

Table 4. *Commemorative statues erected in London and Washington*

Decade	London	Washington	Decade	London	Washington
1801-10	3	0	1871-80	13	7
1811-20	1	0	1881-90	14	8
1821-30	2	0	1891-1900	11	6
1831-40	5	0	1901-10	18	14
1841-50	8	0	1911-20	13	7
1851-60	7	2	1921-8	7	8
1861-70	10	1			

Sources: Lord Edward Gleichen, *London's Open Air Statuary* (London, 1973 edn), *passim*; J. M. Goode, *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.: A Comprehensive Historical Guide* (Washington, 1974), *passim*.

Note: This list is confined to commemorative, free-standing or equestrian statues, and excludes reliefs, allegorical, fountain, animal, abstract and cemetery sculpture. But if all these were added, the same trend would still be apparent.

Table 5. *Issues of royal commemorative stamps*

Reign	Occasion	Date	Stamps issued	Total sold
George V	Silver Jubilee	1935	$\frac{1}{2}d.$, $1d.$, $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, $2\frac{1}{2}d.$	1,008,000,000
George VI	Coronation	1937	$\frac{1}{2}d.$	388,731,000
George VI	Silver Wedding	1948	$2\frac{1}{2}d.$, £1	147,919,628
Elizabeth II	Coronation	1953	$2\frac{1}{2}d.$, $4d.$, $1s.3d.$, $1s.6d.$	448,849,000
Elizabeth II	Investiture of Prince of Wales	1969	$5d.$, $9d.$, $1s.$	125,825,604
Elizabeth II	Silver Wedding	1972	$3p.$, $20p.$	66,389,100
Elizabeth II	Silver Jubilee	1977	$8\frac{1}{2}p.$, $9p.$, $10p.$, $11p.$, $13p.$	159,000,000

Sources: A. G. Rigo de Righi, *The Stamp of Royalty: British Commemorative Issues for Royal Occasions, 1935-1972* (London, 1973), pp. 14, 19, 26, 33, 41, 48; S. Gibbons, *Great Britain: Specialised Stamp Catalogue*, ii, *King Edward VII to George V*, 3rd edn (London, 1974), pp. 172, 207, 211; *idem*, *Great Britain: Specialised Stamp Catalogue*, iii, *Queen Elizabeth II: Pre-Decimal Issues* (London, 1976), pp. 148-9, 254-6; H. D. S. Haverbeck, *The Commemorative Stamps of the British Commonwealth* (London, 1955), pp. 91, 92, 94.

Note: Haverbeck gives the figure of 450,000,000 for the 1937 coronation issue. I have taken the lower figure from Gibbons.

5. Representing Authority in Victorian India

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CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RITUAL IDIOM

By the middle of the nineteenth century, India's colonial society was marked by a sharp disjunction between a small, alien ruling group, British in culture, and a quarter of a billion Indians whom the British effectively controlled. The military superiority of these aliens had just been successfully demonstrated in the brutal suppression of a widespread military and civil revolt which had spread through much of Upper India in 1857 and 1858. In the two decades that followed this military action, a theory of authority became codified, based on ideas and assumptions about the proper ordering of groups in Indian society, and their relationship to their British rulers. In conceptual terms, the British, who had started their rule as 'outsiders', became 'insiders' by vesting in their monarch the sovereignty of India through the Government of India Act of 2 August 1858. This new relationship between the British monarch, her Indian subjects and the native princes of India was proclaimed in all principal centres of British rule in India on 8 November 1858. In the proclamation Queen Victoria assured the Indian princes that 'their rights, dignity and honour' as well as their control over their territorial possessions would be respected, and that the queen 'was bound to the natives of Our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects'. All her Indian subjects were to be secure in the practice of their religions. They were to enjoy 'the equal and impartial protection of the law', and in the framing and administration of this law: 'due regard would be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India'. The princes and her Indian subjects were informed by the queen that all would be done to stimulate 'the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement', and that they 'should enjoy that social advancement

which can only be secured by internal peace and good government'.¹

The proclamation was based on two main assumptions: firstly that there was an indigenous diversity in culture, society and religion in India, and secondly that the foreign rulers had a responsibility for the maintenance of an equitable form of government which would be directed not only to protecting the integrity inherent in this diversity, but also to social and material progress which would benefit the ruled.

The proclamation can be viewed as a cultural statement which encompasses two divergent or even contradictory theories of rule: one which sought to maintain India as a feudal order, and the other looking towards changes which would inevitably lead to the destruction of this feudal order. Each of these theories about British rule incorporated ideas about the sociology of India, and the relationship of the rulers to individuals and groups in Indian society. If India were to be ruled in a feudal mode, then an Indian aristocracy had to be recognized and/or created, which could play the part of 'loyal feudatories' to their British queen. If India were to be ruled by the British in a 'modernist' mode, then principles which looked to a new kind of civic or public order had to be developed. Those adhering to this view desired a representational mode of government based sociologically on communities and interests with individuals representing these entities.

British adherents of both the feudal and the representational mode of colonial government shared a number of assumptions about the past and present of India, and the continued necessity and desirability of monarchical rule for India. In both modes, although Indians might become associated with their white rulers as feudatories or as representatives of communities and interests, effective system-wide decisions would be made by the British colonial rulers. The British rulers assumed that Indians had lost their right to self-rule through their own weakness, which led to their subjugation by a succession of 'foreign' rulers, stretching back to the Aryan invasions, and, in the more recent past, to the British conquest of the preceding imperial rulers of India, the Mughals. The apparent fact of Indian incompetence for self-rule was accepted by all the British concerned

¹ 'Queen Victoria's Proclamation, 1 November 1858', in C. H. Phillips, H. L. Singh and B. N. Pandey (eds.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858-1947: Select Documents* (London, 1962), pp. 10-11.

with ruling India. What arguments there were among the British were related to whether this incompetence was inherent and permanent, or whether under proper tutelage Indians could become effective enough to rule themselves. The feudal theory could encompass the representational theory and the possibility of evolution of competence, since the British had lived through a feudal stage in their own history, and in analytical terms the Indian present could be seen as the British past. The British polity, society and economy had evolved into its modern form from this past; hence theoretically the present feudal society of India could also evolve into a modern one in the distant future. In policy terms the members of the ruling group could argue about the political efficacy of supporting landlords, princes, the peasants or the rising urban-based western-educated Indians in terms of a general agreement on the nature of Indian society and the accomplishment of ultimate goals for India, without questioning the existing institutions of colonial rule.

In the 1860s and 1870s, the notion that 'authority once achieved must have a secure and usable past'² was also becoming established. The past, which was being codified and required representation to both the British in India and at home, and the Indians, had a British and an Indian component, and a theory of the relationship of the two parts. The queen was the monarch of both India and Great Britain, an authoritative centre of both societies. The head of the British government in India after 1858 had a dual title and office. As governor general, he was responsible ultimately to the parliament and as 'viceroy', he represented the monarch and her relationship to the princes and peoples of India.

Starting in 1858, as part of the re-establishment of political order, Lord Canning, the first viceroy of India, undertook a series of extensive tours through North India to make manifest the new relationship proclaimed by the queen. These tours had as one of their main features durbars, meetings, with large numbers of Indian princes, notables and Indian and British officials, at which honours and rewards were presented to Indians who had demonstrated loyalty to their foreign rulers during the uprisings of 1857-8. At these durbars Indians were granted titles such as Raja, Nawab, Rai Sahib, Rai Bahadur, and Khan Bahadur, presented with special clothes and emblems (*khelats*), granted special privileges and some exemptions from normal administrative procedures, and given rewards in the

² J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (Boston, 1971), p. 41.

form of pensions and land grants for various actions such as the protection of Europeans during the uprising and the provision of troops and supplies to the British armies. The form of these *darbars* was a model derived from court rituals of the Mughal emperors and utilized by eighteenth-century Indian rulers, Hindu and Muslim, and then adapted by the British in the early nineteenth century with English officials acting as Indian rulers.

The central ritual which took place in the Mughal's *darbar* was an act of incorporation. The person to be thus honoured offered *nazar*, gold coins, and/or *peshkash*, valuables such as elephants, horses, jewels and other precious objects. The amount of gold coins offered, or the nature and amount of *peshkash* presented, were carefully graded and related to the rank and status of the person making the prestation. The Mughal would present a *khelat* which, narrowly construed, consisted of specific and ordered sets of clothes, including a cloak, turban, shawls, various turban ornaments, a necklace and other jewels, arms and shields, but could also include horses and elephants with various accoutrements as signs of authority and lordship. The number of such items and their value was also graded. Some insignia, clothes and rights, such as the use of drums and certain banners, were restricted to members of a ruling family. Under the Mughals and other Indian rulers, these ritual prestations constituted a relationship between the giver and receiver, and were not understood as simply an exchange of goods and valuables. The *khelat* was a symbol 'of the idea of continuity or succession... and that continuity rests on a physical basis, depending on contact of the body of recipient with the body of the donor through the medium of the clothing'.³ The recipient was incorporated through the medium of the clothing into the body of the donor. This incorporation, according to F. W. Buckler, rests on the idea that the king stands for a 'system of rule of which he is the incarnation... incorporating into his body... the persons of those who share his rule'.⁴ Those thus incorporated were not just servants of the king, but part of him, 'just as the eye is the main function of sight, and the ear in the realm of hearing'. *Nazar*, the term applied to gold coins offered by the subordinate, comes from an Arabic and Persian word for 'vow'. In its typical form it is offered in the coin of the ruler, and is the officer's acknowledgement that the ruler is the source of wealth and well-being.

³ F. W. Buckler, 'The Oriental Despot', *Anglican Theological Review*, (1927-8), p. 241.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

The offering of *nazar* is the reciprocal of the receipt of the *khelat* and part of the act of incorporation. These acts, seen from the perspective of the giver of *nazar* and the acceptor of the *khelats*, were acts of obedience, pledges of loyalty, and the acceptance of the superiority of the giver of the *khelats*.

In *darbars* there were well-established rules for the relative placement of people and objects. The spatial order of a *darbar* fixed, created and represented relationships with the ruler. The closer to the person of the ruler or his representative one stood, the higher one's status. In a *darbar*, traditionally, the royal personage sat on cushions or a low throne placed on a slightly raised platform; all others stood in rows ordered vertically from the left and right down the audience hall or tent. In other *darbars* the rows might be horizontally ordered and separated by railings, but in either case the closer one stood to the person of the royal figure, the more one shared his authority. On entering the *darbar*, each person made obeisance to the person of the ruler, usually by prostrating himself and saluting by touching his head in various manners. In Mughal terms the saluter 'has placed his head (which is the seat of the senses and mind) into the hand of humility, giving it to the royal assembly as a present'.⁵ If *nazar* or *peshkash* were to be offered, and *khelats* or other honours to be received, the person would step forward, and the prestations seen and/or touched by the royal personage; then he would be robbed by an official or the ruler and receive other valuables. If horses or elephants were being presented, these would be led to the entrance of the audience hall for viewing.

