

# The Early Modern Colonial State in Asia

Private Agency and Family Networks in  
the English East India Company

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# Abstract

This thesis studies the formation of the early modern colonial state in Asia. Through an exploration of the English East India Company, it examines the dynamics which shaped political authority, colonial governance and the performance of state power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Specifically, the following research argues that a process of political decentralisation took place within the Company. This was driven by the pursuit of 'private interests' on behalf of the Company's servants in Asia, who, as a result neglected, resisted or subverted the 'public interests' of their masters in London. Key to this reconfiguration of power were the family networks established by Company servants between Europe and Asia, and across Asia itself in this period. As constructs of exchange, circulation and movement, family networks allowed Company servants to exercise considerable political agency, distinct from metropolitan authorities. In so doing, they transformed the political landscape around them, laying the foundations of the early modern colonial state through a process of private state formation from the turn of the eighteenth century onwards.

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# Introduction

## A Confederacy of Little Platoons

In his *Reflections on the French Revolution* published in 1790, the British statesman, political theorist and philosopher Edmund Burke wrote that ‘To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.’<sup>1</sup> Burke was not merely concerned with expressions of public or national devotion or fealty. Rather, he was commenting on the crucial role played by non-state actors in the larger processes of state formation. When Burke spoke at the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, the English East India Company’s first governor-general of India between 1772 and 1785, he further articulated his idea of ‘the little platoon’. He used the intensely public trial to attack what he perceived to have been Hastings’ disenfranchisement of those ‘little platoons’ which had for so long comprised the Company’s political foundations in Asia. Burke argued that to remove the individual, the personal and the intimate from colonial governance and replace them with the disinterested, the impersonal and the autocratic, as Hastings allegedly had done during his governor-generalship, was to see ‘Nature violated in its strongest principles.’<sup>2</sup> In other words, by subverting the private with the public and replacing traditional forms of governance with modern, bureaucratic ones, Hastings had brought ruin upon the Company, evidenced in the political and financial troubles which had engulfed it during his government.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke, ed., *The Works of Edmund Burke* (London, 1887, 12 vols.), vol. 1, p. 534.

<sup>2</sup> Burke, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 422-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

This thesis is an exploration of the early modern colonial state in Asia before the time of Hastings, Burke and the theatrical politics of the English East India Company which played out before London high-society in the later eighteenth century. It aims to uncover a more traditional process of state formation that was subtly but dynamically underway far beyond the courts of the Company's metropolitan headquarters in East India House and the impeachment trials of the House of Commons in London in which the Company's affairs in Asia were subject to the increasingly long arm of parliamentary accountability and the encroaching centralisation of the nation-state. It is a study of the agency of colonial actors on the so-called 'peripheries' of empire in the early modern period. It explores the process through which these actors established expansive social networks in an effort to integrate themselves into a wider global community between c. 1650-1750, and the decentralising dynamic this autonomous agency had upon the emergence of the colonial state in Asia. Colonial actors, in this case the Company's servants, exercised powerful political agency in their own right, laying the foundations of a colonial state which was less Hastings's centralised fiscal-military bureaucracy and more Burke's traditional groupings of 'little platoons'.

By making the distinction, in Burke's words, between 'the body of the Company and the bodies of the Company', this thesis seeks to make three important contributions to the study of the English East India Company and the formation of the early modern colonial state more widely. First, by demonstrating the autonomy of colonial actors from so-called 'centres' and the decentralisation of political authority and decision-making through their agency, it argues that explorations of global networks are more useful in explaining the development of early modern empires and the emergence of colonial polities than traditional centre-periphery models; second, it demonstrates that the foundations of the colonial state were laid gradually, in a far more contested manner

and over a much earlier period than the traditionally accepted period of the later eighteenth century; finally, it situates the colonial family at the heart of colonial state formation through an exploration of the role of the kinship networks they established across Asia by the early eighteenth century in transforming the political landscape around them.

In doing so, this thesis follows Burke's perception of the early modern state which rested on more traditional political models comprised of smaller groups or bodies of political, social and economic authority. For Burke, politics required a regime or system 'other than the hierarchical bureaucratic government' which he believed had been built in Asia by men such as Hastings by the later eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Rather, 'local associations and groupings' had to exercise political power free of larger bureaucratic structures built by a centralising polity.<sup>5</sup> But under Hastings, these 'little platoons' were gradually excluded from exercising power and replaced with an army of 'sophisters, economists, and calculators'.<sup>6</sup> Burke's arguments in favour of the role of smaller, independent groups and associations in state and society stemmed in part from his reaction to the French Revolution in which Burke believed a more traditional age was being violently swept away.<sup>7</sup> But his belief that these smaller groups were an essential component of political society, especially in Asia, was also reflective of the wider early modern political landscape in which non-state or non-nation-state actors could shape and determine the state itself. As Philip J. Stern has recently argued, the early modern British state was comprised of 'an interlocking matrix of commonwealths, churches, associations, communities, office-holders, agencies, and families', all of

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<sup>4</sup> Geraint Parry, 'Enlightened Government and Its Critics in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1963), pp. 189.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Burke, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> See Julie Murray, 'Company Rules: Burke, Hastings, and the Specter of the Modern Liberal State', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Fall, 2007), pp. 58.

whom acted as ‘body politics’ in their own right, exercising their own forms of political authority.<sup>8</sup> This was particularly so in Asia, where the servants of the English East India Company were stationed thousands of miles from sites of central or metropolitan oversight.

It may seem paradoxical that Burke sought at once to argue against the actions of the East India Company at the same time as he championed the rights of its colonial agents as powerful components of that very Company. But Burke was always careful to distinguish between ‘the body of the Company and the bodies of the Company’.<sup>9</sup> He did this predominantly by describing the Company as ‘a service of confederacy’, made up of many smaller groups, interests and associations distinct from the larger, or upper, frameworks of corporate ‘corruption’ and ‘greed’ that supposedly sat atop the Company.<sup>10</sup> If Hastings and his masters at East India House in London were guilty of misconduct and misrule, ‘the bodies of the Company’ on the ground in Asia were guilty of nothing more than being at once under Hastings’s ‘terror and his protection’ as governor-general.<sup>11</sup> Burke’s understanding of the way in which the Company operated as articulated in his speeches at the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, reveal what has remained a predominantly hidden, forgotten or neglected side of the Company for historians: that the trading corporation was not a central, monolithic institution, but ‘a confederacy of little platoons’ with conflicting and competing interests, loyalties, associations and agencies. Following Burke’s analysis, the thesis presented here is that a ‘confederacy of little platoons’ emerged within the English East India Company in the later seventeenth century, a social dynamic which decentred political authority within

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<sup>8</sup> Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty & the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford, 2011), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Murray, ‘Company Rules’, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in *ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in *ibid*.

the early modern British Empire and led to a process of private colonial state formation in Asia.

The first two chapters seek to understand the contest between the ‘public interests’ of the Company, that is the headquarters at East India House in London and their concerns for the dividends of their shareholders through commercial growth and the obedience of their servants, and the ‘private interests’ of the Company, being the Company’s servants and their pursuit of social, cultural, commercial and political power in Asia. Specifically, chapter 1 follows the state-building discourses of the committees and directors at East India House, in which they responded to the unregulated private interests of their servants in Asia by seeking to build social and political hierarchies at places such as Madras that would subordinate their employees there. By adopting a case study of the Company’s settlements on the West Coast of Sumatra, however, chapter 2 reveals how the actual practice of colonial state building in Asia proved far different from the discourse of East India House. The colonial institutions which the committees and directors hoped would regulate private interest had to be built and maintained by those very servants in Asia that they sought to deprive. The latter responded by appropriating the public authority invested in them to further their own interests, establishing private regimes of personal governance that significantly decentred political authority within the Company and marginalised the supposed ‘centre’ at East India House.

In establishing the significant role played by Company servants and their private interests in the colonial state formation process, this study then moves on to consider how such interests were developed and the forces driving them in place of a wider institutional or corporate framework in which Company servants have traditionally been studied. Thus chapter 3 highlights the importance of family networks in connecting

individual Company servants into a larger private community both within the metropole beyond East India House but also, from the later seventeenth century onwards, across Asia itself. Indeed, the growth and expansion of colonial families within the Company's settlements in Asia led to a dynamic of global exchange in which goods, knowledge, communication and people moved across and around the family networks of Company servants, developing and shaping their interests, resources and actions. Chapter 4 examines the role family networks played in laying the foundations of the colonial state in Bengal and Madras through a study of the Vincent, Pitt and Charnock kinship networks. It shows how, as colonial state formation was driven by the pursuit of private interest, its foundations in the Bay of Bengal were often incoherent and politically amorphous. Nonetheless, as chapter 5 demonstrates through an analysis of the Clive kinship network's part in the conquest of Bengal, the foundations of the colonial state laid by such a 'confederacy of little platoons' facilitated the emergence of a considerable imperial domain by the later eighteenth century. As the opportunities for private gains were considerably expanded after this development, Company kinship networks reengaged with the 'centre' at East India House in an effort to extract greater resources for the security of their gains in Bengal. Company servants such as Robert Clive used his kinship network to assert his control over the court of directors, subordinating their policies to his private state formation interests, privatising the very heart of the public corporate body.

### **The Making of an Early Modern Colonial State**

Until very recently, the English East India Company was understood by historians – both contemporary and modern – as a commercial corporation in which its directors in Britain and their employees in Asia were concerned with purchasing rare spices and

exotic textiles in India and shipping them back to the Company's warehouses in London for auction, the profits of which would be paid as an annual dividend to its shareholders.<sup>12</sup> This relatively uncomplicated, tidy and convenient narrative of the Company as a 'mere merchant' was only rarely complicated by historians showing the considerable private trading interests of employees in Asia, and the extent to which their aggressive commercialism led the Company deeper into regional societies and economies.<sup>13</sup> Such traditional accounts understand the emergence of an empire in India from the mid-eighteenth century onwards as a surprising and unlooked for assumption of sovereignty by the Company as the last resort in defending its trade from the surrounding chaos of Mughal decline, often in combination with the idea that such chaos was facilitated by private Company traders undermining the political stability of regimes in places such as Bengal.<sup>14</sup>

To what extent, then, can historians even talk of a colonial state in Asia before the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? One of the significant contributions this study seeks to make is in demonstrating that the foundations of the colonial state in Asia were laid in a much earlier period than the 'sudden' territorial acquisitions of the later eighteenth century, which the historiography traditionally dates from the battle of Plassey in 1757. Indeed, historians have only very recently started to explore the Company's political development in the period preceding Plassey. Most notably, Philip J. Stern's *The Company-State* has challenged the long established belief that nations monopolised processes of state building. Stern argues that a range of corporations, communities and associations could acquire and exercise their own forms of political

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<sup>12</sup> See the account given by Om Prakash, 'The English East India Company and India', in H. V. Bowen, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby, eds., *The Worlds of the East India Company* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2002), pp. 1-18.

<sup>13</sup> The most famous, of course, being Holden Furber, *John Company at Work: A Study of European Expansion in India in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1948).

<sup>14</sup> P. J. Marshall, 'Economic and Political Expansion: The Case of Oudh', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1975), pp. 465-482.

and constitutional authority, including, most notably, the English East India Company. This sovereign power existed alongside that of the nation-state in what Stern describes as ‘an early modern world filled with a variety of corporate bodies politic and hyphenated, hybrid, overlapping, and composite forms of sovereignty’. Stern then explores the ways in which the Company, as a ‘public’ corporate body, built a state in Asia as early as the mid-seventeenth century, upholding legal jurisdictions, raising revenue, planting colonies, waging war and claiming territory.<sup>15</sup>

Stern’s study represents a significant reinterpretation of the Company as a polity in its own right. However, despite the fact that Stern declares early modern states to have been ‘sets of de-centred processes’, his own institutional understanding of the Company as a state is one of a centralised political system free of the contested, overlapping and composite forms of authority represented by other polities in the early modern world.<sup>16</sup> The ‘institutional focus’ of such revisionist history has largely been found in the colonial rhetoric of contemporary institutional figures, such as the chairmen and directors sitting comfortably in East India House in London. The result is that the actual practice of the Company in Asia, or what the historian Anna Winterbottom has recently termed ‘a far more chaotic reality’ when observing the networks of knowledge within the Company, is in danger of being written out of future histories of the Company altogether and of the early modern British Empire more widely.<sup>17</sup> This trend is reflected in the examination of the technologies of knowledge within the Company by Miles Ogborn. When studying the bookkeeping practices of Company servants in Asia, Ogborn depicts political authority and social relationships within the Company’s settlements as conditioned by ‘specific institutional forms’ of

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<sup>15</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>17</sup> Anna Winterbottom, ‘Company Culture: Information, Scholarship, and the East India Company Settlements 1660-1720s’ (PhD dissertation, University of London, 2010), p. 8.

management and regulation, and argues that the Company can only be understood through an appreciation of the top-down ‘process of institutional change’ which supposedly shaped so much of the Company’s political development.<sup>18</sup>

In this thesis, I argue against such institutional understandings of the early modern colonial state which suggests a simplistic model of political authority in which the centralising structures of corporate institutions seem effective in regulating a complex global community of Company servants. Such revisionist histories have paid exclusive attention to the public policies and interests of the Company’s metropolitan authorities at East India House, neglecting the prominent and wide-ranging nature of the private interests of the Company’s servants which shaped the practice and development of the Company in Asia. Rather, Stern argues that Company servants were public officials, promoting the interests of their masters in London above all else. He provides the example of Enoch Walsh, a member of the Bombay council who wrote to East India House in 1697 to assure them that he had ‘Acquited all particular Affairs & private Interest purely to Serve the Publick & intreat your Honnours.’<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, over the next three years, Walsh became a notorious private trader and social piranha, exhorting money from Indian merchants and borrowing heavily from other Company servants, as well as abandoning his public duties as the settlement’s accountant in order to drink, gamble and duel in the streets of Bombay.<sup>20</sup> In 1700, his ship was impounded by the governor to meet the demands of his creditors, prompting Walsh to hijack the vessel and escape out of Bombay’s harbour under cannon-fire from the Castle.<sup>21</sup> This suggests the need to examine, less the institutional discourse of Stern and Ogborn’s public

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<sup>18</sup> Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (London, 2007), pp. 69-70.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Stern, *Company-State*, p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/55, Anonymous to Court of Directors, Bombay, 30 June 1699.

<sup>21</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/55, Bombay Diary and Consultation Book, 14 May 1700.

corporation, and more the practical realities of Company servants operating thousands of miles from central or metropolitan centres.

In order to understand the interplay of the private and public interests in the formation of the early modern colonial state, this study draws upon recent historiographical trends on the domestic European state. These have emphasised the agency of informal or non-state actors in driving decentred processes of state formation. Eschewing traditional understandings of the state as consisting of a ‘centre’ with the means and willingness to project its authority, usually violently through warfare, Michael Braddick has emphasised the role of office holders operating in localities.<sup>22</sup> Such agents created networks which embodied the state by exercising political power beyond the so-called ‘centre’, and were thus capable of shaping, developing and expanding the state itself.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, according to Mark Goldie, these agents were not always political or social elites. In the absence of national or official bureaucracy, away from metropolitan centres, ‘large numbers of people undertook the self-management of their local communities’.<sup>24</sup> As Goldie points out, beyond Whitehall, which employed a mere 1,200 people in the seventeenth century, government was undertaken by ‘amateur, part-time and unsalaried’ community members.<sup>25</sup> The early modern state, therefore, was neither a central nor a top-down building process. Rather, it was formed through the assumption and exercise of state power by informal and indirect agents operating within their own networks of association, loyalty, interest and authority. As Europeans travelled out to Asia in the service of the English East India Company, their ideas of political authority and the state reflected these localised,

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<sup>22</sup> For the state as a monopoly over the means of violence, see Max Weber, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, reprinted in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Wiltshire, 2009), pp. 77-128.

<sup>23</sup> Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c.1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Mark Goldie, ‘The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England’, in Tim Harris, ed., *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 154.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

autonomous systems of governance, and the so-called ‘centre’ at East India House remained as far removed from them in Asia as Whitehall had been from them in Britain. As in the domestic English state, metropolitan centres and colonial institutions possessed only a very weak, and often imagined and rhetorical, hold over actors, agents and groups operating in Asia across maritime expanses, up vast riverine basins, at subordinate settlements and beyond formal imperial boundaries and jurisdictions.<sup>26</sup>

As such, this study argues that colonial state formation was similarly not so much about the centralisation or expansion of ‘military, fiscal, and bureaucratic power’, as it was ‘the incorporation, and empowerment, of disparate communities’, represented by Company servants and their wider family networks in Asia who commandeered public authority to pursue a range of private interests, interests which subsequently laid the foundations of the early modern colonial state.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Patrick Joyce has recently questioned understandings of the state as an ‘it’, defined by central constitutional and administrative functions. Rather, Joyce argues for an understanding of the state in relational terms, ‘not as a thing...but as something like a site of passage of and between different powers’, or, in other words, ‘in terms of relationships’ between agents or groups of agents.<sup>28</sup> Lauren Benton has reiterated this perception when exploring the discourses and practices of colonial sovereignty, defining it as ‘a set of relationships that, through spatial and temporal prisms, may endow distant actors with greater specific powers.’<sup>29</sup>

These explorations of state formation ‘from below’ by colonial actors and agents operating within colonial theatres allow a look beyond the predominantly peaceful and

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<sup>26</sup> For example, see Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 40-103.

<sup>27</sup> Phil Withington, ‘Corporate Citizenship, and State Formation in Early Modern England’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 4 (2007), p. 1036.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Joyce, ‘What is the Social in Social History?’ *Past and Present*, vol. 206, no. 1 (2010), p. 238.

<sup>29</sup> Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, p. 292.

commercially-minded policies of the Company's court of directors before the later eighteenth century. In doing so, glimpses of an 'every day' colonialism which was far more politically engaged in Asia itself, one that was laying the foundations of the colonial state as early as the later seventeenth century – despite the mercantile mind-set of East India House – can be captured. If we return to Patrick Joyce's understanding of the state 'in terms of relationships', then it is necessary to understand the relationship not just between the court of directors at East India House and its servants in Asia, but between the servants themselves who transformed the political landscape around them in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the early modern colonial state. There has been little space for such conceptualisations within the more traditionally accepted narrative of England's overseas chartered companies as 'bureaucratic economic organisations'.<sup>30</sup> However, as this study reveals, the colonial polity which emerged in this period was less of a monolithic, fiscal-military machine, as conceptualised by John Brewer, as it was a social community connected through a series of global networks.<sup>31</sup> As the sociologist John Levi Martin argued, modern state organisations did not, historically, 'spring up', but developed from 'smaller components...namely interpersonal relationships.'<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, if the Company was a trading corporation, it was also, as its founding charter declared, a 'fellowship', imbuing the Company with an 'inescapably social character'.<sup>33</sup> Contemporaries certainly viewed 'The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies' as a society, or community of

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<sup>30</sup> K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 82.

<sup>31</sup> For Brewer's 'fiscal military state', see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), pp. 22-3.

<sup>32</sup> John Levi Martin, *Social Structures* (Oxford, 2009), p. x.

<sup>33</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 8.

members pursuing common interests.<sup>34</sup> The etymological origins of the word ‘company’ itself, as Stern points out, derives from forms of association, not business or trade.<sup>35</sup> From the Latin *companiono*, or ‘companion, one who eats bread with you’, in its many late medieval contexts, such as the Old French *compagine*, a ‘company’ referred to a ‘Society or Corporation of men’, implying a social body of people.<sup>36</sup> In fact, any such body of people who came together for a common purpose was perceived as a ‘company’.<sup>37</sup> Even parliament was understood in 1685 as ‘a Company of men, pack’t together by false returns, illegal Chartres and other corrupt means.’<sup>38</sup> Ecclesiastical institutions were similarly conceived as social organisations. According to the cleric William Ames in 1642, ‘the Church is a company of men.’ He went on to define just what this meant in a passage which is worth quoting in full. ‘It is called a company: because it doth consist properly in a multitude joyned in a fellowship together, or a community of many...and by the same reason it is often called...an House, a Family, a City, a Kingdome, a Flock, &c.’<sup>39</sup> All institutions, then, whether political, ecclesiastical, civic, monarchical or national, were actually understood by contemporaries in social terms as communities of members. Even England’s highest form of political community, the commonwealth, was perceived in such terms. ‘A common wealth’, explained Sir Thomas Smith in his 1583 book *De republica anglorum*, ‘is called a society or common doing of a multitude of free men collected together and united by common accord and coveanautes among themselves, for the conversation of

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<sup>34</sup> British Library [BL], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections [APAC], India Office Records [IOR], A/1/2, Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, to the Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East-Indies, 31 December 1600.

<sup>35</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Guy Miegé, *A new dictionary French and English with another English and French according to the present use and modern orthography of the French inrich’d with new words...* (London, 1677), p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> [Anon], *Some remarks upon a scandalous libel, intituled, The declaration of James Duke of Monmouth, &c* (London, 1685), p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> William Ames, *The marrow of sacred divinity drawne out of the Holy Scriptures; and the interpreters thereof, and brought into method* (London, 1642), p. 152-3.

themselves'.<sup>40</sup> At their core, companies were social communities consisting of members pursuing common interests in many different forms.

This was especially true for England's overseas chartered companies. As the secretary of the Company of Merchant Adventurers explained in 1601, the company was created when 'men of olde time linked and bound themselves together in Companie for the exercise of Merchandise and sea-fare'.<sup>41</sup> The English East India Company was also seen as a similar fellowship of men. In 1695 the merchant Roger Coke described it as a 'Company of Men'.<sup>42</sup> Similarly in 1700 the writer and satirist Edward Ward defined the Company not in commercial or political terms, but as 'a Corporation of Men'.<sup>43</sup> In fact the term 'corporation' was used interchangeably with that of 'company'. In 1597 the theologian Richard Hooker understood a united body of persons 'to appertaine unto severall corporations or companies of men'.<sup>44</sup> When contemporaries referred to the Company, they were united in recognising that it was, predominantly, a social formation.

Despite the well-established understanding of the early modern English state and political authority as social constructs, this has yet to be integrated into approaches to the English East India Company.<sup>45</sup> The existing historiography has largely neglected the Company as a social organisation due both to its remarkable commercial success by the end of the seventeenth century and its unprecedented political expansion by the close of

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in Mark Knights, 'Commonwealth: the Social, Cultural and Conceptual Contexts of an Early Modern Keyword', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3 (September, 2011), pp. 659-60.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in William E. Lingelbach, *The Internal Organisation of the Merchant Adventurers of England* (Philadelphia, 1903), p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Coke, *Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies with animadversions, concerning the naturalizing of foreigners* (London, 1695), p. 2,

<sup>43</sup> Edward Ward, *The London-spy compleat. In eighteen parts* (London, 1700), p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* (London, 1594), p. 245.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996); Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, eds., *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge, 1996); Braddick, *State Formation*; Steve Hindle *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000); Harris, *Politics of the Excluded*.

the eighteenth century. Thus studies of the Company as a trading corporation or as a colonial empire appear more proliferate as the evidence is more substantial, visible and obvious. Yet, as this thesis argues, such a conceptualisation of the Company is misleading. As the political theorist Harold Laski concluded, writing in the early twentieth century, what ‘men later deem a corporation is not to be found’ in the early modern period.<sup>46</sup> As this study argues, it is only through an appreciation of the Company’s social nature and organisation that its commercial and political growth can be understood. If, as was argued earlier, it was the Company’s servants who were responsible for transforming the political landscape in Asia, then the key to understanding their actions, culture, ideology and motives can be found in the social relationships established between them.

The ‘early modern’ as a historical concept has too often been seen as only a stage, to imply an emerging form of modernity, or at least to mark the foundation of a proto-modern state. The ‘early modern’ is in fact a nuanced and ambiguous concept. To that extent, the phrase is misleading, as the period was neither entirely ‘early’ nor was it entirely ‘modern’, and thus clear distinctions or associations with this period must always be treated with a Janus-like approach.<sup>47</sup> The failure to do so has led to assumptions that, as the first permanent joint-stock corporation, the Company laid the foundations of modernity in the British state and thus that the Company itself was a modern construct. At the very least the Company is thought of as a precursor to the modern ‘firm’; at the very most, the catalyst for a consumer revolution and a new age of global capitalism.<sup>48</sup> Far from embodying a proto-modern commercial organisation

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<sup>46</sup> Harold J. Laski, ‘The Early History of the Corporation in England’, *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 30, no. 6 (April, 1917), pp. 571.

<sup>47</sup> Jack A. Goldstone, ‘The Problem of the “Early Modern” World’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1998), pp. 249-284.

<sup>48</sup> Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia*, p. 19; Ann M. Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, ““Giants of an Earlier Capitalism”: The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals’, *The Business History Review*,

which paved the way for modernity in Britain, the English East India Company had more in common with its pre-modern forebears than the later modern developments in the British state and economy. This was insisted upon by Laski, who argued that if the Company did pave the way for a supposedly ‘modern’ world, it nonetheless carried ‘traces of the old.’<sup>49</sup> As Charles Parker has argued, global trading bodies such as the Company were merely new manifestations of earlier forms of traditional commercial enterprise, ones powerfully shaped by the dynamic of more traditional, smaller groups of socio-economic power pursuing their own private interests and concerns.<sup>50</sup>

### **Global Networks in the English East India Company**

In rejecting a centralised, institutional and public model of the English East India Company in favour of a decentred community of Company servants and their families pursuing a range of private interests across Asia, this study reveals how the policies and ideology of East India House in London were divorced from the practical realities which shaped the actions of their servants stationed in Asia. In making such an argument, it is suggested that the historian’s emphasis on discourse to understand state formation provides ‘an untenable dichotomy between thought and reality’.<sup>51</sup> In other words, accepting that the policies of the court of directors in East India House reflected the practices of their servants in Asia, is to neglect the role played by the latter through

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vol. 62, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 398-419; David Washbrook, ‘From Comparative Sociology to Global History: Britain and India in the Pre-History of Modernity’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1997), p. 424; Peter Van Der Veer, ‘The Global History of “Modernity”’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 41, no. 3 (1998), p. 289; Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘Modernity and Politics in India’, *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 1 (Winter, 2000), p. 143; Murray, ‘Company Rules’; Sheilagh Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000-1800* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Harold J. Laski, ‘The Early History of the Corporation in England’, *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 30, no. 6 (Apr., 1917), p. 584.

<sup>50</sup> Charles H. Parker, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 78-9.

<sup>51</sup> Jay M. Smith, ‘Between Discourse and Experience: Agency and Ideas in the French Pre-Revolution’, *History and Theory*, vol. 40, no. 4 (December, 2001), p. 116.

whom such policies were channelled and implemented and thus mitigated, manipulated and subverted in the process. Kathleen Wilson, in her recent study of the state building practices on eighteenth-century British colonial frontiers, has similarly rejected such institutional understandings of the colonial state. Arguing that, as an entity, the state was a fiction, Wilson focuses instead on the performative nature of state power and the ‘practices of state-building’ by colonial actors operating on the ‘peripheries’ of empire.<sup>52</sup>

In that respect, this study is predominantly concerned with the practices and results of state formation. By suggesting that colonial actors could operate outside of the larger colonial structures imposed upon them, and even possessed the means to determine their own political environments, their ability to exercise independent ‘agency’ is particularly emphasised.<sup>53</sup> To understand the development of the Company with reference to metropolitan policy only is to create a seriously unbalanced picture.<sup>54</sup> However, those historians who have also taken into account the actions of Company servants, have mostly adopted a metropolitan perspective. Indeed, the significant autonomy of Company servants in Asia has traditionally been conceptualised as ‘the agency problem’, in which the exercise of private agency has been defined as a form of ‘corruption’ or ‘malfeasance’.<sup>55</sup> In examining the Company’s contract enforcement with its servants, for example, Santhi Hejeebu argued that the ‘the temporal and spatial distance between agents and directors’ presented a constant dynamic of tension ‘in an

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<sup>52</sup> Kathleen Wilson, ‘Rethinking the Colonial State: Family, Gender, and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century British Frontiers’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 116, no. 5 (2011), pp. 1295-9.

<sup>53</sup> See Rod Aya, ‘The Third Man; or, Agency in History; or, Rationality in Revolution’, *History and Theory*, vol. 40, no. 4 (December, 2001), pp. 143; Mark Bevir, ‘Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy’, *Political Theory*, vol. 27, no. 1 (February, 1999), pp. 65-84.

<sup>54</sup> For example, see Philip J. Stern’s recent argument that the political economy and philosophy of Josiah Child, chairman of the court of directors, represented the Company’s wider policy of state formation in the 1680s. Stern, *Company-State*.

<sup>55</sup> For ‘malfeasance’, see Emily Erikson and Peter Bearman, ‘Malfeasance and the Foundations for Global Trade: the Structure of English Trade in the East Indies, 1601-1833’, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 112, no. 1 (July, 2006), pp. 195-230.

era of slow communication and hazardous travel.’ However, Hejeebu goes on to analyse this dynamic through an exploration of ‘the incentive and monitoring systems used by companies to address the agency problem.’<sup>56</sup>

On the contrary, this study conceptualises the political and commercial autonomy of Company servants in Asia not as the result of ‘corruption’, but as a direct product of their ability to exercise a form of ‘private’ agency distinct from the larger ‘public’ policies of the Company in the metropole. Of course, a focus on the ‘man on the spot’, or of ‘sub-imperialism’, has had a long historiographical legacy.<sup>57</sup> Stretching back to the Victorian period, such studies have revealed how the institutional, corporate nature of the Company was ‘largely obscured’ by certain Company servants in Asia who ‘very often *disobeyed* their masters, and acted on their own initiative without any reference to the policy and prejudices of Leadenhall Street.’<sup>58</sup> The result was the neglect of metropolitan interests, often conceptualised as commerciality of ‘the ledger’, in favour of political expansion by means of ‘the sword’.<sup>59</sup> These arguments were adopted by more modern historians as the model for understanding the Company’s inconsistent relationship with Indian states, in which Company servants pursued an aggressive policy that was constantly censured by East India House for deviating from their more commercial concerns. For example, Ian Bruce Watson argued that there were ‘two broad divisions of official and private aspirations’ which constantly ‘impinged on one another’.<sup>60</sup> He characterised this as acting with ‘a sword in one hand and money in the other’, a Janus-like approach which represented the contest between the interests of

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<sup>56</sup> Santhi Hejeebu, ‘Contract Enforcement in the English East India Company’, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 65, no. 2 (June, 2005), pp. 497.

<sup>57</sup> P. J. Marshall, ‘The British in Asia: Trade to Dominion’, in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 499.

<sup>58</sup> Beckles Wilson, *Ledger and Sword, or, The Honourable Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies, 1599-1874* (London, 1903, 2 vols.), vol. 1, p. viii.

<sup>59</sup> Wilson, *Ledger and Sword*.

<sup>60</sup> Ian Bruce Watson, *Foundation for Empire: English Private Trade in India, 1659 – 1760* (New Delhi, 1980), pp. 294 – 95.

Company servants in Asia and their employers in London respectively.<sup>61</sup> More recently, Robert Travers has explored colonial state formation in Bengal from the mid-eighteenth century onwards by analysing the role of Company servants operating on the peripheries of new colonial conquests. According to Travers, ‘the sub-imperialism of British officials in Bengal’ was the driving force behind the conceptualisation and appropriation of Mughal forms of political rule which fed into colonial models of state formation.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the legacy of emphasising the divergent interests of metropolitan intentions and local realities, many histories of the English East India Company continue to look to the orders emanating from the court of directors in London in an effort to understand the Company’s development in Asia, as opposed to the groups who were physically operating there.<sup>63</sup> As Stephen Howe pointed out in his recent review of new approaches to the study of empire, there is still a need to properly understand and bring to the fore the smaller groups and the ‘sub-imperialisms’ they produced ‘within the capacious but perhaps often ill-fitting overcoat of global Britishness’.<sup>64</sup> Only very recently has new scholarship taken up this call and begun to integrate the transformative agency of colonial actors in Asia into larger narratives of the Company’s engagement there.<sup>65</sup> By focusing on the ‘little platoons’, this study seeks to reveal not just the differences between the Company’s metropolitan authorities in London and

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: the British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 31-2.

<sup>63</sup> A good example of this is the metropolitan focus of H. V. Bowen, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby, eds., *The Worlds of the East India Company* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2002).

<sup>64</sup> Stephen Howe, ‘British Worlds, Settler Worlds, World Systems, and Killing Fields’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 40, no. 4 (2012), pp. 705.

<sup>65</sup> As well as Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, see David Veevers, ‘“The Company as their Lords and the Deputy as a Great Rajah”: Imperial Expansion and the English East India Company on the West Coast of Sumatra, 1685 – 1730’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 41, no. 5 (2013), pp. 687–709.

their servants in Asia, but the pivotal role of the latter in shaping the very political foundations of an emerging Company-state.

Divorcing the ‘centre’ from the ‘periphery’ and analysing the ‘man on the spot’ in Asia revisits, in many ways, a more traditional historiography which placed the formation of the colonial state strictly within its local Asian context. For instance, historians such as C. A. Bayly explained the expansion of the Company in India through its reliance on, and mobilization of, Indian networks of trade, capital and information.<sup>66</sup> An entire generation of Indian historians have similarly emphasised the local circumstances of the Company’s development, placing its commercial and political growth within a continuous eighteenth-century Indian narrative, evaluated through a growing body of regional studies, from the Indian Ocean to the Mughal Successor State of Bengal.<sup>67</sup> While such traditional historiography agrees that there were important social groups exercising a dynamic form of agency distinct from any imperial ‘centre’, their focus has been exclusively on Asian social groups, such as Indian bankers and merchants, or what Sanjay Subrahmanyam has termed the ‘portfolio capitalists’.<sup>68</sup> However, as Soren Mentz has recently argued in his study of British networks of trade and capital between Madras and London, understanding the Company strictly within a local Indian context fails to link ‘developments in Asia together with the economic, social and political developments in the mother country’ which were equally as important.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, since the emergence of ‘global history’ in the last two decades, more revisionist histories which have sought to integrate the expansion of the Company

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<sup>66</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of this extensive historiography, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South India* (Ann Arbor, 2001).

<sup>68</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Of Imarat and Tijarat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400 to 1750’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 37, no. 4 (October, 1995), p. 775.

<sup>69</sup> Soren Mentz, *The English Gentleman Merchant at Work: Madras and the City of London 1660-1740* (Copenhagen, 2005), p. 281.

in Asia into a wider analysis of the British Empire elsewhere, especially in the Atlantic.<sup>70</sup>

How, then, can a historical analysis of the autonomy of Company servants in Asia be linked into wider British processes of empire, without directly subordinating them to metropolitan narratives? This study seeks to bridge the gap between these two contrasting threads of historiography by linking local colonial developments – specifically, the pursuit of private interests by ‘little platoons’ in Asia – with wider global processes of empire and state formation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through the study of social networks. Specifically, by uncovering the extensive family networks established by Company servants between Europe and Asia, and across Asia itself from the later seventeenth century, this study shows how political authority within the Company was significantly decentred by the early eighteenth century. Family networks linked individual Company servants into a wider global community based upon the exchange, circulation and movement of people, capital, goods and information, a process which undermined the public structures and hierarchies of the Company and shaped its political development along the contours of an expansive set of private family networks that criss-crossed Asia.

According to Emily Erikson, in her recent study of the social networks established by the captains of Company ships trading to Asia in this period, ‘High levels of employee autonomy and cohesive networks of peer communication fed into each other’.<sup>71</sup> Although Erikson argues that such decentralization actually assisted the Company’s success as a commercial ‘firm’, she nonetheless argues that the networks established between servants allowed them to control the role of the Company in Asia.

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<sup>70</sup> P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India and America, c. 1750-1783* (Oxford, 2005); H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke and John G. Reid, eds., *Britain’s Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550 – 1850* (Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>71</sup> Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: the English East India Company, 1600-1757* (Oxford, 2014), p. 18.