The British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tended to misconstrue these acts by seeing them as economic in nature and function. The offering of *nazar* and *peshkash* were seen as paying for favours, which the British then translated into 'rights' relating to their trading activities. In the case of the subordinates of Indian rulers, the rights established privileges which were the source of wealth and status. The objects which formed the basis of the relationship through incorporation – cloth, clothes, gold and silver coins, animals, weapons, jewels and jewelry, and other objects – were construed by the British to be utilitarian goods which were part of their system of trade. To the Indians, the value of the objects was not set in a market, but by the ritual act of incorporation. A sword

⁵ Abu Al Fazl, *The Ain-i-Akbari*, trans. by H. Blochman, ed. D. C. Phillot, 2nd edn (Calcutta, 1927), clxvii.

received from the hand of the Mughal or with a long lineage, having been held by various persons, had value far transcending its 'market' value. The cloth and clothes which were key elements in a *khelat* took on the character of heirlooms. They were to be stored, maintained from generation to generation, and displayed on special occasions. They were not for ordinary use and wear. The British glossed the offering of *nazar* as bribery and *peshkash* as tribute, following their own cultural codes, and assumed there was a direct *quid pro quo* involved.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the East India Company emerged after a series of struggles with their French competitors as the most militarily powerful of the Indian states, by defeating successively the Nawab of Bengal (1757), the Nawab Vizier of Awadh and the Mughal emperor (1764), Tipu, the Sultan of Mysore (1799) and the Marathas under Scindhia (1803). Their position as a national power *within* the state system of eighteenth-century India was derived from their appointment as Diwan (chief civil officer) of Bengal by the Mughal Emperor in 1765, and establishment of their role of 'protector' of the Mughal emperor in 1803, after Lord Lake had captured Delhi, the Mughal 'capital'. Rather than deposing the Mughal and proclaiming themselves rulers of India in succession to the Mughal empire, the British were content, on the instructions of Lord Wellesley, their governor general, to offer the Mughal 'every demonstration of reverence, respect, and attention'.⁶ Creating the East India Company as what Wellesley and other officials of the time thought of as the 'protector' of the Mughal emperor, they thought they would come into 'possession of the nominal authority of the Mughal'.⁷ The acquisition of 'nominal authority' was thought by the British to be useful, for even though the Mughal in European terms had 'no real power, dominion and authority, almost every state and class of people in India continue to acknowledge his nominal authority'.⁸ Sir John Kaye, whose *History of the Indian Mutiny*, was and in many regards still is the standard work on the 'causes' of the Great Uprising, commented on the relationship between the East India Company and the Mughal

⁶ Wellesley to Lake, 27 July 1803, in Montgomery Martin (ed.), *The Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess of Wellesley During His Administration in India* (London, 1837), iii, p. 232.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁸ Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 13 July 1804, in Martin, *Despatches*, iv, p. 153.

from 1803 to 1857, that a 'political paradox' had been created as the Mughal was 'to become a pensioner, a pageant, and a puppet. He was to be a King, yet no King – a something and yet a nothing – a reality and a sham at the same time'.⁹

After the East India Company gained military control of Bengal in 1757, its influence grew and employees of the Company began to return to England with great wealth; this wealth and influence was beginning to be exerted in the home political system. The question of the relation of the Company to the crown and the parliament became a crucial political issue. A compromise was affected in the India Bill of 1784, which made parliament ultimately responsible for the governance of India, but retained the Company as the instrumentality for commercial activity and the governance of those territories in India over which the Company came to be the ruler. Parliament and the directors of the Company also began to limit the acquisition of private fortunes by their employees, through reducing and then eliminating private trading activities and to define as 'corruption' the incorporation of officials of the Company into the ruling native groups through the acceptance of *nazar*, *khelats*, and *peshkash*, which were declared to be forms of bribery.

With this definition of 'corruption', and with the maintenance of the Mughal emperor as the symbolic centre of the Indian political order, another political paradox was established. The British crown was not the crown of India; the British in India were subjects of their own kings, but the Indians were not. The Mughal continued to be the 'fountain of honour' for Indians. The English could not be incorporated through symbolic acts to a foreign ruler, and perhaps more importantly they could not incorporate Indians into their rulership through symbolic means.

In the late eighteenth century, as officers of the East India Company came more and more to fill the function of tax assessors and collectors, judges and magistrates, legislators and executives in the Indian political order, they were prohibited by their employers and their parliament from participating in rituals and constituting proper relationships with Indians who were their subordinates. Yet in relationships with territorial rulers allied with the British who were their subordinates, officers of the East India Company realized that loyalty had to be symbolized to be effective in the eyes of subordinates and followers. The British therefore began the practice of presenting

⁹ John W. Kaye and George B. Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, 2nd edn (London, 1892), ii, p. 4.

khelats and accepting *nazar* and *peshkash* in formal meetings that could be recognized by Indians as *durbars*.

Although the British, as 'Indian rulers' in the first half of the nineteenth century, continued the practice of accepting *nazar* and *peshkash* and giving *khelats*, they tried to restrict the occasions for such rituals. For example, when a prince or notable visited the Government House in Calcutta, or when the governor general, governors, commissioners and lower British officials went on tour, a *durbar* would be held. *Khelats* were always granted in the name, and by permission, of the governors of presidencies or the governor general. What was offered by the Indians as *nazar* and *peshkash* was never kept by the official to whom it was given. Rather, valuations and minute listings were made of the objects presented, which were ultimately deposited in the *Toshakhana*, a special government treasury for the receipt and disbursement of presents. Unlike the Indians, the British recycled presents which they received, either directly, by giving one Indian what had been received from another, or indirectly, by selling at auction in Calcutta what they received and then using the funds realized to buy objects to be given as presents. The British always tried to equalize in economic terms what they gave and received by instructing Indians of the exact worth of objects or cash they would be allowed to give. So if a person was to give 101 rupees as *nazar*, he would receive a shawl or robe worth that much as his *khelat*.

Mughal ritual might seem to have been retained but the meanings had been changed. What had been, under Indian rulers, a ritual of incorporation now became a ritual marking subordination, with no mystical bonding between royal figure and the chosen friend and servant who was becoming part of the ruler. By converting what was a form of present-giving and prestation into a kind of 'economic exchange', the relationship between British official and Indian subject or ruler became contractual. In the first half of the nineteenth century the British, as they expanded their rule, rested their authority on the idea of contract and 'good government'. They created a mercenary army in which the contract was metaphorically expressed as 'having eaten the Company's salt'. Loyalty between Indian soldiers and their European officers was maintained on the basis of regular pay, 'fair' treatment and observation of the rule of non-interference with indigenous religious beliefs and customs. When there was rebellion, it was based on the belief, on the part of the

soldiers, that their 'contract', explicit or implicit, had been violated, by being made to wear leather hats, or having to travel over 'the black waters', or having to ingest forbidden substances in the form of fat from pigs or bullocks. The state became the creator and guarantor of contractual relations between Indians in relation to the use of the basic resources of labour and land, through the introduction of European ideas of property, rent and revenue. Local lords who were the upholders of a social order based on cosmological concepts, and who maintained right order through ritual action, were converted into 'landlords'. Indian 'kings' who were allowed internal autonomy over their domains were reduced to the status of 'chiefs and princes'. They were controlled through treaties which were contractual in nature, as they guaranteed the boundaries of the states, pledged the support of the Company to a royal family and its descendants, in return for giving up the capacity for making war, and effective as long as they 'practised good government' and accepted the supervision of an English official.

I would argue that in the first half of the nineteenth century there was an incompleteness and contradiction in the cultural-symbolic constitution of India. 'A cultural symbolic constitution', to quote Ronald Inden,

embraces such things as classificatory schema, assumptions about how things are, cosmologies, world views, ethical systems, legal codes, definitions of governmental units and social groups, ideologies, religious doctrines, myths, rituals, procedures, and rules of etiquette.¹⁰

The elements within a cultural-symbolic constitution are not a mere assemblage of items or things, but are ordered into a pattern which asserts the relationship of the elements to each other and constructs their value.

The indigenous theory of rulership in India was based on ideas of incorporation, and a theory of hierarchy in which rulers not only outranked everyone but could also encompass those they ruled. Hence the continuing significance of the Mughal emperor, even as a 'pensioner', as both Indian subjects of the East India Company and rulers of the allied states still bore titles of honour which he alone could grant. The *khutba* in mosques, even in British India, continued to be read in his name, coins of the East India Company until 1835

¹⁰ Ronald Inden, 'Cultural Symbolic Constitutions in Ancient India', mimeograph (1976), pp. 6-8.

bore his name, and many of the Indian states continued to mint coins until 1859–60 with the regnal year of the Mughal emperor on them. Although the British referred to the Mughal emperor in English as the 'King of Delhi', they continued to use his full imperial titles when they addressed him in Persian. As the monarch of Great Britain was not the monarch of India until 1858, the governor generals had difficulty in honouring Indians with medals and titles. When a governor general went on tour and held *darbars* for Indian rulers, they were usually with only one ruler at a time, avoiding the question of ranking one chief above another in terms of placement *vis-à-vis* the body of the governor general. It was not until the 1850s that the British began to try to regularize the practice of firing gun salutes as marks of respect for Indian rulers. The rank system which the gun salutes signified was not fixed until 1867. Efforts on the part of governor generals to symbolize a new order or to eliminate some of the contradictions and lacunae in the cultural-symbolic constitution met with scepticism and even rebuke on the part of the directors of the East India Company and the president of the Board of Control in London. Lord William Bentinck, governor general 1828–35, was the first to perceive the desirability of locating an 'Imperial' capital away from Calcutta, and suggested to his employees in London the 'need for a Cardinal point' for their seat of government.¹¹ Agra became his choice for such a 'Cardinal point', as he believed it was Akbar's capital, and he thought there was little difference between the political conditions of Akbar's time and his own as both rulers were concerned with 'preservation of empire',¹² Agra was seen as 'the brightest jewel' of the governor general's 'crown',¹³ as it was located 'amid all the scenes of past and future glory, where the empire is to be saved or lost'.¹⁴

When Bentinck raised the question of the possibility of moving the capital in 1829, the court of directors forbade the consideration of such a move by pointing out that their rule was not the rule of a single independent sovereign, but that India 'is governed by a distant Maritime power, and the position of the seat of Government must be considered with reference to that peculiar circumstance'. It was

¹¹ 'Bentinck Minute 2 January 1834', I.O.L.R., Board's Collection, 1551/62/250, p. 83.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹³ John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck* (Berkeley, 1974), p. 192.

¹⁴ 'Extract Political Letter to Bengal 3 July 1829', I.O.L.R., Board's Collection, 1370/54/508, p. 12.

precisely this maritime/mercantile past which Bentinck sought to change, as he believed the character of British rule was 'no longer the inconsistent one of Merchant and Sovereign',¹⁵ but rather that of an imperial power. Lord Ellenborough, who had been president of the Board of Control, 1828–30, at the time of periodic investigation of the state of the East India Company's territories prior to the renewal of its twenty-year charter by parliament, suggested to the then prime minister, the duke of Wellington, that the government of India should be transferred to the crown.¹⁶ The suggestion was turned down by the duke who, Ellenborough thought, was 'anxious not to estrange the London commercial interests'.¹⁷

Ellenborough became the governor general of India after the great defeat of the Company's army by the Afghans in 1842, and was determined to restore the prestige of British rule in India. He directed an invasion of Afghanistan, which resulted in the sacks of Ghazni and Kabul as an act of retribution. Ellenborough conceived of symbolizing the defeat of the Muslim Afghans by having what were thought to be the Gates of Somnath, a famous Hindu temple in Gujarat (which had been plundered and desecrated six hundred years earlier by Muslims, and the gates carried off to Afghanistan), returned in triumph to India and placed in a newly built temple in Gujarat. He issued instructions that the sandalwood gates be carried on a cart through the city of Punjab and brought to Delhi, accompanied by a honour guard, and with due ceremony. Ellenborough signaled his intention by issuing a proclamation 'to all the Princes and Chiefs and the People of India'. The return of the gates was to be, Ellenborough proclaimed, the 'proudest record of your national glory; the proof of your superiority in arms over the nations beyond the Indus'. He went on to identify himself with peoples and princes of India 'in interest and feeling', stated that the 'heroic army' reflected 'immortal honour upon my native and adopted country', and promised that he would preserve and improve 'the happiness of our two countries'.¹⁸ He wrote in a similar vein to the young Queen Victoria about the victory and that the 'recollections of the imperial authority [were] now... transferred to the British Government', and

¹⁵ 'Bentinck to Ct Director, Minute, 2 January 1884', *ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁶ Albert H. Imlah, *Lord Ellenborough: A Biography of Edward Law, Earl of Ellenborough, Governor General of India* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁸ John William Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan* (London, 1851), ii, pp. 646–7.

all that remained to be done was to make the princes of India 'feudatories of an Empress', if 'your Majesty were to become the nominal head of the Empire'.¹⁹

Ellenborough had a special medal struck to honour those British and Indian soldiers in the Company's army who served in China during the Opium War. The duke of Wellington felt that Ellenborough, through this action, had usurped the prerogatives of the crown.²⁰ Ellenborough's action and his proclamation concerning the return of the Gates of Somnath led to vicious criticism and ridicule amongst the British in India as well as in England. Although Ellenborough's concerns with symbolic representations of the imperial role for the British in India were not the cause of his recall in 1844, they were taken as indicative of a view of the relationship between India and England which found little support either in England or in India.

The contradictions and difficulties in defining a symbolic-cultural constitution are traceable in the efforts made during the first half of the nineteenth century to construct a ritual idiom through and by which British authority was to be represented to Indians. The continued use of the Mughal idiom caused continuing difficulties, such as arduous negotiations between British officials and Indian subjects over questions of precedence, forms of address, the continued rights to use Mughal titles, the Mughal's continued receipt of the *nazar* from both Indians and British officials, and his granting of *khelats* and issuance of *sanads* (royal charters) at the succession to the *masnad* in Indian states. This latter practice the British referred to as the 'traffic in *sanads*'.

The conflict was not only amongst the nobles and élites and British officials, but found its way into the daily practice of East India's courts and local offices, in what became known as the 'shoe controversy'. The British in India followed a metonymical logic in their relations with their Indian subjects, and the wearing of shoes by Indians in the presence of the British was seen as an effort to establish relationships of equality between the ruled and their rulers. Hence, Indians were always forced to remove their shoes or sandals when entering what the British defined as their space – their offices and homes. On the other hand, the British always insisted on wearing shoes when entering Indian spaces, including mosques and temples.

¹⁹ Lord Colchester (ed.), *The History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough* (London, n.d.), p. 64.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 324–38.

The one significant exception that was allowed was if an Indian habitually wore European clothes in public, then he would be allowed to wear shoes in the presence of his English masters on such occasions of western-style rituals such as the governor general's levee, a drawing room, *conversazione* or a ball.

The British experimented with varying forms of ritual to mark public occasions. The laying of the corner stones for the Hindu College building and the Muhammadan College in 1824 in Calcutta was celebrated 'with the usual imposing ceremonies of Masonry'.²¹ The colleges were established under the auspices of the Committee on Public Instruction, which was made up of Indians and Europeans who raised funds largely from private sources for these institutions. The colleges were to instruct Indians on the 'fundamental principles of the Moral and Physical Sciences'.²² The members of the Free Mason lodges of Calcutta, of which there were several, marched in procession through the streets of Calcutta led by a band and each lodge's insignia and banner, and assembled in the square in which the building was to be constructed.

The Cups, Square, and other implements of the Craft were then placed on the Pedestal... The Reverend Brother Bryce... offered up a solemn prayer to the great Architect of the Universe... As far as the eye could reach, it met Tiers above Tiers of human faces, the house tops in every direction being crowded to cramping by the natives anxious to have a view of the imposing scene.²³

After the prayer, coins and a silver plate with the dedicatory inscription were deposited in the hole over which the foundation stone was to be placed. The stone was then lowered and anointed with corn, oil and wine. There then followed a speech by the Provincial Grand Master, and the conclusion of the ceremony was marked by the playing of the national anthem, 'God Save the King'. Not only is the idiom of the ritual a European one, but so is the institution being celebrated and its underlying public/civic ideal. The education to be offered at these two institutions was to be a secular one, not involved with the transmission of sacred knowledge as in the indigenous educational institutions. Although one institution was for Hindus and the other for Muslims, admission was not restricted to particular groups of Hindus or Muslims as was the normal

²¹ A. C. Das Gupta (ed.), *The Days of John Company: Selections from The Calcutta Gazette, 1824–1832* (Calcutta, 1959), p. 23.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

practice. The fact that funds were raised by public subscription, seen as a European-style charitable act, as well as the use of funds raised by public lotteries, marked the occasion as, if not unique, certainly quite novel.

The first decades of the nineteenth century were rich in the celebrations of British victories in India and Europe, the arrivals and departures of governor generals and military heroes, the deaths and coronations of English kings and royal birthdays. The idiom of these occasions would appear to be the same as in England, with fireworks, military parades, illuminations, dinners with their ceremonial toasts, music accompaniments, Christian prayers and, above all, frequent speeches. Indians participated marginally as soldiers in the parades, as servants or as audiences for the public parts of the celebrations.

EVENTS INTO STRUCTURE: THE MEANING OF THE UPRISING OF 1857

The contradictions in the cultural-symbolic constitution of British India were resolved in the rising of 1857, traditionally described as the Indian Mutiny, which led to the desacralization of the person of the Mughal emperor, a brutal demonstration of the power which the British had to coerce Indians, and the establishment of a myth of the superiority of the British character over that of the disloyal Indians.

The trial of the emperor, following the defeat of the rebellion, formally announced a transformation of rule.²⁴ The bringing of a king to trial means those doing so believe this is an act of justice and 'an explicit denial of the King's claim to rule'. Its meaning, according to Michael Walzer, is that it severs the past from the present and future and establishes new political principles marking the triumph of a new kind of government.²⁵

The trial of the emperor has to be seen in relation to the Government of India Act of 1858, and the Queen's Proclamation of 1 November 1858. The trial and judicial exiling of the emperor and the end of Mughal rule was accomplished by completely desanctifying the previous political order of the society. The parliamentary act and

²⁴ Punjab Government Records: *Correspondence*, vii, pt 2, p. 39; H. L. O. Garrett, 'The Trial of Bahadur Shah II', *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society*, i, pt 1 (April, 1932), pp. 3-18; F. W. Buckler, 'The Political Theory of the Indian Mutiny', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., v (1922), pp. 71-100.

²⁵ Michael Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 6.

the queen's proclamation declare the beginning of a new order. This new order required a centre, required a means by which Indians now could relate to this centre, and the development of the ritual expression of British authority in India.

In the cultural system of Anglo-India the Great Rebellion of 1857-8 can be viewed as demarcating crucial changes. For the British ruling élites, at home and in India, the meanings attached to the events of 1857-8, and the resulting constitutional changes, were increasingly the pivot around which their theory of colonial rule rotated. The war led to redefinitions of the nature of Indian society, the necessary and proper relationships of the rulers to the ruled, and a reassessment of the goals of the government of India, which in turn led to continued changes in the institutional arrangements required to implement these goals. For the Englishmen in the latter half of the nineteenth century, travelling in India as visitors or in the course of their duties, there was a regular Mutiny pilgrimage to visit the sites of the great events - the Delhi Ridge, the Memorial Well and the Gardens in Kanpur, capped by a large marble statue of the Angel of Resurrection, and the Residency in Lucknow. Tombs, memorials, stones and their inscriptions, and tablets which are affixed to the walls of European churches marked for the English the martyrdom, sacrifice and ultimate triumphs of military and civilians whose death made sacred, to the Victorian Englishmen, their rule in India.

To the English from 1859 to the early part of the twentieth century, the Mutiny was seen as a heroic myth embodying and expressing their central values which explained their rule in India to themselves - sacrifice, duty, fortitude; above all it symbolized the ultimate triumph over those Indians who had threatened properly constituted authority and order.

THE FORMALIZATION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE RITUAL IDIOM: THE IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGE OF 1877

The twenty years after the desacralization of Delhi and the final suppression of the uprising of 1858 were marked by the completion of the symbolic-cultural constitution of British India. I will only briefly list the components of the content of this constitution, and then go on to describe how these components were represented in a ritual event, the Imperial Assemblage of 1877, which was held to proclaim Queen Victoria empress of India.

The central political fact was the end of the Company's rule and

the establishment of the monarch of Great Britain as the monarch of India in 1858. This act may be seen as the reciprocal of the final desacralization of the Mughal empire. It ended the ambiguity in the position of the British in India as now the British monarchy encompassed both Britain and India. A social order was established with the British crown seen as the centre of authority, and capable of ordering into a single hierarchy all its subjects, Indian and British. The Indian princes now were Queen Victoria's 'loyal Indian Feudatories', who owed deference and allegiance to her through her viceroy. The governor general and the viceroy, being the same person, was unequivocally the locus of authority in India, and all the British and Indians could be ranked in relation to him, whether it be by office held, or membership in various status groups. The British operated in India with an ordinal theory of hierarchy, in which individuals could be ranked by precedence – this precedence being based on fixed and known criteria, established by ascription and succession, or achievement and office. For the allied princes an effort had been made by 1876 to group them by region, with a fixed assignment of rank vis-à-vis other rulers in their region. The size of a prince's state, the amount of their revenue, the date at which they had become allies of the East India Company, the history of their families, their standing in relation to the Mughal empire and their acts of loyalty towards the British could all be weighed, and an index established to determine the rank of any ruler. This status was then represented at *darbars* held by governors or lieutenant governors of the region, or when the viceroy-governor general went on a progress. A code of conduct was established for princes and chiefs for their attendance at the *darbar*. The clothes they wore, the weapons they could carry, the number of retainers and soldiers that could accompany them to the viceroy's camp, where they were met by British officials in relation to the camp, the number of gun salutes fired in their honour, the time of the entry into the *darbar* hall or tent, whether the viceroy would rise and come forward to greet them, where on the viceregal rug they would be saluted by the viceroy, where they would be seated, how much *nazar* they could give, whether they would be entitled to a visit from the viceroy, were all markers of rank and could be changed by the viceroy to raise or lower their rank. In correspondence with the viceroy, the forms of salutation, the kinds of Indian titles which the British would use and the phrases used in the conclusion of a letter were all graded, and were seen as marks of approval or approbation.

Similarly, the Indians who were under direct British rule were ordinarily ranked in their towns, districts, and provinces in the *darbar* books of various officials. The leading men of district were ranked on the basis of revenue paid, land held, ancestry of their families, acts of loyalty or disloyalty to the British government. Indian officials and employees of the imperial or provincial government were ranked by office, length of service and honours achieved, and the masses, by caste, community and religion.