Thus while, in theory, ‘London principals exercised direct control over factories and forts by shutting them down...even these orders were not always followed.’<sup>72</sup> In creating social networks, then, Company servants operated through their own systems of association, intelligence and resources, allowing them to take greater control over decision-making within the Company. By the later seventeenth century, the decentralisation of the Company allowed Company servants and their networks in Asia to shape the foundations of the colonial state according to their own ‘private interests’.

In arguing that the family networks established by Company servants in Asia decentred the emerging colonial state, this thesis places itself within ‘new’ imperial history methodologies which seek to understand, amongst other things, the juxtaposition of the local and the global. As Kathleen Wilson has observed, these two concepts ‘have been difficult to disentangle since 1492’, and only now have historians started to abandon their separate treatment of the two in favour of understanding rather how they interlinked and shaped one another.<sup>73</sup> Such an approach has emerged since the late 1990s and has sought to redefine linear notions of an imperial or metropolitan ‘centre’ dominating a protean colonial periphery.<sup>74</sup> This has begun, in many respects, with reconceptualising Immanuel Wallerstein’s ‘core-periphery’ model of colonial empires.<sup>75</sup> The process whereby authority, agents and resources ‘radiated outward’ from the ‘centre’ or ‘metropole’, to the ‘periphery’ or ‘colony’, is an unsatisfactory explanation for imperial systems which consisted of highly autonomous areas of settlement, trade and conquest.<sup>76</sup> As Jack P. Greene has noted, traditional ‘centres’, such as London,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>73</sup> Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson, *New Imperial History*.

<sup>75</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York, 1974-1989, 3 vols).

<sup>76</sup> For challenges to Wallerstein’s core-periphery model, see Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820* (London, 2002).

lacked the resources or proximity to coerce distant sites of empire, whether in the Atlantic or Asia, which constructed their own, internal ‘European-style polities’.<sup>77</sup>

One prominent way in which the new imperial history has challenged more traditional ‘centre-periphery’ models is through a conceptual analysis of empire not as a linear or asymmetric construct, but rather ‘as a permeable “web” or “network”, shaped by global and regional currents, that impacted metropolitan as much as colonial culture.’<sup>78</sup> Despite warnings by historians such as C. A. Bayly, who argued, at the onset of new imperial histories, that ‘it is still necessary to ask what the “centre” was around which these decentred discourses revolved’,<sup>79</sup> new imperial historians have rightly posed the question of ‘whose centre is at issue in this account?’<sup>80</sup> For those Company servants and their family networks studied in this thesis, who spent most of their lives outside of Britain, their ‘centre’ was not London, but Madras, Calcutta or Bombay, each of which maintained their own set of colonial ‘peripheries’ which themselves existed often thousands of miles away in the vast interior of Asia or across the maritime expanse of the Indian Ocean. According to Stephen Howe, one of the key challenges in writing future histories of empire, is in analysing such a move away from an understanding of empire as a nation and its colonies - or a ‘centre’ and its ‘peripheries’ - to something more decentred, transnational and inter-imperial as a set of global networks or a ‘web’ of imperial circuits.<sup>81</sup>

In many respects, ‘global history’ has emerged in response to this very challenge. Historians are increasingly understanding empire as a process of global

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<sup>77</sup> Jack P. Greene, ‘Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era: the British-American Experience’, in Daniels and Kennedy, *Negotiated Empires*, pp. 267-282.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, *New Imperial History*, p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> C. A. Bayly, ‘The British and Indigenous Peoples, 1760-1860: Power, Perception, Identity’, in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, eds., *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999), p. 22.

<sup>80</sup> Wilson, *New Imperial History*, p. 15.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Howe, ed., *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London, 2010), pp. 11-12.

connection.<sup>82</sup> As David Armitage and Michael Braddick have argued, an ‘Atlantic World’ was created by ‘a complex of evolving connections’ in that particular ocean.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Alison Games has exposed a ‘web’ in which ‘globetrotters’ circulated colonial experience, knowledge and models from one part of the world to another.<sup>84</sup> These connections, circuits and webs operated as forms of long-distance networks which, it has been argued, created the ‘first global age’ between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries by bringing Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia in to unprecedented levels of contact. What emerged was ‘an open, complex, dynamic, nonlinear system’ which led, among other things, to the establishment and expansion of European empires.<sup>85</sup> The family networks established by Company servants created a similarly ‘nonlinear system’ in Asia, along the contours of which the early modern colonial state was laid, formed and developed.

### **Family and Colonial State Formation**

At the core of this study is an analysis of the role played by families in the processes of early modern colonial state formation in Asia. Having been ‘the most elemental and enduring form of a mercantile partnership’ across Eurasia since the mediaeval period, the family produced the social capital, joint resources and loyalty that proved so fundamental in establishing global networks of trade in the early modern period.<sup>86</sup> As the historian Margot Finn has recently argued, there existed a ‘close nexus between

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<sup>82</sup> For the importance of networks in studying empire, see Natasha Glaisyer, ‘Networking: Trade and Exchange in the Eighteenth-Century British Empire’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2004), pp. 451-76.

<sup>83</sup> David Armitage and Michael Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> Rila Mukherjee, ed., *Networks in the First Global Age, 1400-1800* (New Delhi, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Parker, *Global Interactions*, pp. 78-9.

family formations and economic development', right up to the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> But, according to Finn, only with the growth in new imperial history has 'an efflorescence of scholarship on the part played by family relationships in shaping the conflicted modernities of the British empire' been possible.<sup>88</sup> For the English East India Company, whose development was shaped by a network of colonial families which spread across the globe from the later seventeenth century onwards, the link between family formation and state formation is crucial in explaining the emergence of a colonial polity in Asia by the eighteenth century. Thus, if the Company can also be conceptualised as a social community, and not just a trading corporation, then an understanding of the process of colonial state formation must necessarily focus not just on the commercial transactions of its members, but also the social relationships which they established, cultivated, utilised, and ultimately exploited in an effort to transform the political landscape around them. As such, the third contribution this research seeks to make to the study of the Company and the early modern British Empire more widely, is in understanding the formation of the colonial state in Asia as a social process, emerging from the activities of the family networks established by Company servants in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, to return to Edmund Burke and his concept of 'the little platoons' and their role in shaping the state, the great political philosopher had little doubt that the most important of these smaller configurations of social, economic and political power was the family.

Burke's conceptualisation of the Company as a 'confederacy of little platoons' derived from his belief that modern, bureaucratic and centralised polities were unnatural and unfit to govern societies. After the execution of the Comte d'Artois's brother by

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<sup>87</sup> Margot Finn, 'Family Formations: Anglo India and the Familial Proto-State', in David Feldman and Jon Lawrence, eds., *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 100.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

French revolutionaries, an event Burke abhorred for the idea that a more traditional system of government was being replaced by a modern revolution, the British statesman wrote to console him in 1793. ‘The ties of nature, which are the laws of God, are much better, surer, safer, and pleasanter, than any which we make for ourselves, politically, as members of parties or states, or in the intercourse of common life as friendships.’<sup>89</sup> In other words, Burke believed that the family was the most effective social, commercial, cultural and political unit of power, and that familial ties were a more natural form of association between people than any that might be imposed by larger social or political structures and hierarchies. For Burke, the family acted as a site, more so than any other in society, in which the ‘common opinions, common affections, and common interests’ of its members met.<sup>90</sup>

The importance of the family to every facet of society, from the economy to the state, has been well established by an extensive historiography.<sup>91</sup> Lawrence Stone’s *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* controversially sought to redefine the family as one which transitioned from a seventeenth century ‘open lineage family’ to an eighteenth century ‘nuclear family’.<sup>92</sup> The key theme in Stone’s research was the decline of kinship in the early modern period and the emergence of individuality and ‘the self’, divorced from notions of the family – a reflection of wider changes in society at the time in which the household was supposedly losing its prominent social and economic role.

Much of the subsequent historiography of the family in the proceeding decades has sought to challenge Stone’s findings, and to ‘open’ the family back up as a wider

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<sup>89</sup> Cited in Peter James Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (London, 1958), p. 100.

<sup>90</sup> Neal Wood, ‘The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke’s Political Thought’, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (November, 1964), pp. 51-52.

<sup>91</sup> A concise and comprehensive historiographical survey of the family can be found in Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, eds., *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>92</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, (New York, 1977).

social construct with significant economic influence. For instance, the family has been identified as the primary force behind the development of material culture and an emerging consumer revolution.<sup>93</sup> For Britain's middle classes, the family has been conceptualised as a more physically definable but socially amorphous 'household' in which both men and women pursued a range of domestic, religious, economic and social interests.<sup>94</sup> The emphasis on 'the middle sort' has been a notable feature of the historiography of the family in early modern Britain. Such studies have revealed a highly commercialised middle class whose economic expansion was rooted firmly within the family.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, it has been argued that a precariously emerging market economy was conditioned by equally precarious changes in familial relationships and household structure.<sup>96</sup>

Revisionist historiography, however, has recently challenged the more extreme portrayals of consumerism and commercialism within the family. Indeed, the rise of 'capitalist modernity' by the end of the early modern period had a limited impact on the family. Despite the commercialisation of the British economy and the financial revolutions in banking and finance which occurred between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the structures, routines, concerns and culture of the family remained predominantly traditional. The oversimplified narrative of the English household as transitioning from 'the moral economy' to 'the market economy' fails to appreciate the 'complexity and diversity of social and economic behaviour', in which powerful ideologies such as patriarchy and conservative values such as community

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<sup>93</sup> For example, see Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London, 1982); *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (New Haven, CT, 2000).

<sup>94</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Abingdon, Oxon, 1987).

<sup>95</sup> Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London, 1996).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

juxtaposed within the family with increasing material wealth and bourgeois culture.<sup>97</sup> Personal, business and political relationships therefore continued to be cultivated, maintained and utilised through traditional methods, such as marriage, establishing ‘fictive-kin’ or by familial patronage.<sup>98</sup>

The different spheres of activity within the family allowed it to act as a bridge between the social, commercial, cultural and political worlds of the early modern period. The ‘public’ and ‘private’ have been historically ambiguous concepts and ones that historians continue to find analytically contentious and difficult to define, especially so in the case of the ‘private’.<sup>99</sup> Nonetheless, historians of the early modern state have traditionally defined the ‘private’ as that which did not pertain to the state itself.<sup>100</sup> In the emerging ‘public sphere’ in Britain in the early modern period, actors or agents who held important political office but who used their position to pursue interests other than those connected to that particular office were increasingly seen as ‘corrupt’ and indulging in ‘private’ concerns in working against the state, and could as a result be divested of their ‘public’ status.<sup>101</sup> However, within the ‘private sphere’, such as the family, the distinction between the public and the private were more ambiguous and largely irrelevant in the early modern period.<sup>102</sup> For this reason, there was no segregation of the domestic or political in the family. To the contrary, how the household was governed, for example, shaped powerful ideas about how the state

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<sup>97</sup> Brodie Waddell, *God, Duty and Community in English Economic Life, 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2012), p. 227.

<sup>98</sup> For the concept of ‘fictive-kin’, see Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 103–166.

<sup>99</sup> See Erica Longfellow, ‘Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 45 (April, 2006), p. 314.

<sup>100</sup> Giorgio Chittolini, ‘The “Private”, the “Public”, the State’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 67 (December, 1995), p. 534.

<sup>101</sup> M. M. Goldsmith, ‘Public Virtue and Private Vices: Bernard Mandeville and English Political Ideologies in the Early Eighteenth Century’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Summer, 1976), pp. 477-510.

<sup>102</sup> Lawrence E. Klien, ‘Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytical Procedure’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Fall, 1995), p. 99.

should be modelled.<sup>103</sup> Thus few political office-holders actually distinguished their official public duties from their more private interests, while the ‘collective’ of the ‘public sphere’, such as the court of directors at East India House, more and more came to see the ‘private’ as a form of malfeasance or disobedience, a private gain at the expense of a wider public community.<sup>104</sup>

The juxtaposition of the public and the private within the family meant that it was able both to drive and shape processes of early modern state formation. What in the nineteenth century became known as the ‘public sphere’ was historically constructed in the ‘private sphere’.<sup>105</sup> As Dena Goodman observed, ‘Institutions of sociability were the common ground upon which public and private met’.<sup>106</sup> Speaking of the late Tudor family, Barbara Harris noted how ‘the world of kinship, the great household, client/patron relations, and the court conflated concerns that we would label as either personal or political and virtually ignored the distinction between the public and the private.’<sup>107</sup> In early modern Asia, the families of English East India Company servants similarly acted as a site in which the private juxtaposed and intermeshed with the public, and in which matters of personal material gain, for example, were difficult to disentangle from political engagement.<sup>108</sup> Company servants and their families in Asia were constantly forced to confront ‘a multiplicity of interests’, in which their own

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<sup>103</sup> Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England, 1680-1714* (Manchester, 1999).

<sup>104</sup> Geoff Baldwin, ‘The “Public” as a Rhetorical Community in Early Modern England’, in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, eds., *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 199-215.

<sup>105</sup> Dena Goodman, ‘Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime’, *History and Theory*, vol. 31, no. 1 (February, 1992), pp. 1-20.

<sup>106</sup> Goodman, ‘Public Sphere and Private Life’, pp. 1.

<sup>107</sup> Barbara Harris, ‘Women and Politics in Early Tudor England’, *Historical Journal*, vol. 33, no. 2 (June, 1990), p. 260.

<sup>108</sup> For the juxtaposition of the public and private, see Longfellow, ‘Public, Private, and the Household’, pp. 313-34.

private concerns were so entangled with their public activities that they were unable to distinguish between the two.<sup>109</sup>

In response to such scrutiny of the public role of the family, historians are increasingly looking beyond the socio-economic functions traditionally ascribed to colonial families to examine their political significance in the formation of European empires, especially in Asia. As Emma Rothschild has recently observed, ‘empire was a family enterprise’.<sup>110</sup> She concludes that ‘the history of families has been the history of empires’, in which economic, political and military processes intersected with the ties of family and kinship that connected members of colonial families often separated by thousands of miles.<sup>111</sup> Margot Finn similarly focuses on the various aspects of empire that intersected in the family, arguing that it operated ‘at once [as] a place of political power, a prime site of capital accumulation, a focal point of identity formation and a key locus of emotional development and expression.’<sup>112</sup> For Finn, family formation shaped the motives and actions of those British officials responsible for driving the colonial state.<sup>113</sup>

This was particularly true for Company servants in Asia before the nineteenth century. The English practice of establishing multiracial families ‘was sometimes seen as beneficial to the nascent colonial state of the East India Company.’<sup>114</sup> Interracial relationships created a culture of intimacy that facilitated the establishment of colonial trade, politics and rule in Asia. In this respect, European officials in Asia could embody

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<sup>109</sup> Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: an Eighteenth-Century History*, (Woodstock, Oxon, 2011), p. 133-4.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132, p. 269.

<sup>112</sup> Margot Finn, ‘Anglo-Indian Lives in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2010), pp. 49-50.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>114</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: the Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 249.

‘the state builder, monied man, and family patriarch’ all at once.<sup>115</sup> Far from being a familial dynamic exclusive to pre-capitalist societies, ‘elite families and states meshed’ in the early modern period.<sup>116</sup> Thus Company servants operated economically and politically through their extensive family ties, monopolising political office and controlling vast colonial interests.<sup>117</sup> As Julia Adams concluded of the Dutch VOC, ‘as the patriarchal family and lineal networks and ideologies were woven into the web of patrimonial power, they formed what we might call a familial state.’<sup>118</sup>

The historiography of the colonial family has thus moved away from the study of the family as an end in itself, gradually ascribing it a greater role within processes of colonial state formation. However, two significant problems remain. The first is that, with the exception of Adams’ study of the Dutch VOC, historians of the English Company have yet to look at colonial families before the mid-eighteenth century. Before this period, Asia has largely been defined as a space of trade and commerce, not of settlement or families.<sup>119</sup> This is in contrast to other areas of the early modern British Empire before the later eighteenth century, such as the eastern Mediterranean, where the families of Levant Company servants formed important colonial communities.<sup>120</sup> Secondly, the families of East India Company servants continue to be analysed as an extension of metropolitan groups in London: a subordinate cog in a wider colonial machine centred on the metropole which used the family as an ‘intermediary’ agent or

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<sup>115</sup> Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2003), p. 29.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>119</sup> Philip J. Stern, ‘British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparisons and Connections’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2006), pp. 694.

<sup>120</sup> Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, (Oxford, 1976), p. 302. For the Levant Company, see James Mather, *Pashas: Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World* (London, 2009), p. 59, pp. 80-5.

‘go-between’ through which the Company’s global concerns were governed.<sup>121</sup> Margot Finn, for example, has argued that many factors, including the small number of Company servants, the vast distance between Europe and Asia and the influence of Indian political systems, ‘all reinforced the close ties between the Company’s proto-state and governing-class families in India in this period.’<sup>122</sup> Ghosh similarly promotes this conceptualisation of the colonial family, observing how it was responsible for ‘maintaining the relationship between the state and its subjects.’<sup>123</sup> Thus colonial families are understood as tools of the colonial state, not its authors.

In contrast, this study challenges the idea that colonial families formed part of an institutional state infrastructure centred on the metropole, in which they performed the role of a Weberian patrimonial governing elite in Asia.<sup>124</sup> Rather, it analyses the colonial family as the very authors of political power and authority, driving state formation through their pursuit of ‘private interests’, in direct opposition to the ‘public interests’ of the Company’s metropolitan authorities in London. By placing Company servants and their colonial families within their wider kinship groups, this study argues that such families were able to cross the Company’s official social, cultural, commercial and political boundaries through the networks of kinship which they established right across Asia from the later seventeenth century onwards. In the process, they engaged with new areas of trade, culture and politics, transforming these landscapes as and when it suited their private interests and personal requirements.

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<sup>121</sup> For the concept of ‘go-betweens’, see Simon Schaffer, Lissa Roberts, Kapil Raj and James Delbourgo, eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820* (London, 2009).

<sup>122</sup> Finn, ‘Family Formations’, p. 102.

<sup>123</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, p. 13.

<sup>124</sup> For the concept and practice of patrimonialism, see Mounira A. Charrad and Julia Adams, ‘Patrimonialism, Past and Present’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 636 (2011), pp. 6-15.

Kinship is currently enjoying a new prominence within the historiography of global trade and empire, where once it remained the preserve of anthropologists.<sup>125</sup> More fluid and open concepts of kinship have dramatically expanded the scope, extent and range of family units considered by historians, revealing the establishment of large kinship groups across often expansive geographic areas.<sup>126</sup> Most people in British society relied on a network of kin for support, exchange and promotion in early modern social, economic and political life, particularly in the world of global trade.<sup>127</sup> This was particularly so in London's business community, which relied on kin stationed overseas to manage trade links and commercial ventures.<sup>128</sup> Most importantly, kinship led to political solidarity, with large networks of kin pursuing a common political ambition or interest, as Company kinship networks consistently did in Asia.<sup>129</sup> For Margot Finn, kinship is the key in understanding not just the actions, motives and resources of Company servants in Asia, but of the 'vital socio-political mechanism by which the British East India Company managed imperial expansion during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.'<sup>130</sup>

When Burke spoke of the Company as a 'confederacy of little platoons' at the trial of Warren Hastings, then, he was referring to the hundreds of families that exercised the day-to-day functions of the colonial state. The families established by Company servants in Asia acted as sites of colonial authority, governance and sovereignty, and as they formed and reformed, such families also formed and reformed the political foundations of the Company, creating a dynamic and expansive, yet

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<sup>125</sup> J. D. Faubion, 'Kinship is Dead. Long Live Kinship. A Review Article', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 38, no. 1 (January, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>126</sup> Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, particularly pp. 103-165.

<sup>127</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 53-55.

<sup>128</sup> Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580-1740* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>129</sup> David Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, vol. 113 (November, 1986), p. 49.

<sup>130</sup> Finn, 'Anglo-Indian Lives', p. 49.

amorphous and often incoherent, colonial polity which spread along the wider kinship networks established by families from the later seventeenth century onwards. While Stern's 'interlocking matrix of commonwealths, churches, associations, communities, office-holders, agencies, and families' were all capable of exercising political agency to both embody and shape 'the state', it was the family's effectiveness in creating global networks which meant that, overseas, it operated as the most important political agent within this diverse matrix.<sup>131</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To summarise, this study analyses the role played by Company servants and the kinship networks they established in laying the foundations of a colonial state in early modern Asia. It does so in three ways: firstly, in arguing that Company servants operated autonomous of the 'centre' at East India House by revealing the dichotomy between the policies of the court of directors in London and the practices of their servants in Asia; secondly, in exploring the spread of Company kinship networks from the later seventeenth century onwards which connected Company servants in Asia into a wider global process of empire which was not centred on London; and thirdly, in demonstrating that the pursuit of private interests led such networks to transform the political landscape around them in Asia which laid the foundations of the colonial state by the mid-eighteenth century.

In studying the processes of state formation and the agency of networks, the following chapters adopt a qualitative approach in a field which is too often dominated by quantitative analyses. Social network theory is a thriving methodological tool for sociologists, but more recently for historians, too. Emily Erikson's recent study of the

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<sup>131</sup> Stern, *Company-state*, p. 9.

networks of trade in Asia established by the captains of Company ships is an excellent example of the successful application of quantitative network analysis in understanding the as-yet relatively unexplored impact of social relationships on the Company's expansion. And yet, as Erikson herself writes of her own quantitative research into the social networks of captains employed by the Company, 'I am ready to admit that readers may find themselves slipping around the bathtub model of micro and macro levels of [network] analysis'.<sup>132</sup> While such quantitative and numerical analysis remains useful, nonetheless it is critical to retain a qualitative emphasis on the rich source material that remains so important to the study of social networks and their role in understanding the wider processes of empire and colonial state formation. For example, Sarah Pearsall has argued that the study of private letters is 'one of the best ways to reach families and their histories, but they are also an excellent way of reaching larger changes in societies and cultures.'<sup>133</sup> Margot Finn has similarly argued that qualitative approaches to the study of empire, such as the utilisation of biographies, is particularly beneficial to the study of empire through families. Finn argues that only through such qualitative methodologies can new imperial histories simultaneously reveal how 'great and lesser men and women are simultaneously embedded in dense, localised, particularistic social webs comprised of friends, family and servants and also caught up in the trammels of global networks'.<sup>134</sup>

This thesis adopts Finn's model for studying the role of family networks in larger imperial processes. The research presented in this study is based primarily upon the private papers, correspondence and biographies of more than a dozen colonial families and their kinship networks, analysing – in various degrees of depth – hundreds

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<sup>132</sup> Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*, p. 22.

<sup>133</sup> Sarah M. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Finn, 'Anglo-Indian Lives', p. 53.

of individuals over a two century period. However, six families in particular reoccur throughout and are given greater focus: the Pitts, Charnocks, Collets, Scattergoods, Walshs, Fowkes and Clives. This is in part due to the extant source material available on these families, mostly in the form of private papers available in the British Library in London, which make their analysis far more comprehensive and thus considerably more demonstrative than other families who left little written record of their activities behind. But it is also because the majority of these families produced figures who held senior positions within the Company and featured prominently in key events in the period under discussion. Thomas Pitt was governor of Madras while his cousin John Pitt was consul for the New Company; Job Charnock waged war against the Mughal Empire and founded Calcutta; Joseph Collet was both deputy-governor of Bencoolen and after that, governor of Madras; John Scattergood was a free merchant operating in all of Asia's major commercial markets; Joseph Walsh was deputy-governor of Bencoolen while his son John Walsh was intimately involved with the conquest of Bengal; Joseph Fowke was a successful diamond merchant; and finally Robert Clive was twice governor of Bengal. But while such families can, on the whole, be considered elite, their study as part of wider kinship networks reveals a much denser social and political web of subaltern actors, from widowed wives to impoverished cousins.

However, there is a risk that in uncovering the private agency of families by focusing on the private papers of families, the historian will inevitably find the evidence they seek. This study thus places such archival sources strictly within the context of their wider socio-political framework by interrogating the public records of the English East India Company, similarly available in the British Library. There are two predominant forms of public records which have been extensively utilised for this study: the official correspondence between East India House in London and its servants

in Asia (and vice versa), and the diaries and public consultation books of the individual Company settlements in Asia themselves. In contrasting the private lives of Europeans in Asia with their public roles as servants of the Company, a holistic and rounded picture of their aims, motives and actions have thus been analysed, producing a study which crosses both the public and private boundaries which were so thoroughly intermingled to Company servants themselves, but which have since, through the lens of modern society and the segregation of public and private records within the archive, has become, much like the early modern colonial state, distorted beyond all recognition.

# Part One

Contested Visions of the Colonial State

## Chapter One

### Public Interest and the Discourse of Colonial State Building

In 1654, with Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate established in Britain, the governor and court of committees of the English East India Company gathered at its metropolitan headquarters in East India House in London to discuss the Company's future. Many of the committee-men present at this meeting argued that the time was right to acquire a new charter from the Lord Protector that would provide the Company with greater political, legal and constitutional powers to govern its members scattered across the globe. The proposal submitted to the court outlined 'a model of government for disposing, managing, and improving' the Company.<sup>1</sup> It consisted, primarily, of dispatching senior officials to Asia appointed not by East India House but by Cromwell himself. As such, these men would possess the 'authoritye and style of a publicke person'.<sup>2</sup> This, it was believed, would allow for the emergence of a strong, centralised government in Asia, much like that which Cromwell was instituting in Britain at that very moment through the rule of his major-generals in the provinces.<sup>3</sup> The committee-men believed that the new charter would 'settle the jurisdiction of the said Society with more union among themselves and more authority over the several traders and factors residing in India'.<sup>4</sup> They argued that the acquisition and exercise of greater political

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<sup>1</sup> 'Proposals for the better Governing, Settling and Securing of the East India Trade', August 1654, in Ethel Bruce Sainsbury, ed., *A Calendar of the Court Minutes of the East India Company, 1639-1663* (Oxford, 1907-1922, 6 vols.), pp. 335-7 (hereafter *CCM*).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> For the imposition of centralised rule over the English localities, see Christopher Durston, *Cromwell's Major-Generals: Godly Government during the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> *CCM*, Court of Committees, August 1654, in pp. 335-7.

powers was ‘the only remedy that may be expected for regulating or preventing those great abuses that arise from disorderly, loose [conduct] and private trade.’<sup>5</sup>

As the Company expanded across the globe from the mid-seventeenth century, from St Helena in the Atlantic and Madras on the Coromandel Coast, to Bencoolen in Sumatra and Hugli in Bengal, the need to regulate this growth became critical. That East India House considered forfeiting its own authority in Asia in exchange for more power to control the behaviour of its ‘disorderly’ servants there, reveals the existence of a general crisis which attended the Company’s global expansion. As new settlements were founded and new trades established, exerting a measure of control over the ever increasing number of members sent thousands of miles away across the vastness of Asia became the central preoccupation, anxiety and frustration of metropolitan authorities at East India House. As early as 1638 the court of committees had sought ‘to make ordinances for the government...and better control of their servants’.<sup>6</sup> More than fifty years later, the committees were still seeking the most effective means for creating an ‘English Politicall Government in India’ that would govern its servants there ‘with Coersive Lawes, and a strict execution of those Laws’. Until that was achieved, they argued, their servants would act as if ‘destitute of Wisdome Conduct or Order’.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, as the discussions at East India House in that August of 1654 reveal, the metropole’s desire to regulate the actions of its members by centralising authority within the Company, became East India House’s primary goal. Over the course of the later seventeenth century, the Company’s metropolitan authorities became less concerned with managing a commercial corporation, and more preoccupied with building the state apparatus that would allow it to control the behaviour of its members.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> CCM, Summary of Proposals for a New East India Company, June 1638, p. 296.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Stern, *Company-State*, p. 60.

The first part of this thesis explores the highly contested nature of the colonial state, in particular the competing visions held by the Company's metropolitan authority in London and their servants in Asia, of how a colonial state should act, who it should empower and what it should achieve. This first chapter analyses the discourse of state building created by East India House as a result of what it perceived to be the decentralisation of political authority within the Company from the mid-seventeenth century. It also considers its attempts to put this discourse into practice in Asia. This period represented a time of considerable change for the Company. In the first sixty years after its founding charter was issued in 1600, the Company experienced mild commercial growth, followed by a long slump in which profits dried up, dividends dropped and charter renewals encountered strong domestic resistance.<sup>8</sup> After the Restoration in 1660, however, the Company underwent unprecedented levels of commercial and political expansion which saw it emerge as Europe's largest trader in Asian goods, with factories and settlements spread right across Asia by the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> However, this up-swing in fortunes for the court of committees (after 1685 the court of directors) and the Company's shareholders in the court of proprietors at East India House, also brought with it considerable complications. As the Company's official trade prospered, greater opportunities were made available to its servants in Asia to enrich themselves privately, stationed as they were many thousands of miles from executive oversight. From the 1660s onwards, what East India House perceived to be the neglect of the Company's public interests by servants in pursuit of their own private concerns provoked them to centralise authority within the Company in an effort to better regulate and control their affairs in Asia. This chapter explores the

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<sup>8</sup> P. J. Marshall, 'The English in Asia', in Nicholas Canny, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Origins of Empire* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 264-85.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

state building discourses promoted by East India House in an effort to increase its authority over its servants in the seventeenth century.

As the Company's global expansion accelerated, East India House sought to bind members of the Company to its 'public interest' by subordinating them into hierarchies built and legitimised upon a political discourse of 'order' and 'obedience'. By acquiring greater political authority from the Crown, East India House sought to establish both a judiciary and bureaucracy, as well as to centralise government and to codify rules, orders and behaviour throughout their settlements. In doing so, they hoped such protean state institutions would create the political and social hierarchies which would command the obedience of their servants in Asia, ensuring their loyalty to East India House and its interests. It was a model of state-building shaped by contemporary understandings of the sanctity of order, both in society but also in trade and government. British theologians, philosophers, political scientists and writers articulated order as the product of natural and providential hierarchies, an ideology which determined political life in the seventeenth century and similarly shaped the emergence of the domestic English state. Nonetheless, much like the latter, the wish for centralisation and the rhetoric of obedience and subordination remained very much a discourse of colonial state building, one that was adopted as the political culture of the Company's metropolitan authorities at East India House, but one that proved eminently difficult to apply in practice.

Modern historians continue to perceive the Company as a centralised institution, in which its servants professed their loyalty to the public culture of East India House thousands of miles away.<sup>10</sup> However, metropolitan state-building was severely limited when applied to the context of early modern colonial practices. In order to build and

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<sup>10</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 11.

maintain state institutions over such vast distances, East India House was forced to delegate substantial political authority to the same servants in Asia that it sought so thoroughly to subordinate. The relationship between the two groups was accentuated by the ‘temporal and spatial distances between agents and directors’ which, in a period when letters from London took up to two years to be received and replied to in Asia, made the centralisation of authority in the metropole problematic at best.<sup>11</sup> Of necessity, then, certain Company servants were imbued with wide-ranging metropolitan authority in an effort to regulate their colleagues so far from effective oversight. But such servants, as this chapter will demonstrate, appropriated their delegated power in pursuit of their own ‘private interests’ in Asia, mitigating, transforming and eventually decentring the state building efforts of their masters in London.

### **From Community to Corporation: Global Expansion and the Breakdown of Trust in the Early Company**

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the members of the Company were bound to East India House and one another through social ties of intimacy, trust and loyalty. Incorporated on 31 December 1600 for the Earl of Cumberland and 215 ‘Knights, Aldermen and Burgesses’, ‘The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies’ was a socially homogenous, interpersonal and tightknit community of members.<sup>12</sup> Those who invested in the Company’s early voyages, acted as its committee-men or went out to Asia as governors, factors and writers, belonged to the City of London’s merchants and aristocrats, groups which possessed strong

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<sup>11</sup> Hejeebu, ‘Contract Enforcement’, p. 497.

<sup>12</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/A/1/2, Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, to the Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East-Indies, 31 December 1600.

commercial and social ties amongst and between one another.<sup>13</sup> As George Lawson wrote in 1689, 'members of a community' could be united 'to make a body, bound by a spirit of fraternity.'<sup>14</sup> This fraternal dynamic was acknowledged by one of the Company's first members to be sent out to reside permanently in India as a factor. In writing to the governor and committee to thank them for his position at the Mughal Emperor's court in Agra in 1616, Joseph Salbancke wrote of 'the duty and respect which I owe to your honourable fraternity'.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, a culture of fraternity shaped the Company's early development, in which personal ties between members were thought to be the strongest and most effective for conducting long-distance trade and politics. 'For nothing beside a relation can possibilie resyde actually one & the same and at all times in a companie of men', observed the cleric William Ames in 1615, 'and in all the parts of that companie.'<sup>16</sup> The French theologian and philosopher Pierre Charron agreed. In fact, he argued that amity was specifically 'the invention of alliances, companies, fraternities, colleges and communities.' By forging intimate relationships, the members of these bodies created ties which were 'commodious to the weale-publicke...the preserver of states and policies.'<sup>17</sup> This homogeneity bound members of the Company operating in Asia to their masters in East India House, producing the social capital necessary for the maintenance of trust and loyalty between them.

The money for investment into the Company's joint-stock and the expertise to establish new factories and settlements were both raised through the social obligation between members of the Company's fraternity. For instance, the group of members who

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989), p. 192; Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism*, p. 271.

<sup>14</sup> Lawson, *Politica sacra & civilis*, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Salbancke to the East India Company, Agra, November 1616, in William Foster, ed., *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East* (London, 1900), vol. 16, p. 237 (hereafter *LREIC*).

<sup>16</sup> William Ames, *A second manuduction, for Mr. Robinson. Or a confirmation of the former, in an answer to his manumission* (London, 1615), p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Charron, *Of wisdom: three books written in French by Peter Charro Doctr of Lawe in Paris* (London, 1608), Samson Lennard (trans.), pp. 429-30.

founded Madras in 1639 were described as ‘four gentlemen all sworne brothers’.<sup>18</sup> This dynamic was highlighted by the Parliamentarian William Prynne in 1642 when he declared that the ‘Fundamental Law and originall compact of every...Corporation, Company or Fraternitie...was that every Member of them should contribute proportionably upon all occasions...without which contribution they could be neither a...Coropration, Company, Fraternitie, or have any continuance, or subsistence, at all.’<sup>19</sup> To maintain the trust and obligation inherent in fraternal ties during the Company’s early development, members were encouraged to open their own families up for recruitment. When the *Lawes or Standing Orders* of the Company were first published in 1621, it was declared that each ‘Brother of the Company’ was to make ‘his Sonnes Free of this Society’ on their twenty-first birthday.<sup>20</sup> Thus Francis Smithwick, son of the Committee-man Thomas Smithwick, was ‘made a free brother of this Company by patrimony’ in 1641.<sup>21</sup> These rules maintained the Company’s homogeneity, binding its members, whether in London or Asia, into a vast web of interpersonal relationships, ties and obligations.

These fraternal ties were invoked between members through a ritual of language, practice and routine. For example, members were defined in ordinances, orders and correspondence as ‘Brothers’, referring to themselves as ‘the Brethren’ and to the Company as the ‘Brotherhood’.<sup>22</sup> According to Mary Ann Clawson, the conscious forging of artificial fraternal ties in communities such as the Company was ‘insisted on by their participants, which united these otherwise disparate institutions’.<sup>23</sup> By invoking

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Declaration of Andrew Trumball’, Fort St. George, 18 September 1644, in Henry Davison Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800* (New Delhi, 1996, 4 vols.), vol. 2, pp. 52-53 (hereafter *Vestiges*).

<sup>19</sup> William Prynne, *The Sovereigne Power of Parliaments and Kingdoms* (London, 1642), p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> East India Company, *The Lawes or Standing Orders of the East India Company* (London, 1621), p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/B/20, A Court of Committee, London, 19 August 1641.