Immediately after the suppression of the rebellion, and the establishment of the queen of England as the 'fountain of honour' for India, investigations were made into the system of Indian royal titles, with the goal of ordering them in a hierarchy. Not only was the system organized, but holders of titles had to 'prove' by criteria established by the British that their titles were legitimate. Henceforth only the viceroy could grant Indian titles, based on the recommendation of local or provincial officials. The basis of entitlement became specified by acts of loyalty, outstanding and long-term service in the government, special acts of charity such as endowing schools and hospitals, contributions to special funds and 'good' management of resources leading to the improvement of agricultural production. Indian entitlements were for the length of the life of the holder, although in some of the leading families there was the presumption that with demonstrated good behaviour by the successor to the headship of the family, he would in due course be rewarded by the renewal in the next generation of a title previously held. Honour and titles by the 1870s were closely tied to the expressed goals of the new governmental order, 'progress with stability'.

In 1861 a new royal order of Indian knights was established, the Star of India. At first this order, which included both Indian and British knights, was restricted to twenty-five members who were the most important Indian princes and senior and distinguished British civil and military officers. In 1866 the order was expanded by the addition of two lower ranks, and by 1877 there were several hundred holders of knighthoods in the order, which were personal, and granted by the queen. The investiture and holding of chapters of the order added an important European component to the ritual idiom which the British were establishing in India. The accoutrements of the order were English and 'feudal': a robe or mantle, a collar, a medallion with the effigy of the queen (the wearing of such a human effigy was anathema to Muslims) and a jewelled pendant. The investiture was in the European style, with the reading of the warrant and

a presentation of the insignia, the newly entitled knight kneeling before the monarch or her representative. The contractual aspect of the entitlement was painfully clear to the Indian recipients as the accoutrements given had to be returned at the death of the holder. Unlike prestations received from Indian rulers in the past which were kept as sacred objects in treasure rooms to be viewed and used on special occasions, these had to be returned. The statutes of the order required the recipients to sign a bond that the valuables would be returned by their heirs. Indians also objected to one of the statutes which specified the conditions under which the knighthood could be rescinded for acts of disloyalty. The knighthoods became rewards for 'good service'.

The relationship between the crown and India was beginning to be marked by tours of India by members of the royal family, the first of these being the Duke of Edinburgh in 1869. The Prince of Wales went on a six month tour of India in 1875-6. The royal tours were not only significant in India in terms of the representation of the bond between the princes and peoples of India and their monarch, but were extensively reported in the British press. On the return of the Prince of Wales, exhibitions were held in major English cities of the exotic and expensive presents which he had received. Ironically, one of the major gifts which the Prince of Wales gave in return was an English translation of the Vedas by Max Müller.

The period of 1860 to 1877 saw a rapid expansion of what might be thought of as the definition and expropriation of Indian civilization by the imperial rulers. Colonial rule is based on forms of knowledge as much as it is based on institutions of direct control. From the founding by Sir William Jones and other European scholars in 1784 of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, there had been a steady development in the accumulation of knowledge about the history of India, its systems of thoughts, its religious beliefs and practices and its society and institutions. Much of this accumulation was the result of practical experience in law courts, in the assessment and collection of revenue and the attendant English imperative to order and classify information. Through this period more and more Europeans came to define what they thought of as the uniqueness of Indian civilization. This definition included the development of an apparatus for the study of Indian languages and texts, which had the effect of standardizing and making authoritative, not only for Europeans but for Indians themselves, what were thought to be the 'classics' of

Indian thought and literature. Through the encouragement of the production by Indians of school books, Indians began to write history in the European mode, often borrowing European ideas about the past of India. In the 1860s an archaeological survey was established, with Europeans deciding what were the great monuments of India, which monuments were fit for preservation or for description as part of the Indian 'heritage'. Census operations and the establishment of an ethnographic survey were to describe 'the peoples and cultures of India', to make them available in monographs, photographs and through statistical tabulations not only to their own officials but to social scientists so that India could be part of the laboratory of mankind. The British believed that Indian arts and crafts had entered a period of sharp decline in the face of western technology and machine-made products, hence their arts and crafts had to be collected, preserved and placed in museums. In addition, art schools were founded in major cities where Indians could be taught how to produce sculptures, paintings and craft products, Indian in content but appealing and acceptable to western tastes. Indian architectural builders began to construct European-style buildings, but with 'Oriental' decorative motifs. The imperial government established committees to search for and preserve Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and vernacular language manuscripts. Educated Indians increasingly were to learn about their own culture through the mediation of European ideas and scholarship. The British rulers were increasingly defining what was Indian in an official and 'objective' sense. Indians had to look like Indians: before 1860 Indian soldiers as well as their European officers wore western-style uniforms; now the dress uniforms of Indians and English included turbans, sashes and tunics thought to be Mughal or Indian.

The reified and objectified vision of India, its life, thought, sociology and history were to be brought together to celebrate the completion of the political constitution of India, through the establishment of Victoria as empress of India.

THE ROYAL TITLES ACT OF 1876

On 8 February 1876, for the first time since the death of her husband in 1861, Queen Victoria opened parliament. Much to the surprise of the Liberal opposition, she announced in her speech that a bill would be introduced in parliament to add to her Royal Style and Titles. In

her speech she referred to the 'hearty affection' with which her son, the Prince of Wales, then touring in India, was being received 'by My Indian Subjects'. This assured her that 'they are happy under My rule, and loyal to My throne'.²⁶ She therefore deemed it an appropriate time to make an addition to her Royal Style and Titles.

In a speech on 17 February 1876, the prime minister, Disraeli, reviewed the discussions of 1858 concerning the declaration of Victoria as empress of India. At that time it had been considered premature to make Victoria empress because of unsettled conditions in India. But, he continued, in the subsequent twenty years there had been growing interest about India in Great Britain. The Prince's visit had stimulated a mutual feeling of sympathy in these two countries, and Disraeli had been assured that an imperial title, the exact nature of which was unspecified, 'will give great satisfaction not merely to the Princes, but to the nations of India'.²⁷ It would signify 'the unanimous determination of the people of this country to retain our connection with the Indian Empire'.²⁸ Disraeli, in this speech, stressed the diversity of India, describing it as 'an ancient country of many nations', varying peoples and races, 'differing in religion, in manners and in laws - some of them highly gifted and civilized, and many of them of rare antiquity'. 'And this vast community is governed', he continued, 'under the authority of the Queen, by many Sovereign Princes, some of whom occupy Thrones which were filled by their ancestors when England was a Roman Province'.²⁹ The hyperbolic historical fantasy voiced by Disraeli was part of the myth later acted out in the Imperial Assemblage. India was diversity - it had no coherent communality except that given by British rule under the integrating system of the imperial crown.

Thus at the base of the Conservative defence of the bill was the idea that Indians were a different kind of people from the British. The Indians were more susceptible to high-sounding phrases, and would be better ruled by appeal to their Oriental imaginations, as 'they attach enormous value to very slight distinctions'.³⁰ It was argued that, given the constitutional relations between India and Great Britain, the Indian princes were indeed feudatories, and the ambiguity existing in the relationship of the princes to the British paramountcy would be reduced if the British monarch had a title of

²⁶ Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates* (3rd ser., ccxxvii, 1876), p. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1750.

'Emperor'. Although some Indian rulers were called 'Prince' in English, their titles in Indian languages were those of kings, for example Maharaja. With the imperial title, the hierarchic order would be clear cut and unequivocal. It was pointed out that Queen Elizabeth had used an imperial title, and that in practice, from Canning's time in India onwards, imperial titles were used to refer to the queen by princes and independent Asian rulers such as the Amirs of Central Asia. The claim was reiterated that the British were successors to the Mughals, who had an imperial crown which Indians of all status understood. The British, the Conservatives argued, were the successors of the Mughal; hence it was right and proper that India's monarch, Queen Victoria, should be declared empress.

The Royal Titles Act was passed, and received the royal assent on 27 April 1876. The need to overcome the acrimonious debate, the adverse newspaper coverage, especially as it found its way into Indian newspapers and was discussed by western-educated Indians, became part of the rationale for planning the Imperial Assemblage. The three principal designers of the assemblage, Disraeli, Salisbury (secretary of state for India) and Lord Lytton (the newly appointed viceroy), realized that the Imperial Assemblage must be designed to make an impact upon the British at home as well as upon Indians.

THE INTENTIONS OF THE PLANNERS OF THE IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGE

Lord Lytton, the newly appointed viceroy and governor general, returned to England from Portugal, where he had been serving as ambassador, and by January 1876 had begun his effort to overcome his 'absolute ignorance... concerning India'. This effort included meetings in February with members of the Indian Office staff and others in London considered 'experts' on India. The most influential was O. T. Burne, who later accompanied Lytton to India as his private secretary and was regarded by Lytton as the originator of the plan for the assemblage.³¹

Lytton chose Burne to be his private secretary to 'help restore friendly and sound relations between India and Afghanistan and at the same time to proclaim the Indian Imperial title, both of which questions', Burne wrote, 'I was recognized as having a special

³¹ Lytton to Salisbury, 12 Aug. 1876, I.O.L.R., E218/518/1, p. 367.

knowledge'.³² As was true of most viceroys, Lytton came to India with little knowledge of India or, perhaps more importantly, about the workings of the government of the colony. Most of the highest officials of the Raj rose through the ranks of the civil service, which meant twenty to thirty years of experience and well-entrenched relationships throughout the bureaucracy, as well as a highly developed capacity for political intrigue. Viceroys complained bitterly about the frustrations in implementing their plans and policies, dictated by political position in England. It fell to the viceroy's private secretary to articulate the viceroy's office with the bureaucracy. Questions of appointments, promotions, postings and honours initially went through his hands. Viceroys were dependent on the private secretary's knowledge of personal relationships and factions within the bureaucracy, and their capacity to utilize viceregal power effectively in relation to the civil service. After twenty years of experience in various staff positions, Burne had a wide acquaintance with officials in India, and because of his service in Ireland and London was well-acquainted with leading politicians at home.

The planning of the Imperial Assemblage was started in secrecy soon after the arrival of Lytton and of Burne in Calcutta in April 1876. A committee was established which included T. H. Thornton, acting foreign secretary of the government of India who was to be responsible for relations with the Indian princes and chiefs, and Major General (later Field Marshal) Lord Roberts, quartermaster general of the Indian army, who was in charge of the military planning of the assemblage. Also on the committee was Colonel George Colley, Lytton's military secretary, and Major Edward Bradford of the political department, head of the recently established secret police.

The president of the committee was Thomas Thornton, who had served mainly in positions in the secretariat, having been secretary to the Punjab government for twelve years before acting briefly as foreign secretary. Major General Roberts, who had made a reputation for himself as a logistics specialist, was in charge of planning the camps in Delhi.³³ Lord Lytton was much impressed with Roberts's abilities. It was because of his performance in planning the assemblage

³² Major General Sir Owen Tudor Burne, *Memories* (London, 1907), p. 204, and *passim* for his career.

³³ Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty-one Years in India* (New York, 1900), ii, pp. 91-2.

that he was selected for command of the British forces in Afghanistan, the keystone to Roberts's later career in India and England.³⁴

The committee drew on the ideas and suggestions of a small and influential group of political officers, men who had served for many years as residents or agents of governor generals in the principal Indian courts. In the earliest stages of the work Major General Sir Henry Dermot Daly, about whom Lytton wrote 'there is universal consensus of opinion that there is no man in India who knows how to manage Native Princes as well as Daly',³⁵ seems to have been part of the group. Daly argued that holding a *darbar* with all the major princes represented would be impossible because of the jealousies and susceptibilities of the chiefs.³⁶ The view held by most of the political experts was that 'Questions of precedence and slumbering claims of various kinds would infallibly arise, and heart burnings and umbrage and even more serious difficulties would ensue'.³⁷ Lytton tried to dissolve the opposition of the political officers by quietly ignoring them, and by insisting that the meeting in Delhi was not to be a *darbar* but rather an 'Imperial Assemblage'. Thus in particular, he hoped that the question of precedence would not arise, and, by carefully controlling the visits with the princes, to avoid discussing various territorial claims.³⁸

By the end of July 1876, the committee had finished its preliminary planning. The plan was divulged to the viceroy's council, and an outline forwarded to London for the approval of Salisbury and of Disraeli. At this stage, and into August, strict secrecy was maintained, for Lytton feared that early announcement of the plan would lead to an outcry in the Indian press - European and Indian - about details of the plan, and that there would follow a debate as 'unseemly' as that which had marked the Royal Titles Act.