<sup>22</sup> For example, see Company, *Lawes or Standing Orders*, p. 80.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Ann Clawson, ‘Early Modern Fraternalism and the Patriarchal Family’, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer, 1980), p. 368.

the ties of kinship to define their relationship between one another, members were able to ‘create and sustain relationships among biologically unrelated individuals’.<sup>24</sup> Thus the governor of Surat reported in 1616 that the success of the new factories in Persia was due entirely to the factors there ‘living together with mutual society of love and unity.’<sup>25</sup> The intimacy and trust fostered by such ties were evident in the letters between members in the first half of the seventeenth century. Expressions of love, amity and fellowship littered the Company’s correspondence. ‘So commending my love and duty to your Worship’, ended one typical letter from a factor at Mocha to Sir Henry Middleton, the Company’s chief in Asia in 1610, ‘I remember my love also to Mr. Fennell, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Green and to all others our good friends with you’.<sup>26</sup> Another, sent between factors residing in different parts of Japan in 1613, asked the recipient to ‘forget me not in your love...whom upon my life you shall find dutiful, honest and true, both to the Company and yourself.’<sup>27</sup>

While connections between members were not always necessarily ones of the utmost intimacy, most members shared some association or degree of familiarity with one another. When a Company fleet arrived in Asia in 1614, carrying a group of new senior officials to take office there, its members were already known to most of those awaiting their arrival. Thomas Aldworthe, chief of Surat, wrote to his ‘Loving friend’ at Agra, Thomas Keridge, informing him of the new arrivals. The senior most one was Nicholas Downton, ‘a man famous and well respected by the Company. He knoweth Nicholas [factor at Surat] and remembers his love unto him. Likewise Mr. Edward Dodsworth, one of the chief men, kin to Sir Thomas Smith [governor of the Company],

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>25</sup> RFSG, *LREIC*, A Commission or Instruction for our loving friends Edward Connock, chief, Tho. Barker, George Pley, Edward Petus, William Tracy, and Mathew Pepwell, in the voyage and employment by God’s grace intended for Persia, Surat, November 1616, vol. 4, p. 224.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Captain Nicholas Downton, Giles Thornton and Hugh Frayne to Sir Henry Middleton, Mocha, 30 January 1610, vol. 1, pp. 52-54.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, J. Saris to Richard Cocks, Road of Fernando in Japan, 5 December 1613, vol. 2, p. 9.

commends his love unto you...and has a letter and a token for you'.<sup>28</sup> Shortly after their arrival, many of the new officials made their way to Keridge at Agra, where he declared 'my love unto the whole company'.<sup>29</sup>

The friendship exhibited in official correspondence between members of the Company went beyond the necessity of formal guidelines for appropriate early modern letter-writing.<sup>30</sup> As Jonathan Barry has shown, members of England's early companies, guilds and liveries operated through 'a set of overtly collective virtues, of sociability and good fellowship'.<sup>31</sup> Strong connections of trust and loyalty tied together members belonging to the socially and commercially homogenous City elite who comprised the Company's senior members. Nicholas Downton, aboard the Company's ship *Peppercorn* in Asia, wrote to his 'Beloved Friends', the governor and court of committee in 1611, describing 'with what great care, pains and charge this journey was set forth by the Indian Company, consisting of many, both of Nobility and merchants of London'.<sup>32</sup> Downton wrote again in 1614 to explain to the governor, Sir Thomas Smith, that he had not accepted the post of general in Asia through 'covetousness', but rather 'the conceit I had of your love, with the love of divers others...drew me...neglecting my own ends, applying myself wholly to yours'.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, when Company members failed in their duties, they considered it to be a 'loss to the Company, and disgrace to ourselves', promising the court of committees to remedy the situation and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Thomas Aldworthe to Thomas Keridge, Surat, 22 October 1614, vol. 2, p. 137-39.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Thomas Keridge to Captain Downton, Agmier, 22 November 1614, vol. 2, p. 182.

<sup>30</sup> For the emergence of 'polite' and 'familiar' letter writing, see Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*.

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort', in Peter Burke, Brian Harrison and Paul Slack, eds., *Civil Histories: Essays present to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford, 2000), p. 98, cited in Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*, p. 178.

<sup>32</sup> RFSG, *LREIC*, 'Nicholas Downton, his opinion, what fit to be done for the time next ensuing', Road of Dabul, 24 February 1611, vol. 1, p. 156.

<sup>33</sup> RFSG, *LREIC*, Captain Nicholas Downton to Sir Thomas Smith, Surat, 20 November 1614, vol. 2, p. 174.

‘win their love’.<sup>34</sup> A tangible sense of familiarity, personal obligation and fraternal duty thus underpinned the functioning of the Company.

From the 1630s, however, growth in the modest size of the fraternity which had fostered such trust began to threaten its homogeneity, and thus the ties which had bound members across Asia to East India House. The substantial amount of capital required by each joint-stock to maintain the Company’s ships, officials, settlements and investments, amounted to almost £3m between 1600 and 1630.<sup>35</sup> Inevitably, the inclusion of those beyond existing networks of fraternal obligation, finance and expertise was necessary if the Company was to continue operating and competing in Asia. As a result, while the fraternity consisted of 132 persons at its first meeting in 1600, over 1,300 individuals had joined the Company by 1630.<sup>36</sup> The vast majority of these were small-scale investors, but some were new shareholders with substantial voting rights, or new committee-men that sat with the governor, or new agents, factors, chiefs and captains sent out to Asia to manage, govern and service the Company’s increasing responsibilities which became substantial. Exports to Asia had seldom exceeded £100,000 a year in the 1630s. But from 1660 onwards this increased sharply, reaching £600,000 in the 1680s.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the acquisition of Madras in 1639, Hugli in 1651, St Helena in 1657, Bombay in 1661, Bencoolen in 1685 and Calcutta in 1690, greatly enlarged the Company’s physical world, and in doing so made the temporal, spatial and personal connections between members more disparate.

This social and political impact such disparateness had upon the Company was most evident on the Coromandel Coast and in the Bay of Bengal. While the Madras

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Samuel Juxon to Sir Thomas Smith, Surat, 2 March 1615, vol. 2, pp. 159-61.

<sup>35</sup> Theodore K. Rabb, ‘Investment in English Overseas Enterprise, 1575-1630’, *Economic History Review*, new series, vol. 19, no. 1 (1966), p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Ron Harris, ‘The Formation of the East India Company as a Cooperation-Enhancing Institution’ (December 2005). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=874406>, pp. 39-40.

<sup>37</sup> K. N. Chaudhuri, ‘Treasure and Trade Balances: the East India Company’s Export Trade, 1660-1720’, *Economic History Review*, vol. 21, no. 3 (December, 1968), p. 482.

agency consisted of sixteen members in 1645, residing in five small trading factories, by 1678 there were seventy-three officials stationed across eight settlements, from large cities like Madras on the Coromandel Coast in the south, to prosperous factories as far north as Patna up the Ganges River in Bengal, almost 1,500 miles away.<sup>38</sup> That the substantial increase in the size of the Company's establishment could lead to a lack of social and political cohesion amongst its members in the Madras agency was commented on by the court of committees in 1668. Having studied the list of officials serving there, the court took under 'serious consideration' the idea that any additional personnel would destabilize the agency, and resolved to 'forbade the sending of such persons this year, & also for the future', they declared to Madras, as it would cause 'our Affaires not to bee well manadged.'<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless the Madras agency continued to grow as new servants were sent in the following years, which the court of committees acknowledged in 1675, observing 'how numerous the people grow'.<sup>40</sup> Signs appeared as early as the mid-seventeenth century that the Company's expansion had outstripped the fraternal obligations and homogenous ties which had traditionally bound it together.

The creation of a permanent joint-stock through a new charter in 1657 represented the most visible and official break in the interpersonal ties of trust between East India House in London and members in Asia. Before the charter, members admitted into the Company, who were almost always known to their new employers beforehand, were required only to take an oath before their departure for Asia. For example, six new members were admitted in October 1641. Four of these were the sons of Alderman Aboy, a committee-man; one the son of William Cockrayne, the deputy-

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<sup>38</sup> Of course the Madras agency was subordinate to Bantam Presidency in the 1640s, which numbered in total 45 persons, see *Vestiges*, vol. 1, p. 59, fn. 1, p. 63. For the growth of the Madras establishment, see BL, APAC, IOR/E/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 23 June 1678. For the settlements which comprised the Madras Agency, see BL, APAC, IOR/B/26, Court of Committees, London, 5 January 1658.

<sup>39</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/87, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 20 November 1668.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 December 1675.

governor of the court of committees; and the last the son of Richard Wick, a factor in Asia. The court met to discuss their applications and declared that they were ‘admitted into the freedom of this Society by Patrimony’.<sup>41</sup> The fact that the court of committees only required these new recruits to swear an oath for their good behaviour – the breaking of which was declared to be ‘of dangerous consequence to the Company’<sup>42</sup> – clearly demonstrates the trust evident in such informal and personal mechanics of employment which defined the relationship between East India House and members departing for Asia.

A visible sign of the breakdown in such trust appeared when the Company became a permanent joint-stock in 1657. A large body of new members, the so-called ‘New Subscribers’, pushed for the abolition of patrimonial service and oath taking.<sup>43</sup> Following an extended debate, the practise was abolished.<sup>44</sup> In its place, more mechanical and direct forms of service were instituted. These took the form of written contracts, such as a covenant of indenture and a bond which had to be signed by two sureties on a new member’s behalf.<sup>45</sup> While the violation of the covenant’s terms exposed the perpetrator to legal prosecution, their guarantors could also be sued by the Company for the amount of the bond. Although their size often changed, bonds were generally worth at the very least £500, and often as much as £2,000.<sup>46</sup> The covenant itself, meanwhile, was a lengthy and detailed document which provided members with a rolling five-year contract of employment and thoroughly delineated all areas of acceptable and unacceptable conduct, especially with regards to private trade.<sup>47</sup> Thus, when Streynsham Master was appointed governor of Madras in 1675, he assured the

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<sup>41</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/B/20, Court of Committees, London, 1 October 1641.

<sup>42</sup> CCM, Court of Committees, 7 August 1639, p. 314.

<sup>43</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/B/23, A General Court of all Freemen, London, 20 November 1657.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Hejeebu, ‘Contract enforcement’, p. 501.

<sup>46</sup> For example, see BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 23 June 1678.

<sup>47</sup> Hejeebu, ‘Contract enforcement’, p. 502.

court of committees that he was ‘bound by Covenants’ to serve them.<sup>48</sup> The transition from informal to formal frameworks of service reflected the changing relationship between East India House in London and its employees sent out to Asia, one in which fraternal ties were replaced by legal contracts between members of an ever expanding and disparate global community.

Global expansion and the creation of a permanent joint-stock had subverted the Company’s homogeneity. The legal case of the East India Company v Thomas Sandys revealed the breakdown in trust, obligation and intimacy between London and Asia. The case was brought before the King’s Bench in 1682 by the merchant Thomas Sandys who intended to trade to Asia in defiance of the Company’s monopoly. When his ship and goods were seized by the Admiralty, Sandys challenged the Company’s charter, declaring it, and all such chartered monopolies, as void.<sup>49</sup> The case was a defining precedent for English political economy, upholding as it did the political, commercial and even moral legitimacy of monopolies. It also reveals the social crisis which had enveloped the Company during its unprecedented expansion from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.

In this ‘Great Case of Monopolies’, as it became known, the counsel for Sandys argued that the East India Company was not capable of monopolizing the Asian trade as it was devoid of those properties which were required for the good governance of trade: trust, obligation and duty.<sup>50</sup> As personal ties between members had been replaced by an impersonal obligation to the joint-stock, Sandys accused the Company of being little

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<sup>48</sup> Streysham Master, *The Diaries of Streysham Master, 1675-1680, and other contemporary papers relating thereto* (London, 1911, 2 vols.), Sir Richard Carnac Temple, ed., vol. 1, pp. 8-10 (hereafter Master, *Diary*).

<sup>49</sup> For an excellent account of the case and its wider implications for English political economy, see Stern, *Company-State*, pp. 46-60.

<sup>50</sup> For a published summary of the Sandys case, see Sir Henry Pollexfen, *The argument of a learned counsel, upon an action of the case brought by the East-India-Company, against Mr. Thomas Sands, an interloper* (London, 1696).

more than ‘the invisible Corporation’, unlike the Levant and Muscovy companies, who sought to be ‘Managers, Regulators, and Improvers of Trade.’ The counsel for Sandys argued that in dealing with members of the Levant Company, ‘you know your Chapman’, unlike those of the East India Company. ‘Every Man, whether Merchant or not, if he can buy such a Share in their Stock, is of their Company.’ As such, the Company was ‘indefinite as to Persons; the Members thereof are daily changeable; some go out, sell their Stocks, or dye’. As members were defined by their contribution to the joint-stock, and not through ties of trust or intimacy, Sandys considered members to be faceless and ‘invisible East-India Merchant[s]’.<sup>51</sup> The bottom line for Sandys was that the Company ‘hath neither Soul nor Conscience’.<sup>52</sup>

These were, of course, extreme arguments in one of the seventeenth century’s most fiercely contested legal battles. But the case of Sandys illustrates how the ties which held the Company together had transitioned from the personal to the impersonal. As the Company expanded, its metropolitan authorities at East India House became increasingly anxious that the loyalty of its members to the interests of the governor and court of committees could no longer be assured. ‘Fraternity’, ‘amity’ and ‘love’ had been replaced by obligation to the covenant. A century later, Edmund Burke described this process as one which ultimately led the Company to violate their own chartered rights. In its ‘subjugation and subsumption of the individual to the dreadful totality of the corporate body’, the Company’s metropolitan authorities at East India House had broken the laws of trust which guaranteed the individual’s ability to pursue its interests.<sup>53</sup> Corporations like the Hudson’s Bay Company had avoided conflict between the ‘public interest’ of the metropole and the ‘private interests’ of officials in Canada by fostering a social structure within the Company which treated members as one large

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 30-2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Murray, ‘Company Rules’, p. 64.

family.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the Company of Merchant Adventurers, one of England's earliest overseas chartered companies, had 'erected amongst themselves a several society, staple college, and confederacy strongly banded together.'<sup>55</sup> The unintended consequence of the breakdown of such social homogeneity within the East India Company by the later seventeenth century led to the emergence of 'disorderly' behaviour amongst members in Asia which fed into metropolitan anxieties and shaped their perception of, and approach towards, 'private interest'.

### **The Emergence of 'Private Interest'**

Long before the Company became a joint-stock corporation in the 1650s, the writer, constitutionalist and M.P. John Hooker had warned of the dangers posed to companies that subordinated its individual members to the 'dreadful totality of the corporate body', as Burke had termed it in retrospect. Addressing an audience of the Company of Merchant Adventurers in Exeter in 1559, to which he was also a member, Hooker declared that the 'fellowship' must come together 'in concorde and unity' by which 'all comonwelthes and all estates are preserved and kept', warning ominously that 'without them all are turned to utter [ruin] and [desolation].'<sup>56</sup> Hooker went on to illustrate his point with Aesop's Fable in which a Scythian father challenged his thirty sons to break a faggot of thirty sticks; when they failed to do so, he ordered each son to break a stick individually. 'As long as ye shall [continue] together within the compasse and bonde of love and unitie', the Scythian told his sons, 'ye shall be strong and

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<sup>54</sup> Ann M. Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, 'Agency Problems in Early Chartered Companies: The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 50, no. 4 (December, 1990), p. 875.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in William E. Lingelbach, *The Internal Organisation of the Merchant Adventurers of England* (Philadelphia, 1903), p. 29.

<sup>56</sup> 'The Oration or Declaration which I, John Vowell al[ia]s Hoker, made by the appointment of Mr. Robert Mydwynter Mayor unto the Comons of the Citie of Exon at the Guildhall the xxvth of Januarie 1559', in William Cotton, *An Elizabethan Guild of the City of Exeter: an account of the proceedings of the Society of Merchant Adventurers, during the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century* (Exeter, 1873), p. 99.

invincible'. If such social ties did indeed unravel, as they had done in the East India Company by the mid-seventeenth century and were threatening to do so a century earlier to the Merchant Adventurers, then Hooker argued that the only way to avoid 'utter ruin' was if members showed complete 'obedience to the Masters and Governors of this Company'.<sup>57</sup>

Replacing informal social ties with formal bonds of obedience was a method increasingly adopted by the masters and governors of the East India Company after the establishment of a permanent joint stock in the later seventeenth century. As the ties which bound members of the Company in Asia to metropolitan authorities at East India House unravelled, the governor and court of committees perceived any deviance from the public interest as a form of disorder or disobedience, a dynamic which led to the widespread emergence of private interest. As the Company was defined through various royal charters as a 'body politick', it considered its servants as public officials with a legal duty to uphold the public interest.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, from the mid-seventeenth century, the upheavals of the English Civil War had brought a shift in the perception or notions of 'public', from an individual person holding a public office, to an 'aggregate of people who made up a particular community'.<sup>59</sup> Thus, as part of a political community, Company servants were expected to aspire to the highest possible aim: the good of the public. Not to do so was therefore considered as dangerous, subversive, corrupt or even evil. The delineation of the public from the private and the resulting demonization of the latter was shaped by a growing articulation of 'national interest' in England. As the Archbishop of York declared in 1702, when promoting the idea of loyal subjects, 'They would have no *Interests* separate from the *Commonwealth*; nor

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-106.

<sup>58</sup> For the Company's royal charters, see below.

<sup>59</sup> Baldwin, 'The "Public" as a Rhetorical Community', p. 201.

would they for the advancing themselves, ever seek the ruin of others.’<sup>60</sup> The governor of Surat, Henry Peppwell, had worried about ‘disobedience’ through the growth of ‘private interest’ when he was charged with enlarging the Company’s presence in the Persian Gulf by founding new factories there. When he dispatched his ‘loving friends’ to staff these new outposts, he instructed them to give priority to the ‘careful government of yourselves’ and to ‘supress all such disorders...each man to other yielding that due respect and right as becometh his place.’<sup>61</sup>

The Company’s metropolitan authorities in London regarded ‘disorder’ as more than mere malfeasance. From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, they conceptualised any behaviour at odds with their orders or policies as a form of disobedience. When the court of committees wrote to Madras to warn them against any ‘disorderly’ behaviour, such as ‘unhandsome & disrespectfull passages in your Letter[s]’, or even exhibiting ‘bad language to their superiours’, they were precise about how this was perceived. ‘You are to understand that by misdemeanour wee doe not mean onely Debaucheries’, they explained in 1678. Rather, ‘disorder’, ‘malfeasance’ and ‘misdemeanour’ were regarded as the willingness ‘of our Servants [to] disobey the orders of their Superiours in reference to our Service’. Such disorderly behaviour, the court of committees concluded, was a sign of ‘unfaithfullnes’ to the Company.<sup>62</sup>

East India House interpreted the spread of ‘disorder’ across their settlements in Asia as a challenge and threat to their own authority. Disobedience, wrote the court of committees to servants in Persia in 1682, was a ‘Palpable crime’.<sup>63</sup> Their understanding of the causal link between ‘disorder’ and ‘disobedience’ was made plain to Governor

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<sup>60</sup> Cited in Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*, p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> RFSG, *LREIC*, A Commission or Instruction for our loving friends Edward Connock, chief, Tho. Barker, George Pley, Edward Petus, William Tracy, and Mathew Pepwell, in the voyage and employment by God’s grace intended for Persia, Surat, November 1616, vol. 4, p. 224.

<sup>62</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 23 June 1678.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Watson, *Foundation for Empire*, p. 162.

Andrews's successor at Surat, Sir George Oxenden. Before leaving for Asia in 1661, he was issued with a set of instructions which stated that 'if any of our Servants shall...prove refractory, or not comply' with his orders, then the new governor was to assume that they intended to 'ffight, or contest with your Authoritie' and therefore he was 'at Liberty to dispose [of] them'.<sup>64</sup> In 1660 the agent of Madras, Thomas Chamber, was accused of acting in an 'irrationall, irregular' manner.<sup>65</sup> This included the expulsion of French priests from the settlement, governing without the consultation of a council and the acquisition of a vast estate from the profits of private trade.<sup>66</sup> Since 1656, Madras had been delegated from an independent presidency to an agency subordinate to Surat.<sup>67</sup> For its governor, Matthew Andrews, Chamber's malfeasance at Madras amounted to insubordination. 'Who made you our Superiour?', Andrews demanded of the agent in 1661. 'You say you have given us timely notice [of your actions]. Wee aske you where you had the Authority to give us timely notice to be obedient to your orders.'<sup>68</sup> In reply, Chamber declared that while Madras might now be subordinate to Surat, he would nonetheless have 'noe Coequall to contend withall in what should be acted on this [Coromandel] Coast and Bay Bengalla.'<sup>69</sup> Although Surat warned Chamber that if he 'Act not better to the Companys Benefit' then they would 'provide for a remedy', the agent argued that Surat's overbearing behaviour had 'turned us [Madras] out to graze in the world and shift for ourselves.'<sup>70</sup> Crucially, while East India

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<sup>64</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/86, Commissions and Instructions for Sir George Oxenden, London, 19 March 1661.

<sup>65</sup> *Vestiges*, Letter of Protest from the President and Council of Surat to Agent Chamber, Surat, 15 December 1662, vol. 1, p. 200.

<sup>66</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/86, Particulars of the severall commands which the East India Company expects Mr Thomas Chambers their late Agent at Fort St George ought to satisfie them, London, 21 February 1662.

<sup>67</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/B/26, Court of Committees, London, 23 December 1656.

<sup>68</sup> *Vestiges*, Letter of Protest from the President and Council of Surat to Agent Chamber, Surat, 15 December 1662, vol. 1, p. 201.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Madras to Surat, Fort St. George, 7 April 1662, vol. 1, p. 201.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter of Protest, Surat, 15 December 1662, vol. 1, p. 201; *ibid.*, Madras to Surat, Fort St. George, 7 April 1662, vol. 1, p. 201.

House did indeed dismiss Chamber as agent of Madras, they also recalled Andrews as governor of Surat and, soon after, the agent for Bengal too, concerned that they might all have been carrying on their ‘owne private designs and Interest...to our greate loss’.<sup>71</sup> The court of committees’ hope that clearing house would put an end to the emergence of ‘private designs and Interest’ amongst members in Asia was quickly dashed. As new settlements were founded and new members sent out to govern them, the lack of obligation and ties between those in Asia and metropolitan authorities at East India House prevented short-term solutions from reversing the breakdown in trust and authority within the Company.

The factional conflict, private malfeasance and the resort to violence amongst members stationed on the Coromandel Coast was understood by East India House as the subversion of the Company’s ‘public interest’ by its members’ ‘private interests’. As order was perceived to have collapsed in Asia, the actions of members there were articulated by the governor and court of committees in London as rebellion against their authority and thus against the Company itself. When Sir Edward Winter succeeded Chamber at Madras as the new agent in 1662, he reported to the court of committees the following year that servants there and throughout the Coast were ‘not soe reall and faythfull to the Company’. Rather, they were ‘carryed on by selfe interest’.<sup>72</sup> Ironically, Sir Edward himself was accused of acting in the same manner by his colleagues at Madras and in 1664 East India House sent a supervisor there to launch an investigation into the agent’s alleged abuse of power.<sup>73</sup> Sir Edward argued that some on his council had formed a faction and fabricated the claims against him. Far from abusing his power, Sir Edward argued, he was able to exercise very little due to the refractory nature of his

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<sup>71</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/86, Particulars of the Companies Demands against Mr Mathew Andrewes, London, 19 March 1661.

<sup>72</sup> *Vestiges*, Madras to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 30 January 1663, vol. 1, p. 211.

<sup>73</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/86, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 16 December 1663.

colleagues. The new supervisor, Nicholas Buckeridge, had been charged with uncovering the ‘divers misdmanadgments and misusages’ of affairs on the Coast.<sup>74</sup> But according to Sir Edward, the supervisor had merely joined with factions opposed to him, which meant that ‘The Agent and the rest after that rate are nothing more then ciphers’. Sir Edward now considered himself to be an ‘Agent of wax’, controlled by his subordinates.<sup>75</sup>

By the end of 1664, the Company’s affairs on the Coromandel Coast were in chaos. While the agent at Madras accused his colleagues at Masulipatam of embezzlement, they in turn attempted to usurp his authority. The Company’s chief at that settlement, William Jearsey, claimed to have received a letter and commission directly from East India House ‘impowering him, and rather making this place [Madras] subordinate to that then that to this’, Sir Edward wrote in a rather anxious manner to the court of committees.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, the council at Madras refused to consent to any order of business directed by Sir Edward. ‘The world is now come to that passe that all are Councillors’, he lamented to London, ‘and there’s scarcely any left to bee Commanded, and less that will obey any thing that is ordered hence.’<sup>77</sup> Finally, Supervisor Buckeridge was attempting to supersede the agent himself. He shut down subordinate factories without consulting the agent, established new ones, such as at Metchlepatam, and opened letters addressed to the agent without informing him.<sup>78</sup> When Sir Edward ordered a chief of a subordinate factory to come to Madras to account for some misdemeanour, Buckeridge cancelled the order. ‘They are tyed together in a string’, Sir Edward declared of the supervisor and the rest of the council. ‘So the Agent leaves them

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Comission & Instructions Given to Mr Nicholas Buckeridge, London, 16 December 1663.

<sup>75</sup> *EFI*, 1661-64, vol. 11, p. 377.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 381.

<sup>77</sup> *Vestiges*, Madras to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 12 January 1665, vol. 1, p. 221.

<sup>78</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/40/3, Sir Edward Winter to Thomas Winter, Fort St George, 12 January 1665.

to doe their worke, and hee will doe his.’<sup>79</sup> As the Company’s administration on the Coast ground to a halt, political authority all but collapsed. Settlements vied for jurisdiction, chiefs, agents and supervisors contested seniority, and all commercial and political affairs were left to flounder. Despairing of the situation around him, Sir Edward advised the court of committees that matters would be better managed if institutions were built and regulations put in place ‘among us that every man might know his place’.<sup>80</sup> Despite being himself both the cause and victim of such ‘disorder’ and ‘private interest’, Sir Edward nonetheless acknowledged that without the establishment of a strict hierarchy, ‘disobedience’ to East India house would continue to flourish on the Coromandel Coast.

Before East India House could heed their agent’s advice and act upon it by developing the state apparatus at Madras which would enforce obedience to the governor and court of committees, events deteriorated rapidly, threatening the continuance of the Company on the Coast altogether. When Supervisor Buckeridge returned to England in 1665, he took with him a lengthy document containing the main accusations against Sir Edward as agent. The most serious was the charge that he ruled Madras through an Indian merchant named Timmanna who ‘had risen to absolute power, which he had consistently abused in Winter’s interest.’<sup>81</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Company sent out a new agent, George Foxcroft, to replace Sir Edward and therefore ‘to settle and compose all differences’.<sup>82</sup> Demoted to second of council, Sir Edward resented his replacement and sought constantly to undermine the new agent by implementing a strategy previously used against him: the formation of a faction to disrupt government. Once again the Company’s establishment on the Coast ground to a

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<sup>79</sup> *EFI*, 1661-64, vol. 11, p. 378.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, Affidavit furnished by William Hutchins, London, 15 March 1667, vol. 11, p. 389.

<sup>82</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/86, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 21 December 1664.

halt through what East India House described as ‘such discord and Annimosities’.<sup>83</sup> Events at Madras would prove to be far worse than feelings of animosity between servants, however. As the court of committees complained to Madras of ‘discord’, a rebellion broke out against the authority of East India House in the settlement that would transform the way in which the Company’s metropolitan authorities approached the future government of their affairs and, ultimately, their servants in Asia.

In September 1665, Sir Edward Winter launched a *coup d’etat* and seized control of Fort St. George by force, killing several factors and imprisoning Agent Foxcroft and his son on the falsified charge that they had used ‘severall seditious and treasonable words...against his now Majestie Charles the Second, King of England’ at the public table during dinner.<sup>84</sup> In alliance with the commander of the garrison and several councillors, Sir Edward governed Madras ‘with tyranny’.<sup>85</sup> He ‘did burne the faces, drub and otherwise punish’ those who ‘would not subscribe to comply with him and justifie his usurpation’, according to one witness,<sup>86</sup> while Foxcroft himself, smuggling letters out of his prison to Chief Jearsey at Masulipatam, states that Sir Edward ‘cruelly and barbarously burnt and mangled and cut the bodies’ of those who opposed him, proceeding to have them ‘disgracefully turned out of towne while they were sore with their wives and families, to shift for themselves.’<sup>87</sup> Many more were seized and imprisoned without cause.<sup>88</sup> The purging and bloodletting was part of an attempt by Sir Edward to prevent any news from reaching East India House, ‘by which he would keep you from all true intelligence’, Foxcroft informed the court of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1665.

<sup>84</sup> *Vestiges*, This is a true and Faithfull Copy of the Narrative of what hapned, published in Fort St. George since the time of these Disasters, Fort St. George, September 1665, vol. 1, p. 225-27.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., George Foxcroft to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 26 September 1665, vol. 1, p. 231.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., Jeremy Sambrooke’s Depositions, London, 1671, vol. 1, p. 242.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., George Foxcroft to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 8 September 1666, vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>88</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/40/3, Captain Hutchins Deposition, Surat, 15 March 1666.

committees.<sup>89</sup> Sir Edward's motive in seizing Madras, he concluded to them, was 'to nest himself in this Fort and not to obey any of your Commands.'<sup>90</sup>

Sir Edward's efforts to prevent correspondence from escaping Madras was effective enough to forestall knowledge of events there from being known for almost two years. Rumours abounded and circulated around Asia and back to East India House: a Catholic priest had stirred up a mutiny and now ruled Madras; Sir Edward had killed Foxcroft and intended to deliver the town and fort up to the Dutch; Sir Edward had clapped all of the Europeans in irons and governed Madras through 'his black Guards'.<sup>91</sup> In a letter to the court of committees, Sir Edward sent his own narrative of events to East India House wherein the *coup* was presented as a 'revolution', justified through Foxcroft's alleged anti-royalist declarations.<sup>92</sup> This claim polarised reactions amongst the Company's other settlements in Asia. While the governor of Surat issued a proclamation condemning Sir Edward and his seizure of power, the governor of Bombay came out in favour of Sir Edward and issued his own proclamation in 1668 against the imprisoned Foxcroft.<sup>93</sup> Others, such as Benjamin Brond, purser of the Company's ship *Greyhound*, stormed Fort St. George in the hopes of releasing Foxcroft, although the attempt failed and his small party of sixteen English soldiers were imprisoned by Sir Edward. 'I hope your honours will not passe by such murderers and usurpers of your power', Brond wrote to the court of committees shortly after.<sup>94</sup>

The first report of events at Madras was received at East India House in 1667, by way of letters from Surat. Despite not knowing the full extent of the situation, the court of committees nonetheless understood the calamitous consequences any

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<sup>89</sup> *Vestiges*, George Foxcroft to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 8 September 1666, vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, Surat to Court of Committees, Surat, 26 March 1667, vol. 1, p. 251.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, This is a true and Faithfull Copy of the Narrative of what hapned, published in Fort St. George since the time of these Disasters, Fort St. George, September 1665, vol. 1, p. 225-27.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 251-52.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, Benjamin Brond to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 14 October 1666, vol. 1, pp. 250-51.

usurpation of their authority would have had for the Company. ‘The...Actions of Sir Edward Winter & his Compliances, hath very much troubled us, in that it hath distracted our affairs, and wee cannot but feare, will in ye closures, bee to our great losse & damage.’<sup>95</sup> At first they wrote to Madras to exhort Sir Edward to reinstate Foxcroft as agent, and, to prevent ‘further Acts of disobedience’, also gained a proclamation from King Charles II ‘requiring all persons to returne to their obedience’ to the Company.<sup>96</sup> When this was ignored, East India House despatched a squadron of warships to Madras in 1668, with the court of committees instructing its admiral ‘to shew those wch are wth ye Mutineers, the great Inconveniencies & Dangers, that they have themselves into, by persisting in such rebellious practises to Our Sovereign & disobedience to us.’<sup>97</sup> In the event, Sir Edward surrendered peacefully after the fleet had arrived.<sup>98</sup> But the ‘rebellion at Madras’, as it was immediately described by the court of committees, was followed by six similar rebellions before the end of the century, most notably at Bombay in 1683 and St Helena in 1684.<sup>99</sup> Together, they convinced the Company’s metropolitan authorities at East India House that only by building the institutions and systems which would create a strong, centralised state in Asia could private interests be kept in check by procuring the obedience and subordination of servants, one to another, and in turn, to East India House itself. In the wake of Sir Edward’s rebellion on the Coromandel Coast, the court of committees attempted to build such a state.

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<sup>95</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 26 August 1667.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 January 1667.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 January 1668.

<sup>98</sup> *Vestiges*, vol. 1, p. 255-59.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Madras to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 12 November 1668, vol. 1, p. 264. For Bombay, see Stern, *Company-State*, pp. 64-7; for St Helena, see Hudson Ralph Janisch, ed., *Extracts from the St. Helena Records* (St. Helena, 1885), pp. 29-32.

## Public Interest and the Discourse of State Building

In Britain in the seventeenth century, the gentry responded to the widening gulf between themselves and the lower orders of society by attempting to subordinate them into greater constitutional and legal regulatory frameworks through which ‘they were bound to abide’.<sup>100</sup> East India House similarly sought to address the emergence of what it perceived as ‘private interest’ amongst its servants following the Madras rebellion. It did so by acquiring greater powers with which it hoped to regulate members of the Company operating in Asia and thus in future to bind them to the ‘public interest’. But the rules, orders and laws which comprised such regulation could only be effective – let alone legitimate and legal – if backed up by the necessary political authority. The need for a strong, central body politic to regulate and uphold order was seen as essential if the Company was to grow and expand. Indeed, the sole reason for the creation of ‘Bodies Politick’, according to the cleric George Lawson in 1689, was to achieve order ‘in a Society, or collective, as in a Family, Kindred, Congregation, Corporation, Community.’<sup>101</sup> James Harrington acknowledged this in his *Oceana* in 1656 when he asked: ‘What can a number of Men coming into a Society regulated by certain Laws, Constitutions, or Form, be but a Corporation?’<sup>102</sup> It was a view shared by the theologian Richard Baxter. In 1667, he argued that without political power, a society would have been just ‘a Community I mean a company of men that have yet set up no Government among them.’<sup>103</sup> For a ‘company of men’ stretched by global expansion, it was essential for East India House to develop the state apparatus that would allow it to control its own members. This was the opinion of Benjamin Hoadly in 1715 when he wrote that ‘a

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<sup>100</sup> Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson, eds., *Order & Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> George Lawson, *Politica sacra & civilis, or, A model of civil and ecclesiastical government* (London, 1689), p. 48.

<sup>102</sup> John Toland, ed., *The Oceana of James Harrington and his other works* (London, 1700), p. 396.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Baxter, *The reasons of the Christian religion* (London, 1667), p. 52.

Company of Men without civil government cannot have magisterial executive power.<sup>104</sup>

The latter, then, had to be acquired if East India House hoped to establish the regulatory frameworks in Asia which would contain and subordinate the ‘private interest’ of its disparate and rapidly growing member base.

As Stern has recently shown, the ‘magisterial’ power needed to create systems of regulation was acquired by the Company through charters with ever wider ranging powers from the English Crown, as well as the various Asiatic rulers in whose jurisdiction the Company’s settlements resided.<sup>105</sup> The Company’s first charter in 1600, granted by Elizabeth I, established a joint-stock with a monopoly over trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope. Significantly, it also created a ‘Body Corporate and Politick’.<sup>106</sup> In this capacity the Company could ‘make, ordain or establish any such Laws, Constitutions, Orders or Ordinances...for the good Government...of all Factors, Masters, Mariners and other Officers’.<sup>107</sup> This included the authority to punish offenders with fines, imprisonment and corporal punishment.<sup>108</sup> While no doubt sweeping in the powers it granted to the Company, the first charter was for fifteen years only. Not until the charter ultimately issued by Oliver Cromwell in 1657 was the Company created a permanent joint-stock.<sup>109</sup>

The Lord Protector secured the Company’s future and confirmed those sovereign powers which allowed it to legislate for its members. However, the Company still lacked the means and legitimacy to uphold these beyond the Cape of Good Hope, specifically where its members and settlements operated within the sovereign

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<sup>104</sup> J. Hoadly, ed., *The works of Benjamin Hoadly, DD.* (London, 1777, 3 vols.), II, pp. 275-6.

<sup>105</sup> For the Company’s ‘dual sovereignty’, see Philip J. Stern, “‘A Politie of Civill & Military Power’: Political Thought and the Late Seventeenth-Century Foundations of the East India Company-State”, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 47 (April, 2008), pp. 253-83.

<sup>106</sup> See Stern, *Company-State*.

<sup>107</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/A/1/2, Charter granted by Queen Elizabeth, to the Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East-Indies’, 31 December 1600.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 46.

jurisdiction of foreign powers, such as the Mughal Empire. A new charter, therefore, was granted by Charles II in 1661 which reinforced and expanded the Company's authority in Asia. This was received 'from the King to command all English in India to yield obedience to the Company's Agents...living in conformity to the Company's orders.'<sup>110</sup> Simultaneously, a series of *firman*s were agreed with local rulers which invested the Company with jurisdiction over any Britons 'that may dwell or reside in any of their dominions' there.<sup>111</sup> Anti-monopolists who opposed the Company resented the political power it had acquired both in Europe and Asia. In 1655 Thomas White described the Company as a 'slight imitation' of a government because 'it is not as [if] they are heads of such [political] Communities, but as they participate of Sovereignty by privilege, or accident.'<sup>112</sup> Such attacks merely served to confirm the significant state-building powers then enjoyed by the Company, autonomous of the English state. By the late seventeenth century, the Company had acquired the means and legitimacy to regulate, order and legislate for its 'disorderly' members in Asia. As Sir Josiah Child, chairman of the court of directors, explained in 1687, its charters and *firman*s allowed the Company to 'claim the sovereignty' over its settlements, and 'govern by our own laws' its members residing there.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, the building of 'a Politie of civill & military power' would be 'the foundation of a large well grounded sure English Dominion in India for all time to come.'<sup>114</sup> Or, as one critic put it, the Company in Asia would become 'another Common-Wealth'.<sup>115</sup>

The model of such a state was shaped by a discourse of governance which the Company developed from the legal authority and political power gained from various

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<sup>110</sup> CCM, Court of Committees, 14 February 1662, vol. 6, p. 183.

<sup>111</sup> Cited in Stern, *Company-State*, p. 59.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas White, *The Grounds of Obedience and Government* (London, 1655), p. 51.

<sup>113</sup> Cited in S. V. Desika Char, *Readings in the Constitutional History of India, 1757-1947* (New Delhi, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>114</sup> Cited in Stern, 'A Politie of Civil and Military Power', p. 282.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

sovereign princes, both European and Asian, in the late seventeenth century. This model was informed by processes and ideologies of governance within the domestic English state in this period. The works of contemporary political economists, theologians, philosophers, social theorists and political scientists, exalted the organisation of society into a hierarchy for the achieving of social, political, economic and religious order.<sup>116</sup> This emerging discourse was shaped by political developments in England, such as the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution. Contemporaries believed in a ‘Cosmic Harmony’ which consisted of ‘an interlocking and interdependent scheme of created things existing in a natural hierarchy.’<sup>117</sup> In the late seventeenth century, a staggering breadth of work was published articulating the duties of obedience by lesser members of hierarchies to their superiors, through a prism of historical and biblical precedent and evidence. As the theologian Richard Baxter observed in his survey of contemporary forms of government in 1667, there were just two such types: those which existed for the common good, and those which imposed order. ‘The Government of *Societies* is always immediately for the *Order* of the *Society*’, he concluded, ‘But not always for their good, much less *chiefly*.’<sup>118</sup> Early modern England was a hierarchical society built upon the extraction of obedience from one group by another. This was made abundantly clear through the work of men such as Gregory King, who quantified the classes of England and their wealth in 1688, and Guy Miege, who surveyed English society in 1702 and defined dozens of individual ranks which formed a strict hierarchy, from ‘Viscounts’ to those who received ‘their Livelihood after a Mechanick Way.’<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> For example, see Robert Eccleshall, ‘Richard Hooker’s Synthesis and the Problem of Allegiance’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Jan. – Mar., 1976), pp. 115-16.

<sup>117</sup> James Daly, ‘Cosmic Harmony and Political Thinking in Early Stuart England’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 69, no. 7 (Oct., 1979), p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> Baxter, *Christian religion*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>119</sup> Gregory King, *Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England* (London, 1696); Guy Miege, *The New State of England under our Present Monarch K. William III* (London, 3 vols., 1702), vol. 2, p. 152.

To contemporaries, however, hierarchy was neither a capitalist formation nor a political construct. Rather, it was a divinely ordained form of social organisation which found its legitimacy in nature and represented the only possible route to achieving order.<sup>120</sup> In 1667, the year Winter's rebellion at Madras was discovered by East India House, the English theologian Richard Baxter argued that the entire social landscape of the early modern period was organised as a natural hierarchy. In all the 'rational world', he explained, 'there are Rulers and Subjects, Masters and Servants, Tutors and Scholars, which all are Governours or Governed.' According to Baxter, without the obedience which defined the relationship between these groups, 'there is no Government'.<sup>121</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, social insubordination was regarded as a cancer which would destroy the body politic.<sup>122</sup> The importance of hierarchy to every possible form of order, whether social, political, economic or even religious, could not be exaggerated. Samuel Rutherford unsettled his fellow Englishmen in 1656 when he asked the disconcerting question: 'When sacred Hierarchy, the order instituted by Christ, is overthrown, what is the condition of sovereignty?'<sup>123</sup> The answer for contemporaries was disobedience and disorder. In 1645 the Parliamentarian William Prynne believed that the lack of hierarchy in 'our Armies, Parishes, Cities, Churches, Families, Parliaments, Kingdome' would ultimately 'sunder all relations' between members of society. The lack of relations, concluded Prynne, 'subverts the very pillars, foundations of all Government'.<sup>124</sup> Hierarchy was therefore believed to be necessary to ensure order, the only condition in which a state could function effectively.<sup>125</sup> So it was

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<sup>120</sup> Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689-1727* (Oxford, 2000), p. 74.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Baxter, *The reasons of the Christian religion* (London, 1667), pp. 40-42.

<sup>122</sup> Hindle, *State and Social Changes*, pp. 236-37.

<sup>123</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *A treatise of civil policy: being a resolution of forty three questions concerning prerogative, right and priviledge, in reference to the supream prince and the people* (London, 1656), p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> William Prynne, *Truth triumphing over falshood, antiquity over novelty*, (London, 1645), p. 150.

<sup>125</sup> John Walter, 'The English People and the English Revolution Revisited', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 61 (Spring, 2006), pp. 179-180.

that the East India Company, as a ‘Common-Wealth’ suffering from ‘disorder’, attempted to construct the state apparatus necessary to subordinate its members, legitimated through a political discourse which believed that order and obedience was a naturally ordained condition, and the true ends of the state. As Julia Adams has noted when exploring the colonial state-building efforts of the early modern Dutch Republic, ‘a state can be said to be constituted when regulation and (in the last instance) coercion are anchored in...organization’.<sup>126</sup>

Organized coercion, then, replaced doctrines of ‘fraternity’ and ‘amity’ following the collapse of the ‘public interest’ at Madras in the 1660s, a process which prompted metropolitan authorities to build what the historian Michael Mann has called the ‘infrastructural power’ necessary for the projection of political authority.<sup>127</sup> For instance, in 1667 the court of committees instructed ‘all persons within ye lymitts of that Agency [Madras] of what degree or quality soever, doe yeild obedience to [the agent] & the Counsell’.<sup>128</sup> The officials sent out on the warships to replace the rebellious agent in 1668 were instructed ‘to reduce to obedience’ those at Madras and to set up ‘ye orderly governmt of your selves’.<sup>129</sup> In the wake of the rebellion, the Company sought to subordinate members into hierarchies which would produce order in Asia, therefore binding them to the Company’s ‘public interest’ while supressing their own private ones. ‘We require all persons to observe our Orders’, the court of committees declared in 1670, ‘in our settlement of each person, as to place & precedency, without continuing or making any new disturbance concerning the same.’<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Adams, *Familial State*, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge, 1993, 2 vols.), vol. 2, pp. 59-61.

<sup>128</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/87, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 31 January 1667.

<sup>129</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 January 1668.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, Court of Committees to Masulapatam, London, 29 November 1670.

The foundations of such a model of state building was an attempt by East India House to enforce a culture of obedience throughout the Company. For example, the committee-men who sat with the governor and had originally been addressed as 'Your Worship', were now predominantly referred to as 'Honourable Masters', while they regarded members sent out to Asia as 'our servants'.<sup>131</sup> One proprietor bemoaned this transition in a general court, observing that he 'thought that the Secretary, Auditors, and Accountants were the Company's officers, but he now finds that they are servants of the Court of Committees'.<sup>132</sup> It was hoped by the committees that the master-servant dynamic would reinforce the principles of hierarchy and define the relationship between members. Such a model aimed to convert the committees into 'manorial lords who farmed their own demesnes', in that they would be reliant on a rigid hierarchy to ensure maximum control over their disparate community of members, even at the cost of profit.<sup>133</sup> When, in a letter, one agent addressed himself to the court of committees as an equal, he was scolded accordingly: 'Wee have more grounds to write [you] in a higher Stile then [you] have presumed to doe to us, and for the future wee expect that you manage your pen with more respect'.<sup>134</sup> East India House hoped that such a hierarchical culture would, over time, shape members in Asia into obedient servants, devoted to the 'public interest' of their masters in London.

In the Madras Agency, East India House sought to create hierarchies through a process of empowering senior servants with public authority which flowed directly from the Crown through the Company's new charters. Before his rebellion, East India House had rebuffed Sir Edward's request in 1664 for a 'Strict Mandate' which would force 'all

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<sup>131</sup> Philip Stern, 'Corporate Virtue: the Languages of Empire in Early Modern British Asia', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2012), p. 521.

<sup>132</sup> CCM, Quarterly General Court, 6 February 1635, p. 18.

<sup>133</sup> S. R. H. Jones and Simon P. Ville, 'Efficient Transactors or Rent-Seeking Monopolists? The Rationale for Early Chartered Trading Companies', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 56, no. 4 (December, 1996), p. 899.

<sup>134</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 15 December 1676.

our subordinate Factors to observe [his] Inimations’, as they believed that agents and governors in Asia already possessed ‘sufficient power formerly’ to enforce this.<sup>135</sup> However, following Sir Edward’s rebellion, the court of committees retrospectively acted on this plea, empowering future agents of Madras with the authority to construct a more formal and concrete hierarchy which, they hoped, would produce obedience in their subordinates and would, in turn, establish ‘order’ and ‘stability’ throughout the Company’s settlements in Asia. The court of committees wrote to Sir Edward’s successor, George Foxcroft, that they had ‘searched our Charter [of 1661], wherein we find that...Governours...have power to exequite Judgement in all Causes Civill and Criminall.’<sup>136</sup> To provide Foxcroft with access to this judicial power, they elevated him from agent to the more substantial and eligible office of governor, increasing his authority and legitimizing his new legal position.<sup>137</sup> After his release from prison and reinstatement in 1668, Foxcroft exercised the new powers his governorship brought, summoning Madras’s first grand jury to try the wife of a Company servant who was accused of murder.<sup>138</sup>

In the immediate years following Sir Edward’s rebellion, the ‘public’ discourses of state building projected by East India House appeared, to an extent, to transfer in practice to Asia. In providing the governor of Madras with the means to enforce his authority and punish what he perceived to be the criminal proceedings of those under his jurisdiction meant that Foxcroft’s successor, Sir William Langhorn, endured little factional strife on the scale suffered by his predecessors. Indeed, the most notable act of disobedience was occasioned by the use of obscenities by a factor in public and his

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 December 1664.

<sup>136</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/87, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 10 March 1665.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> For the origin of the judiciary at Madras and the case of Ascentia Dawes, see Arthur Mitchell Fraas, “‘They Have Travelled Into a Wrong Latitude’: The Laws of England, Indian Settlements, and the British Imperial Constitution 1726-1773’ (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 2011), pp. 26-8.

throwing a brick through the window of another factor's home. 'All in our Service must behave themselves with due Respect to there Superiours', wrote the court of committees to the governor following this incident.<sup>139</sup> The new governor used this period of stability and order of this period to resolve pressing issues with surrounding Asian rulers, such as the confirmation of all of the Company's rights to Madras from the King of Golconda in 1674, as well as ending the long-running 'town rent' dispute in 1676.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, Langhorn was able to rebuild the city's fortifications which had, in many places, been allowed to fall into disrepair.<sup>141</sup>

Convinced that 'private interest' had been flattened beneath their newly consolidated hierarchy at Madras, the court of committees capitalised on the situation by seeking to subordinate its lower levels, too. In 1668, Madras was informed that no more adult or senior officials would be sent out from Europe. Rather, they would only seek to despatch youths so that they could be trained up from an early period to be 'sober, Industrious & faithfull'. Furthermore, to ensure the subservience of the youths and to create ties of obligation and patronage, the court of committees decided to leave the power to appoint and promote them in the hands of governors and their councils.<sup>142</sup> Through the introduction of a grading system for those outside of the council in 1675, it was hoped that junior officials would become subordinated into a more formal and structured hierarchy. The youths were to become apprentices, established on £5 per annum, and after seven years' service to become writers. After a year as the latter, they were promoted to factor on £20 per annum. Senior to factors were merchants on £40 per annum, rising to senior merchant on £50.<sup>143</sup> These various levels of seniority outwardly confirmed the subordinate status of those below the council, while also providing

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<sup>139</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

<sup>140</sup> See *Vestiges*, vol. 1, pp. 343-57.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 362.

<sup>142</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 20 November 1688

<sup>143</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

incentive for good conduct by progressing up the various levels.<sup>144</sup> Members of the council themselves, meanwhile, were identified as a sacrosanct group within this hierarchy. ‘Because we are resolved to keep a good and orderly Government’, declared one governor of Madras, everyone, ‘particularly the Factors and Writers’, had to pay the utmost respect ‘to any and even the lowest of the Council.’<sup>145</sup>

### **The Limits of Public State Building**

Unfortunately for East India House, what appeared to be the triumph of ‘public interest’ by the 1670s turned out to be little more than the failure to understand the transformation undertaken by the ‘private interest’ of its servants operating in Asia in the years following the Madras rebellion. Instead of outright rejection of metropolitan authority through the use of coercion and violence, Company servants started to work within the new political system of hierarchies and institutions. Indeed, Company servants maintained the façade of obedience to the ‘public interest’ while mitigating, undermining and ultimately subverting the state building efforts of their masters in London for their own private ends. This was particularly so during the governorship of Streynsham Master, a period which, outwardly, appeared to represent the full realisation of public discourses of state building within the Company. Master spent his governorship attempting to put into practice the rhetoric of his employers in London, building the key judicial, political, bureaucratic and social institutions in the Madras agency which East India House hoped would maintain their authority there and prevent any future outbreak of ‘private interest’. However, as shall be seen, ‘private interest’ not only survived Master’s formalisation of the ‘public interest’, but flourished through its manipulation and commandeering of the vastly expanded political authority such

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<sup>144</sup> Hejeebu, ‘Contract enforcement’, p. 502.

<sup>145</sup> Cited in Love, *Vestiges*, vol. 1, p. 460.

institutions delegated to Company servants in Asia. When Master was replaced as governor of Madras in 1680, he left behind him not the strong, public foundations of a centralised state, but a series of powerful colonial regimes under the control of influential individuals pursuing their own policies and interests.

In 1676 the court of committees appointed Streyنشam Master to succeed Governor Langhorn with the specific mandate to carry out the subordination of servants of the Madras agency into the fledgling hierarchy. During his period as governor, Master was directed to address the ‘disorderly practices of some of our people.’<sup>146</sup> He was to do so by the ‘use and exercise [of] all such other power and Authorities as by his Majesties Royall Charter’.<sup>147</sup> His commission provided more power for promoting or demoting and fining or punishing Company officials in the Madras agency, as well as the administering of new oaths, or, most importantly, dismissal from the Company altogether.<sup>148</sup> The court of committees declared to Master upon his departure for Asia in 1675, that he must ensure their servants ‘conforme, submitt and yeild obedience’ to him as their delegated agent in India.<sup>149</sup> If servants in the Madras agency could no longer be bound together through love and amity, then their subordination into a hierarchy would ensure that the Company’s ‘public interest’ would not be subverted ‘by their Divisions.’<sup>150</sup> Over the next five years, Master attempted to strengthen, consolidate and expand East India House’s hold over Madras through the establishment of new social, bureaucratic, judicial and political institutions, all of which sought to formalise the Company’s hierarchy.

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<sup>146</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Commission and Instructions for Streyنشam Master, London, 24 December 1675.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., Commission and Instructions for Streyنشam Master, London, 24 December 1675.

When Master arrived at Madras in 1676, he summoned all Company servants to the council chamber and read aloud his commission, emphasising his intent to enforce the hierarchy put in place by his predecessors.<sup>151</sup> The new governor did not wait long before pursuing this intention. At one of his first consultations, he instructed for copies of orders and rules for the ‘Christian and sober Comportment’ of all Company servants to be hung up in public spaces and to be ‘duly observed.’<sup>152</sup> These rules, which were quickly known throughout the Madras agency as the ‘Company’s Ten Commandments’, prohibited swearing and drinking while making attendance at divine service obligatory.<sup>153</sup> To underline these, Master forcefully closed down all the taverns and ‘punch houses’ operating in the city at the same time as he established the first Anglican church there, St. Mary’s.<sup>154</sup> By seeking a reformation of manners at Madras, Master hoped that its servants would conduct themselves in a more orderly, obedient fashion. These rules were compounded by the keeping of a public table. Previously, each Company servant was issued diet expenses: an allowance for food, upkeep and housing. In 1676, however, this was abolished in favour of all Company servants dining together at a public table in the governor’s chamber. East India House believed it would help subordinate the younger servants ‘by enjoying so good an example, and preventing them from keeping ill Company’.<sup>155</sup> At the public table, manners could be enforced, order maintained, and the settlement’s social hierarchy – which was inextricably linked with its political one - visually displayed.<sup>156</sup> To this end, the governor sat at the head of the table, attended by a retinue which included a band of musicians, while the

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<sup>151</sup> Master, *Diary*, Consultation, Fort St. George, 11 August 1676, vol. 1, p. 286.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, Consultation, Fort St. George, 31 August 1675, p. 304.

<sup>153</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 16 December 1675.

<sup>154</sup> For the forceful closure of the punch houses, see *ibid.*, p. 305. For the establishment of St. Mary’s Church, see *Vestiges*, vol. 1, pp. 423-7.

<sup>155</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

<sup>156</sup> Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, ‘Grids of power: order, hierarchy and subordination’, in Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 31.

councillors sat either side of him according to their seniority, and the rest in descending order: senior merchants, merchants, factors, writers and finally apprentices dining at the bottom of the table.<sup>157</sup> The public table, then, was used as a site to effect the reformation of manners, but also one in which the top levels of the hierarchy could impress their status and seniority over subordinates. To that end, the custom of having an umbrella carried over a person's head as a sign of respect and privilege was ordered by Master to be reserved only for the governor and the three most senior members of his council.<sup>158</sup>

Master also sought to reform the administration and government of Madras in an effort to facilitate the subordination of servants into the agency's hierarchy. The governor ordered that, in future, all superiors should 'be addressed with a becoming respect, as becomes servants to their Masters...They are always to be wrote in a Submissive stile'. Precise instructions on how future letters should be written to governors and committees were circulated throughout the agency.<sup>159</sup> At the same time, servants were urged to create uniformity in the writing and keeping of consultation books, trade registers and political correspondence, while the *ad hoc* convening of consultation meetings was replaced with scheduled meetings every Monday and Thursday.<sup>160</sup> By regulating the practice of writing, accounting, bookkeeping and decision making, Master hoped to delineate the individual responsibilities and obligations of each servant, one to another, and to the Company's affairs as a whole, creating a 'public space' in which 'private interest' could be kept at bay.<sup>161</sup> Finally, disruptions to public business by private conflicts between servants were to be avoided

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<sup>157</sup> Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in 18<sup>th</sup> Century India* (Oxford, 1963), p. 11.

<sup>158</sup> Master, *Diary*, Streynsham Master to William Langhorn, Fort St. George, 12 August 1676, vol. 1, p. 295.

<sup>159</sup> Master, *Diary*, Proposals for some Alterations in the Honourable Companies Accompts, Kasimbazar, 4 November 1676, vol. 2, pp. 6-7.

<sup>160</sup> For Streynsham Master's reform of bookkeeping and administration, see the excellent account by Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, pp. 67-103.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-83.

by placing them within a legal framework where resolution was both more likely and more legitimate. Master strengthened the Choultry Court, which dealt with civil cases such as land disputes, by increasing the number of justices, and used the Company's wider powers granted by the charter issued by Charles II in 1661 to establish the settlement's first Court of Judicature.<sup>162</sup> The latter, acting as both a Superior Court and a Court of Appeal, was convened by the governor and council sitting every Wednesday and Saturday in the chapel to 'hear and judge all Causes'.<sup>163</sup> This new court was serviced by the introduction of various judicial offices, such as that of constable, clerk and marshal. On its first day of sitting, in April 1678, the trial for two murder cases, which had been pending for over a year, were begun.<sup>164</sup>

The supremacy of the 'public interest' in Asia could not be assured through the reform of Madras alone, however. As long as 'disorder' and 'private interest' went unchecked in other factors and settlements within the jurisdiction of the Madras agency – one which stretched across the Bay of Bengal as far as Patna on the Ganges – East India House could not be certain that a repeat of Sir Edward's rebellion at Madras would not happen elsewhere. The 'public interest' in Bengal, in particular, had long been 'impeded by the differences among our servants there', as East India House observed in 1676. The breakdown of authority amongst those factories subordinate to Madras, both at Masulipatnam and, more widely, throughout Bengal, was noted by Master as he toured them in the following years, reporting to the court of committees that their factionalism and quarrels were 'the Hazzard and peril of your whole trade in the Bay Bengala'.<sup>165</sup> The factories at Kasimbazar and Ballasore, for example, were hotbeds of 'discontent', 'disorder' and 'disobedience'. Hugli, to whom they were

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<sup>162</sup> See *Vestiges*, vol. 1, p. 404.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 405.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 406-7.

<sup>165</sup> Master, *Diary*, Streyntsham Master to Court of Committees, Kasimbazar, 28 October 1676, vol. 1, p. 490.

subordinate, had attempted to address the situation by removing their refractory chiefs. But when they attempted to transfer the chief of Ballasore, Joseph Hall, in 1670, first to Patna, further up the Ganges river, and then to Hugli itself where he could be under more immediate supervision, he simply ignored their orders and spent 'the whole monsoone' trading privately. His administration of Ballasore had been characterised by tyranny and violence. In one incident, Hall had a member of his council bound, stripped naked, beaten with a cane and expelled from the settlement. 'He has constantly, ever since his arrivall in Bengala, binn a Contemner of the Honourable Companyes Chiefs', the chief of Hugli, Matthias Vincent, complained in 1676, 'endeavouring to clandestine meanes to animate and Creat factions and partyes to their disquiete, and the Honourable Companyes disreputation, and to the great prejudice of their affaires.'<sup>166</sup> Master attempted to enforce East India House's authority over the settlements in Bengal by using the same process he had recently applied at Madras: subordinating them into a strict hierarchy under the authority of a powerful governor.

The court of committees had urged Master to regulate the haphazard relationship between Madras and its subordinate settlements by having them channel all correspondence through the former.<sup>167</sup> It was hoped that, by making Madras the gateway through which their actions and affairs were transmitted to the court of committees, the subordinate settlements would be more obedient and obliging. It also meant that their conduct was more immediately available for the governor's scrutiny. But Master intended to do more than reform correspondence and letter writing. For the first time in the agency's history, the governor inspected every one of its settlements, undertaking two tours of the agency in 1676 and again in 1679. Instead of sailing directly to each one, however, Master travelled overland 'attended with a princely

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<sup>166</sup> Master, *Diary*, The charge of Mathias Vincent against Mr. Joseph Hall, vol. 1, pp. 451-60.

<sup>167</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

Traine and Charge'.<sup>168</sup> With him in his survey were two members of council, a surgeon, chaplain, secretary, numerous young writers, a file of soldiers and even a trumpeter.<sup>169</sup> At a consultation held at Madras, the governor advised his council that the substantial charge was 'necessary for the Hono[ura]ble Compa[ny]s interest...to go in a handsome Port and Equipage'.<sup>170</sup> It was also, no doubt, necessary to impress upon the subordinate chiefs and servants the governor's power, and the legitimacy of his authority to integrate them into the agency's hierarchy. An overawed junior factor at the settlement of Musilapatam, for instance, described to a colleague how 'the Agent [Master] came to towne in great State'.<sup>171</sup>

As Master progressed up the Coromandel Coast and sailed across to Bengal, he visited over a dozen settlements, firing, promoting and reforming the Company's servants as he went. He ordered posters of rules to be put up in factory halls and on city gates, created separate spaces for the orderly conduct and despatch of correspondence and recordkeeping, supervised commercial transactions, looked into cases of embezzlement and fraud, and proscribed lists of succession in each place he visited. 'The orders you have made for regulating our factories in ye Bay & other places wee think to be excellent good', the court of committees wrote to Madras in 1681, 'forme and order we know is needful in all businesses.'<sup>172</sup> Master particularly sought to end the faction and quarrels which had paralysed the Company's business in Bengal. At Kasimbazar, for instance, he summoned witnesses and heard testimonials on the behaviour and conduct of Joseph Hall, chief of Ballasore, and found him guilty of misconduct, dismissing him as chief.<sup>173</sup> The court of committees anxiously urged

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<sup>168</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 5 January 1681.

<sup>169</sup> Master, *Diary*, Voyage up the Hugli to Kasimbazar, 4 September 1676, vol. 1, p. 320.

<sup>170</sup> RFSG, *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St. George, 3 March 1679, pp. 20-21.

<sup>171</sup> Cited in Master, *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 79.

<sup>172</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 5 January 1681.

<sup>173</sup> See Master, *Diary*, vol. 1, pp. 449-504.

Master's successors to maintain and uphold his subordination of the Bay settlements. 'If you be not careful to hold all our servants to ye Performance of those orders', they wrote to the new governor of Madras, William Gyford, 'they will signifie nothing.'<sup>174</sup>

The policies pursued by East India House and the governors of Madras in the later seventeenth century represent an attempt to put their discourse of state building into practice. In seeking to subordinate servants into social and political hierarchies, the court of committees hoped to achieve a form of order in Asia which they believed, according to contemporary domestic thought and ideology, was conducive to the Company's public affairs. As Abbe Carre, a French visitor to Surat, observed in the 1670s, 'such good order and obedience helps [the Company's] prosperity...Each [servant] keeps strictly to the rank of his employment, and is severely punished if he forgets himself.'<sup>175</sup> By establishing law courts, creating a bureaucracy, reforming the administration and codifying social behaviour, East India House believed that they had succeeded in building the state institutions which ensured the supremacy of the public interest in Asia at the expense of private interest. As the Company's chairman, Sir Josiah Child, proudly declared in 1687, 'his Majestie has been pleased by his Royall Charters & during his Royall Will & Pleasure to forme us into the condition of a sovereign State in India.'<sup>176</sup>

However, there were severe limits to East India House's long-term ability to put into practice their public state building discourses. This was most evident in the subsequent development of the Madras agency. For, despite the best efforts of Governor Master, Bengal fell back into 'disorder' barely a year after his departure. The court of committees complained to Madras in 1681 of the 'affaires in those factories' as being

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<sup>174</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 5 January 1681.

<sup>175</sup> Cited in Watson, *Foundation for Empire*, p. 163.

<sup>176</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/91, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 28 September 1687.

‘intollerably bad ye Last yeare...wee cannot bear with them any Longer’.<sup>177</sup> They wrote again in 1682 to urge Governor Gyfford to demand ‘obedience thereunto from all our Factors and servants within your Agency’, but to no avail.<sup>178</sup> In the following year, when William Hedges took over as the agent in Bengal, he found that every chief, factor and writer was pursuing their own private designs and interests. ‘The Company must be necessitated to follow the Dutch rule’, he complained in his diary, ‘and command absolute and entire obedience to be given to their Agent, or their affaires in this Country will run into great disorder and suddaine distruction.’<sup>179</sup> Unlike the English Company, however, the Dutch VOC succeeded in maintaining two highly centralised bodies of government: the Company’s executive body in Amsterdam, the Seventeen Gentleman, as well as a colonial headquarters in Asia itself, the settlement of Batavia. The latter in particular provided the sort of centralising authority the English Company lacked in Asia, complete with colonial settler families and thousands of Dutch troops capable of enforcing Amsterdam’s authority over its servants.<sup>180</sup>

Unable to act on Hedges’ advice, the continued disobedience of the Madras agency forced East India House to reduce it ‘to Governable limits’, separating Bengal from Madras.<sup>181</sup> But as trouble continued within the now much reduced Madras agency, especially at Masulipatam which was a settlement ‘totally corrupt & depraved’, the governor was granted even wider autocratic powers to suspend or promote chiefs of the subordinate settlements without consulting East India House first.<sup>182</sup> Ultimately, constant urging by the court of committees and the granting of more powers to governors could not prevent the breakdown of public authority within the Madras

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<sup>177</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 15 March 1681.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 February 1682.

<sup>179</sup> Master, *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>180</sup> Adams, ‘Principals and Agents’, pp. 20, particularly Figure 1.

<sup>181</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/90, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 20 September 1682.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

agency. In 1713, another rebellion broke out, when Robert Raworth usurped power at Fort St. David and refused to hand the settlement over to the governor. Much like Sir Edward's rebellion half-a-century before, a large force had once again to be assembled and despatched to bring the settlement and its 'rebellious' servants back under the control of East India House.<sup>183</sup>

The period between Sir Edward Winter's rebellion in 1665 and Robert Raworth's in 1713, was that of the failure of the Company's metropolitan authorities to translate into practice the discourse of public state building which was espoused in the domestic English state. This was especially evident in the supposedly transformational judicial system established after 1685. Despite establishing courts through which private disputes and conflicts could be addressed in public, East India House did not possess the means to sustain such colonial institutions in Asia. The historian Mattison Mines has described colonial governance at Madras after Master's departure as being 'Weakly administered...highly personalized, antagonisms were rife, and relationships constantly in flux, a product of personal competition and opportunistic alliances between individuals rather than of Company hegemony or even of local social hierarchy.'<sup>184</sup> The new legal system rapidly became controlled, manipulated and undermined by 'private interest' in which Company servants contested political authority and perpetuated personal feuds. This was also extended to the Company's Asian subjects, who regularly manipulated the colonial judiciary at Madras to prosecute political or commercial enemies, despite being excluded by charter from using it in the first place.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> For Raworth's rebellion, see James Tolboys Wheeler, *Madras in the Olden Time: Being A History of the Presidency* (Madras, 1861, 2 vols.), vol. 2, pp. 196-212.

<sup>184</sup> Mattison Mines, 'Courts of Law and Styles of Self in Eighteenth-Century Madras: From Hybrid to Colonial Self', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (February, 2001), p. 37.

<sup>185</sup> Niels Brimnes, 'Beyond Colonial Laws: Indigenous Litigations and the Contestation of Property in the Mayor's Court in Late Eighteenth-Century Madras', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2003), pp. 513-50.

In fact, all that had been achieved was to greatly expand the resources, patronage, authority and autonomy of governors and senior servants on the spot in Asia, itself an unintended consequence of East India House's attempt to overcome the twin tyrannies of time and distance which inhibited their direct control over events thousands of miles away. As they had written to Bencoolen, the chief settlement of the West Coast of Sumatra, 'We trust our Dep'ty Governour and Council with our authority to manage all our affairs under your care'.<sup>186</sup> Empowering servants to act for them in Asia was a necessity if the public interest was to be enforced and maintained. The court of committees acknowledged this to the governor of Madras: 'If any thing should [happen] extraordinary, that wee cannot foresee', they wrote in 1678, 'the keeping exactly to our directions might be greatly prejudiciall to us...wee leave it to you to vary from our Orders in any particulars'.<sup>187</sup> However, as the court of committees themselves correctly perceived, the absence of their immediate presence and executive oversight provided exactly these Company servants with the independence to pursue their private interests in place of their public duties.

When the chief at Hugli failed to send any letters or accounts to East India House in 1680, the latter complained that the public interest was being subverted. Their court of committees wrote that their servants would never have neglected the vital duties of sending their accounts to London along with an update on affairs in Bengal, had they not been 'overburthened with ye Load of private trade.'<sup>188</sup> It is true that in 1667, East India House had opened up Asia's 'country trade' to its servants, allowing them to trade privately on their own accounts.<sup>189</sup> However, they had done so purely as an incentive, another method through which they hoped to bind servants to the public

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<sup>186</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 14 March 1717.

<sup>187</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 23 June 1678.

<sup>188</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Hugli, London, 5 January 1681.

<sup>189</sup> Marshall, *East India Fortunes*, p. 19.

interest.<sup>190</sup> As the volume of private trade grew at an alarming rate, Company servants were constantly urged to put public business before these newly legitimated private interests. ‘We are glad to heare when [our servants] thrive by any good meanes’, the court of committees wrote to Hugli in 1681, but, they pleaded, ‘if you have commissions or businesse for any other, dispatch ye Companys businesse first’.<sup>191</sup> By empowering governors in Asia to build hierarchies and therefore subordinate servants into an obligation to the Company’s public interest, the court of committees sought to establish an indirect, delegated presence throughout their settlements. ‘Wee shall not Allow Any of our Servants of wt Quality Soever’, they declared to Madras in 1675, ‘to Contemne our Authority wch those doe that Contemne Any that Act by it’.<sup>192</sup> This dynamic ensured that, by the early eighteenth century, every settlement in Asia did indeed possess a governor, deputy-governor, chief or agent with substantial executive authority.

Therein, however, lay one of the fundamental problems of the Company’s state building efforts: the principal-agent relationship. By delegating so much power to senior servants in Asia, East India House facilitated the emergence of autonomous centres of interest which could act virtually independent of their masters in London. Indeed, the empowerment of governors, far from centralising the Company’s authority, splintered it, perpetuating - not reducing - private interest and competing regimes of loyalty, obligation and obedience. Indeed, in the early modern period, social and political orders were imaginative constructs as much as they were material realities.<sup>193</sup> In this respect, the practice of East India House’s discourse of order and hierarchy was applied in Asia in a haphazard, piecemeal and porous manner, as senior officials and servants contested

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<sup>190</sup> Hejeebu, ‘Contract Enforcement’, pp. 510-513.

<sup>191</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Hugli, London, 5 January 1681.

<sup>192</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

<sup>193</sup> Braddick and Walter, ‘Grids of power’, in Braddick and Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power*, p. 8.

and negotiated its framework. The establishment centralised control and public hierarchies were only really possible if they provided certain advantages for those they attempted to subordinate.<sup>194</sup>

Even as they were forced to grant governors and senior servants in Asia greater powers, East India House guarded their delegated authority jealously. The slightest sign – or rumour - of a servant misusing these powers to promote themselves and their private interests above the Company's was cause for dismissal. 'Wee can never hope any regularity to be observed', declared the court of committees in 1681, 'but in doing publick right to us, be sure you never exercise private...prejudice.'<sup>195</sup> It was believed that such 'publick right' was served best by obedient servants. Therefore, when Master wrote haughtily to East India House, the governor of the court of committees, Sir Josiah Child, accused him of 'Insolence'. Child complained of Master's 'vain ostentatious pomp', as well as his 'pride in thinking yourself too good or too big...your intolerable presumption & indiscretion.'<sup>196</sup> Despite his efforts in consolidating the hierarchy of the Madras agency, Streysham Master was dismissed in 1680 when a receipt was found in a drawer at Fort St. George which proved that he had sold four elephants belonging to the Company to an Indian merchant and pocketed the profit.<sup>197</sup> Private interest was articulated by the Company as disobedience to their authority and public concerns. Although governors were to act as the representatives of East India House in Asia, the court of committees nonetheless expected them to do so with 'vigilant subserviency and cooperacon in your stations.'<sup>198</sup> At the turn of the eighteenth century, however, the Company's governors, deputy-governors, agents and chiefs were anything but 'subservient'. With their new powers and resources, they created regimes in Asia which

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>195</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 15 March 1681.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 5 January 1681.