Lytton expected to accomplish a great deal with the assemblage. He hoped it would conspicuously 'place the Queen's authority upon the ancient throne of the Moguls, with which the imagination and tradition of [our] Indian subjects associate the splendour of supreme

³⁴ O. T. Burne, 'The Empress of India', *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, iii (1887), p. 22.

³⁵ Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1875, I.O.L.R., E218/518/1, p. 147.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁷ L. A. Knight, in his article, 'The Royal Titles Act and India', *Historical Journal* xi, no. 3 (1968), pp. 488-507, details many of the current claims to territories and grievances which were felt might surface at the *darbar*; T. H. Thornton, *General Sir Richard Meade* (London, 1898), p. 310.

³⁸ Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1876, I.O.L.R., E218/518/1, p. 149.

power!³⁹ Hence the decision was made to hold the assemblage at Delhi, the Mughal capital, rather than in Calcutta. At this time Delhi was a relatively small city recovering from the destruction of the rebellion of 1857. The population of the city was treated as a conquered people. One of the 'concessions' announced on behalf of the queen at the assemblage was the reopening of Zinat ul Musajid, long closed on 'military grounds' for public worship, and the restoration to the Muslims of Delhi of the Fatepuri Mosque in Chandi Chowk, which had been confiscated in 1857.⁴⁰

The selection of Delhi as the site also avoided associating the crown with a distinctly regional centre such as Calcutta or Bombay. Delhi had the advantage of being in a relatively central location, even though the facilities available for a gathering of large numbers were limited. The location of the assemblage was related to British rather than Mughal Delhi, as the site selected was not the large Maidan in front of the Red Fort (which had been cleared and which today is the political ritual centre of India), but one near the ridge on sparsely settled ground which had been the scene of the great British victory of the Mutiny. The British camp was located on the ridge and to the east going down to the Jamuna river.

The assemblage was to be an occasion to raise the enthusiasm of 'the native aristocracy of the country, whose sympathy and cordial allegiance is no inconsiderable guarantee for the stability... of the Indian Empire'.⁴¹ Lytton was striving to develop strong ties between this 'aristocracy' and the crown. He believed that India would never be held by 'good government' alone, that is, by improving the condition of the *ryot* (agriculturalist), strictly administering justice, and spending huge sums on irrigation works.

The assumed special susceptibility of the Indian to parade and show and the key position of the aristocracy were the defining themes of the assemblage, which was, Lytton wrote, to have an effect also on 'public opinion' in Great Britain, and would act as a support for the Conservative government in England. Lytton hoped that a successful assemblage, well reported in the press, and displaying the loyalty of the Indian princes and peoples, would be evidence of the wisdom of the Royal Titles Act.

³⁹ Lytton to Queen Victoria, 21 April 1876, I.O.L.R., E218/518/1.

⁴⁰ I.O.L.R., Political and Secret Letters from India, Jan. and Feb. 1877, no. 24, para. 20.

⁴¹ Lytton to Queen Victoria, 4 May 1876, I.O.L.R., E218/518/1.

Lytton wanted the assemblage to bind the British official and unofficial communities in India closer together in support of the government. This expectation was not achieved by the assemblage. The governors of both Madras and Bombay advised against holding the assemblage, and for a time it appeared that the governor of Bombay might not even attend. He argued that there was a famine in Bombay and he was needed there; any cost to the central government or the presidency attendant upon participation would be better spent to alleviate the famine. Both governors complained about the disruption caused by having to leave their governments for two weeks with large numbers of their staff to attend the assemblage.

Many British in India, official and unofficial, and several influential British papers saw the assemblage as part of a policy of elevating the 'blacks', and paying too much attention to the Indians, because most concessions and acts of grace were directed towards Indians. Lytton wrote that he faced 'practical difficulties of satisfying the European element, which is disposed to be querulous and avoiding the difficulty of favouring the conquered more than the conquering race'.⁴²

The opposition to the plans in London and India was so strong that Lytton wrote to Queen Victoria,

If the Crown of England should ever have the misfortune to lose the great and magnificent empire of India, it will not be through the disaffection of your Majesty's native subjects, but through party spirit at home, and the disloyalty and insubordination of those members of Your Majesty's Indian Service, whose duty it is to cooperate with the Government... in the disciplined and loyal execution of its orders.⁴³

COLONIAL SOCIOLOGY AND THE ASSEMBLAGE

In analytical terms the goal of the assemblage was to make manifest and compelling the sociology of India. The invitees were selected in relation to ideas which the British rulers had about the proper social order in India. Although emphasis was placed on the princes as feudal rulers and 'the natural aristocracy', the assemblage was also to include other categories of Indians, 'native gentlemen', 'landlords', 'editors and journalists' and 'representative men' of various kinds.

⁴² Lytton to Salisbury, 30 Oct. 1876, *ibid.*

⁴³ Lytton to Queen Victoria, 15 Nov. 1876, *ibid.*

In the 1870s a contradiction in the British theory of Indian sociology had become apparent. Some members of the British ruling group viewed India in historical terms as a feudal society consisting of lords, chiefs and peasants. Other British saw India as a changing society which was composed of communities. These communities could be large and somewhat amorphous, such as Hindu/Muslim/Sikh/Christian/Animist; they could be vaguely regional, such as Bengali or Gujarati; they could be castes such as Brahmans, Rajputs, Baniyas; or communities could be based on educational and occupational criteria, that is, westernized Indians. Those English rulers who saw India as made up of communities sought to control them through identifying the 'representative men', leaders who were thought to speak for, and who could shape responses from, their communities.

According to the feudal theory, there was a 'native aristocracy' in India. Lytton, in order to define and regulate this aristocracy, planned the establishment of a privy council and a College of Arms in Calcutta. The privy council was to be purely consultative, summoned by the viceroy 'who would keep the machinery completely under his own control'.⁴⁴ Lytton's intention was to arrange the constitution of the privy council 'to enable the Viceroy, whilst making parade of consulting native opinion to swamp the native members, and still secure the prestige of their presence and assent'.⁴⁵ The plan for a privy council for India quickly encountered constitutional problems and opposition from the council of India in London. A parliamentary act was necessary to establish such a body, and parliament was not sitting through the summer and autumn of 1876. The result, announced at the assemblage, was the naming of twenty 'Counsellors of the Empress', for the purpose of 'seeking from time to time, in matters of importance, the counsel and advice of Princes and Chiefs of India, and thus associating them with the Paramount Power'.⁴⁶

The College of Arms in Calcutta was to be the Indian equivalent of the British College of Arms in London, which would in effect establish and order a 'peerage' for India. Indian titles had been a vexing question for the British rulers of India since the early nineteenth century. There appeared to the English to be no fixed lineally ordered hierarchy or any common system of titles, such as

⁴⁴ Lytton to Salisbury, 30 July 1876, *ibid.*, p. 318.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁴⁶ *Gazette of India*, Extraordinary, 1 Jan. 1877, p. 11.

the British were familiar with in their own society. What were thought to be royal titles, such as Raja, Maharaja, Nawab or Bahadur, seemed to be used randomly by Indians, and were not attached to actual control of territory or office, or a hierarchical system of status distinctions.

Coordinated with the establishment of the College of Arms was a plan to present at the Imperial Assemblage ninety of the leading Indian princes and chiefs with large banners emblazoned with their coats of arms. These banners were shield-shaped in the European mode. The crests were also European, with the heraldic devices derived from the history of the particular royal house. The representations of 'history' on the crests included the mythic origins of the families, events connecting the houses to Mughal rule and, particularly, aspects of the past which tied the Indian princes and chiefs to English rule.

The banners were presented at the Imperial Assemblage to attending Indian princes. These presentations were substituted for the former Mughal practice of exchange of *nazar* (gold coins) and *peshkash* (precious possessions) for *khelats* (robes of honour) which marked previous British durbar practice. By eliminating what had been rituals of incorporation, the British completed the process of redefinition of the relationship between ruler and ruled begun in the middle of the eighteenth century. What had been a system of authority based upon the incorporation of subordinates to the person of the emperor now was an expression of linear hierarchic order in which the presentation of a silk banner made the Indian princes the legal subjects of Queen Victoria. In the British conception of the relationship, Indian princes became English knights and should be obedient and offer fealty to the empress.

Lytton was aware that some of the more experienced and hard-headed officials, who had served in India and were now members of the secretary of state for India's council, would see the presentation of the banners and the establishment of the College of Arms as 'trivial and silly'.⁴⁷ Lytton thought this response would be a great mistake. 'Politically speaking', Lytton wrote, 'the Indian peasantry is an inert mass. If it ever moves at all it will move in obedience, not to its British benefactors, but to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be'.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1876, I.O.L.R., E218/518/1, p. 149.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The other possible political representatives of 'native opinion' were what Lytton scornfully referred to as the 'Baboos', who had been taught to write 'semi-seditious articles in the Native Press, and who represent nothing but the social anomaly of own position'.⁴⁹ He felt that the Indian chiefs and princes were no mere noblesse, but 'a powerful aristocracy', whose complicity could be secured and efficiently utilized by the British in India. In addition to their power over the masses, the Indian aristocracy could be easily directed, if appealed to properly, as 'they are easily affected by sentiment and susceptible to the influence of symbols to which facts inadequately correspond'.⁵⁰ The British, Lytton continued, could gain 'their allegiance without giving up any of our power'.⁵¹ To buttress his argument, Lytton referred to the British position in Ireland and especially the recent experience with Ionian Greeks, who, not withstanding the 'good government' which British rule gave them, enthusiastically surrendered all these advantages for what he termed 'a bit of bunting with the Greek colours on it'. He added, to underline his argument about the Indian aristocracy, 'the further East you go, the greater becomes the importance of a bit of bunting'.⁵²

THE ENACTMENT OF THE COLONIAL SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA:
THE INVITEES TO THE IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGE

At centre stage, according to the designers of the assemblage, were the sixty-three ruling princes who appeared in Delhi. They were described by Lytton as ruling forty million people and holding territories larger than France, England and Italy.⁵³ The ruling chiefs and the three hundred 'titular chiefs and native gentlemen' who attended were seen as the 'flower of Indian Nobility'. Lord Lytton wrote:

Among them were the Prince of Arcot and the Princes of Tanjore from the Madras Presidency; the Maharajah Sir Jai Mangal Singh, and some of the principle Talukdars of Oudh; forty representatives of the most distinguished families of the North-Western Province, scions of the ex-Royal family of Delhi; descendants of the Sadozai of Cabul, and the Alora Chiefs of Sindh, Sikh Sardars

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ I.O.L.R., Political and Secret Letters from India, Feb. 1877, no. 24, para. 5.