<sup>197</sup> Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, p. 103.

<sup>198</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 26 May 1682.

sought not to promote the public interest of their masters in London, but to their own extensive private interests in Asia.

In the Madras agency, those servants who operated, and accepted their place, within the governor's hierarchy did so by shaping its terms to promote their own interests, an outcome which ultimately subverted the purpose of such hierarchies. Therefore, Company servants often espoused the order and hierarchy of the Company, paying respect to the governor and confirming their loyalty to East India House, but they did so to legitimate or further their private interests within that system.<sup>199</sup> It was a dynamic which was perpetuated across Asia. The servants empowered by East India House to build the foundations of the Company's state in the late seventeenth century, men such as William Jearsey at Masulipatam, Matthias Vincent at Hugli, and William Langhorn and Streynsham Master at Madras, were also those who most adhered to their private interests, emerging as the wealthiest, most influential and powerful European figures in Asia.<sup>200</sup> Thus, when the court of committees received reports that Governor Langhorn had acquired a vast estate through private trade, they wrote to accuse him of placing his own interests above theirs. 'I take no less care of their concerns, then of my own,' Langhorn replied in 1673 in reference to the court of committees, 'nay, much more, I assure you, God Knows it, for I do fully look upon their interest...as ye most principally...[and] my owne but in ye second place.'<sup>201</sup> East India House dismissed the plea, and shortly thereafter the governor himself. In fact, of the six governors who took office between 1670 and 1700, all but one were eventually dismissed on accusations of corruption and insubordination.

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<sup>199</sup> Braddick and Walter, 'Grids of power', in Braddick and Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power*, p. 10-12.

<sup>200</sup> Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, p. 78.

<sup>201</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/40/3, William Langhorn to Court of Committees, Fort St. George, 10 September 1673.

## Conclusion

The English East India Company's formation of a discourse of colonial state building in Asia in the seventeenth century emerged from the need to place the 'public interest' of the Company over the 'private interest' of its servants. Forces of growth from the mid-century, such as new members, increased investment and the establishment of new settlements, transformed the Company from a homogenous community bound by interpersonal ties of trust and obligation, to one that was disparate, diffused and appeared to those in London to be 'disorderly' and ultimately 'disobedient'. From the 1660s, East India House began to lose control over affairs in Asia, where the collapse of political authority at places such as Madras allowed private interests to subvert the Company's public business. When East India House's authority was usurped in a rebellion there, the court of committees empowered future governors with the legitimate means to build the state apparatus which they hoped would produce a strict hierarchy from which the obedience of subordinates in Asia could be effected. The discourse which shaped this form of governance was ground in the widely accepted political ideologies of seventeenth century England in which hierarchy was believed to produce the political order necessary for the establishment of good government.

As this chapter has revealed, however, the process of state building in Asia proved far removed from the discourse of state building in Europe. When East India House sought to build the institutions and hierarchies that would enable it to regulate its servants and promote the Company's public interests, it was forced to concede considerable political authority to those very servants from whom it sought obedience. As private interest flourished outside of centralised forms of governance, servants appropriated their public authority in pursuit of their own concerns, a dynamic which significantly undermined and, in many cases, made obsolete new judicial, bureaucratic,

social and political systems erected throughout the Company's settlements. As a series of rebellions across Asia revealed, the attempt to centralise the Company by subordinating servants through a process of state building had largely failed by the turn of the eighteenth century. As the final chapter in part one of the thesis demonstrates, from the wreck of this great experiment in Asia was released a current of unregulated political authority, the most substantial of which descended from the Crown itself, providing unprecedented opportunities for Company servants to build their own private and far more powerful political regimes across Asia.

## Chapter Two

### Private Interest and the Decentralisation of Political Authority

In his seminal work, published in 1963 on the English in India, Percival Spear concluded that servants operating in Asia acted with great ‘respect and submission for the Company at home.’ He depicted East India House as an ‘overbearing and inquisitorial central office’, efficiently managing its ‘country branches’ in Asia.<sup>1</sup> This unitary understanding of the realities of the relationship between the Company’s metropolitan authorities at East India House and their servants in Asia has been a persistent one. More recently, Robert Travers has argued that ‘the political, legal and bureaucratic complexity surrounding the Company’s operations, meant that Company servants were not as autonomous’ as they appeared to be.<sup>2</sup> Phil Stern has similarly argued that servants were linked in to an unbroken ‘chain of command that ultimately led back to London’, ensuring their compliance with metropolitan orders and policies.<sup>3</sup> However, as the previous chapter has shown, the ‘chain’ between London and Asia was not as unbroken as historians have usually assumed. Indeed, it was a more complicated process. At Madras in the late seventeenth century, the chain was first twisted by the emergence of private interest, then broken through rebellion and finally linked up again through a public discourse of state building. But while this new chain was reinforced through the establishment of new colonial institutions and the professed loyalty of servants, each link had actually been manipulated and refashioned. The ‘chain of command’ was thus not so much a centralising ball-and-chain shackled by East India House around the ankles of its servants, but a chain on which servants constantly tugged

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<sup>1</sup> Spear, *The Nabobs*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 11.

from across Asia, gradually pulling the centre of East India House apart and significantly decentring its authority in the process.

The process of decentralisation within the Company was a direct consequence of the dichotomy between public discourse and private practice. As the previous chapter illustrated, the model of state building which East India House sought to put into practice was focused upon the public nature of political power, which, in the Company's case, consisted of upholding the interests and policies of East India House and its governing body, the governor and court of committees. But such a model was mere discourse, promoting less an idea of the state as an ideal, in much the same way that Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* or James Harrington's *Oceana* did not depict the state as it was, but rather described the state as they thought it should be.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, systems and institutions of order, obedience and hierarchy could only be established and maintained in Asia by those very servants whom they sought to disenfranchise and subordinate. It became clear to East India House very quickly that their public models of state building could not be directly applied in Asia without being mitigated, reformed and rendered useless by servants promoting their own private interests. This was particularly visible on the West Coast of Sumatra, a region of Asia in which the Company had only established itself from 1685. As a protean region of settlement conceived at such a formative time in the process of political decentralisation, the West Coast of Sumatra provides an illuminating window into the state building practices of Company servants in Asia. This chapter therefore adopts a case-study of the West Coast of Sumatra, revealing the process through which senior servants in Asia appropriated the public authority invested in them by their masters in Europe to create private regimes of colonial governance which served their own interests.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

Contrary to the suggestion in the historiography, ‘private interest’ was not always of a pecuniary nature.<sup>5</sup> For example, when Nathaniel Foxcroft, second of council at Madras, was charged with expressing anti-royalist views in 1665, he was accused of seeking ‘to maintaine his private interest before’ the Company’s.<sup>6</sup> As the commercial, judicial and political powers of the governor and court of committees depended upon charters from the Crown, Foxcroft’s political views were conceived as being anti-public or, to conceptualise it as his accusers had, of representing ‘private interest’, one which threatened the very existence of the Company. This chapter reveals how ‘private interest’ was understood by contemporaries as a general label for the promotion or pursuit of any commercial, social, political or cultural action or thought by Company servants which did not align with those of their employers at East India House. This chapter thus broadens the narrow focus on trade and business through which historians have traditionally understood ‘private interest’. On the West Coast of Sumatra at the turn of the eighteenth century, private interest comprised a composite range of interests, from the appropriation of political power and the elimination of commercial competition, to the promotion of religious beliefs and the expansion of imperial rule. Such practices ultimately led to the emergence of private regimes in Asia whose existence undermined, decentred and reconfigured the centralisation of public authority and power sought by metropolitan authorities at East India House.

The development of the Company’s settlements on the West Coast of Sumatra at the turn of the century reflects the circumscriptions imposed by Company servants on the policies, aims and interests of East India House, revealing the gulf between public discourse and private practice within the colonial state building process. While East

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see Spear, *The Nabobs*, p. 14; Marshall, *East India Fortunes*; Watson, *Foundation for Empire*; Om Prakash, ‘The English East India Company and India’, in Bowen, Lincoln and Rigby, *Worlds of the East India Company*, pp. 1-17; Mentz, *The English Gentleman Merchant*.

<sup>6</sup> RFSG, *MDCB*, Affidavit by Joseph Farley, Fort St George, 16 September 1665, pp. 227-8.

India House's authority was theoretically absolute, the adoption of their ideologies, policies and orders in Asia depended entirely on the interpretation, collaboration, as well as the application, by their servants.<sup>7</sup> As the previous chapter demonstrated, the actual result was often far removed from the intended one. With public policies constantly frustrated in their designs, East India House gradually transitioned from policymaker to reactionary, attempting to contain the agency of their servants who were in a stronger position to shape affairs in Asia. As one Madras factor wrote to another in 1709, the 'disobedience' and 'disorder' in that agency could only be solved 'if an active brisk stirring man was there, and one who would study the Company's interest as well as his own.'<sup>8</sup> The clear lines between 'public' and 'private' matters, which centralised political models demanded, were clearly blurring by the early eighteenth century. This was not due to a compromise, but rather was a result of the limits and ultimate failure experienced by the 'centre' in regulating its servants in Asia and thereby in shaping the Company's development in the early modern period.<sup>9</sup>

### **The West Coast of Sumatra in the Early Eighteenth Century**

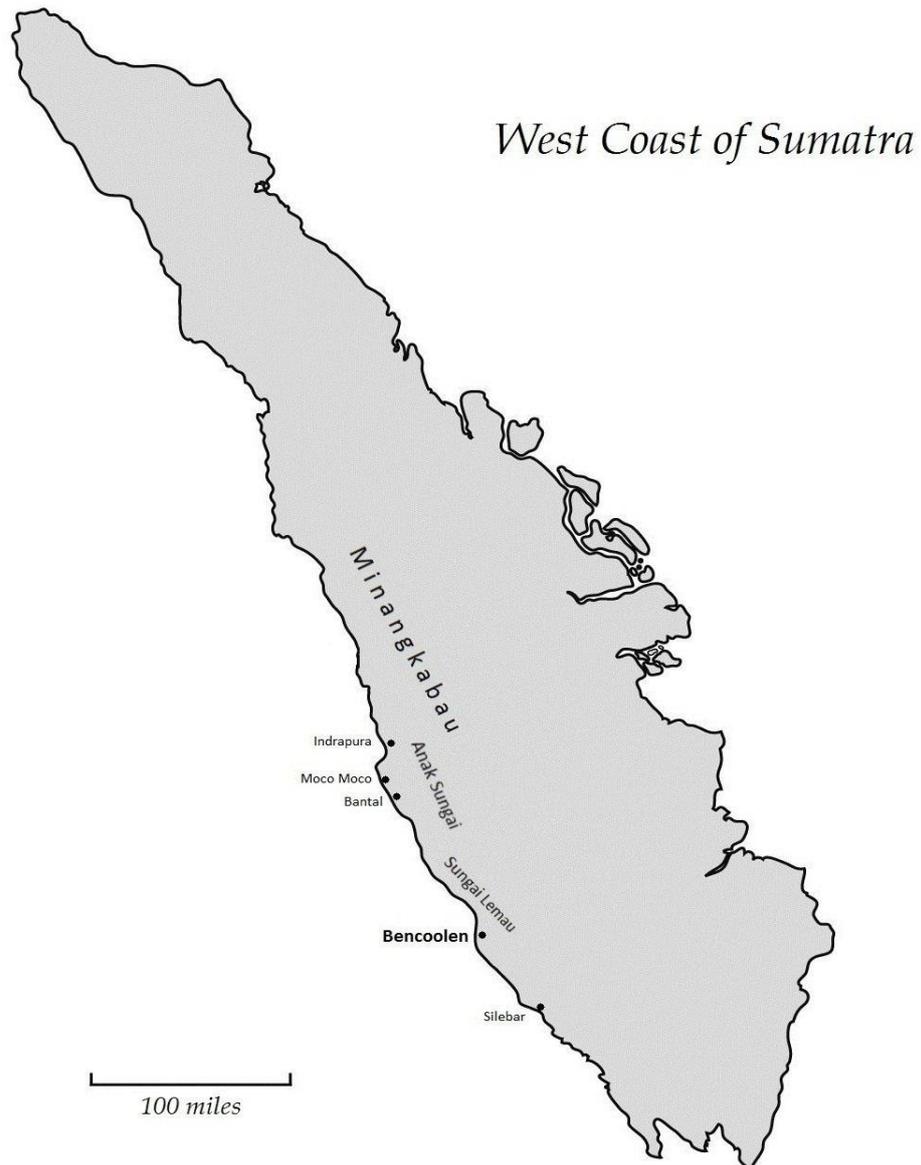
The Company's settlements on the West Coast of Sumatra were its most important establishment outside of the Indian sub-continent. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Dutch VOC had gradually pushed the English Company out of its other spice yielding possessions in the East Indies, most notably at Amboina in

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<sup>7</sup> Watson, *Foundation for Empire*, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>9</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, p. 36.



**Figure 1** Map of the West Coast of Sumatra

1623 and Bantam in 1682.<sup>10</sup> To retain a foothold in the spice trade, the Company was forced to seek an alternative settlement, largely free from Dutch interference. The West Coast of Sumatra was the answer. In 1685 two Company servants from Madras, Ralph Ord and Benjamin Bloome, arrived off Bencoolen to negotiate the establishment of a

<sup>10</sup> For Amboina, see D. K. Bassett, 'The "Amboyna Massacre" of 1623', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1960), pp. 1-19. For the Dutch coup at Bantam and the English expulsion, see D. K. Bassett, 'The Factory of the English East India Company at Bantam' (PhD dissertation, University of London, 1955).

Company settlement there. The local raja, eager for protection against the Dutch, enquired whether they intended just to buy pepper or to settle permanently.<sup>11</sup> Ord and Bloome replied that they wished the Company to be the 'onely Lords & Sole Proprietors' of Bencoolen.<sup>12</sup> The negotiation for possession of the settlement was laced with heavy bribes and a generous purchase price for pepper, at which the raja and other prominent figures of the town and surrounding country agreed to cede Bencoolen to the Company. Ord and Bloome fired a canon in each direction to define the extent of their new sovereignty, and erected York Fort to act as the Company's new headquarters in the East Indies.<sup>13</sup> Gradually, other settlements were established along a two-hundred mile stretch of the West Coast, from Bantal in the north to Silebar in the south.

The development of the West Coast in the decades following its settlement mirrored, to an extent, that of Bengal. Its relationship with Madras, to whom they were also subordinate, was similarly characterised by 'disorder'. Much like Bengal, the West Coast was gradually considered ungovernable, and both Madras and East India House pursued a range of strategies to deal with what they perceived to be the disobedience and corruption of their servants there as the result of widespread private interest. When declaring the *modus operandi* of their West Coast settlements, the court of directors informed their servants that 'the Sum of all is to procure Pepper' and, they added with anxiety, 'to see our Estate is not carelessly or Wickedly lavisht out.'<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, far from promoting the Company's public interest by becoming an *entrepot* for the pepper trade, underwriting their own expenses while yielding vast profits for the directors and

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<sup>11</sup> For an account of the settlement of Bencoolen, see York Fort to Madras, 28 June 1685, in Records of Fort St. George, *Letters to Fort St. George, 1681-1765* (Madras, 1916-1946, 85 vols.), vol. 3, pp. 209-215 (hereafter *LTFSG*).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* In 1714 York Fort was replaced by Fort Marlborough, built some two miles away on higher ground above Bencoolen, see BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 27 February 1712.

<sup>14</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/101, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 14 February 1722.

dividends for the shareholders alike, Bencoolen and its subordinate settlements consistently failed to fulfil their quota for the shipment of 200 tonnes of pepper a year.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the charges incurred by servants on the West Coast created a vast deficit for the Company. Even in a supposedly reasonable year, the profits of the pepper trade barely met one-tenth of the settlement's considerable upkeep of 42,000 dollars.<sup>16</sup> The charges of Bencoolen for the month of July 1716 alone amounted to more than the cost of all pepper shipped off the West Coast in the preceding seventeen months.<sup>17</sup> 'Our Charge hath been & yet continues excessive', complained the court of directors the following year, 'Pepper is the one thing needful'.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, shipments continued to decline throughout the early eighteenth century, forcing the directors to conclude that 'We have not been so well dealt with as We expected in gratitude as well as Duty & Fidelity.'<sup>19</sup>

Company servants on the West Coast were inhibited from exercising their 'Duty & Fidelity' towards their masters at East India House through their 'disorderly' conduct which resulted from their pursuit of private interests. Successive deputy-governors had observed how 'Corruption has been universall' throughout the West Coast.<sup>20</sup> Faction and violence between Company servants, a product of competition in trade and politics, was endemic. An instance when a lieutenant in the garrison at Bencoolen assaulted Thomas Kingsley, a member of the council, was thought common behaviour.<sup>21</sup> One new deputy-governor reported how his subordinate, the chief of Bantal, had cut the second of his council in the face with a sword, while the third of council wished 'the Deputy Governor and Council all Dragged at the Abingdon's stern from Bencoolen to Bantall', a distance

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<sup>15</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/103, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 24 December 1725.

<sup>16</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/100, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 25 November 1726.

<sup>17</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 14 March 1717.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Gregory Page, York Fort, 14 November 1712.

<sup>21</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 28 February 1712.

of some one-hundred miles.<sup>22</sup> Affairs were also in a constant state of confusion owing to the rapid turnover of servants. This was caused by a high mortality rate in which men were lost to 'Drinking or Women' - the 'Bencoolen fever' being a common venereal disease rampant amongst Company servants.<sup>23</sup> One 'drank himself dead' within a few weeks of his arrival, while others, even the senior members of council, were said to be addicted to opium, so that 'Some are fast asleep and others rave, but not one of them has taken the pleasant turn'.<sup>24</sup>

The neglect of public interest also characterised the relationship between Company servants and the Malay rulers and pepper merchants of the West Coast. Rather than obeying the instructions of the directors to procure as much pepper as possible by placing new pepper contracts and encouraging the Malay to plant more pepper vines, Company servants acted in an arbitrary and tyrannical manner. The pepper merchant Orumkey Lilla had facilitated the Company's settlement at Bencoolen in 1685, acting as their agent to liaise with the surrounding Malay rulers. Within a few years, however, Company servants had 'Cutt off Orankey Lillos head for Severall crimes he was accused of'.<sup>25</sup> When the mariner William Dampier visited the West Coast in 1690 he was amazed to observe two prominent Malay rajas confined to the stocks at York Fort.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Robert Skingle, the chief of Bantal in 1710, had a Malay chief beheaded for disobedience, and later as deputy-governor he 'put the Countrey into a flame' by forcefully disarming the Malay who entered York Fort, 'which is one of the greatest Affronts to them', barred them from sitting as judges and killed a local ruler

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<sup>22</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, York Fort, 5 May 1713.

<sup>23</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Dic Ipse Club, York Fort, 23 September 1712.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Ann Bedwell, York Fort, 1 August 1713.

<sup>25</sup> RFSG, *MDCB*, 2 August 1692, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> William Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries* (London, 1931), p. 125.

himself for attempting to 'carry away a Slave Wench.'<sup>27</sup> Such extreme and violent behaviour prevented an adequate supply of pepper from being acquired from surrounding populations. In 1710 Madras blamed their servants on the West Coast for 'troubles and imbroyles with the Natives and Country Governmt' which led to the latter 'destroying each other Pepper Plantation yn in blood or slaughter'.<sup>28</sup> Although Company servants attempted to shift the blame on the Malay themselves, the directors warned them that 'Good words will no longer go down w'th Us'.<sup>29</sup>

In neglecting the pepper trade, servants on the West Coast of Sumatra represented the ultimate subversion of the public interest. Continued insubordination there in the early eighteenth century threatened to undermine not just the Company's ability to compete against the Dutch in the pepper trade, but the entire discourse of state building espoused by the directors. This was acknowledged by the governor of Madras in 1703, who complained that their subordinates on the West Coast had not sent a single account book or letter of correspondence to them in five years. 'All their transactions was foreign to us...as believe themselves not accountable to us for any thing they did or should do.'<sup>30</sup> The court of directors time and again recognised the need to ensure that the West Coast conformed to the compliant behaviour expected of its other settlements, despatching a series of agents from East India House to act as 'supervisors' who wielded unprecedented powers in an effort to enforce broken hierarchies and subordinate thriving private interests. In 1710, Jeremiah Harrison arrived as the first supervisor with almost unlimited authority to create 'a remedy against all such Evils &

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<sup>27</sup> York Fort to Directors, 4 July 1710, in John Bastin, ed., *The British in West Sumatra 1685-1825* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> Madras to Jeremiah Harrison, Fort St. George, 10 March 1710, in Records of Fort St. George, *Letters from Fort St. George* (Madras, 1912-1946, 85 vols.), vol. 15, p. 27 (hereafter *LFFSG*).

<sup>29</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 14 March 1717.

<sup>30</sup> RFSG, *LFFSG*, Madras to Jeremiah Harrison, Fort St. George, 10 March 1710, vol. 15, p. 26.

the many Errors that have crept in' on the West Coast.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, Harrison had come to 'remedy' the incumbent deputy-governor, Robert Skingle, whose zealous pursuit of private interest had transformed him into an 'absolute and arbitrary' figure on the West Coast.<sup>32</sup>

Supervisor Harrison's main task was to discover how Skingle had acquired so much personal and autocratic power.<sup>33</sup> At first, it appeared that the supervisor had succeeded in enforcing central control from London and establishing the Company's public interest up and down the West Coast. For example, Skingle was immediately dismissed and new rules were put in place to curtail the powers of future deputy-governors: their personal retinue was reduced, official privileges limited and the process of council appointments reformed. However, these policies barely outlived the six months Harrison spent on the West Coast. Almost immediately after his departure for Madras, the deputy-governor appointed to maintain these reforms, Anthony Ettrick, presided over an entirely new chapter of private interest. In 1711, the governor of Madras was once again complaining that Bencoolen neglected to inform him of anything they did.<sup>34</sup> In fact, as soon as Harrison had set sail for Madras, Ettrick 'neglected all the Mercantile affairs', assassinated a local raja, invaded and occupied his territory and eventually perished in 1712 whilst retreating along with most of his men through sickness and death.<sup>35</sup> Once again, the West Coast was left in 'Confusion', aided by the succeeding deputy-governors, one of whom was notorious for being a drunk which 'made him act thoughtlessly', and another who lived but a few months after taking up the post.<sup>36</sup> Madras declared that 'there has been so much mismanagement' by

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., vol. 15, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Madras to Bencoolen, Fort St. George, 8 October 1711, vol. 16, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, 22 October 1712.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Company servants 'as has well nigh ruin'd all the Companies affairs in all their Settlements. on the West Coast of Sumatra'.<sup>37</sup>

The pursuit of private interest had enveloped the Company's West Coast establishment into an economic and political crisis. The 'troubles and Warrs' occasioned by Skingle and his successors had 'very much retarded the bringing in Pepper' and, more fatally, had led to widespread famine through the violent interruption of supplies of rice and paddy to the Company's settlements.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, as Bencoolen had 'spent the Companys Treasure in the Quarrells' with Malay states and new shipments of silver from Europe were stopped as a consequence of the War of the Spanish Succession, a debased copper coinage had been minted which was both resented by the Malay and unable to sufficiently supply Company servants with even the basic necessities.<sup>39</sup> By 1712, the West Coast presented an eerie spectacle: pepper plantations were neglected and overgrown, the Malay were starving, markets had disappeared and outposts had been abandoned through want of personnel, money and provisions.<sup>40</sup> The reason behind the collapse of order on the West Coast was obvious to the governor of Madras, Edward Harrison: the state building discourse of the Company's metropolitan authorities at East India House had not been implemented in practice. As he concluded to his counterpart at Bencoolen of the West Coast: 'there has not been little more than the shadow of any modell or scheme of a true & right Governmt in any of its parts whether Eeconomy Politicall or Millitary...Yor. whole constitution is all out of frame and of the Hinges.'<sup>41</sup> For East India House, the solution was clear. Much like Madras in the later seventeenth century, the remedy for the West Coast's subversion of the public interest would be

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<sup>37</sup> RFSG, *LFFSG*, Madras to Jeremiah Harrison, Fort St. George, 10 March 1710, vol. 15, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> RFSG, *LTFSG*, Bencoolen to Madras, York Fort, 24 January 1712, vol. 8, p. 52.

<sup>39</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, 22 October 1712.

<sup>40</sup> J. R. Young, 'The English East India Company and Trade on the West Coast of Sumatra, 1730-1760' (PhD. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1970), p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> RFSG, *LFFSG*, Madras to Jeremiah Harrison, Fort St. George, 10 March 1710, vol. 15, p. 27.

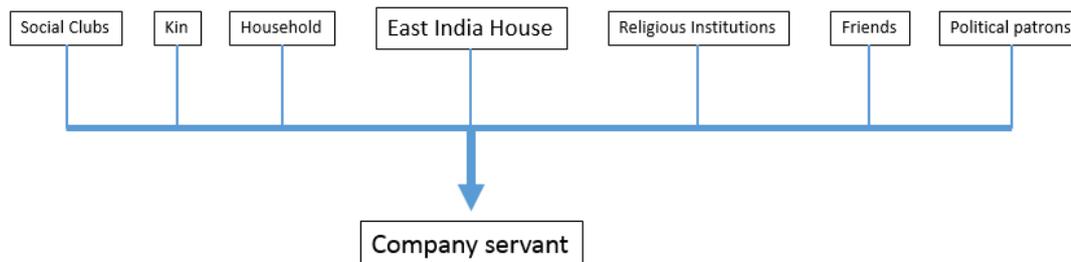
found in the establishment of a strong, centralised government with the ability to subordinate servants, achieve order and revive the pepper trade. Much like Madras, however, the practice of colonial state building on the West Coast of Sumatra also proved far removed from the public discourse of East India House.

### **The Multiplicity of the Metropole**

The decentred dynamics of political authority within the Company by the early eighteenth century was a reflection of the decentred nature of the metropole itself. Indeed, the metropolitan or central authority of the Company was, in theory, East India House in Leadenhall Street, London. From here, discourse, authority, orders, letters and material objects radiated out to settlements and servants in Asia in support of the public interest of the chairman and the court of directors. Although the limits of the early modern metropole's ability to determine the development of colonial regions has been an issue of ongoing historical debate, historians nonetheless continue to regard the metropole itself as a single social, political and geographic construct.<sup>42</sup> To the Company servant, the metropole was not a unitary or monolithic source radiating its authority outwards. Rather, East India House was just one of many strands of the metropolitan web which shaped and informed the policies and practices of Company servants across Asia. Particularly in the context of state building, East India House had to contend with a multiplex of other, more private and personal metropolitan sources, all of which presented alternative models of state formation for Company servants to put into practice. These included a wide range of

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<sup>42</sup> For example, see all of the edited essays in Daniels and Kennedy, eds., *Negotiated Empires*.



**Figure 2** Diagram of the plurality of metropolitan influences upon Company servants

groups, people and communities, including households, kin, friends, religious institutions, social clubs and political patrons. The connections which Company servants maintained with these metropolitan sources as they travelled out to Asia served to undermine the authority of East India House. Indeed, the contest between public and private metropolitan sources shaped the practice of colonial state building on the West Coast of Sumatra in the early eighteenth century.

The plurality of metropolitan sources of authority was particularly evident during the deputy-governor of Joseph Collet between 1712-16. A prominent merchant in London, Collet had been tasked by the court of directors with subordinating Company servants on the West Coast of Sumatra into a public hierarchy which would establish the public interest as supreme, once and for all. Appointed in 1711, Collet seemed an ideal choice to centralise political authority on the West Coast. As an agent of the court of directors, Collet appeared dedicated to the public interest. Having declared bankrupt two years before, Collet was personally obligated to the Company's chairman, Gregory Page, for his new appointment. 'As to my future Conduct respecting both the Company's affairs and my own', Collet declared to Page as he rounded the Cape of Good Hope, he would look to emulate the governor of Madras and 'obey him

as my Superiour'.<sup>43</sup> Professing himself a loyal servant of his new masters, Collet reiterated his commitment to uphold the interests of East India House. Indeed, the social, economic and political turmoil he witnessed on the West Coast reinforced the importance of his commission to bring the settlements under a firm, centralised government.

Arriving in the *Toddington* in 1712, Collet touched at the northern subordinate settlement of Bantal, some one-hundred miles up the Coast from Bencoolen. Sailing into the Bantal road on 23 July, the new deputy-governor stepped ashore to find 'all in confusion'.<sup>44</sup> Penning a quick letter to the directors in London, Collet reported how 'by ignorance or otherwise', the servants there had neglected all of the Company's official commercial business, while the general books, in which every official act and transaction was supposed to be recorded, had laid untouched for months.<sup>45</sup> With 'The Northern parts in Confusion', Collet continued his journey down the Coast and arrived at Bencoolen on 10 August to be installed as deputy-governor.<sup>46</sup> His commitment to putting into practice the state building discourse of his employers at East India House, one that would consolidate the public interest through the provision of centralised government, was made clear in one of his first official letters to a local Malay ruler. One private interest which had drained the Company's finances had been the military intervention of deputy-governors in the civil wars and succession disputes of surrounding Malay states. The public interest therefore demanded a cessation of hostilities with the Malay and a reduction of the West Coast military establishment. This was something the directors had ordered Collet to carry out immediately upon his arrival. Thus, when Sultan Gulemat, ruler of the large neighbouring state of Anak

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<sup>43</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Gregory Page, 12 February 1712.

<sup>44</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, 22 October 1712.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, 22 October 1712.

Sungai, requested military assistance from Collet during a succession dispute, the latter wrote back accordingly: 'I am obliged to acquaint you that my Hon'ble Masters are resolved to have their affairs on this Coast managed in a manner very different from what they have been of late years.'<sup>47</sup> To Malay and European alike, Collet's arrival thus appeared to signify a break with previous decentralised regimes of private interest, heralding a new political system constructed indirectly by East India House through their loyal agent.

As deputy-governor, Collet was expected to replicate the state building practices of his counterparts at Madras in the later seventeenth century, which, as the previous chapter demonstrated, comprised the establishment of a judiciary, the reformation of the administration into a central bureaucracy and, most importantly, the subordination of servants into public hierarchies. However, Collet both carried his own private set of attitudes, beliefs and practices with him to Asia and also maintained connections with people, groups and communities in the metropole which consistently reinforced or refashioned these private discourses and practices. The orders and policies of East India House which were dispatched with, and to, Collet in Asia had to be constantly channelled, articulated, interpreted, and eventually implemented through a multiplex prism of private interests. Indeed, as with all Company servants who planted roots in Asia, Collet's initial dedication to the public interest of his masters at East India House was reshaped by the private interests he quickly established on the West Coast of Sumatra, not just those of a pecuniary nature, but those also of a social, theological, cultural and political nature, too. Thus when Collet sought to gain the obedience of his subordinates or to centralise government, for example, he did so according to more

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<sup>47</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Bencoolen to Sultan Guillamott, York Fort, 1 September 1712.

private understandings of obedience and governance, and the role these played in furthering his own increasingly considerable interests and ambitions in Asia.

For Joseph Collet, a devout Baptist and family-man, the task of establishing his hegemony over the West Coast of Sumatra was not just a public duty, but a matter of conscience, morality and religion. Before his departure for Asia, Collet regularly conversed with his spiritual mentor and teacher, Moses Lowman, the Presbyterian minister of Clapham, on a range of subjects, but mostly the spirit and morality of man. In these debates, Collet had argued that mankind was naturally ‘capable of being Influenced by Principles of Reason, Justice and Gratitude’, whilst the reverend ‘urg’d the Generall Practice of Mankind to the Contrary.’<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the reverend emphasised the corrupt and disobedient nature of ‘Mankind’ and the need to forcefully reform and continuously govern people if they were to exist in any kind of social or political order.<sup>49</sup> In Britain, Collet had contested these beliefs with the reverend. But upon arriving on the West Coast and experiencing the disorder and disobedience amongst servants there first-hand, he quickly conceded to the reverend’s arguments. ‘In short, English, French, Portugueze, Brasilians, Africans, Dutch, Moores, Indians of many Sorts’, Collet wrote to Lowman shortly after arriving at Bencoolen, ‘are (almost) all alike.’<sup>50</sup> At the same time, Collet wrote to another friend in Britain that ‘I find here there has been more villany and folly than I cou’d expect to have found amongst Englishmen’.<sup>51</sup> Collet’s own private interests, in the form of his spiritual and moral beliefs, were already beginning to subvert his commission to create a centralised, public government on the West Coast.

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<sup>48</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Moses Lowman, York Fort, 14 November 1712.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see Moses Lowman, *The Principles of an Occasional Conformist* (London, 1718).

<sup>50</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Moses Lowman, York Fort, 14 November 1712.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Francis Molineux, York Fort, 16 October 1712.

The new deputy-governor's conversion to the ideologies of Reverend Lowman and the Clapham congregation Collet had frequented when in England, fundamentally changed his understanding of and approach towards the state, government and the role of individuals within that system. 'I knew many were corrupted', he wrote in a letter to Lowman about the West Coast servants, 'but did not believe the Corruption so universall as you apprehended...you had a truer Notion of mankind than my Self.'<sup>52</sup> After barely two months at Bencoolen, Collet's private beliefs and values had diverged from the public interests of his masters at East India House. Indeed, the new deputy-governor already had little intention of establishing those public state institutions which an earlier generation of governors had attempted to erect at Madras. 'This Experience has entirely alter'd my schemes of Government', Collet admitted to Lowman in November.<sup>53</sup> An indication of what these alterations were can be found in a range of private metropolitan sources of social, cultural and religious thought.

The prevention of private corruption and religious disobedience through the construction of providential and natural hierarchies was at the centre of ideas about the state for figures such as Reverend Moses Lowman. Indeed, according to the reverend, man's disobedience could only be averted when 'all Rights and Titles to Obedience are united' in one supreme governor, the 'Benefactor and Patron, our Master, Father, and King'.<sup>54</sup> Investing absolute authority in a 'Civil Magistrate' would prove beneficial to 'publick Society'.<sup>55</sup> In fact, it was essential for those who sought 'Union of Social Life together'. According to Lowman, to grant a prince, governor or magistrate the 'Power of directing the Actions of the Community' was the 'Soul of the Body Politick'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, only powerful, absolute authorities, like Deputy-Governor Joseph Collet, could expect

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Moses Lowman, York Fort, 14 November 1712.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Moses Lowman, *A Sermon Preach'd to the Societies for Reformation of Manners* (London, 1720), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

obedience from members of a community, such as the one formed by the Company's servants on the West Coast of Sumatra. However, their obedience was not to be commanded through legal regulatory frameworks or centralised political systems, as East India House believed and hoped, but through nothing more than the natural right of governors to command subordinates. As Lowman declared,

The Right of the Magistrate to Obedience in...Acts of Government, must be the same as his Right to Government itself; and Men subject to Government, are held to answer this Right upon as high Obligations at least, as they are to answer the Duties of any other Relation they stand in to each other. So that this *Civil Relation*, once establish'd, induces a *Moral Obligation*. The Rights of Princes, and the Obedience of Subjects, become engagements of Conscience; in part, as the Duty of all Relations is bound upon Men by the Law of God; and further as the Order, Peace, and Happiness of Society, with the Means necessary to procure and preserve them, that is, the Institution and just Rights of Governours, is the *Will and Intention* of God himself; who is God of Order, and must certainly will the Peace and Social Welfare of Mankind.<sup>57</sup>

By legitimising political authority not through any public or legal power, but through providential and natural rights, Lowman placed the power of magistrates, governors and princes beyond constitutional, contractual or consensual frameworks. East India House had empowered Collet with considerable authority so that he would put into practice the state building discourses that would subordinate Company servants to the public

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

interest. But Collet understood his authority in more private terms: he had a natural right, as 'supreme magistrate', to subordinate those on the West Coast through a personal, moral and religious duty. Their submission and obedience would be offered to Collet directly, not to their masters at East India House.