from Amritsar and Lahore, Rajputs from the Kangra Hills; the semi-independent Chief of Amb, on the Hazara border, envoys from Chitral and Yassin, who attended in the train of the Maharaja of Jammu and Chasmere; Arabs from Peshawar, Pata chiefs from Kohat and Derajat; Biluch Tommduis from Dera Ghazi Khan; leading citizens from Bombay; Gond and Mahratha nobles from the Central Provinces; Rajputs from Ajmere and natives of Burma, Central India, Mysore and Baroda.⁵⁴

This litany of names, titles and places was for Lytton and the English the embodiment of the assemblage. The exotic names, the 'barbaric' titles and, above all, the elaborate variation in dress and appearance were constantly noted by English observers of the assemblage. The list of invitees included representatives of many of the dispossessed Indian royal families, such as the eldest son of the 'ex-King of Oudh', the grandson of Tipu Sultan, and members of the 'ex-Royal family of Delhi' (the House of the Mughal emperor). The presence of these descendants of the former great ruling houses of India imparted some of the flavour of a Roman triumph to the assemblage. The British conception of Indian history thereby was realized as a kind of 'living museum', with the descendants of both the enemies and the allies of the English displaying the period of the conquest of India. The 'rulers' and 'ex-rulers' were fossilized embodiments of a past which the British conquerors had created in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. All of this 'history' was brought together in Delhi, to announce, enhance and glorify British authority as represented by the person of their monarch.⁵⁵

The conjunction of past and present was proclaimed in the first official announcement of the Imperial Assemblage, when it was stated that among those to be invited would be 'those Princes, chiefest and nobles in whose persons the *ambiguity of the past* is associated with the prosperity of the present'.⁵⁶ Indians from all parts of the empire and even some Asians from beyond the boundaries were seen in their diversity as a statement of the need for British imperial rule. The Viceroy, standing for the empress, represented the only authority which could hold together the great diversity inherent in the 'colonial sociology'. The unity of empire was literally seen as

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ For a listing of the major invitees, see *ibid.*, encs. 1 and 2.

⁵⁶ *Gazette of India*, Extraordinary, 18 Aug. 1876.

that provided by the super-ordinate and heaven-blessed British rulers of India. The diversity was mentioned frequently in the speeches which were a feature of the ten days of assemblage activities. At the state Banquet before the assemblage, with a mixed audience of Indians in their 'native costumes' and British in their frock coats and uniforms, Lytton proclaimed that if one wanted to know the meaning of the imperial title, all they had to do was 'to look around' and see an empire 'multitudinous in its traditions, as well as in its inhabitants, almost infinite in the variety of races which populate it, and of the creeds which have shaped their character'.⁵⁷

The colonial sociology of India was by no means fixed and rigidly ranked and ordered. The classificatory system was based on multiple criteria, which varied through time and from region to region of India. At the base of the classification were two kinds of criteria, one which the English rulers believed was 'natural', such as caste, race and religion, and the other, social criteria which could include achievement, education – both western and Indian, the financing of works of public utility, acts of loyalty performed on behalf of their English rulers and the family history seen as descent and genealogy. What the English thought of as the 'natural aristocracy' of India were at times contrasted with the category of 'native gentlemen' whose status was based on their actions (social criteria) rather than their descent (natural criteria).

Most of the twenty-two Indians who were invited by the Bengal government as 'native gentlemen' were large landholders, controlling extensive estates, such as Hatwa, Darbangha and Dumroan in Bihar, or men such as Jai Mangal Singh of Monghyr who had performed loyal service during the Santhal 'Rebellion' and the Sepoy 'Mutiny'.⁵⁸

The Madras contingent of 'nobles and native gentlemen' was led by descendants of two deposed rulers: the prince of Arcot and the daughter of the last Maharaja of Tanjore. In addition to large landholders of Madras presidency, the Indian members of the Madras legislative council and two Indian lower civil servants were among the official guests. The Bombay contingent of 'nobles and native gentlemen' was the most diverse, and was apparently selected

⁵⁷ I.O.L.R., Political and Secret Letters from India, Feb. 1877, no. 24, enc. 11, 'Speech of Lord Lytton at State Banquet'.

⁵⁸ I.O.L.R., Political and Secret Letters from India, Jan. and Feb. 1877, no. 24, enc. 2.

for representative qualities. The city of Bombay sent two Parsis, one of whom, Sir Jamesetji Jajeebhoy, was the only Indian at the time to have an hereditary English knighthood, and had been declared by the English government head of the Bombay Parsi community. In addition, there was a leading merchant, thought to be the 'representative member of the Mahommedan community', a government pleader from the Bombay high court, and another successful lawyer. In terms of the 'communities' of cosmopolitan Bombay, there were two Parsis, two Marathas, a Gujarati and a Muslim. From the rest of the presidency came several large landholders, a judge of small claims court, a deputy collector, a professor of mathematics from the Deccan college, and the oriental translator to the Bombay government.⁵⁹

LOGISTICS AND THE PHYSICAL PLANNING: THE CAMPS, THE AMPHITHEATRE AND DECORATIVE MOTIFS

By the end of September 1876 guest lists were drawn up and official invitations were sent. Planning now shifted to the actual physical arrangements for the assemblage, the location and preparation of the sites of the camps, which were to provide living accommodation for over 84,000 people, who were to converge on Delhi late in December. The camps were spread in a semi-circle of five miles, taking the Delhi railway station as the starting point. Preparation of the site required the clearing of one hundred villages, whose lands were rented and whose cultivators were prevented from planting their winter crops. Considerable work was involved in developing a road network, water supplies, establishing several bazaars and proper sanitary facilities. As always with a large gathering of Indians in the nineteenth century, the British were greatly concerned about the possibility of an epidemic breaking out, and extensive medical precautions were taken. Labour had to be recruited, much of which came from the peasants in the villages which were dislocated by the utilization of their fields for the camps. Actual preparation for the building of the camp sites began on 15 October, with Major General Roberts in overall charge.

The Indian rulers who were invited were instructed to bring their tents and equipage; railway schedules had to be worked out to transport the thousands of retainers and animals that accompanied

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the rulers. Strict limits were put on the number of followers who could accompany their masters. The number of retainers allowed to each chief was based on their gun salutes, with those honoured by seventeen and above being allowed five hundred; those with fifteen allowed four hundred; eleven, three hundred; nine, two hundred and those 'feudatories' without salutes were allowed one hundred.⁶⁰ The planners estimated that the Indian rulers and their retainers would total 25,600, but, after the event, it was estimated that there were 50,741 Indians in their own camps, 9,741 Indians in the imperial camps, as clerks, servants and followers, and another 6,438 in the 'miscellaneous camps', such as those of the police, post and telegraph, the imperial bazaar, and visitors.⁶¹ Excluding the camps of the troops – approximately fourteen thousand in number – attending the assemblage, there were eight thousand tents erected in and around Delhi to house the guests. Overall, there were at least eighty-four thousand people attending the assemblage, of whom 1,169 were Europeans.

The central imperial camp stretched for a mile and a half, by half a mile wide, on the flats abutting the north-eastern side of the Delhi ridge and covered the grounds of the pre-Mutiny military cantonment. The viceroy's canvas camp complex faced the main road, so that there would be easy access for the great numbers of visitors, European and Indian, whom he would receive in audience. Wheeler, the official historian of the assemblage, described the viceroy's tents as 'canvas houses' and 'the pavilion' – the enormous Durbar tent – as 'a Palace'.⁶² In this tent the viceroy held court, sitting on the viceregal chair on a raised platform, at the back of which was hung a painting of a stern visaged, black attired Queen Victoria, surveying the proceedings. In front of him stretched the huge viceregal rug, with the coat of arms of the imperial Indian government. Chairs were arranged on the rug in a rough semi-circle for members of his staff, and the important retainers of the chief who were to come to pay homage to the newly proclaimed Empress and her viceroy. In ranks around the wall of the viceregal tent stood mare and yak tail whisk bearers, dressed in the livery of the viceregal household, and down

⁶⁰ I.O.L.R., Imperial Assemblage Proceedings 8, 15 Sept. 1876, Temple Papers, Euro. MSS. F86/166.

⁶¹ Figures are given in I.O.L.R., Political and Secret Letters from India, 6 Aug. 1877, no. 140, enc. 8.

⁶² J. Talboys Wheeler, *The History of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi* (London, 1877), p. 47.

the sides of the tent behind the chairs were European and Indian troopers. The whole scene was brilliantly lit by gas lamps.

Camped immediately to the right of the viceroy was the governor of Bombay, and to his left the governor of Madras; there then followed the camps of the lieutenant governors. At the south-east end of the imperial camp, adjoining those of the viceroy and the governor of Madras, were the camps of the commander-in-chief of the Indian army and the commanders of the Madras and Bombay armies. These had their own entrances and were almost as large as the camps of the viceroy. At the back of the camps of the viceroy, the governors and lieutenant governors were those of the chief commissioners, the resident of Hyderabad and the agents to the governor general for Central India, Baroda and Rajputana. Access to these latter was by internal roads as they did not face outwards on to the plains.

Scattered around the plains from a distance of one to five miles were the camps of the Indians, organized regionally. On the eastern side of the ridge, on the flood plain of the Jumna river and closest to the imperial camp, were those of the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Gaekwar of Baroda and the Maharajah of Mysore. These were the 'Special Native Camps'. To the front of the imperial camp were those of the Central Indian chiefs, with the camp of Maharajah Sindhia of Gwalior closest to that of the viceroy. Two and a half miles to the south were the camps of the chiefs of Bombay Northwest Province and the Central Province. Strung along the west and the south walls of the city of Delhi were the Punjab chiefs, with pride of place being given to the Maharajah of Kashmir, who, at a distance of two miles, was the closest to the imperial camp. The Rajputana chiefs were camped five miles along the Gurgoan Road, due south of the imperial camp. Five and a half miles along the Kootub Road were the camps of the Oudh Talukdars. The Bengal and the Madras nobles were within a mile of the main camp.

There was a marked contrast between the layouts of the European and the Indian camps. The European camps were well ordered, with straight streets and neat rows of tents on each side. Grass and flowers were laid out to impart the touch of England which the British carried with them all over India. The plants were supplied by the Botanical Gardens at Saharanpur and Delhi. In the Indian camps, spaces were provided for each ruler who was then left to arrange his camp in his own fashion. To the European eye, the Indian camps were cluttered and disorganized, with cooking fires seemingly placed

at random, and with a jumble of people, animals and carts impeding easy movement. Nonetheless, most European observers commented on how vibrant and colourful the Indian camps were.⁶³

The contrast between the imperial camp and the other camps was not lost on some of the Indians. Sir Dinkar Rao, who was Sindhia's *dewan* (prime minister), commented to one of Lytton's aides:

If any man would understand why it is that the English are, and must necessarily remain the master of India he need only go up to Flagstaff Tower [highest point overlooking the camps] and look down upon this marvellous camp. Let him notice the method, the order, the cleanliness, the discipline, the perfection of the whole organization and he will recognize at once the epitome of every title to command and govern which one race can possess over others.⁶⁴

There is much hyperbole, and perhaps some self interest, in Sir Dinkar Rao's statement; however, it effectively points to one of the main things which Lytton and his associates wanted to accomplish through the assemblage, which was to represent the nature of British rule as they conceived it, and this was what the camp represented in their own ruling theory: order and discipline, which was in their ideology part of the whole system of colonial control.