Reverend Lowman's political ideology was part of a lineage of contested English political thought which stretched back over a century and included such figures as Lancelot Andrewes, William Prynne, Robert Filmer and William Sherlock, all of whom acknowledged the legitimacy of political authority as deriving from natural law, particularly evident through the exercise of patriarchal governance. For instance, Lancelot Andrews, the Bishop of Ely, announced from his pulpit in 1610 that monarchs were 'Fathers of their Countreys'.<sup>58</sup> Present in the audience was King James I, who had charged Andrews with commemorating the anniversary of a failed plot against his life.<sup>59</sup> Known as the Gowrie sermon, Andrews used this opportunity to inform the king of the patriarchal nature of his royal authority. James would do well, Andrews preached, to look to his 'fatherhood, and government' as one and the same.<sup>60</sup> The parallels between a king's divine right to rule and a father's absolute power over his family was juxtaposed by England's early modern natural law theorists to promote the practice of patriarchy as a political ideology, not just a social dynamic of the private household.<sup>61</sup> In John Novell's 1662 book *The Seditious Principle*, it was argued that as head of the family, the patriarch was the 'Supreme Power' and therefore must command the absolute obedience of his subordinates. By this logic, he continued, the king's authority was therefore 'that

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<sup>58</sup> Lancelot Andrewes, *A Sermon Preached before His Majestie On Sunday the fifth of August* (London, 1610), pp. 12-13.

<sup>59</sup> Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 116-19.

<sup>60</sup> Andrewes, *A Sermon Preached*, p.13.

<sup>61</sup> See Gordon J. Schochet, *The Authoritarian Family and Political Attitudes in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England: Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford, 1975).

authority which a Father hath over his sons'.<sup>62</sup> More than that, Novell argued, 'Civil Magistracy and Paternal Authority are really the same...in that Obedience is commanded to both...the People do no more authorize their King, than Children their Father, to have dominion over them.'<sup>63</sup> Indeed, over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, political theorists placed patriarchal authority at the centre of discourses on the right to rule, not just the monarch's right, but a plethora of authoritarian rights: nobility over tenants, men over women, civil magistrates over the localities and even England over its growing empire.<sup>64</sup>

Hundreds of so-called 'conduct books' were published throughout this period, mapping out the hierarchy of patriarchal householders which reinforced the father's undisputed rule, in which dependents, such as wives, children and servants, had to offer complete obedience.<sup>65</sup> Conduct books acted as manuals, providing instruction for the organisation and effective management of a patriarchy. For instance, In 1621 *A godly forme of houshold government for the ordering of private families* outlined 'the severall duties of the husband towards his wife, and the wives dutie towards her husband, the parents dutie towards their children, and the childrens towards their parents, the maisters dutie towards his servants, and also the servants duty towards their maisters'.<sup>66</sup> The model patriarchy was defined as one which enforced hierarchy through the

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<sup>62</sup> John Novell, *The seditious principle viz. that the supreme power is inherent in the people, and that perpetually as n the proper subject (upon which the late lawlesse actings against the King were grounded, and from which the long thraldom and misery of the three nations did ensue): examined and confuted* (London, 1662).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> See Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England, 1680-1714* (Manchester, 1999). For patriarchy as a justification of imperial rule over the American colonies, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: the American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge, 1982).

<sup>65</sup> Waddell, *God, Duty and Community*, p. 114.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Cleaver, *A godly forme of houshold government for the ordering of private families* (London, 1621).

obedience of its members to the father, master, and head of the household.<sup>67</sup> The supremacy of the father within the family-household was acknowledged almost a hundred years later in Daniel Defoe's *The Complete Family Instructor*. The father, Defoe wrote in 1715, must constantly be aware of 'his duty in the future directing, teaching and governing his family.'<sup>68</sup> Only by exercising his authority could a patriarch expect obedience from, and order within, the household. As Defoe's errant father informed his wife upon the disobedience of his children: 'it was my duty to have exercised the authority of a father and of a governor of a house...they are lost through my neglect!'<sup>69</sup>

The corpus of guidelines promoted in conduct books reinforced patriarchal models of governance, shaping private understandings of the state and state-building.<sup>70</sup> As Robert Cleaver declared: 'An Houshold is as it were a little Commonwealth'.<sup>71</sup> This symbiotic relationship between political authority and patriarchal power was acknowledged by some of the most influential political theorists of the early modern period. The political jurist Jean Bodin emphasised this in his 1606 work *The six books of a commonweal*. Bodin declared that 'A Familie...is the true seminarie and beginning of every Commonweal, as also a principall member thereof'.<sup>72</sup> He blamed early classical philosophers such as Aristotle for separating the 'Oeconomical government', by which he meant the domestic management of a household, 'from the Politicall, and a Citie from a Familie.'<sup>73</sup> For Bodin, ignoring patriarchal authority as a model of

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<sup>67</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), particularly pp. 34-66.

<sup>68</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Complete Family Instructor: in five parts* (London, 1715-1717, 2 vols.), vol. 1, p. 32.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>70</sup> A. J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, 'Introduction', in A. J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, pp. 31-34.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, M. J. Mooley, ed. (Oxford, 1955), p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

government was akin to ‘if wee should pull the members from the bodie.’<sup>74</sup> There was little doubt that ‘the government of an house or familie’ was ‘the true modell for the government of a Commonweal.’<sup>75</sup> The structure of authority in the family was further adopted as a model for shaping the early modern polity by James Harrington in his fictitious ideal commonwealth *Oceana*. ‘Paternal Power is in the right of Nature’, declared Harrington, ‘and this is no other than the derivation of Power from Fathers of Familys, as the natural root of a Commonwealth.’<sup>76</sup> Ground-breaking political theorists such as Bodin and Harrington, then, placed patriarchy at the centre of English state formation from the early seventeenth century onwards.

Patriarchal models of political authority and the state were not without opposition, however. By the early eighteenth century, such discourse was highly contested and increasingly polarised. Two opposing theories on the form and legitimacy of political authority gradually emerged. Sir Robert Filmer’s *Patriarcha*, published in the 1680s, quickly became the principal work on the importance of patriarchal models of power and authority in the state. ‘If we compare the Natural Rights of a Father with those of a King’, Filmer argued, ‘we find them all one...as the Father over one Family, so the King as Father over many Families’.<sup>77</sup> *Patriarcha* thus defined power in the early modern period as based on the laws of nature, not social contract or the civil laws of man. On the contrary, John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* adhered to the principles of contract and consent. This work aimed to legitimise the regime of William III after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, placing the Crown’s authority within ‘the consent of the people, which being the only one of all lawful governments’.<sup>78</sup> Locke’s entire first treatise acted as a critique of the patriarchal interpretation of political

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> John Toland, ed., *The Oceana of James Harrington and his other works* (London, 1700), p. 87.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, or, The natural power of Kings* (London, 1680), p. 23.

<sup>78</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London, 1689), p. vii.

authority through a line-by-line refutation of *Patriarcha*. 'Honour thy father and mother', Locke disparaged, 'cannot possibly be understood of political subjection and obedience; since the laws...were given to such, whose fathers were under civil government, and fellow subjects with them in political societies.'<sup>79</sup> By separating patriarchal government from public government, obedience from consent, natural law from civil law, Locke sought to re-define the household as a private sphere arranged entirely on the basis of consent. 'The power of a *magistrate* over a subject', Locke declared in the second treatise, 'may be distinguished from that of a father over his children, a master over his servant, a husband over his wife, a lord over his slave.'<sup>80</sup> The Bill of Rights, which legalised the 'abdication' of James II and the accession of William and Mary in 1689, was based upon these new contractarian interpretations.

In many respects, however, the *Two Treatises* and the Bill of Rights proved a false start. Indeed, Locke's ideas were neither popular with contemporaries nor as transformational at the time as posterity has assumed, at least not until the late eighteenth century.<sup>81</sup> In fact, rather than signalling the inauguration of a contractarian English state legitimised upon the interpretation of political power as a construct of consent and the public as a separate civil sphere from that of the private, the post-Revolutionary Settlement landscape signalled a continuation with its Stuart predecessors. This is revealed in one of the many pamphlets published in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, urging the new parliament to conduct itself upon 'A True and Perfect Model', one in which 'every *Pater-Familias*, or House-Keeper, is a Natural

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>81</sup> James Tully, 'Placing the "Two Treatises"', in Phillipson, Nicholas and Skinner, Quentin, eds., *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 254.

Prince, and is invested with an Absolute Power over his Family'.<sup>82</sup> By the beginning of the eighteenth century, it had become quite clear that political and, more particularly, royal, power had eschewed consent for the obedience and hierarchy inherent in patriarchal models of authority. Indeed, William III had placed his reign firmly within natural and providential bounds.<sup>83</sup> Well into the eighteenth century, political thought continued to be shaped by 'those who espouse the *Patriarchal Scheme of Government*', according to the bishop of Bangor, Benjamin Hoadly, in 1710.<sup>84</sup>

Joseph Collet projected patriarchal models of political authority both on the governance of the West Coast of Sumatra, as well as on his own family. 'Whenever you marry,' Collet wrote to his daughter in 1718, 'remember that it is the Husband's part to be head and Protector, and the Glory of the Wife to be his delight.'<sup>85</sup> The successful establishment of a patriarchy at home was a necessity if it was to be legitimately exercised outside of the family. As the Reverend Moses Lowman declared, only by 'an especial Care of Vertue and Religion in your own Families', could princes, governors and magistrates subordinate those they hoped to govern.<sup>86</sup> By maintaining contact with metropolitan sources of social, political and spiritual thought and authority other than East India House, Collet's adherence to the Company's public interest was fundamentally reshaped by much more powerful private interest. Indeed, his practice of natural law and his promotion of patriarchal models of the state on the West Coast of Sumatra were themselves the pursuit of private interest, one that undermined the public state building discourse of East India House. This quickly became evident as Collet

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<sup>82</sup> Earl of Shaftsbury, *Some observations concerning the regulating of elections for Parliament, found among the Earl of Shaftsbury's papers after his death, and now recommended to the consideration of this present Parliament* (London, 1689), pp. 14-15.

<sup>83</sup> Braddick, *State Formation*, p. 279.

<sup>84</sup> Benjamin Hoadly, *An Examination of the Patriarchal Scheme of Government* (London, 1710), p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Elizabeth Collet, Fort St George, 28 August 1718.

<sup>86</sup> Lowman, *A Sermon Preach'd*, p. 20.

began to exercise the powers invested in him by the court of directors from 1712 onwards.

### **The Formation of a Private Colonial Regime**

The debate over consent or obedience at the heart of British political thought, both in the family and in the state, was reflected in Joseph Collet's formation of a private regime of governance on the West Coast of Sumatra. Collet used the sweeping powers delegated to him by the directors, not to promote the public interest, but to pursue his own varied and extensive private interests, from exercising his patriarchal authority to curtailing the profits of his commercial competitors. East India House was not a passive actor in this process, however. The painful lessons of state-building at Madras in the later seventeenth century led to the development of preventative measures which would place powerful governors like Collet within a legal framework of political consent and even limited – or shared - constitutional authority.

This was attempted primarily through the establishment of collective action in decision making.<sup>87</sup> Every executive official, whether the president, governor, deputy-governor or chief, sat with an appointed council, consisting of a settlement's most senior servants. They met regularly to share, discuss and rule upon important matters.<sup>88</sup> Appointment to the council, therefore, granted a senior servant a share in the governor's decision making policy. In seeking to dilute the substantial powers of governors in Asia by allowing others to both scrutinise and contest them, East India House hoped to subject governors to a series of checks and balances. It was believed that governing by consultation was the best method for preventing the kind of absolute power which allowed servants to act independent of East India House. For example, as early as 1661

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<sup>87</sup> See Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, pp. 76-83.

<sup>88</sup> Stern, 'Corporate virtue', p. 521.

the court of committees had written to Thomas Chamber, agent at Madras, ordering ‘that all matters bee debated and concluded of by Consultation and not as formerly singly by our Agent...wch wee utterly dislike and will by noe meanes allow of in the future.’<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, all of the council’s debates and decisions carried out in consultation were also to be open and accessible to any servant who wished to be informed of even the most sensitive policies enacted by the governor and his council.<sup>90</sup>

The importance East India House placed on consensual political frameworks to prevent arbitrary and independent behaviour constantly manifested itself in letters and orders. Despite empowering governors with sweeping political authority, they were nonetheless rarely provided with the power of dismissing members of council. This was seen when Madras appointed a supervisor for the West Coast, ‘empowered to act independent of the Council...and to dissolve them or dismiss or suspend any of them’. When news of this appointment reached East India House, they professed themselves shocked and wrote quickly to admonish Madras: ‘This Commission is of so extraordinary nature that we can by no means approve or allow it.’<sup>91</sup> Despite forcing senior servants to govern in consultation with their councils, the fear remained that such councillors would merely become pawns of their more powerful servants. This was particularly true of the West Coast of Sumatra. The court of directors constantly urged members of the Bencoolen council to ‘speak up against evil practices’ in which deputy-governors ‘brow beat or intimidated’ them in an effort to force compliance with their own decisions.<sup>92</sup> ‘We appoint a Council’, the directors explained to their servants on the West Coast, ‘to see our affairs under their inspection be well managed & to controul

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<sup>89</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/85, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 28 January 1661.

<sup>90</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/88, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 16 December 1675.

<sup>91</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/101, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 3 February 1719.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 9 March 1719.

whatever [is] amiss'.<sup>93</sup> But while the hierarchical government of the public state was supposed to be structured in a top-down way, in practice the representative assemblies of the Company's various settlements, such as councils, were highly personalised, internally divided and therefore very weak, allowing senior servants to push them aside and gather power solely into their own hands.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the orders and instructions of the court of directors to exercise his power with the consent of the Bencoolen council, Joseph Collet's patriarchal conception of power as being invested absolutely in one individual led him to marginalise and eventually disband the theoretically consultative system of government on the West Coast. Instead, he created an absolutist regime, one in which all authority was invested in a supreme power: Collet as deputy-governor. Almost immediately after his arrival on the West Coast, he began to exercise the functions of government without his council. In February 1713, he informed the governor of Madras how he had taken 'all matters especially of Importance' out of the council's hands and transacted it in his private quarters. 'As for my Council, God help them, they know nothing of the matter'.<sup>95</sup> To share power with his council would have meant compromising Collet's patriarchal power and therefore conceding his position as master of his own household. 'Instead of asking them what I shall do', Collet concluded to the governor, 'I only tell them what I have done.'<sup>96</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the council resented their authority being usurped and all political power being gathered up into the person of the deputy-governor, contrary to the directors' orders. But as Collet informed the chief of Bantal in 1714, 'I keep the Great Boys [his council] as quiet as I can but am oblig'd now and then to take away

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> See Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 87-155.

<sup>95</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, York Fort, 28 February 1713.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

their Bread and Butter.’<sup>97</sup> Curtailing their numerous perquisites as councillors was one way Collet sought to gain their submission. Another was by their very visible subordination. In 1712 Collet ordered York Fort to be abandoned, and rebuilt the Company’s headquarters at Fort Marlborough, placing the deputy-governor’s chambers at the centre of the settlement, surrounded by those of his councillors. The new fort, Collet informed Henry White, chief of Bantal, would ensure that the councillors would ‘be more under my eye’, which would allow him to ‘constantly pursue my Old Maxim – He that will not bend, shall break.’<sup>98</sup> The visible display of Collet’s authority as deputy-governor was also constantly employed to overawe the council. Whenever Collet left his chambers, he was led by a flag bearer, attended by a horse guard, a troop of Malay soldiers, four men carrying blunderbusses, and followed by a Malay rear-guard. ‘If I [go] abroad...or shou’d lye out of the Fort’, Collet informed friends in England, ‘the number of my Guard is encreased.’<sup>99</sup> Thus through neglect, coercion and intimidation, Collet was able to defunct the only rival body for power on the West Coast, reducing it to obedience and ruling with absolute authority.

Having established his uncontested control over political authority, Collet set about demolishing the existing ‘shadow of government’ that had led the collapse of the Company’s power on the West Coast. He began by punishing those who exhibited opposition to his government or signs of insubordination. As he wrote to the members of the Dic Ipse, a religious club he belonged to in England, Collet deemed such acts to be ‘matters of the greatest Importance’ which challenged both his religious sensibilities and his political position. ‘I have been obliged to some severities unknown here and yet at the same time wisht for a Power to inflict greater Penalties.’<sup>100</sup> As Collet’s powers of

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<sup>97</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Henry White, York Fort, 13 March 1714.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Dic Ipse Club, York Fort, 23 September 1712.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

punishment were already wide-ranging, he was clearly talking about the power of capital punishment. As he shared these policies and ambitions with members of the Dic Ipse, he was reconfirming his belief in the absoluteness of political authority which the club itself represented. The name Dic Ipse is an Anglicised version of the Latin phrase *ipse dixit*, coined by the Roman orator and political philosopher Cicero to denote an arbitrary or dogmatic authority deriving from the power of individuals as opposed to wider logic or reason.<sup>101</sup> Such alternative sources of metropolitan thought and practice as the Dic Ipse Club led to an ever widening gulf between the public discourses of East India House in London and the private practices of their deputy-governor in Asia.

The pursuit of Collet's private interests, particularly in regards to the exercise of his absolute political authority, was quickly felt amongst the small community of Company servants on the West Coast. Within the first month of his deputy-governorship, Collet had imprisoned one Company servant while 'another I have broken for lewdness and cowardness', both of whom, he triumphantly declared to the Dic Ipse Club, were sent off the West Coast on the departure of the first ships for Europe.<sup>102</sup> In the following year, the purge had gathered apace. The chief of Bantal, Stephen Bailhorn, was dismissed 'for his insolence to the Deputy Govern'r', along with his second of council, Gilbert Cook, who dared to challenge Bailhorn's replacement.<sup>103</sup> At Bencoolen, the warehouse keeper was suspended indefinitely 'for abusing, affronting, and challenging' another Company servant. When the purging came to an

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<sup>101</sup> The phrase was made particularly popular in Britain in the later eighteenth century by Jeremy Bentham. See Jeremy Bentham, *Deontology; or, the Science of Morality* (London, 1834, 3 vols.), vol. 1, p. 323.

<sup>102</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Dic Ipse Club, York Fort, 23 September 1712.

<sup>103</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 28 February 1713; *ibid.*, 10 September 1713.

end in 1713, only nine covenanted servants remained on the West Coast, roughly half of the usual number.<sup>104</sup>

After eighteen months in office, Collet had dramatically altered the socio-political landscape of the West Coast settlements. Rivals for power had been brought to heel and subordinated, while insubordinate servants had been punished and dismissed. ‘I have effectually destroy’d almost all the perquisites of their respective offices’, Collet boasted to his brother, Samuel Collet.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the ‘shadow of a true and right Governmt’ complained of in 1710 by the governor of Madras had been effectively torn down and demolished. There had perhaps never been a more opportune moment to make the public interest of the Company supreme by reviving the pepper trade, reducing expenses and disengaging from conflict with the surrounding Malay. However, like most of his fellow governors and senior servants, Joseph Collet had developed private interests, loyalties and associations of his own within his eighteen months of residence in Asia, outside of the public task entrusted to him by Gregory Page and the rest of the court of directors at East India House.

The deputy-governor outlined the maxims of his ‘schemes of Government’ to the Reverend Moses Lowman. ‘I make all under me know that I will be obey’d.’ He hoped to accomplish this through various methods. ‘I gradually work on the severall affections, Gratitude, Hope and Fear, and find Springs to move them all.’<sup>106</sup> These varying strategies were deployed in a reformation of manners which Collet pursued amongst subordinates on the West Coast. Whereas East India House hoped to reform the public behaviour of its servants in places such as Madras as a way of preventing the spread of private interest, Collet was motivated by what he believed was a paternal duty and patriarchal right. Collet took moral, godly and respectful behaviour by other

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<sup>104</sup> Although a bout of plague had also taken its toll, see *ibid*.

<sup>105</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, York Fort, 22 September 1712.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Moses Lowman, York Fort, 14 November 1712.

Company servants as a sign of their submission to him as deputy-governor. ‘I think I am rather feared by the English’, Collet wrote to Gregory Page, chairman of the court of directors. ‘Their reformatations of every kind that I must go through with render them uneasy.’<sup>107</sup>

Collet aimed to create a godly regime at Bencoolen. The main thrust of reformation, therefore, was directed at the lack of religiosity in his subordinates. According to the deputy-governor, they exhibited ‘Wickedness and Blaspheme...and this I had almost said is Universall.’<sup>108</sup> In a letter to a friend in Britain, Collet declared his intention to ‘endeavour a Reformation both by Authority and Example. God grant Success!’<sup>109</sup> Through rigorous attendance at divine service, he hoped to instil piety, justice, charity, temperance ‘and Purity of Heart as well as Life’ in his subordinates.<sup>110</sup> To this end, Collet preached to the West Coast establishment every Sunday at Bencoolen, holding ‘Prayers’ and delivering ‘a Sermon’.<sup>111</sup> For the latter, Collet quoted directly from the works of theologians such as John Tillotson and John Wilkins, both of whom espoused patriarchal models of political authority.<sup>112</sup> ‘Obedience’, declared Wilkins in his *Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, published two years before Collet’s departure for Asia, ‘being nothing else but that homage which we owe to such as are in a superior relation, who have a right to command us.’ He continued: ‘Every relation of superiority and dominion being a distinct engagement to subjection; whether *Oeconomical*, as that betwixt *Parent* and *Child*; *Political*, as betwixt *Magistrate* and *Subject*’.<sup>113</sup> Collet adopted and preached these messages of obedience to reinforce his

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<sup>107</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Gregory Page, York Fort, 16 October 1712.

<sup>108</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Daniel Dolins, York Fort, 30 August 1713.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Joseph Harding, York Fort, 18 September 1712; *ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, York Fort, 23 August 1714.

<sup>112</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Nathaniel Hodges, York Fort, 1 March 1714.

<sup>113</sup> John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London, 1710), pp. 227-8.

right to rule his audience, not through any constitutional or public power granted by East India House, but as possessing natural and providential authority, as a patriarch does over his own household.

By mid-1714, Collet believed that such private reformations were beginning to succeed in creating a god-fearing society under his rule. As he wrote to his brother-in-law, ‘a great Reformation of manners is visible amongst my People; and I have reason to believe that in some instances there is a change of heart as well as Life.’<sup>114</sup> As Collet stamped his private authority over West Coast society, a political system began to emerge that was less about the loyalty of servants to East India House or the promotion of the public interest, and more about loyalty to Collet and the promotion of his own private interests, whether attendance at one of his sermons or acknowledging the uselessness of the council as a political body. Collet’s pursuit of his private interests on the West Coast of Sumatra was succinctly summed up in a letter to his brother, Samuel Collet, in 1714: ‘And as for the English, we make up one great Family of which I am the head and common Father, to whom all pay the Reverence, Respect, and Obedience of Children.’<sup>115</sup>

In projecting himself as a powerful patriarch while casting his subordinates as ‘children’, Collet transferred the loyalty and obligation of those on the West Coast from their public masters and employers at East India House, to him personally as their ‘common Father’. When William Palmer arrived on the West Coast in the junior station of writer, Collet extended his favour to him and established a patriarchal relationship between them. ‘Gov’r Collet useth me like a Son’, Palmer wrote to his patron in England in 1713, ‘he has made me his Secretary.’<sup>116</sup> Such obligations bound the young Palmer to Collet directly, so that he informed his patron that only God’s pleasure in

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<sup>114</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to John Bedwell, York Fort, 20 April 1714.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, York Fort, 1 March 1714.

<sup>116</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, William Palmer to Mr Mooley, Fort Marlborough, 13 February 1714.

sparing the deputy-governor's life, despite an outbreak of plague, ensured that the Company's affairs on the West Coast continued to flourish. 'In short', Palmer concluded to his patron, 'We are all an entise Body knit together in amity'.<sup>117</sup> Even the most senior servants found themselves subjected to Collet's own private forms of government, as opposed to the more public idea of the state which their employers at East India House promoted. As chief of Bantal, a subordinate settlement some one-hundred miles north of Bencoolen, Henry White was the second most powerful figure on the West Coast. Traditionally, the chiefs of Bantal were the competitors of their superiors at Bencoolen, in commerce and politics. But under Collet, this dynamic was reversed. 'I always wrote to him in the Stile and with the freedom of a Father', Collet wrote of White to his daughter Elizabeth in 1714, 'which he returns with the duty and affection of a Son.'<sup>118</sup> Indeed, governing White as a father allowed Collet to subject Bantal to his authority and control its affairs to a greater extent than any deputy-governor had managed before.

The emergence of a private colonial regime on the West Coast of Sumatra reflected Collet's pursuit of private interests, those of a social, theological and political nature. But in binding Company servants to him on such an intimate level, Collet was also able to facilitate his pecuniary interests from the obedience they offered to him. For instance, many of his so-called 'children' felt obliged to make Collet, as their 'father', the executor of their estates in Asia. Richard Connell, a member of the Bencoolen council, died from plague in 1713. Shortly before his death, Connell had changed his will to make Collet's daughter Henrietta the sole heir, and Collet, as executor, remitted the £400 which the estate realised home to his daughter.<sup>119</sup> Writing to his eldest daughter Elizabeth, Collet related how her sister had a fortune left to her by 'a

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Elizabeth Collet, York Fort, 5 May 1714.

<sup>119</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Mary Collet, York Fort, 16 October 1713.

Gentleman that thought himself under some obligations to me'.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, another of Collet's subordinates left his youngest daughter Anne an estate of £250.<sup>121</sup> Nor was Elizabeth herself neglected. Henry White, the chief of Bantal whom Collet had treated like a son, asked the deputy-governor permission to begin a correspondence with Elizabeth in 1714. As his powerful deputy in the northern subordinate factories, his main trading partner and his successor as deputy-governor, Collet sought to strengthen his authority over the chief of Bantal and bind him further to his own interests. 'I require of you to return his civility's in the Stile and with the Freedom of a Sister', Collet instructed his daughter.<sup>122</sup> He further ordered Elizabeth to sit for her portrait and send it to White 'as a Present from a Sister to a Brother', and also to visit and acquaint herself with White's relatives in England.<sup>123</sup> White himself sent Elizabeth a gold nutmeg grater in the shape of a heart, and a small gold nutmeg case.<sup>124</sup> By 1716, he had also made her the executor of his will and heir of his entire estate.<sup>125</sup>

The ends of Collet's government of the West Coast, of course, were not to fleece subordinates of their estates for the benefit of himself and his own family. But the patriarchal model of governance established by Collet tied servants to him on a private level, creating not just professional and public obligations, but personal, emotional and even intimate bonds in which their loyalty and subordination was offered to him directly, and not to East India House. Indeed, authority in colonial governance was not a public matter, rather it was shaped, exercised and legitimised through a series of interpersonal relationships based upon a private discourse of natural and providential right. East India House saw such behaviour as the corrupt and dangerous pursuit of

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<sup>120</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Elizabeth Collet, York Fort, 1 March 1714.

<sup>121</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Anne Collet, Fort St George, 18 September 1716.

<sup>122</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Elizabeth Collet, York Fort, 5 May 1714.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Elizabeth Collet, Fort St George, 18 September 1716.

private interest, but for their servants in Asia, it was simply the way in which power, authority and governance were articulated and exercised, far removed from the immediate oversight of the directors in London. Thus, while East India House sought to encourage and reward loyalty to the Company's public interest through increased salary or a share in private trade, Collet did so by acting in a paternal manner.

Paternalism in this respect was not distinct from patriarchy as a form of authority. Rather, it was another manifestation of patriarchal power, a 'tool' in the 'toolkit' of fathers to enforce obedience over the household.<sup>126</sup> For instance, Collet 'adopted' the unmarried European women of the West Coast as his daughters, arranging their marriage to the most suitable of his subordinates.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, he extended his protection and care to the children of such unions. When John Hunter left Bencoolen to take up the post of chief of Bantal in 1712, Collet brought his daughter into his own household, appointed a nurse to look after her, and even consulted a doctor when she fell sick. 'Whilst under my care', Collet informed her father, '[she] shall want nothing in my Power to provide for her.'<sup>128</sup> If their parents died, as many did from disease and the climate, Collet took the children in as his own, or arranged for their transport to Madras 'where better care may be taken of them.'<sup>129</sup> The paternal affection which Collet extended to his subordinates incentivised their loyalty to him, as he wrote to his sister in 1717: 'I shall think a Father's Care repaid by his Children's duty.'<sup>130</sup> But at the same time, it also reconfirmed their subjection to his authority, and his position as the supreme power on the West Coast of Sumatra.

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<sup>126</sup> Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (London, 1996), pp. 322-4.

<sup>127</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to John Bedwell, York Fort, 23 October 1712.

<sup>128</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to John Hunter, York Fort, 3 December 1712.

<sup>129</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to William Dawsonne, York Fort, 1 July 1713.

<sup>130</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Ann Bedwell, Fort St George, 23 December 1717.

## **Imperial Expansion as Private Interest**

Perhaps the most significant – and visible - difference between the public discourses of East India House and the private practices of its servants, can be found in their conflicting approach to the Company's political and territorial expansion in Asia. Traditionally, historians have understood European imperial expansion there to be shaped by wider geo-political circumstances and currents, such as Anglo-French conflict or the 'decline' of the Mughal Empire.<sup>131</sup> However, the composite nature of private interest, which included not just pecuniary interests such as private trade, but social, political and cultural interests, too, meant that waging war and conducting foreign diplomacy were also duties assumed by Company servants who attained great personal power in Asia, as Joseph Collet had. Indeed, as part of the development of private forms of governance on the West Coast of Sumatra, imperial expansion was a key dynamic in legitimising private power. Collet's regime would have been fatally undermined had groups existed beyond his authority, exercising independence and maintaining different socio-political orders on Bencoolen's doorstep. Imperial ambitions, therefore, shaped Collet's interaction with the Malay up and down the West Coast.

Joseph Collet represented the diverse contours of imperial politics in Asia in the eighteenth century. His subordination of Company servants on the West Coast and his exercise of autocratic power derived from his private social interests, for example the role of natural law in politics. His imperial ambitions, on the other hand, derived more particularly from his cultural interests, specifically his attitude toward and perception of Malay culture. The latter, Collet consistently declared, created uncivilized and

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<sup>131</sup> This is discussed to a greater extent in chapter 5. However, for an excellent synthesis of wider or global circumstances shaping imperial expansion, see C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, 1989); Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*.

backward political societies on the West Coast.<sup>132</sup> This was a widely held view by most Europeans stationed on the island during this period, one that was promoted from the very beginning of the Company's presence there. 'In a word I shall Plainely tell yor Honor &ca', Company servants wrote to the court of directors in 1686, after barely a year on the West Coast, 'that this Place is a receiptall for Vagabonds & runegates & from ye King to ye beggar theaves.'<sup>133</sup> In 1700, the chief of Bantal also condemned the surrounding Malay in similar terms. 'The Mallays are a people Barbarous in their practice, false in their faith, and unsteady in their resolutions.'<sup>134</sup> While the Company's public interest demanded the accommodation of Asian culture, religion and society in the interest of positive diplomatic and commercial ties, the private cultural stereotypes fostered by Company servants fed into their patriarchal discourses. Colonial encounters thus became opportunities for the exercise of patriarchal authority and, as a consequence, of outright conflict and territorial expansion.

Fresh from his voyage to Asia in 1712, Deputy-Governor Collet penned a letter to a friend in England a few days after his arrival at Bencoolen. After his initial contact with various prominent Malay rajas and sultans, he articulated to his friend the encounters through the prism of his private social and cultural attitudes and beliefs. 'They tell me I am a good Man and pray for my life daily; I treat them as a Wise man shou'd his Wife, am complaisant in trifles, but immoveable in matters of importance.'<sup>135</sup> One again, the patriarchal models of political power which were fed into the West Coast through private sources of metropolitan authority and thought, shaped Collet's practice of foreign diplomacy, ultimately driving his imperial ambitions. Thus for Collet, the perceived backwardness of the Malay made them natural 'wives' and 'children' in his

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<sup>132</sup> For the classic study on colonial discourses of the 'other', see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).

<sup>133</sup> Bencoolen to Madras, York Fort, 8 May 1686, in Bastin, *The British in West Sumatra*, p. 31.

<sup>134</sup> RFSG, *LTFSG*, Bencoolen to Madras, York Fort, 31 July 1700, vol. 7, p. 181.

<sup>135</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Mary Quincy, York Fort, 19 September 1712.

personal colonial regime. As William Palmer, Collet's secretary, wrote in 1713: 'the [rulers] of the Country love the Governor and fear him and he useth them as his Sons'.<sup>136</sup>

During the four years of his deputy-governorship, Collet sought the complete obedience of the surrounding Malay to his rule. The forum at which this was most frequently achieved was that of the *bitchar*. An assembly where Malay rulers and Company servants convened to deliberate on everything from judicial matters to diplomatic proceedings, the *bitchar* provided Company servants with a platform to demonstrate their authority over the Malay. It was a gathering of great pomp and display, where gifts of expensive silk taffeta and luxurious cotton *coffaes* (fabrics) were distributed to various Malay rulers by the deputy-governor, while the military were drawn up in formation, parading and beating drums.<sup>137</sup> The Malay and members of the deputy-governor's council were seated hierarchically according to rank, Company servants at the highest end of the table with the deputy-governor at their head, presiding over the entire gathering.<sup>138</sup> As the distribution of gifts and the symbolism of ceremony formed a vital aspect of the culture of diplomacy in West Sumatran society, a Company servant's control over a *bitchar* was a powerful political expression of his personal authority.<sup>139</sup>

Although *bitchar* was a uniquely Malay institution, the respect, cooperation and negotiation East India House urged their servants to pursue with the Malay rulers there was disregarded, and the *bitchar* subverted, particularly by Joseph Collet, into a private court in which the Malay visibly expressed or offered their subordination to him. 'I have been ador'd with Prostration and have had my feet bath'd with tears of Joy and

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<sup>136</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, William Palmer to Mr Mooley, Fort Marlborough, 13 February 1713.

<sup>137</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/101, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 9 March 1719.

<sup>138</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>139</sup> Freek Colombijn, 'The Volatile State in South East Asia: Evidence from Sumatra, 1600-1800', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 62, no. 2 (May, 2003), pp. 498-9.

Gratitude’, Collet declared of his time in *bitchar* in 1712 to the Reverend Hodges, an acquaintance in Britain. ‘My Knees have been embraced and that even by a Prince as well as Slaves’, Collet continued. ‘I am dayly pray’d for in various languages and with different Rites by severall Kings, and all their Subjects.’<sup>140</sup> As flowery as such boasts may seem, they were more than just rhetoric. During *bitchar*, Malay rajas, sultans and emperors sought Collet’s judgement on judicial cases, accepted his rulings on diplomatic incidents and were ascribed punishment for disobedience.<sup>141</sup> Far from upholding the public interest of his employers at East India House, Collet considered himself to be achieving ‘the ends of Justice as a Man, and Duty as a Parent’.<sup>142</sup> The last part was important. While holding *bitchar*, the deputy-governor exercised his patriarchy by enforcing his authority over the Malay and accepting their submission to his orders. Equally, the absence of a Malay ruler at a *bitchar* was a direct affront to Collet’s personal authority, and a danger to the regime he had built on the West Coast.

When the Malay opposed Collet’s subjugation of them, or attempted to operate outside of his regime, he projected his authority through military force. Collet’s approach to the Sultanate of Anak Sungai, a large state to the north, reveals how private practices of government led to imperial expansion on the West Coast. In 1713, two prominent rajas of the sultanate inaugurated their rebellion against Collet’s authority by refusing to attend *bitchar*. The reasons for their disobedience can be found in the turbulent political conditions of the sultanate over the preceding years. As Collet wrote to the directors at the beginning of 1713, ‘affairs in the North have been hitherto very much out of order’.<sup>143</sup> He witnessed the situation first hand when his ship had docked at Bantal on its way to Bencoolen the year before. There he had learnt that a long-

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<sup>140</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Nathaniel Hodges, York Fort, 2 November 1712.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, York Fort, 23 August 1714.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Nathaniel Hodges, York Fort, 2 November 1712.