THE AMPHITHEATRE AND PRECEDENCE

From the inception of the planning, the question of the seating arrangements for the Indian rulers was seen as the most crucial single question on which the success of the Imperial Assemblage would rest. As we have seen, the problems of precedence which, in the opinion of experts like Daly, bedevilled a *darbar* had to be avoided. Its terminological transformation into an assemblage allowed Lytton to do this. He insisted that the assemblage would not resemble a *darbar* 'in its arrangements or ceremonies, of any of the meetings customarily so called',⁶⁵ as the actual ritual to proclaim the new title would not be 'under canvas' but in 'the open plain thereby freeing it from questions of precedence, exchange of presents and other impedimenta of an ordinary *darbar*'.⁶⁶ The planners of the assemblage hit

⁶³ Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Lady Betty Balfour, *The History of Lord Lytton's Administration, 1876-1880* (London, 1899), p. 123.

⁶⁵ Lytton, 'Memorandum', I.O.L.R., Imperial Assemblage Proceedings 8, 15 Sept. 1876, Temple Papers, Euro. MSS. F86/166, para. 16.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

upon a unique solution to the seating arrangements for the Imperial Assemblage. It was decided that the princes would be seated in a semi-circular grandstand, by their regional groupings from north to south. The viceroy would be seated on a dais, on his viceregal chair, and with only members of his immediate staff and family group around him. The dais was placed in such a fashion that all the Indians, at least in the first row, would be equidistant from the person of the viceroy. Hence none could claim to have superiority over their fellow chiefs. The grandstand was to be divided by province or agency, with the exception of the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maharaja of Mysore, who would be in a special section in the centre of the seats. Each of the major geographic sections had a separate entrance, and as the precedence for each of the geographic units was fairly well worked out, there wouldn't arise, the planners thought, the question of cross-regional precedence. There was a separate road providing access to the entrances, and timing of the entries prescribed. European officials were to sit intermixed amongst the Indians, for example the lieutenant governor of Punjab with the Punjab princes and notables, the agent general for Rajputana and the various residents amongst the chiefs from that region. Lytton wrote

the Chiefs do not so much object to be seated in groups of their own nationalities and province, as to be mixed up and classified with those of other provinces, as in a *Darbar*. Each chief would proceed from his camp to the Dais assigned to him in a separate elephant procession, in time to receive the Viceroy.⁶⁷

In addition to the pavilion for the seating of the *grandees*, two large grandstands were erected obliquely facing it for retainers and other visitors. Large numbers of soldiers from the Indian army and princes' armies stood in semi-circular ranks facing the pavilion, as did servants and other Indians. Interspersed with the onlookers were large numbers of elephants and horses with their grooms and *mahouts* (riders).

To emphasize the uniqueness of the event the planners developed an overall design motif which could be termed 'Victorian Feudal'. Lockridge Kipling, Rudyard Kipling's father and director of the Lahore Art School, a minor pre-Raphaelite and to use his own

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 18; See also Thornton, *op. cit.*, app. to ch. 21, 'Note on the Arrangement of the Imperial Assemblage'.

description, a 'monumental ceramicist', was in overall charge of the designing of the uniforms and decorations for the assemblage.

A large dais for the viceroy was built facing the pavilion in the shape of a hexagon, each side being 40 feet long for a total of 220 feet around; its masonry base was 10 feet high. There was a broad flight of stairs leading to the platform on which was placed the viceregal throne. Over the dais was a large canopy. The shafts holding the canopy were festooned with laurel wreaths, imperial crowns, gargoyle-like eagles, banners displaying the Cross of St George and the Union Jack. There was an embroidered frieze hanging from the canopy displaying the Rose, Shamrock and Thistle with the Lotus of India. Also hanging from the shafts supporting the canopy were shields with the Irish Harp, the Lion Rampant of Scotland and the Three Lions of England. The 800 foot semi-circular pavilion in which the chiefs and high government officials were seated was decorated with fleurs-de-lis and gilded lances, the supporters of the canvas, displaying the imperial crown. Along the back posts were mounted the large silken banners with the coats of arms of the princes and chiefs. Not all observers of the scene were impressed. Val Prinsep, a painter who had been commissioned to paint a picture of the scene, which was to be a collective present from the princes to their new empress, was aghast by what was thought to be a display of bad taste. On seeing the site he wrote:

Oh Horror! What have I to paint? A kind of thing that out does the Crystal Palace in hideosity... [it] is all iron, gold, red, blue and white... The Viceroy's dais is a kind of scarlet temple 80 feet high. Never was such a brummagem ornament, or more atrocious taste.⁶⁸

He continued:

They have been heaping ornament on ornament, colour on colour. [The viceregal dais] is like the top of a twelfth cake. They have stuck pieces of needlework into stone panels and tin shields and battle axes all over the place. The size [of the whole collection of structures] gives it a vast appearance like a gigantic circus and the decorations are in keeping.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Val C. Prinsep, *Imperial India: An Artist's Journal* (London, 1879), p. 20.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

THE IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGE

On 23 December, all was in readiness for the arrival of the central figure of the Imperial Assemblage, the viceroy, Lord Lytton. The eighty-four thousand Indians and Europeans had occupied their far-flung camps, the roads were laid out and the site was complete. The activities of the assemblage were to last for two weeks; the purpose being to mark Queen Victoria's accession to her imperial title as 'Kaiser-i-Hind'. The title was suggested by G. W. Leitner, professor of Oriental Languages and principal of the Government College in Lahore. Leitner was a Hungarian by birth and began his career as an Orientalist, linguist and interpreter with the English army during the Crimean War. He was educated at Constantinople, Malta, King's College, London, obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Fribourg and was a lecturer in Arabic and Turkish, professor of Arabic and Muhammadan Law at King's College, London before going to Lahore in 1864.⁷⁰ Leitner argued that the term 'Kaiser' was well known to the natives of India, having been used by Muhammadan writers in relation to the Roman Caesar, and therefore the ruler of the Byzantine empire should be known as 'Kaiser-i-Rum'. In the present circumstance of the British ruler in India it was appropriate, Leitner thought, as it neatly combined the Roman 'Caesar', German 'Kaiser' and Russian 'Czar' imperial titles. In the Indian context it would be unique, and would not run the risk of being mispronounced by Indians as would the title empress, nor would it associate British rule with such exhausted titles as 'Shah', 'Padishah' or 'Sultan'. It avoided the overt association of the title with either Hindu or Muslim titles.⁷¹

Lord Lytton had suggested to Lord Salisbury in late July 1876, on either his or Burne's reading of Leitner's pamphlet, that 'Kaiser-i-Hind', was 'thoroughly familiar to the Oriental mind', and 'widely recognized' in India and Central Asia as 'the symbol of Imperial power'. In addition, the title was the same in Sanskrit and Arabic, 'sonorous' and not 'hackneyed or monopolized by any Crown since the Roman Caesars'. Lytton left it to Salisbury to make the final decision on the question of the queen's Indian title.⁷² Salisbury agreed

⁷⁰ G. W. Leitner, *Kaiser-i-Hind: The Only Appropriate Translation of the Title of the Empress of India* (Lahore, 1876), pp. 11-12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷² Lytton to Salisbury, 30 July 1876, I.O.L.R., E218/515, pp. 321-2.

to the use of Kaiser-i-Hind and it was duly announced officially in *The Times* of 7 October 1876. The title drew criticism as being obscure from the distinguished Orientalist R. C. Caldwell, and Mir Aulad Ali, professor of Arabic and Urdu at Trinity College, Dublin, thought it was 'preposterous' as it formed 'the picture of a European lady, attired partly in the Arab, partly in the Persian garment peculiar to men, and wearing upon her head an Indian turban'.⁷³

Lytton's arrival in the Delhi railway station was the official commencement of the assemblage. He descended with his wife and two young daughters and his immediate official party from the railway car, gave a brief speech of welcome to assembled Indian rulers and high government officials, briskly shook hands with some of those assembled, and then moved off to mount a train of waiting elephants.

Lord and Lady Lytton rode in a silver houdah, created for the Prince of Wales's visit the year before, mounted on the back of what was purported to be the largest elephant in India, owned by the Rajah of Banaras.

The procession, led by troops of cavalry, moved through the city of Delhi to the Red Fort, circled around the Jama Masjid and then proceeded towards the north-west to the camps on the ridge. The procession route was lined by Indian army soldiers, Indian and British, interspersed between whom were contingents from the princely state armies, outfitted in their 'medieval' armour and bearing Indian weapons. Lytton commented that these native soldiers present 'a most striking and peculiar appearance... a vivid and varied display of strange arms, strange uniforms, and strange figures'.⁷⁴

The procession took three hours to move through the city to the camps. As the viceroy, his party and other British officials passed, some of the retainers of the Indian princes fell in behind the official party. However, none of the attending princes or Indian notables rode in the procession. As was to be their role throughout, they were there as recipients of largesse and honour given them by their empress, and to be spectators to the British acting on her behalf as the Indian monarch.

⁷³ *Athenaeum*, no. 2559 (11 Nov. 1876), pp. 624-5; no. 2561 (25 Nov. 1876), pp. 688-9.

⁷⁴ Lytton to Queen Victoria, I.O.L.R., Letters Despatched to the Queen, 12 Dec. 1876 to 1 Jan. 1877, E218/515/2.

The week between Lord Lytton's arrival and grand entry and the day of the assembly held for the reading of the actual proclamation of Victoria's ascension to the imperial throne on 1 January 1877, was taken up with audiences given by Lytton to leading chiefs, various receptions and dinners for distinguished visitors and participants. In all Lytton gave 120 audiences in his time in Delhi, including return visits to many of the princes, and received several delegations offering petitions and loyal addresses for the new empress.⁷⁵

The most important of these meetings were the ones held for the princes in the viceroy's reception tent. A prince would appear at an appointed time accompanied by some of his retinue. On entry, depending on his precise status, he would be greeted by the viceroy, who would then present him with 'his' coat of arms embroidered and fixed on a large silken standard. The armorial bearings of the Indian rulers were designed by Robert Taylor, a Bengal civil servant and amateur heraldist. Taylor had first designed coats of arms for Indian rulers on the occasions of the visits of the Duke of Edinburgh in 1869 and the Prince of Wales in 1876. Lord Lytton now decided that in addition to those which Taylor had already created, another eighty were to be created.

The devices which Taylor created related to his conception of the mythic origins of the various ruling houses, their identification with particular gods or goddesses, events in their history, topographic features of their territories, or they incorporated some ancestral emblem associated with a ruling house or even a group of houses. Most of the arms of the Rajputs bore the sun to symbolize their descent from Rama. The Sikh chiefs of the Punjab all had a boar on their banners. The background colour of the device could also be used to denote regional groups of chiefs, some had particular trees or plants which had sacred significance for a particular house. Even events of the Mutiny were represented if they indicated loyalty to the British. At times Taylor's imagination seemed to run out. Kashmir, a buffer state created by the British in 1854 by the installation of a Maharaja over territories held previously by a number of other rulers, had to be satisfied by three wavy lines representing the three ranges of the Himalayas, and three roses to represent the beauty of the Vale of Kashmir. The armorial bearings were embroidered on large silk standards, 5 ft by 5 ft, in the Roman style; Indian banners, which are silk streamers, were not thought to be the right shape to

⁷⁵ Thornton, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

bear the arms of the new feudal nobility.⁷⁶ In addition to the gift of the banner and the coat of arms, the most important of the Indian rulers were presented with a large gold medallion which was worn from a ribbon around their necks. Lesser chiefs received silver medallions as did hundreds of lower civil servants and soldiers, Indian and British.