<sup>143</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 10 September 1713.

threatened civil war had finally broken out in the sultanate, where the ruler, Sultan Gulemat, was being challenged for the throne by Rajas Suleman and Mansore.<sup>144</sup> The chief of Bantal in 1710, Robert Skingle, had seen this as an opportunity to weaken the sovereignty of the sultanate and increase his own political authority by supporting both candidates to the throne.<sup>145</sup> Skingle's successor, Anthony Ettrick, went a step further and used the breakdown of authority in the sultanate to annex the territory of Raja Jangallo. 'He attempted conquest but with great baseness & imprudence,' Collet wrote of Ettrick.<sup>146</sup> The raja had been invited to Bantal on the pretence of joining a *bitchar*, but once he had arrived and entered the Company's fort there, Ettrick had given the signal to concealed soldiers to fire upon the raja's party. Although Raja Jangallo survived this assassination attempt, he was presently seized and murdered two days later. Imprisoning the raja's brother and successor in the fort, Ettrick 'attackd the [raja's] Countrey and expelld his family,' garrisoning the capital.<sup>147</sup> As most of the soldiers Collet had brought with him from Madras had already perished in the various campaigns of the chiefs of Bantal, he was therefore forced to stall for time while he rebuilt his military capabilities.

As the new chief of Bantal, Collet selected his 'son', Henry White, with instructions to summon a *bitchar* and mediate between Sultan Gulemat and the pretender, Raja Suleman.<sup>148</sup> But when Suleman failed to attend, and instead withdrew to his fortified settlements at Moco Moco and Manduta with his ally Raja Mansore, he signalled his intent to dispute Collet's power over him. The deputy-governor wrote furiously to White that he was 'not at all disposed to bear their Insolencys', and encouraged him that 'if ever they come within reach of the Guns [of Bantal Fort]

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<sup>144</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 15 May 1714.

<sup>145</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, Bencoolen to Court of Directors, York Fort, 4 July 1710.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, York Fort General, 22 October 1712.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 10 September 1713.

without leave I would have you be very liberall of your shots.<sup>149</sup> Unless the rebel rajas were brought to submission, Collet's position as ruler of the West Coast was in danger of being undermined. White therefore proposed to Collet a 'Scheme of Warr', which included raising a force of 30 Europeans and 100 Malays to take the offensive and hunt the rajas down. But the manpower available to Collet was still severely restricted, as were his military stores. 'I am sorry your neighbours are so troublesome especially at a time when it is not in our power to call them to account', Collet wrote to White, 'but where are these 30 Europeans to be had?'<sup>150</sup> However, when the *Frederick* and *Susannah* sailed unexpectedly into the Bencoolen road, the deputy-governor was provided with the means to bring the rebel rajas back under his authority.

'You will perhaps wonder to find the Postscript to my private Letter a direct contradiction to our Generall Letter wherein You are told that we can spare no men to make the Appearance of a Military force Sufficient to make your troublesome neighbours quiet,' Collet wrote to White in October 1713.<sup>151</sup> On board the newly arrived Company ships were complements of troops and military stores sufficient to act offensively. Collet immediately despatched an officer with twenty European and sixty Malay troops to Bantal, granting White power to subordinate the rebel rajas, 'by Military Execution', as he termed it.<sup>152</sup> Collet sought to bring the sultanate once and for all under his control by making the sultan his puppet: his rights were to be reduced by increasing those of his *proateens*; he was to pay for the upkeep of all Company settlements within his territory; Company servants assumed the right to regulate the economy of Anak Sungai by banning the import of gun-powder, forbidding the export of pepper, and enforcing the cultivation of pepper vines upon threat of fining every

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<sup>149</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Bencoolen to Bantal, York Fort, 23 September 1713.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Bantal, York Fort, 23 October 1713.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

family fifteen dollars who failed to do so; most importantly, Collet claimed full territorial sovereign rights to Raja Suleman's settlements of Moco Moco and Manduta. The treaty concluded with the stipulation that 'whoever breaks Peace without first complaining to the English shall be lookd on as Publick Enemy.<sup>153</sup> When the sultan finally agreed to these exacting demands on 30 November 1713, Collet instructed White to march against the rebel rajas.<sup>154</sup>

The campaign itself was swift and involved a direct march overland some forty miles from Bantal to take Moco Moco and Manduta from the rajas, especially important now that Collet claimed possession of both places. This was a war to demonstrate the deputy-governor's patriarchal authority, and his ability to punish and correct those who disobeyed him. Few were to be left in doubt of this, with Sultan Guleman's offer to join forces declined, Collet 'only desiring his People to carry their Baggage & provide Barracks.<sup>155</sup> Catching Moco Moco by surprise, an assault from the river led by William Fox, third of council at Bantal, was enough to ensure its capture, but not before Raja Suleman set fire to a portion of the town as he fled.<sup>156</sup> A detachment was then sent up-river to Maduta which they found abandoned and largely burnt to the ground. 'The Compys forces took in this expedition,' Collet boasted in early 1714, '13 p[ound] Ordnance, 1 mortar, 47 shot, 20 Granado Shells filld, 26 empty & above 20 bahar Pepper.<sup>157</sup> The deputy-governor believed that his subjugation of Anak Sungai would bring it more firmly under his patriarchal authority. In 1714 he observed victoriously that Sultan Gulemat 'calls me a Father and asks my advice in the Government of his

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<sup>153</sup> For the treaty's full terms, see BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Treaty with Anak Sungai, York Fort, 30 November 1713.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 15 May 1714.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

own people.’<sup>158</sup> To the Reverend Moses Lowman, whose patriarchal ideas of political power had so influenced Collet’s own private understandings of state formation, the deputy-governor wrote in 1715 that ‘I have gone through two successfull Wars...and at the same time have gain’d the Love of the people I have conquer’d’.<sup>159</sup>

### **The Triumph of Private Interest**

After four years on the West Coast of Sumatra, Joseph Collet was promoted to governor of Madras in 1716, the most senior office in the Company’s service. After his departure from Bencoolen, the court of directors noted to Collet’s successor how his actions as deputy-governor had made the Malay ‘esteem him the Father of their Country’.<sup>160</sup> But far from perceiving Collet’s private colonial regime as a usurpation of their authority through the corrupt pursuit of private interest, East India House rewarded him for the political stability, social order and commercial growth his form of governance had brought to the West Coast. Indeed, the dynamic of creating autonomous, private regimes in Asia through the appropriation of public authority could not only endure, but receive official recognition and even endorsement by East India House if it also succeeded in serving the ‘public interest’, however incidental. Collet was well aware of this fact. As he wrote to his brother, the establishment of a private regime on the West Coast meant that ‘my private Affairs are in a flourishing condition’, but, he added, it also ‘renders my Government very easy; the publick Affairs prosper abundantly.’<sup>161</sup>

The pursuit of private interest had indeed put Collet’s affairs in a ‘flourishing condition’. His commercial interests, for example, had been spectacularly realised. While Collet professed to earn £2,000 a year from his private trade, others estimated it

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<sup>158</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Moses Lowman, Fort Marlborough, 3 January 1715.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 14 March 1717.

<sup>161</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, York Fort, 1 March 1713.

at the more likely sum of £10,000.<sup>162</sup> For instance, it was later discovered that he had taken commission on all pepper, redwood and saltpetre shipped from the West Coast, a practice which was both unheard of and which likely provided him with a substantial sum.<sup>163</sup> Yet even far more modest estates than that acquired by Collet had raised the suspicions of East India House and often led to prosecution. Collet, however, was allowed to enjoy his without censure – even with praise.

The private colonial regime established by Collet on the West Coast may have been formed through the pursuit of a composite set of private interests, but it also met the expectations of the ‘public interest’ that East India House sought so strenuously to promote in Asia through its state building efforts. Commercial growth was the cornerstone of the Company’s public interest. As the court of directors had reminded Collet in 1712, ‘Trade is our business and if fully pursued will take up the time of our Councils at all places’.<sup>164</sup> To the directors’ delight, Collet succeeded in reviving the severely diminished trade in pepper during his deputy-governorship, one of the key aims Collet was specifically sent to Sumatra to achieve. Before Collet’s arrival there, Malay pepper farmers had been alienated, pepper plantations were overgrown, and trading posts abandoned, providing barely a trickle of pepper for the Company’s warehouses in London.<sup>165</sup> Under Collet, the acquisition and shipment of pepper became a priority. He urged the Malay to ‘increase Pepper which is as much as their Interest as the Companys’.<sup>166</sup> He also opened new trading posts in places such as Moco Moco.<sup>167</sup>

Collet’s efforts quickly bore fruit. As he wrote to the governor of Madras, ‘I am now pretty confident of being able to answer the Company’s Expectations of enlarging

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, York Fort, 2 June 1714.

<sup>163</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 8 January 1717.

<sup>164</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/98, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 13 January 1713.

<sup>165</sup> Young, ‘Trade on the West Coast of Sumatra’, p. 15.

<sup>166</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, 22 October 1712.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 27 February 1713.

the Pepper Trade to their Content.<sup>168</sup> In 1712 the deputy-governor reported to the court of directors that the *Success* had set sail from Bencoolen fully laden with 960 *bahar*<sup>169</sup> of pepper, more than twenty tonnes than was customary, as well as containing stocks of redwood and saltpetre.<sup>170</sup> A further 1,500 *bahar* of pepper was shipped throughout 1713, with 2,000 more predicted for the following year.<sup>171</sup> Under Collet, a record amount of pepper was acquired from the West Coast of Sumatra. As the directors informed Collet's successor, Richard Farmer, in 1717, 'he procured for Us more Pepper the first & second year', than any other year in the establishment's history.<sup>172</sup> If such private forms of governance secured the public interest as well as the private interest of their authors, they were tolerated and in some cases – although far more rarely – even rewarded by East India House. Physical conflict between East India House and their servants in Asia materialised only when such private regimes failed to realise the public interest, a situation which was more the norm in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. When this happened, the usurping Company servant was either successfully dismissed or driven to rebellion against his masters. Such was the fate of Richard Farmer, Collet's successor as deputy-governor.

Deputy-governor Farmer was far less successful in building a private colonial regime. Although he sought to replicate the practices of his predecessor, Farmer's acquisition of autocratic power lacked the patriarchy exercised by Collet, and thus sought to subordinate his peers while failing to integrate them into a wider political order. Furthermore, his regime was ultimately unable to realise any aspect of the public interest, particularly its economic aims, which resulted in conflict with East India

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<sup>168</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, York Fort, 22 October 1712.

<sup>169</sup> *Bahar* was an Arabic unit of measurement, used to weigh pepper. While the number of lb in a *bahar* varied during this period, most Company sources considered it to be between 500-600 lb per *bahar*.

<sup>170</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, Joseph Collet to Court of Directors, York Fort, 28 February 1713.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 September 1713.

<sup>172</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 14 March 1717.

House. '[It is] not in his nature to do well for any body', complained the West Coast factor Joseph Walsh in 1718, 'not having one spark of Hon'sty or Generosity within him.'<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, according to Walsh, Farmer had 'us'd every one here very ill, making us live in continual disquiet'.<sup>174</sup> The new deputy-governor had engrossed all private trade to the exclusion of his subordinates, imprisoned his competitors and even monopolised all manner of provisions, even the basic necessities such as salt and rice.<sup>175</sup> There was to be no paternal care or weekly sermons under Farmer. Furthermore, he had entirely neglected the pepper trade, allowing Company ships to lay empty and idle, even rotting in some cases.<sup>176</sup> This was partly due to his erratic and violent policy toward the Malay. 'He has by his pervious', continued Walsh, 'incend's the whole country against us, & involv'd us in Wars to the very brink of ruin.'<sup>177</sup> Farmer's wars meant that he was unable to ship any pepper from the West Coast during the eighteen months of his regime. 'We can attribute this failure to nothing else but our Dep'ty Governour's infidelity, supineness or want of Judgement and Zeal for our service', declared the directors.<sup>178</sup> Once it had been proved that the deputy-governor had defrauded the Company's accounts, the governor of Madras despatched a military force to depose Farmer.<sup>179</sup> Having alienated the entire political establishment on the West Coast, however, Farmer lacked the popular support to physically rebel against the Company. In March 1719 the ships from Madras arrived and Farmer was seized, imprisoned, and eventually shipped back to Madras to be charged.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 21 June 1718.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 14 March 1717.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 21 June 1718.

<sup>178</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 9 March 1719.

<sup>179</sup> RFSG, *MDCB*, Consultation, March 1719, Fort St George, pp. 80-81.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., Consultation, March 1719, Fort St George, pp. 80-81.

The fate of the West Coast of Sumatra serves as an accurate epitaph for the Company's public state building efforts in Asia. Farmer's erratically violent regime had left the West Coast in a state of disarray after 1719. His attempt to place his own candidate on the throne of Anak Sungai had inadvertently united the various warring Malay factions under the deposed Sultan Gulemat. The new deputy-governor, Edward Cooke, was caught unawares when a large Malay army marched on Bencoolen in mid-1719, burning it to the ground and expelling the Company's servants off the West Coast of Sumatra. 'The fatal desertion of Bencoolen as We have the account from several hands', bemoaned the court of directors in 1722, 'casts a Reproach more or less on every body there so that We are not very willing to Station any of them in Our service'.<sup>181</sup> Although Bencoolen was resettled again in 1721, none of Collet's successors were able to repeat his balance of public and private interests. Instead, they entirely rejected the public interest, aggressively pursuing their own private schemes of commerce, governance and imperial expansion to varying degrees of intensity. In 1721, Nathaniel Elwick, the governor of Madras, accused the new West Coast deputy-governor of having 'enter'd upon a design of flinging off all subordinacy to this Presidency & has assum'd to himself a power of acting at the West Coast in defiance & contempt of our authority and contrary to the orders he hath rec'd from the Honble Company'.<sup>182</sup> The Company finally withdrew from the West Coast in 1824, conceding Sumatra to the Dutch in favour of Singapore.<sup>183</sup> Much like the gradual failure of the West Coast to realise East India House's expectations in the pepper trade, so the pursuit of private interests by senior servants decentralised political authority within the

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<sup>181</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Madras, 14 February 1722.

<sup>182</sup> RFSG, *MDCB*, Articles of charge exhibited by the Honourable Nathaniel Elwick against Isaac Pyke, Fort St George, 18 December 1721, pp. 202-205.

<sup>183</sup> Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, from c.1800 to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 2000, 2 vols.), vol. 2, p. 14.

Company, severely limiting the ability of metropolitan authorities at East India House to build the early modern colonial state in Asia.

## **Conclusion**

As events on the West Coast of Sumatra in the early eighteenth century show, the ability for the Company's public discourse of state building to be put into practice by its servants in Asia was limited and remained unrealised. East India House was forced to empower senior servants in Asia through the spatial and temporal limits placed on their ability to project their own authority there. In doing so, they believed such figures would build the colonial institutions necessary for the establishment of a strong, centralised state. Such a polity, they hoped, would ensure the obedience and loyalty of servants scattered throughout Asia to the public interests of metropolitan authorities at East India House, interests concerned with commercial growth and shareholder dividends. But public institutional understandings of hierarchy and order conflicted with the private interests of those very servants empowered in Asia to undertake such state building. Indeed, the policies and orders of East India House had to be channelled through their servants, and in the process became subject to reinterpretation and reconfiguration, and were, ultimately, applied according to the composite interests of servants. These interests, moreover, were shaped by competing sources of metropolitan authority, thought and practice, fed through the connections Company servants maintained with households, kin, social clubs and religious orders in Britain. Such a decentralised process of political authority did not always lead to the subversion of the public interest, however. In some cases, such as Joseph Collet's deputy-governorship of the West Coast of Sumatra, the public interest was fully realised, at least in commercial terms.

The first part of this thesis has exposed the failure of East India House to shape the emergence of the early modern colonial state, revealing instead the triumph of private interests in subverting public models of the state and replacing them with more personal ideas of the purpose and projection of state power. By the early eighteenth century, the policies of East India House were shaped by the pursuit of the private interests of its servants in Asia, remaining very much subservient to their personal actions and beliefs. As Collet himself observed as he prepared to leave Sumatra in 1716: ‘He that attempts to go thro’ the Exercise of power and administration of government so as to please all Men, will very probably please none; my rule is so to act as that in the first place may approve Myself to my own Conscience, and next to those by whom I am entrusted’.<sup>184</sup> This private approach to colonial governance emerged as the model through which the English East India Company developed in Asia.

Fundamental to this process of political decentralisation were the long-distance ties which connected associates, friends and family members in Britain with Company servants operating thousands of miles away across Asia. Such connections ensured that the interests and actions of Company servants were constantly shaped and reshaped by a composite range of metropolitan influences in places such as India and the West Coast of Sumatra which determined their private interests, specifically their understandings of the state and the exercise of state power. Indeed, family and friends in Britain played critical roles in the Company servant’s appropriation of public authority and their transfiguration of new systems and regimes of colonial power. This was clearly evident in the transformed political landscape of the West Coast which Collet left behind in 1716, and it was a process repeated across Asia in the early modern period.

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<sup>184</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Adam Holden, Fort St George, 19 September 1716.

The decentred nature of the Company's political authority in Asia was reflective of the decentred nature of the imperial metropole itself. As the court of directors dispatched their orders from East India House to their servants in Asia, these were accompanied by the gifts, patronage requests, pamphlets, books, opinions and information of a multitude of other metropolitan groups, all of whom shared a private relationship with the Company's servants that challenged and reshaped the latter's ties with East India House. In this respect, the metropole was not a single, unitary structure, but a web of various people, groups and communities. Such a 'web of empire' tugged at the Company's 'centre' in London, decentring it in the process.<sup>185</sup> Part two of the thesis thus undertakes a closer analysis of these connections which established a global community outside of the Company's own corporate system, and studies further their impact upon the colonial state formation process in Asia.

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<sup>185</sup> Games, *Web of Empire*.

# Part Two

Family Networks and the Process of  
State Formation

## Chapter Three

### Company Kinship Networks in Early Modern Asia

As section one revealed, in order to understand the political development of the Company in Asia, it is necessary to study not just the decisions or orders of the court of directors at East India House, but also the establishment and growth of the networks of Company servants, both between Europe and Asia, and across Asia itself in the early modern period. The web of networks along which political authority splintered and flowed was fundamental in shaping the private interests of Company servants. As Emily Erikson has recently noted, ‘the push and pull between the coordinating hierarchical form of the Company and the many loose ends of the different desires and ambitions of enterprising individuals’ was a process of political decentralisation which led directly to the massive growth of social networks through which the Company would ultimately develop in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The growth of a particular form of social network, as glimpsed in the dynamic of Joseph Collet’s ties to the metropole in the previous chapter, will be the focus of the second part of the thesis. This chapter will explore the formation and expansion of family networks between Company servants, and their importance in developing a wider global framework through which the Company ultimately developed.

The development of a private colonial regime under Joseph Collet on the West Coast of Sumatra revealed the importance of family networks within the Company. A majority of the letters, gifts, goods and information sent or received by Collet on the West Coast came from, or were sent to, members of the Collet family or their wider kin in Britain. Family members made recommendations for appointments, conveyed

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<sup>1</sup> Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*, p. 180.

political views, sent theological tracts, requested patronage, provided resources and made demands which fundamentally altered both Joseph Collet's interests and the political makeup of the regime he created on the West Coast. Even Collet's most influential theological correspondent, the Reverend Moses Lowman, was actually the Collet family's pastor. Collet's actions as deputy-governor were shaped by his wider family network. Spreading and threading themselves between Europe and Asia, and across Asia itself in the early modern period, family networks provided otherwise localised and often isolated Company servants with access to a much wider global system of exchange, circulation and movement which allowed them to exercise their own distinct political agency, independent of East India House.

Family relationships, connections and networks played a fundamental role in the political development of the Company in early modern Asia. The powerful private interests of Company servants were shaped by their families. Every governor of Madras, from Thomas Chamber in the 1660s to Thomas Pitt at the turn of the eighteenth century, conducted their administrations with, and through, family members. For instance, Sir George Foxcroft came out to Madras as governor in 1663 with his son, Nathaniel Foxcroft, whom he made second of council and his successor.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the man who eventually deposed and imprisoned him, Sir Edward Winter, was accused of inappropriately 'receiving several of his Relations into our employment', at least one of whom he promoted to third of council.<sup>3</sup> Winter also communicated and legitimised his rebellion against Foxcroft to East India House through his brother Sir Thomas Winter, who sat on the court of committees and mediated between London and Madras during the rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/86, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 18 September 1665.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 December 1663.

<sup>4</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/40/3, Edward Winter to Thomas Winter, Fort St. George, 12 January 1665.

As early as the late seventeenth century, East India House became aware of the ‘great inconveniency’ caused to the public interest when ‘near Relations’ gathered in the same settlement to achieve a monopoly, or at the very least a large influence, over political power.<sup>5</sup> To mitigate this, whenever possible, East India House attempted to station family members in different parts of Asia, such as the son of William Puckle, the chief of Masulipatam, who was ordered to leave that settlement and reside in Bengal.<sup>6</sup> However, as with other designs and policies aimed at limiting private interest, this was subverted by Company servants who were keen to create powerbases in certain settlements by concentrating their families there. Thus, when Robert Hedges was sent to Madras in the junior capacity of writer, his uncle William Hedges used his influence as agent of Bengal to have his nephew stationed with him instead, ‘that he might have the breeding of him under his Eye.’<sup>7</sup> Similarly, both Elihu Yale and Thomas Pitt, as governors of Madras, developed the Company’s trade with China through family members. Yale had appointed his brother Thomas as chief factor in 1689 and tasked him with establishing a new factory at Canton, while Pitt used his son Robert as his agent there in 1701 to acquire goods, information and influence, which the latter considered ‘a post of the most trust, credit, and profit’.<sup>8</sup> By the turn of the eighteenth century, this pattern of family settlement became the norm, and the emerging colonial state became increasingly shaped by powerful families.

Families played a vital part in every aspect of the lives of Company servants. When travelling, settling, trading or governing in Asia, they operated firmly within the context of their immediate families and wider kinship groups. In the context of the early

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<sup>5</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/87, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 24 December 1675.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 8 February 1682.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Pitt to Mrs Pitt, Canton, December 1701, cited in Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, p. 247. For the Yale brothers, see John Keay, *Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London, 1993), pp. 205-207.

modern British Empire, however, historians have traditionally defined Asia as a space of trade and commerce before the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Supposedly, the small number of the latter operating there were restricted to merchants and officials residing in scattered and isolated Company factories and forts, hoping to make a quick fortune and return to their families and homes in Europe.<sup>10</sup> Within such a scheme, the establishment of a colonial community, society or 'space' appeared unfeasible given the impermanent nature of the British presence.<sup>11</sup> Such a theme has been recently contradicted by Emma Rothschild, who observed that, across the early modern world, 'empire was a family enterprise'.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter will show the significant role family networks played in the world of the Company servant. Sir Josiah Child, chairman of the court of directors, revealed in 1681 that those 'living in any places within their Charter' in Asia comprised 'many hundred[s] of Families'.<sup>13</sup> Company servants maintained connections with family and kin in Europe and depended significantly on the not inconsiderate number of members who went out with them to Asia. As well as reiterating existing connections, however, they also established new ones by integrating cross-cultural and interracial relationships into their own families. In doing so, they cast a web of networks across Asia which subverted, reconfigured and then broadened the official social, commercial and political boundaries of the East India Company.

The first part of this chapter will seek to analyse the extent and importance of the familial world of Company servants, revealing the ways in which the latter not only

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<sup>9</sup> Philip J. Stern, 'British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparisons and Connections', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 'Forum: Beyond the Atlantic', 3rd Series, vol. 63, no. 4 (2006), pp. 694.

<sup>10</sup> P. J. Marshall, 'British Society in India under the East India Company', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1997), pp. 91; James Horn, 'British Diaspora: Emigration from Britain, 1680-1815', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2001), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (Oxford, 1976), p. 302

<sup>12</sup> Rothschild, *Inner life of empires*, p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> Philopatris [Sir Josiah Child], *A treatise wherein is demonstrated, I. that the East-India trade is the most national of all foreign trades* (London, 1681), p. 23.

maintained ties with family members who remained in Europe, but sought to reiterate and strengthen them while in Asia. Furthermore, the families of Company servants transitioned in this period into ‘Company families’, creating new familial ties in Asia by integrating cross-cultural and interracial relationships into existing families, significantly expanding their social, cultural, commercial and political interests in the process. The second part of this chapter will argue that, from the early eighteenth century onwards, such families began to organise themselves into wider kinship networks. Maintained by the exchange, circulation and movement of goods, capital, information and people around a network of nodes and centres founded by various kin members, these kinship networks spread across Asia by the mid-eighteenth century, creating an increasingly interconnected colonial space in the process. The expansion of these networks of kin will then be analysed in the context of the emerging diamond trade between Asia and Europe. Their ability to marginalise the Company’s official trade and monopolise valuable commodities, as well as to create channels of international finance which operated outside of the Company’s official systems of capital, reveals how kinship networks were able to shape the nature of the emerging colonial space in Asia. By emphasising the extent to which families determined the actions, interests and motives of Company servants, this chapter will contrast the private world in which they operated with the visibly public one in which they are traditionally analysed and understood by historians.

### **The Familial World of the Company Servant**

The hereditary dynamic of Company recruitment was a significant factor in the growth of its servants’ families throughout Asia. Those hoping to join the Company’s service or reside within its jurisdiction beyond the Cape of Good Hope required the use of familial

patronage.<sup>14</sup> The Company itself privileged new servants from the families of existing servants, considering such recruitment as the most efficient vetting process available, one that would ensure trust, loyalty and usually experience amongst new servants.<sup>15</sup> When the court of directors considered the application of new factors in April 1697, it accepted that of Thomas Marshall's as 'his Father [is] an ancient Member of our Court'. Thomas Lovell also met success due to being the 'Son to our Recorder', as well as Trevor Games who was 'related to Sir William Langhorne', an ex-governor of Madras.<sup>16</sup> This hereditary preference meant that most writers, factors and agents sent out to Asia were following or accompanying a father, uncle, cousin or brother.<sup>17</sup> For instance, George Oxenden went out to Asia in the Company's service with his brother Christopher in the 1640s.<sup>18</sup> When George returned in 1661 as governor of Bombay, he brought with him his nephew Henry Oxenden and his godson Streynsham Master, the future governor of Madras.<sup>19</sup>

Once Company servants arrived in the vastness of Asia, factors conspired not to dislocate families, but to bind them together. Company servants relied on the support and resources of family and kin in Asia for everything beyond what their meagre wages allowed.<sup>20</sup> When Joseph and John Walsh were sent out to Asia through the patronage of their uncle, the Madras Councillor John Styleman, they relied on kin for even the most basic of sustenance. Joseph, who was stationed on the West Coast of Sumatra, was regularly forced to ask his aunt in Madras to send him parcels of 'things I wrote for', while his uncle supplied him with European articles such as 'the head of a cane', and

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<sup>14</sup> Finn, 'Anglo-Indian', pp. 56; Rothschild, *Inner Life of Empires*, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Marshall, *East India Fortunes*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/92, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 16 April 1697.

<sup>17</sup> Games, *Web of Empire*, p. 9; Rothschild, *Inner Life of Empires*, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> Foster, *The English Factories in India*, vol. 11, p. 202.

<sup>19</sup> Master, *Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> The annual starting wage for a writer was £5, for a factor £15 and for a senior merchant £40, see Hejeebu, 'Contract Enforcement', p. 502.

another sent him European shoes.<sup>21</sup> John Wright spent so many years paying his son Thomas's bills of exchange from Bombay, that he warned him in 1703 that the next bill he drew on him 'will bee the last mony you will evver receive from mee.'<sup>22</sup> Beyond the basic necessities of food and clothing, Company servants also required an almost constant supply of credit and investment from family members if they were to embark on the trading ventures which would bring them financial success. When the supercargo Thomas Dixon lost his ship and all of his goods in a storm in the Bay of Bengal in 1718, he declared to his cousin John Scattergood that he was now 'utterly Ruined and not worth one Rupe in the world', requesting a substantial loan from him of three thousand pagodas to recover his losses.<sup>23</sup> Such a dynamic of necessity reinforced ties of joint interest, obligation and trust between the families and kin of Company servants dispersed across Asia.<sup>24</sup>

That is not to suggest, however, that eventual financial independence, if it happened at all, loosened family ties. As siblings, sons, nephews and cousins were sent out to Asia in the service of the Company through the support of their families, they were expected to relieve the often impoverished circumstances of the latter if they met with success.<sup>25</sup> For example, Joseph Collet's family suffered financial ruin when he declared bankruptcy in 1710.<sup>26</sup> In an attempt to retrieve the family's fortunes, he accepted the Company's offer of the deputy-governorship of the West Coast of Sumatra. On arrival in Asia, Collet depended on the financial and material support of family members, such as his brother-in-law John Bedwell who furnished him with a regular supply of European articles including hats, leather shoes, vinegar, spectacles,

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<sup>21</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 21 June 1718.

<sup>22</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur C387/1, John Wright to Thomas Wright, London, 30 April 1703.

<sup>23</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, Thomas Dixon to John Scattergood, Bengal, 1 January 1718.

<sup>24</sup> Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism*, p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Finn, 'Anglo-Indian Lives', pp. 54-55; Rothschild, *Inner Life of Empires*, pp. 15-33.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Dodwell, ed., *The Private Letter Books of Joseph Collet* (London, 1933), pp. xi-xv.

silk stockings and Virginian tobacco.<sup>27</sup> But within two years, Collet's political and commercial success meant that he was able to provide his family and kin with substantial allowances, dowries and pensions.<sup>28</sup> For example, his four daughters enjoyed a considerable annual allowance of £400 each while his mother was paid a pension of £100 which he hoped would provide 'a comfortable maintenance.'<sup>29</sup> Besides cash remittances, Collet provided his son John with several thousand pounds worth of capital for his private trading ventures, and appointed his eldest brother as supercargo of one of his own ships.<sup>30</sup> Collet revealed the underlying motives of his presence in Asia in a letter to Governor Harrison: 'The proffits of my Government...maintain my Family', he wrote in 1714.<sup>31</sup>

As Collet's financial intervention in the affairs of his family deepened, so too did his social involvement, creating ties, obligations and duties which bound his familial world closer together.<sup>32</sup> When the deputy-governor first took up his post at Bencoolen in 1712, he informed his sister Ann Bedwell not to worry about taking 'care of my poor Girls', and that all they needed in life was 'Virtue and a good education'.<sup>33</sup> As Collet allowed each of his four daughters large allowances and substantial dowries, he heightened his control over their affairs, arranging their education, marriage and private character. To his sister Ann he provided a strict set of guidelines on how his eldest daughter Elizabeth was to correspond with a potential suitor: 'she ought to avoid both the distance of a Mistress and the fondness of a Lover'.<sup>34</sup> To Elizabeth herself, he wrote a letter 'enlarging on the instructions I have already given you for your conduct',

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<sup>27</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to John Bedwell, Cape of Good Hope, 12 February 1712.

<sup>28</sup> For this dynamic in the Johnstone's family, see Rothschild, *Inner Life of Empires*, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Mary Collet, Fort Marlborough 8 September 1716; BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Mary Collet, Fort Marlborough, 10 October 1715.

<sup>30</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, York Fort, 15 June 1714; BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Ann Bedwell, Fort St. George, 13 July 1717.

<sup>31</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Edward Harrison, York Fort, 2 June 1714.

<sup>32</sup> For this process in the Atlantic, see Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*.

<sup>33</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Ann Bedwell, York Fort, 24 September 1712.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Ann Bedwell, York Fort, 5 May 1714.

ordering her to pursue the study of religion and ‘Domestick Life’ for ‘the improvement of your mind and the conduct of your Actions.’<sup>35</sup> Collet’s attention to her conduct was frequent and all pervading, even intervening with how she should govern ‘a black boy’ named Bacchus which he had sent her: ‘Let him be taught to read, and make him know you will be obey’d.’<sup>36</sup> Collet admitted to his sister the following year that the education of his daughters was now his most important concern.<sup>37</sup> Also of particular concern was the reputation of his son, for whom he had secured a lucrative post at Madras directly under the governor. He lectured him on improving himself ‘in Writing and Accounts’, and warned him ‘to avoided women and alcohol, ‘the fatall rock on which so many Youths miscarry’.<sup>38</sup> Not just the maintenance of his family connections, then, but their strengthening since his arrival in Asia was summed up by Collet in a letter to a friend in 1715. ‘The int’rests’ of family, he wrote, ‘are so closely united...and distance of times or place ought to be no Obstruction’.<sup>39</sup> In fact, it proved the catalyst for binding a Company servant’s familial world closer together.

These families were not only strengthened by their engagement with Asia. They were also changed and reconfigured in fundamental ways. Although substantial numbers of British mercantile families were dissenters and foreign immigrants and were thus never entirely a culturally homogenous group, in Asia they nonetheless represented a racially cohesive community.<sup>40</sup> However, the families of Company servants became ‘Company families’, transitioning into amorphous sites of interracial and multicultural relationships. This enabled Company servants to straddle the various ethnic, linguistic, religious, economic and political worlds of which Asia was composed. The Powney

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Elizabeth Collet, York Fort, 26 August 1714.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 16 May 1714.

<sup>37</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/3, Joseph Collet to Ann Bedwell, Fort Marlborough, 3 January 1715.

<sup>38</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to John collet, York Fort, 8 June 1714.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., Joseph Collet to Lady Wills, Fort Marlborough, 1 April 1715.

<sup>40</sup> Grasby, *Kinship and Capitalism*. For the number of dissenting merchants, see table 6.5, p. 258; for the number of merchants born outside of Britain, see table 7.1, p. 272.

family represents the typically composite, polyglot and changing makeup of Company families during this period. The brothers Henry and John Powney were both employed on Company ships stationed at Madras, where they established households and raised families from 1703 onwards. John, for example, married Mary Heron, daughter of the Company's master-mariner at Madras. Their seven sons and five daughters created a vast kinship group which established connections that crossed the boundaries of cultural and national affiliation, marrying an assortment of the settlement's most influential British and non-British residents and their daughters, including a governor, a mayor, numerous councillors and the port's most affluent merchants. For instance, Rebecca Powney married the Portuguese registrar of the Mayor's Court, Noah Casamaijor, while Thomas Powney was married to Catherine de la Matrie, daughter of Antony Coyle De Barnaval, a Franco-Irish supercargo of Company ships trading between India and Manila.<sup>41</sup>

Blurring the lines of nationality and culture, Company families also incorporated significant multiracial elements as well. The legitimate and illegitimate unions between Company servants and Asian women produced a substantial number of Eurasian marriages and offspring.<sup>42</sup> In this respect, servants of the English East India Company sought to mimic practices carried on by the servants of other European companies operating in Asia, such as the Portuguese *Estado da India* (State of the Indies) or the Dutch *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (United East Indies Company).<sup>43</sup> Although marriage between Dutch officials and Javanese women at Batavia was officially acknowledged, the VOC sought to regulate such unions in order to limit the number of subsequent Eurasian families. Unofficially, however, 'the overwhelming majority of

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<sup>41</sup> For the Powney and Barnaval families, see Love, *Vestiges*, vol. 2, pp. 314-18.

<sup>42</sup> Charles H. Parker, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 78-9.