Not all went smoothly with the presentation of the banners and medallions; the banners proved to be very awkward and hard to handle because of the weight of the brass poles and the fixtures on them, and it wasn't clear to the Indians what should be done with them. It was thought they might be used in processions by fixing them to the backs of elephants. One British Army officer, who was presenting the silver medallions to several of his Indian troopers in Urdu, was not up to the task of conveying their significance to his men. He addressed his troops as follows 'Suwars [pigs – he meant *sowar*, the Urdu word for trooper], your Empress has sent you a *billi* [cats – he meant *billa*, a medallion] for you to wear around your necks'.⁷⁷ The presentations which were from the empress were meant to replace the giving of *khelats* and obviate the presentation of *nazar*, the gold coins. It is significant that the major present was a representation of the British version of the Indian rulers' pastas as represented in their coats of arms.

At noon on 1 January 1877, all was in readiness for the entry of the viceroy into the amphitheatre. The princes and other notables were all seated in their sections, the spectators' grandstand filled, and thousands of Indian and European troops were drawn up in ranks. The viceroy and his small party, including his wife, rode into the amphitheatre to the 'March from Tannhäuser'. As they got down from the carriage six trumpeters, attired in medieval costume, blew a fanfare. The viceroy then mounted to his throne to the strains of the National Anthem. The chief herald, described as the tallest English officer in the Indian army, read the queen's proclamation which announced that henceforth there would be the addition of 'Empress of India' to her Royal Styles and Titles.

A translation of the proclamation of the new title was read in Urdu by T. H. Thornton, the foreign secretary of the government of India.

⁷⁶ R. Taylor, *The Princely Armory Being a Display for the Arms of the Ruling Chiefs of India after their Banners as Prepared for the Imperial Assemblage held at Delhi on the First Day of January, 1877*, I.O.L.R. typescript; and *Pioneer Mail*, 4 Nov. 1904 (clipping bound with Taylor, *Princely Armory* in I.O.L.R.).

⁷⁷ Burne, *Memories*, pp. 42–3.

Then a salute of 101 salvos was fired and the assembled troops fired *feux-de-joie*. The noise of the cannon and rifle fire stampeded the assembled elephants and horses; a number of bystanders were killed and injured, and a large cloud of dust was raised which hung over the rest of the proceedings.

Lytton made a speech in which, as was common in the speeches of viceroys on major occasions, he stressed the fulfilment of their empress's promise in her proclamation of 1 November 1858 of the achievement of a 'progressive prosperity' combined with the undisturbed enjoyment, on the part of the princes and peoples of India, 'of their hereditary honours', and the protection 'of their lawful interests'.

The historic basis of British authority in India was created by 'Providence' which had called upon the crown 'to replace and improve upon the rule of good and great Sovereigns', but whose successors failed

to secure the internal peace of their dominions. Strife became chronic and anarchy constantly recurrent. The weak were the prey of the strong, and the strong the victims of their own passions. The rule of the successors of the House of Tamerlane, Lytton continued, 'had ceased to be conducive of the progress of the East'. Now, under British rule, all 'creeds and races' were protected and guided by 'the strong hand of Imperial power' which had led to rapid advance and 'increasing prosperity'.

Lytton then referred to the proper codes of conduct for the constituent components of the empire. He first referred to 'the British Administrators and Faithful Officers of the Crown', who were thanked in the name of the empress for their 'great toil for the good of the Empire', and their 'persevering energy, public virtue, and self devotion, unsurpassed in history'. In particular, 'the district officers' were singled out for their patient intelligence and courage on which the efficient operation of the whole system of administration was dependent. All the members of the civil and military services were gratefully recognized by their queen for their capacity to 'uphold the high character of your race, and to carry out the benign precepts of your religion'. Lytton told them that they were 'conferring on all the other creeds and races in this country the inestimable benefits of good government'. The non-official European community were complimented for the benefits which India had received 'from their enterprise, industry, social energy and civic virtue'.

The princes and chiefs of the empire were thanked by the viceroy on behalf of their empress for their loyalty and their past willingness to assist her government 'if attacked or menaced', and it was to 'unite the British Crown and its feudatories and allies that Her Majesty had been graciously pleased to assume the Imperial title'.

The 'native subjects of the Empress of India' were told by their viceroy that 'the permanent interests of this Empire demand the supreme supervision and direction of their administration by English officers' who must 'continue to form the most important practical channel through which the arts, the sciences and the culture of the West... may freely flow to the East'. This assertion of English superiority notwithstanding, there was a place for the 'natives of India' to share in the administration 'of the country you inhabit'. However, appointment to the higher public service should not only go to those with 'intellectual qualifications' but must also include those who are 'natural leaders', 'by birth, rank and hereditary influence', that is, the feudal aristocracy, which was being 'created' at the assemblage.

The viceroy concluded his speech by reading a telegraphic message from 'The Queen, your Empress' who assured all assembled of her affection. 'Our rule', she cabled, was based on the great principles of liberty, equity, and justice, 'which would promote their happiness' and add to their 'prosperity and advance their welfare'.⁷⁸

The conclusion of the viceroy's speech was greeted by loud cheering, and when this stopped, the Maharaja Scindia rose and addressed the queen in Urdu and said:

Shah in Shah, Padshah, May God bless you. The Princes of India bless you and pray that your *hukumat* [the power to give absolute orders which must be obeyed, sovereignty] may remain steadfast forever.⁷⁹

Scindia was followed by other rulers expressing their thanks and pledging their loyalty. Scindia's statement, which appears to have been unsolicited, his failure to address the empress with the proper title 'Kaiser-i-Hind' notwithstanding, was taken by Lytton as the sign of the fulfilment of the intention of the assemblage.

The activities of the assemblage continued for another four days. These included a rifle match, the inauguration of a Royal Cup Race, won fittingly by one of the princes' horses, several more dinners and

⁷⁸ *Gazette of India*, Extraordinary, 1 Jan. 1877, pp. 3-7.

⁷⁹ Thornton, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

receptions, and the presentation of loyal addresses and petitions by various regional and civic bodies. There was also an extensive exhibition organized of Indian arts and crafts. The proceedings were concluded with a march by the imperial troops, followed by contingents from the armies of the princes. Long lists of new honours were announced, some princes had their gun salutes enhanced and twelve Europeans and eight Indians were awarded the title of 'Counsellor of the Empress'. Thirty-nine new members of the Star were created to mark the occasion, and large numbers of new Indian title-holders were created. Thousands of prisoners were released or had their sentence reduced, and monetary rewards were given to members of the armed forces. On the day of the proclamation ceremonies were held all over India to mark the occasion. In all, over three hundred such meetings were held in presidency capitals, in all civil and military stations down to local tahsil headquarters. In the towns, the plans for the occasion were usually drawn up by local Indian officials, and included *darbars*, the offering of poems and odes in Sanskrit and other languages, parades of school children and their being treated to sweets, feeding of the poor, distribution of clothes to the needy, usually winding up with a fireworks display in the evening.

CONCLUSION

Historians have paid little attention to the assemblage of 1877; at best it is treated as a kind of folly, a great *tamasha*, or show, but which had little practical consequence. It has been noted in histories of Indian nationalism as the occasion when, for the first time, early nationalist leaders and journalists from all over India were gathered in the same place at the same time, but is passed over as mere window-dressing to mask imperial realities. It is also taken as an example of the callousness on the part of imperial rulers who spent large sums of public money at a time of famine.

At the time it was planned and immediately afterwards, the assemblage received considerable criticism in the Indian-language press as well as in the English papers. It was seen by many, as were Ellenborough's attempts at imperial glorification, as being somehow or other un-English, and the expression of the wild imaginations of Disraeli and Lytton.

Yet the assemblage kept being referred to subsequently by Indians

and Europeans as a kind of marker, a before and after event. It became the standard by which public ceremony was measured. It may be said the event itself recurred twice – in 1903 when Lord Curzon organized an imperial durbar in Delhi to proclaim Edward VII emperor of India on the exact location where his mother's imperial title was proclaimed, and when in 1911, also on the same spot, George V made an appearance to crown himself emperor of India. Curzon, a man of enormous energy, intelligence and almost megalomaniacal belief in his own power to rule India, spent almost six months planning 'his' durbar, and was always at pains to follow the forms which Lytton had laid down. When he did deviate from these he felt constrained to offer detailed and extensive explanations for his changes and additions. If anything, Curzon wanted the Imperial Durbar to be more 'Indian' than the assemblage, hence the design motif was 'Indo-Saracenic', rather than 'Victorian Feudal'. He also wanted more active participation in the event itself on the part of the princes, who were to offer direct acts of homage. This kind of participation became the centre piece of the 1911 Imperial Durbar, when many of the leading princes, during the durbar itself, individually kneeled before their emperor, in what was termed 'the homage pavilion', which replaced the dais of the viceroy as the centre piece of the amphitheatre.

What was the significance or consequence not only of the Imperial Assemblage and the Imperial Durbars, but also the ritual idiom created to express, make manifest and compelling the British construction of their authority over India? Did Lytton and his successors accomplish their goals? On one level they did not, as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are independent nations today. The idea of the permanence of imperial rule is a half-forgotten curiosity, even to historians who see the events of the period of 1877 to 1947 as a fight over loaves and fishes, or the culmination of the Indian peoples' anti-imperial struggle.

I think, however, there is another way of looking at the question of success or failure, of the intentions of Lytton and his associates and the codification of the ritual idiom. I have focused almost exclusively on the British construction of authority and its representations. When Indians, particularly in the first years of their national movement, came to develop a public political idiom of their own, through their own organizations, what idiom did they use? I would suggest that in effect they used the same idiom that their British rulers

employed. The early meetings of the All India Congress Committees were much like durbars, with processions and the centrality of leading figures and their speeches, which became the vehicle through which they tried to participate in the achievement of the values of 'progressive government' and the obtainment of the happiness and welfare of the Indian peoples. The British idiom was effective in that it set the terms of discourse of the nationalist movement in its beginning phases. In effect, the early nationalists were claiming that they were more loyal to the true goals of the Indian empire than were their English rulers.

The First Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920–1 is taken as marking the final establishment of Gandhi as the crucial figure in the nationalist struggle. It was the first time a new idiom was tried out in the form of non-cooperation and passive resistance. At base this was the first full-fledged and widespread rejection of British authority in India. The movement began with Gandhi's announcement that Indians should return all honours and emblems granted by the imperial government. In doing this Gandhi attacked not the institutions of government, but the capacity of that government to make meaningful and binding its authority through the creation of honours.

Most of Gandhi's contributions to the nationalist movement were concerned with the creation and representation of new codes of conduct based on a radically different theory of authority. These were represented in a series of markings. No longer were Indians to wear either western clothes or the 'native' costumes decreed by their imperial rulers, but home-spun simple peasant dress. The communal prayer meeting, not the durbar-like atmosphere of the political rallies, was where his message was expounded. The Indian pilgrimage was adapted to politics in the form of Gandhi's marches, and the idea of the *paidatra* (the walking of the politician amongst the people) is still part of the political rituals of India.

Yet, the British idiom did not die easily or quickly, and it may still be alive in various forms. The end of the empire was marked where it might be said to have begun, in 1857, with the desacralization of the Mughal's palace, with English officers drinking wine and eating pork. The moment of transfer of authority from the viceroy to the new prime minister of an independent India was marked at the Red Fort by the lowering of the Union Jack at midnight, 14 August 1947, before a huge crowd of jubilant Indians.