<sup>43</sup> Dennis B. McGilvray, 'Dutch Burghers and Portuguese Mechanics: Eurasian Ethnicity in Sri Lanka', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1982), p. 237.

families' living there were of this nature, even those of senior VOC officials.<sup>44</sup> As early as the mid-seventeenth century, such practices had led to the formation of a 'Mestizos society', transforming Batavia into the centre of Dutch power in Asia.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, few of the Company's elite families with which this chapter is concerned were purely European.<sup>46</sup> On the West Coast of Sumatra, the incorporation of Eurasian members into Company families was the product of sexual, commercial and political opportunity.<sup>47</sup> Company servants frequently sought to integrate Malay wives and children into their lives and promote them as legitimate family members. In 1713 John Hunter was sent north up the West Coast of Sumatra to be chief of Bantal. He left behind him at the Company's capital of Bencoolen a Malaysian daughter whom he valued so much that he would only entrust her to the care of the deputy-governor, Joseph Collet. 'My little charge', as Collet wrote of her frequently to her father at Bantal, was treated with the utmost consideration and concern. When she became 'Indispos'd with the worms', she was attended by the doctor on a daily basis and cared for by a 'wench' named Jacinth 'of whom the Child is very fond'.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in 1714, Joseph Collet arranged the courtship of his main trading partner and second-in-command on the West Coast, Chief of Bantal Henry White, with his daughter Elizabeth.<sup>49</sup> He facilitated the match at the same time as he cared for Henry White's Malaysian daughter at Bencoolen. Although official correspondence between Company servants rarely revealed the existence of such children, subtle and often cryptic

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<sup>44</sup> Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia* (Wisconsin, 2009), p. 19.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: the Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> For example, see E. Ulrich Kratz, 'Like a Fish Grasping for Water: the Letters of a Temporary Spouse from Bengkulu', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 34, no. 100 (2006), pp. 247-80.

<sup>48</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/1, Joseph Collet to John Hunter, York Fort, 16 March 1713.

<sup>49</sup> See chapter 2.

references point to their presence, as when Collet informed White that ‘Our Female is like to pay you a Visit’ if Collet were to send her to Madras on board the *President*.<sup>50</sup>

Collet’s need to bind his trading partner and successor to him through marriage necessitated the acceptance and integration of Malaysians into such an elite Company family. Not just Malaysians, significant numbers of African slaves brought to the West Coast from Madagascar were also incorporated into the dynamic of Company families.<sup>51</sup> In 1714 the British resident of Silebar, a subordinate port which lay approximately one-hundred miles to the south of Bencoolen, brought with him on a visit to the latter his new son, ‘born last month of one of our Slaves...begot by himself’.<sup>52</sup> As Collet personally discovered as deputy-governor, Company families could also integrate Asian political elites as well. No less than three Malay rajas sent him their wives or daughters as gifts ‘to attend me’, as Collet tactfully described to his brother. Although he rejected these offers on the grounds that ‘the Christian Religion does not allow such practices’, nonetheless the diplomatic custom was a long established one in which less religiously observant deputy-governors rarely refused to indulge.<sup>53</sup> Such policies – although with a greater degree of success - had certainly driven the substantial growth of Eurasian families in the settlements of the Portuguese *Estado da Indias*.<sup>54</sup> In Sumatra, Portuguese officials married Asian women in the hopes of forging alliances with political elites, while in South India they did so to break into local trade networks.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Henry White, York Fort, 13 March 1714. For the difficulty in tracing the indigenous wives and children of Company servants in the archive, see Durba Ghosh, ‘Decoding the Nameless: Gender, Subjectivity, and Historical Methodologies in Reading the Archives of Colonial India’, in Wilson, ed., *New Imperial History*, pp. 297-316.

<sup>51</sup> Frenise A. Logan, ‘The British East India Company and African slavery in Benkulen, Sumatra, 1687-1792’, *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 41, no. 4 (1956), pp. 343. For the Dutch, see Taylor, *Social World of Batavia*, p. 15.

<sup>52</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D1153/2, Joseph Collet to Henry White, York Fort, 13 March 1714.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Joseph Collet to Samuel Collet, York Fort, 23 August 1714.

<sup>54</sup> C. R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 57-85.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, *To Live as Brothers: Southeast Sumatra in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu, 1993), p. 50; Francisco Bethencourt, ‘Political Configurations and Local Powers’,

Their success in integrating with Asian cultures since the sixteenth century prompted the servants of other European companies to consider the Portuguese there as *topasez*, an Asian people whose language was the *lingua franca* of Asia's coastal regions.<sup>56</sup>

Replicating the practices of other European company servants in Asia, these families acted as colonial sites of racial and cultural reconfiguration which allowed Company servants to integrate themselves into Asian societies and incorporate aspects of those societies into their own families. These processes created a web of global connections, both between Europe and Asia, but more importantly right across Asia itself as Company families spread out to new regions of trade, settlement and opportunity by the turn of the eighteenth century, usually within the Company's jurisdiction, but often beyond it.

### **Kinship, Exchange and the Formation of Networks in Asia**

The emergence of Company families was also facilitated by their organisation into global networks of exchange in the early eighteenth century. The circulation and movement of goods, capital and information between Company servants and their wider kinship group in Europe and Asia challenges the localised treatment of the Company in Asia, in which its various regions are considered as separate, with divergent political trajectories which were shaped by the Asian states in whose jurisdiction they resided.<sup>57</sup>

Through their kinship networks, Company servants operated not just within local regional frameworks, but through an increasingly interconnected global community of Company families.

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in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 214.

<sup>56</sup> Gert Oostindie and Bert Paasman, 'Dutch Attitudes towards Colonial Empires, Indigenous Cultures, and Slaves', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3 (1998), p. 349.

<sup>57</sup> P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783* (Oxford, 2005), p. 229.

In the eighteenth century Atlantic world, networks of ‘associates’ contributed to the integration of an Atlantic community which facilitated British commercial, political and territorial expansion.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, as argued by Eivind Seland, the spread of commercial networks in the Indian Ocean led to ‘a degree of social cohesion’ there as early as antiquity.<sup>59</sup> Establishing social networks of a geographic, linguistic and religious nature, ‘circulation societies’ of Roman, Greek and Christian traders connected the vastness of the Indian Ocean and created the ‘infrastructure of trust’ between otherwise indifferent groups and communities.<sup>60</sup> Early modern Asia was similarly far from a *tabula rasa*. European companies arriving in Asia from the sixteenth century onwards encountered pre-existing, complex and well-established networks of ports, communities and merchants.<sup>61</sup> These networks had created commercially and culturally integrated regions in places such as the Bay of Bengal which lasted well into the eighteenth century and over which European companies often organised their own networks.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, these networks were established by Asian merchants through their families and wider kinship groups. Asian merchants formed themselves into ‘endogamous guilds’ that represented ‘a cluster of families related by ties of marriage and kinship’: what Tirthankar Roy has conceptualised as the ‘collective’.<sup>63</sup> As they spread out across Asia, vast networks were sustained by these ‘collectives’ of families

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<sup>58</sup> David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Eivind Heldaas Seland, ‘Networks and Social Cohesion in Ancient Indian Ocean Trade: Geography, Ethnicity, Religion’, *Journal of Global History*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2013), p. 373.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Bhaswati Bhattacharya, Gita Dharampal-Frick and Jos Gommans, ‘Spatial and Temporal Continuities of Merchant Networks in South Asia and the Indian Ocean (1500-2000)’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 50, issue 2/3 (2007), pp. 91-105.

<sup>62</sup> Kenneth R. Hall, ‘Ports-of-Trade, Maritime Diasporas, and Networks of Trade and Cultural Integration in the Bay of Bengal Region of the Indian Ocean: c. 1300-1500’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 53, issue ½ (2010), pp. 109-45.

<sup>63</sup> Tirthankar Roy, *Company of Kinsmen: Enterprise and Community in South Asian History, 1700-1900* (New Delhi, 2010), p. 89.

and their interests.<sup>64</sup> At first, the English Company and its servants delegated responsibility for managing their interests to elite Asian kinship networks.<sup>65</sup> By the later seventeenth century, however, Company servants had begun to develop their own extensive kinship networks to both compete with and eventually dominate those of their Asian and European rivals.<sup>66</sup>

With the growth of Company families in Asia in the later seventeenth century, networks became an increasingly important dynamic of colonial expansion. In contrast to Europe, the amplified factor of time and distance separating members of Company families and their kin in Asia changed the pattern of interaction between them.<sup>67</sup> Along with the obvious obstacles involved in maintaining family ties between Europe and Asia, those even between Bombay and Madras proved just as challenging. As Sir Josiah Child explained, it was 'much more difficult to maintain a Correspondence by Letters in *India* from Port to Port; by reason of the set Monsons or Trade-winds, that blow six moneths together one way.'<sup>68</sup> Thus in Asia, Company families were forced to live, interact and communicate across various disparate coastal enclaves and maritime

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<sup>64</sup> For example, see Prista Ratanapruck, 'Kinship and Religious Practices as Institutionalization of Trade Networks: Manangi trade Communities in South and Southeast Asia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 50, no. 2/3 (2007), pp. 325-46.

<sup>65</sup> Ghulam A. Nadri, 'The Maritime Merchants of Surat: a long-term perspective', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 50, no. 2/3 (2007), pp. 235-58; Bhavani Raman, 'The Familial World of the Company's *kacceri* in Early Colonial Madras', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>66</sup> Barry Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Ian W. Archer, 'Social Networks in Restoration London: the Evidence from Samuel Pepys's Diary', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, eds., *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2000), table 5.1, p. 81.

<sup>68</sup> Philopatris, *A Treatise*, p. 37.

spaces.<sup>69</sup> The result of such a spatially fragmented existence was the creation of global networks of exchange, circulation and movement.<sup>70</sup>

According to Kerry Ward, such factors ensured that the colonial state in Asia was ‘comprised of an intersecting set of networks’, of both a temporal and spatial nature.<sup>71</sup> This was certainly true of the Dutch VOC, which consisted of multiple material and discursive networks which ‘exist simultaneously as paths of circulation for people, goods, and information’.<sup>72</sup> It was also a dynamic which defined the shape of networks established by those cultural diaspora groups who operated outside, or across, the many European chartered companies. For example, the network of Armenian families in Asia was sustained ‘through the circulation of men, capital, information, priests and women’.<sup>73</sup> The global expansion of English Company families as described earlier developed along a similar pattern to those of Dutch or Armenian families: the establishment of networks of exchange, circulation and movement which integrated scattered kin members into a wider global community. The reconstruction of one such Company kinship network reveals the process through which this was achieved.

John Scattergood, a free merchant stationed at Madras at the turn of the eighteenth century, belonged to an extensive kinship network which had established itself across Asia, stretching from Bombay to Canton. In 1681, John was born into a small family with few connections beyond the insignificant settlement of Balasore on

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Drayton, 'Maritime Networks and the Making of Knowledge', in David Cannadine, ed., *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c.1763-c.1840* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 73.

<sup>70</sup> For the importance of networks in studying empire, see Natasha Glaisyer, 'Networking: Trade and Exchange in the Eighteenth-Century British Empire', *Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2004), pp. 451-76.

<sup>71</sup> Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: the Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (London, 2011), p. 211.

the Bay of Bengal where his father was third of council in the Company's service.<sup>74</sup> When the latter died shortly after John's birth, his mother married Robert Trenchfield, the brother of another Balasore councillor. The Trenchfields were a large family with members and interests spread throughout the Bay of Bengal. After his mother's new marriage bore John two half-sisters and two half-brothers, the family relocated to Madras so that Richard Trenchfield could more effectively coordinate his family's trading concerns.<sup>75</sup> By the time John Scattergood was old enough to enter the Company's service in 1698, his family had expanded to include numerous kin from both the Scattergoods and Trenchfields, including several aunts, uncles and at least a dozen cousins, all of whom played a role in John's day-to-day life or possessed active connections to the family at Madras.<sup>76</sup> These kin had established themselves in most of Asia's main ports and along its maritime highways by the time of John's death in 1723.

The exchange and circulation of goods, capital, information and people across and around John Scattergood's kinship network maintained relationships between members and bound together the various nodes from which members operated. John Scattergood's receipt of a letter at Madras in 1715 from his brother Elihu Trenchfield at Calcutta, discussing the arrival in Asia of their younger brother Jack Trenchfield, is typical of the dynamic of Company kinship networks in Asia. 'When my brother Jack arrived, he delivered me six hundred Madrass rupees on Account of your Daughter Carolina,' wrote Elihu, 'which according to your desire have interested in my private Adventure this Voyage'.<sup>77</sup> Jack Trenchfield had arrived in Asia from Europe to trade in partnership with his brothers, bringing capital from family in Lincoln to invest in their Asian commercial enterprises. As a free merchant operating between places as

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<sup>74</sup> RFSG, *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St George, 28 July 1679, p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 May 1698, p. 61.

<sup>76</sup> For the importance of kin relations in Asia, see Margot Finn, 'Colonial Gifts: Family Politics and the Exchange of Goods in British India, c.1780-1820', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2006), p. 229.

<sup>77</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur C387/1, Elihu Trenchfield to John Scattergood, Calcutta, 13 December 1715,

geographically diverse as Persia and China, Elihu offered family members opportunities for employment and financial gain, whilst they, moving between Europe and Asia, and, more importantly, around Asia itself, provided both a source of family capital to invest in his voyages and a connection to other nodes of their kinship network. In the same letter, Elihu, occupied in Bengal, pleaded with his brother John at Madras to acquaint him with 'all news, foreign and Domestic, especially in the last of Our own family', and to send him 'all the News Papers and pamphlets you think worth my reading.'<sup>78</sup> Company kinship networks were indispensable to commercial, political and social transactions in Asia through their ability to acquire and circulate information, communication and knowledge 'within the Compass of our own family', as Arabella Scattergood's brother in law declared in 1703, to members operating in the disparate regions of Asia.<sup>79</sup>

The commercial relationship between John Scattergood and his cousin Bernard Wyche was an important link in the trade carried on by their wider kinship network at that time. As chief of Surat, Wyche employed his younger brother George and his cousin John Scattergood as supercargoes on the ships trading from Surat to the port of Amoy in China, a lucrative and privileged appointment.<sup>80</sup> Wyche was also instrumental in protecting John Scattergood's interests further down the coast in Malabar, where he engaged in joint ventures with their cousin Charles Burniston. The importance of the Wyche connection within the kinship network was considerable and John Scattergood was aware of the need to reinforce and strengthen the link on a continuous basis. One way in which this was achieved was by extending hospitality to Bernard Wyche's family. For example, in 1714 John and Arabella Scattergood invited the Wyche children

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur C387/1, Alexander Forbes to Francis Forbes, London, 11 March 1703. For this dynamic in the Johnstone kinship network, see Rothschild, *Inner Life of Empires*, p. 55.

<sup>80</sup> See Hosea Ballou Morse, 'The Supercargo in the China Trade about the year 1700', *English Historical Review*, vol. 36, no. 142 (1921), pp. 199-209.

to stay with them at Madras, extending the invitation to the family of William Phipps as well, John Scattergood's cousin and a member of Wyche's council at Surat.<sup>81</sup> Other relationships were also strengthened in this way, and periodically members from Bombay and Surat went to stay with the Scattergoods at Madras, including Carolina, the daughter of Charles Burniston, deputy-governor of Bombay, and John, the son of William Aislabie, governor of Bombay. The connections which maintained Company kinship networks were consolidated by such circulation of family members across the network to the diverse regions of Asia.

It is important to note, however, that Company servants were not always successful in maintaining kinship networks through circulation and exchange. Indeed, an exploration of Scottish networks in the Madeira wine trade in the eighteenth century by David Hancock - also familial in organisation - has shown that their private nature made them more resource-intensive to maintain as well as more fragile in the face of personal conflicts between members.<sup>82</sup> Company kinship networks in Asia were similarly susceptible to challenges and, often, outright failure.<sup>83</sup> Many factors conspired to reduce them in size, extent and importance, all of which meant that the mutual benefits derived by kin members from their participation could dry up. The removal of a family member from an advantageous post, for example, might impair the effectiveness of an entire centre of network nodes. When John Scattergood's accommodating and generous cousin William Aislabie retired from his position as governor of Bombay in 1715, a position from which he had facilitated the commercial and political aspirations of the network, he was replaced by Charles Boone. Despite having been an old trading partner of John Scattergood's, Boone proved less amenable than his predecessor. Things

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<sup>81</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/1, John Scattergood to Bernard Wyche, Madras, June 1714.

<sup>82</sup> David Hancock, 'The Trouble with Networks: Managing the Scots' Early-Modern Madeira Trade', *Business History Review*, vol. 79, no. 3 (2005), pp. 467-91.

<sup>83</sup> Drayton, 'Maritime Networks', p. 79.

started off well enough, with Elihu Trenchfield reporting that he found the governor to be ‘a very generous friend’ and ‘very assisting in the disposal of our Cargoe.’<sup>84</sup> But without the ties of kinship to bind them to the new governor, the network found its influence at Bombay reduced by 1719 and the governor's attention to their affairs diminished. ‘I wrote him about it’, John Scattergood complained to his brother, ‘but believe shall not get much Justice from him.’<sup>85</sup>

To survive and to provide opportunities and greater cohesion for its members, constant expansion of a kinship network was therefore vital. This can be perceived in the transition of Edward Fenwick from business associate to intimate member of John Scattergood’s kinship network. Fenwick, supercargo of the *Pembroke* since 1703, had long been a friend and trading partner of John’s.<sup>86</sup> Describing him to family members in 1713 as ‘my old friend’, John integrated Fenwick into his kinship network initially by using him to deliver gifts and goods to family members in Lincoln, including a parcel of Indian tea for his sisters, six Chinese fans for his aunts, a gold snuff box and an image of himself for his mother.<sup>87</sup> During these visits to England, Fenwick stayed with the Trenchfields and wrote to John in 1716 of ‘enjoying the Company and Conversation of the best Mother and Sisters that ever Man had’.<sup>88</sup> At this point, Fenwick began a courtship with John’s eldest sister Elizabeth Trenchfield, which was encouraged by her brothers.<sup>89</sup> Due to Fenwick’s position as supercargo of the *Marlborough* on the lucrative trading routes to China, Elihu regarded him as ‘one that I should sooner choose to be allied to.’ Jack similarly agreed to ‘the Match’ and signalled his approval by appointing

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<sup>84</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, Elihu Trenchfield to John Scattergood, Tellicherry, 20 December 1717.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., John Scattergood to Elihu Trenchfield, Canton, November 1719.

<sup>86</sup> RFSG, *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St George, 9 June 1703, p. 41.

<sup>87</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/1, John Scattergood to Elizabeth Trenchfield, Madras, 13 November 1713. For the importance of gift-giving as a form of exchange amongst kin in India, see Finn, ‘Colonial Gifts’, p. 204.

<sup>88</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, Edward Fenwick to John Scattergood, Fort St. George, 10 October 1716.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Fenwick as his attorney, trusting him with the management of his financial affairs in Asia.<sup>90</sup> Such encouragement ensured that Fenwick and Elizabeth were married in 1717 when he returned from Asia.<sup>91</sup> From then on, John Scattergood addressed him as 'Dear Brother Fenwick', appointed him as his attorney, and declared that 'the ties of old Friendship as well as that of a relation' would strengthen the bond between them.<sup>92</sup>

Such processes of expansion meant that John Scattergood's kinship network was the largest of its kind in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. At its height, the network operated right across Asia and organised the Company's largest private commercial transactions. For example, in 1714 John Scattergood conducted a voyage to China as supercargo of the *Amity*. He coordinated investment from all of the network's nodes in Asia, and of the 179,800 rupees eventually subscribed to the voyage, 40% of the investment came from members of the network, with John and his cousins William Aislabie and Bernard Wyche committing the largest sums.<sup>93</sup> These families - the Scattergoods, Aislabies and Wyches - were the most prominent nodes within the network. The Scattergoods were based at Madras, where John operated as a captain and supercargo of Company ships since 1698 and remained there, with a brief return to Britain, until his death in 1723. Through John's marriage to Arabella Forbes in 1707, the Scattergood-Trenchfield families formed links with her kin in Bombay, consisting of the Burnistons and Aislabies.<sup>94</sup> They were both distinguished families, with Samuel and John Burniston having each served as deputy-governors of Bombay, while William Aislabie served as governor from 1708-1715. Kin also occupied important positions

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., John Trenchfield to John Scattergood, Tellicherry, 5 December 1717.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., Elizabeth Fenwick to John Scattergood, London, 10 January 1719.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., John Scattergood to Elizabeth Fenwick, Canton, November 1719; *ibid.*, Elizabeth Fenwick to John Scattergood, London, 16 December 1719; *ibid.*, John Scattergood to George Lewis, Fort St. George, 25 May 1719.

<sup>93</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, 'Shareholders in ship *Amity*, 1714'; see also Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*, table 5.10, p. 206.

<sup>94</sup> Sir Richard Carnac Temple, *The Scattergoods and the East India Company, 1619-1723* (London, 1921), p. 37.

further up the coast at the port of Surat where the Wyches lived. One of these, Bernard Wyche, held the senior post of chief of Surat, with his brother George acting as supercargo on ships trading to China. While the Scattergoods, Burnistons, Aislabies and Wyches each operated from the networks terrestrial nodes, the Trenchfields existed in the oceanic spaces between, acting as captains and supercargoes. They travelled along Asia's maritime routes which served to connect the various families together, and these families to other parts of Asia. Jack and Elihu Trenchfield for example made regular trading voyages to places such as Tellicherry on the Malabar Coast, Mocha in the Persian Gulf and Canton in China.

The families mentioned above formed the most important nodes of the kinship network, in terms of being the most numerous and the most distinguished. A number of lesser family branches lived and operated alongside them, however: the Phipps in Bombay, where William Phipps lived with his wife and two children, first as member of council and then as governor from 1722; a pair of brothers such as Thomas and Christopher Dixon in Bengal; even a single relation such as 'my Cozen Thomas Pain' who accompanied Elihu and Jack as they traded across Asia.<sup>95</sup> Regardless of their collective size or individual distinction, these families formed a network of mutually beneficial exchange and shared interest, maintained by the strengthening of family ties and the expansion of its member base across Asia by the second decade of the eighteenth century.

### **Private Trade and the Re-creation of the Bay of Bengal**

The expansion of Company kinship networks across Asia in the early eighteenth century gradually integrated the Company's disparate political jurisdictions and

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<sup>95</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, John Trenchfield to John Scattergood, Tellicherry, 5 December 1717.

commercial systems into more coherent colonial spaces. Such a process was accomplished through the establishment of new trading routes, as well as shaping existing commercial markets and merging regional economies together. The private trade conducted by Company servants in Asia has been ascribed as one of the leading contributory factors to the Company's eventual political success there in the eighteenth century, relative to the other European companies.<sup>96</sup> During the first half of the century, the private trade of its servants was the Company's most dynamic sector, growing at a far greater rate than official trade.<sup>97</sup> In pursuit of their own commercial interests, Company kinship networks operated the breadth of Asia, penetrating far beyond the jurisdictional and territorial boundaries of the Company itself, drawing the latter ever deeper into Asian states, economies and societies.

Private trade, or 'country trade', has traditionally been understood as conditioned by uniquely Asian factors such as indigenous networks of credit or the cooperation of Asian business agents such as banyans. Supposedly, it was this 'Age of Partnership' which allowed European private trade to expand and thus for the Company to become more entrenched in regional economies and, by extension, regional states.<sup>98</sup> However, as will be shown, Company kinship networks laid the foundation for British private trade and in turn led to the re-shaping of European commerce in Asia in the eighteenth century. Wider kinship networks provided Company servants with the social

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<sup>96</sup> For the causal link between the private trade of the Company's servants and the Company's commercial and political success, see: P. J. Marshall, *East India Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1976); Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead, Eastern India 1740-1828* (Cambridge, 1987); Marshall, 'Economic and Political Expansion: The Case of Oudh', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1975), pp. 465-482; Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784-1806* (Cambridge, 1969); H. Furber, *John Company at Work: A Study of European Expansion in India in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948).

<sup>97</sup> Mentz, *English Gentleman Merchant*, p. 20; Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800* (Minnesota, 1976), p. 131; Marshall, *East India Fortunes*, p. 58.

<sup>98</sup> There is a voluminous literature on the 'Age of Partnership' and the local roots of the Company's private trade. For the most prominent, see M. N. Pearson, ed., *The Age of Partnership: Europeans in Asia before Dominion* (Honolulu, 1986), particularly pp. 191-215; Watson, *Foundation for Empire*; Susan Neild-Basu, 'The Dubashes of Madras', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1984), pp. 1-31; C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 47-78; S. Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740* (Delhi, 1986).

capital and financial resources through which private trade could become established and expand. More importantly, this process acted as a cohesive force in binding the various territorial regions of the Company together. Without such familial links, the Company's control of certain factories, ports and coasts, such as those on the West Coast of Sumatra, would have been severely weakened, and its territorial integrity undermined.

As part one of the thesis demonstrated, East India House's efforts to bring the West Coast of Sumatra more firmly into a centralised state since the beginning of the eighteenth century had met with consistent failure. The emergence of private regimes of governance, such as that of Joseph Collet, ensured that the West Coast remained resistant to public forms of state building. But that does not help to explain why, if it proved so recalcitrant and disobedient to central forms of authority, East India House retained the West Coast settlements. It was certainly not for pecuniary purposes, because the settlements never turned a profit, as chapter two showed. The reasons may have been strategic, both to prevent the Dutch from acquiring possession of the West Coast and to ensure the Company retained bases east of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>99</sup> However, if the West Coast was perceived by East India House as only a strategic base, they would not have been so persistent in attempting to minimise its military resources and capabilities.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the military infrastructure was never developed to make the West Coast a strategic base. As the court of directors observed of Fort Marlborough, 'if it may be called a Fort', its defences were so insignificant that it really had 'no Fortifications' at all.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Robert J. Young, 'The English Factory at Banjar on the Island of Borneo, 1699-1707', *Indonesia Circle*, vol. 19, no. 55 (1991), p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> For example, see the court of directors' instructions to Supervisor James Macrae, BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/103, Court of Directors to James Macrae, London, 8 December 1725.

<sup>101</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/99, Court of Directors to Fort Marlborough, London, 14 March 1717.

The explanation for the continued settlement of the West Coast lies in the private commercial interests of Company kinship networks. It prevented a withdrawal from the West Coast by integrating settlements into a wider Bay of Bengal trading system. The Company's official trade was unable to create such consolidation. The Company had relied overwhelmingly on the export of silver to Asia in order to make its investments in goods.<sup>102</sup> This was also the case with the West Coast, where the Company despatched silver bullion every year from London to be exchanged at Bencoolen for pepper and, to a lesser extent, saltpetre and redwood.<sup>103</sup> This was most notable in the early eighteenth century. The War of Spanish Succession in Europe led to attacks on Company shipping which fatally disrupted the flow of specie to Asia and, in particular, to the West Coast of Sumatra.<sup>104</sup> This meant that, by the time peace had been concluded in 1714, commerce had all but ceased there: pepper plantations had shrunk and markets had disappeared.<sup>105</sup> This specie famine stalked the West Coast for some years to come. Deputy-Governor Joseph Collet lamented to the court of directors that unless more silver was despatched to Bencoolen, 'all will run to ruin'.<sup>106</sup> The situation became so acute that East India House considered withdrawing from the West Coast altogether in 1717.<sup>107</sup> The destruction of Bencoolen shortly after seemed like an obvious and convenient moment to do just that. But within two years Bencoolen was being

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<sup>102</sup> Chaudhuri, 'Treasure and Trade Balances', pp. 480-502.

<sup>103</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, 'Women and Economic Change: The Pepper Trade in Pre-Modern Southeast Asia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 38, no. 2, Women's History (1995), p. 174.

<sup>104</sup> It has been estimated that, before the mid-eighteenth century, silver comprised between 70 and 85% of all Company exports to Asia. See H. V. Bowen, 'Bullion for Trade, War, and Debt-Relief: British Movements of Silver to, around, and from Asia, 1760-1833', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3 (May, 2010), p. 446.

<sup>105</sup> Young, *Trade on the West Coast of Sumatra*, p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Bencoolen to Court of Directors, York Fort, 11 September 1714.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

resettled and the Company's establishment continued well into the nineteenth century.<sup>108</sup>

Despite being politically and commercially invaluable and even outright subversive of East India House's wider state building efforts, the West Coast of Sumatra remained an important part of the Company's presence in Asia. In many respects, this demonstrates the way in which private interests determined the development and shape of the colonial polity, even in the teeth of opposition from the court of directors. In the early eighteenth century, Company kinship networks stepped into the commercial vacuum created by the disruption of the War of Spanish Succession. In doing so, they reconfigured Sumatra's role in the Company's Asian trade, diverting much of the pecuniary benefit to themselves while simultaneously building strong commercial, social and political links between the West Coast and the Coromandel Coast. This process made it virtually impossible for East India House to separate the regions politically by withdrawing from Sumatra.

The arrival of the brothers John and Joseph Walsh to Asia in the Company's service in 1715 was the beginning of a kinship network that continued to operate there well into the nineteenth century. The network was built and expanded through participation in private trade between the Coromandel Coast and the island of Sumatra. The Walsh family had served the Company since at least the mid-seventeenth century, and since then sons had followed fathers into the accounts department at East India House in London.<sup>109</sup> However, the wider kinship group of which the Walsh family was a part, including the prominent Styleman merchants of London, drew younger members of the family away from their apprenticeships in the metropole and out into the

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<sup>108</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>109</sup> John Walsh senior is the first recorded family member in the service of the Company, as assistant accountant at East India House. See BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/53, Enoch Walsh to Court of Directors, Bombay, 11 May 1697.

Company's settlements in Asia where they were advanced through familial patrons in senior positions at places such as Madras.<sup>110</sup> By the time of John and Joseph Walsh's arrival in 1715, their kinship group had been entrenched in Asia for many decades. However, with the participation of John and Joseph Walsh at Madras on the Coromandel Coast and Bencoolen on the West Coast of Sumatra respectively, their kinship group became an expansive network with ambitious private trading interests which helped bind the economies of both coasts together.

Joseph Walsh arrived at Bencoolen in the senior post of factor, thanks to the patronage of his uncle John Styleman, previously a councillor at Madras and now a director at East India House.<sup>111</sup> Joseph joined the West Coast establishment in the final months of Joseph Collet's deputy-governorship, and experienced the turbulent years which followed. Wracked by Collet's northern wars, desolated by famine and embroiled in political turmoil, the West Coast presented an eerie spectacle.<sup>112</sup> The scarcity of silver in the Bencoolen treasury was still making trade difficult. In 1712, Collet had brought with him almost 40,000 silver dollars in the hope of jump-starting the economy.<sup>113</sup> But despite impressive pepper investments in the first eighteen months of his administration, much of this specie was then exhausted through Collet's patriarchal subjugation of Anak Sungai in the north.<sup>114</sup> To cope with the interruption in the flow of silver to the West Coast, the Company was initially forced to rely on copper cash to continue purchasing pepper. This policy, however, proved disastrous. Since the beginning of the pepper trade, the Malay prized silver above any other European commodity for the

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<sup>110</sup> RFSG, *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St George, 8 March 1688, p. 46; *ibid.*, 23 March 1693, p. 89; PCC Prob 11/666, Will of John Styleman, 1734.

<sup>111</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/B/53, Minutes of the Court of Directors, London, 5 January 1715.

<sup>112</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>113</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, York Fort, 22 October 1712.

<sup>114</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/8, Bencoolen to Court of Directors, York Fort, 11 September 1714.

exchange of their pepper.<sup>115</sup> In particular, Malay women, who were the prime cultivators of the pepper vine, spent much of their crop on acquiring silver ornaments, jewellery and specie. In the 1670s, Malay children living in the highlands of West Sumatra could be found wearing expensive silver chains around their necks.<sup>116</sup>

The introduction of copper as the Company's currency for pepper was thus widely resented, from the lowest pepper farmer to the most prominent raja. Pepper merchants either refused to accept this coinage, demanded higher prices for their crops or stopped sending pepper downriver to the Company's settlements altogether. Company servants resorted to forcefully extracting pepper from merchants, a tactic which often met with threats by the Malay to sink their own boats and thus destroy the only form of transport which could ship the pepper down from the highlands. More practically, they also raised high interest loans from the Malay to sustain pepper purchases.<sup>117</sup> By 1710, however, such measures could not be sustained, and the Company's traditional markets on the West Coast began to disappear. With the aid of his treasure chests of silver, Collet attempted to reverse the Company's reliance on copper, removing it from circulation by purchasing it back with silver. But he was repeatedly forced to extend the deadline for the Malay to bring their stockpiles in, and was of the opinion that much of it would have to remain in circulation, especially so after his own supplies of silver were exhausted.<sup>118</sup> As late as 1720, the secretary noted that instead of silver plate, the treasure chests at Bencoolen 'proved to be most of them full of nothing but copper cash'.<sup>119</sup>

While the Bencoolen treasury remained devoid of silver, and its warehouses and *godowns* sat empty of pepper, Company servants stepped in to fill the void in a private

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<sup>115</sup> Watson-Andaya, 'Women and Economic Change', p. 174.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Young, *Trade on the West Coast of Sumatra*, p. 11-13.

<sup>118</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/G/35/7, York Fort General, York Fort, 22 October 1712.

<sup>119</sup> RFSG, D&CB, Thomas Cooke to Madras, Fort St George, 21 April 1720, p. 62.

capacity. From 1709 onwards, those stationed across the West Coast began to turn to their kinship networks to supply the shrunken Sumatran markets with the capital and goods it demanded.<sup>120</sup> In doing so, they not only revived the economy of the West Coast, but permanently reshaped it, changing the dynamics of commercial exchange and integrating it into a wider colonial trading system based upon the Bay of Bengal.<sup>121</sup> Traditionally, the pattern of the Company's public trade with the West Coast consisted of East India House exporting silver to Bencoolen, who in return shipped pepper directly back to London. The intervention of Company kinship networks in the pepper trade of the West Coast dramatically changed this. Company servants on the West Coast began to pay for pepper in kind with textiles imported from their kin on the Coromandel Coast, principally at Madras. They in turn sent pepper back to their kin at Madras, who eventually shipped it to family in Britain for sale.<sup>122</sup> Even after the flow of silver specie from Europe recommenced, this triangular pattern of trade remained the model even for the Company's public trade, turning Madras into the main *entrepot* for pepper exports to Europe, reducing the demand for specie on the West Coast and creating a new market for the textiles of the Coromandel Coast.<sup>123</sup>

Joseph Walsh was one of the many Company servants on the West Coast of Sumatra who replaced, and then refashioned, the Company's public trade with his kinship network's own private commercial interests. In 1717, the same year that East India House considered abandoning the West Coast, Joseph received his first consignment of goods from his brother John, stationed at Madras as a factor. This consisted of an assortment of textiles from the Coromandel Coast, including a bale of

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<sup>120</sup> Young, *Trade on the West Coast of Sumatra*, p. 14.

<sup>121</sup> For the Bay of Bengal's transition into a predominantly colonial space by the mid-eighteenth century, see Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (Abingdon, Oxon, 2003), pp. 190-248.

<sup>122</sup> Young, *Trade on the West Coast of Sumatra*, p. 15.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

cheap fine cloth known as *sannoos*, as well as more luxurious ‘Pullicat’ stockings.<sup>124</sup> Joseph either directly exchanged these textiles for pepper with the Malay merchants, or, more lucratively, sold them on to the Company at a higher price, who then bartered them for much-needed pepper. Although the cargo fetched a reasonable profit of two-hundred dollars for the brothers, Joseph wrote to John the following year that he was ‘sorry not to have got you more for your Sannoos’.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, their private trade between the Coromandel and West Coasts grew rapidly. Joseph widened his investment portfolio by sending back to his brother luxurious goods found on the West Coast of Sumatra other than pepper. These included elephant’s teeth and ‘benjamin’, otherwise known as benzoin resin, a precious tree bark used in incense and particularly prized by the Indians of the Coromandel Coast for its importance in religious ceremonies.<sup>126</sup>

As the extent of the Walsh brothers’ trade grew, so did the involvement of their kinship network. From 1718 onwards, their uncles John and Anthony Williams, both free merchants stationed at Madras, participated in and facilitated the private trade of their nephews between the Coromandel and West Coasts. As captains of their own ships, they were in a convenient position to transport the network’s goods and capital to and fro. Joseph considered his uncle Richard indispensable in their trading activities. He wrote to Richard, his ‘most affection[ate] Kinsman’, hoping that his conduct would ‘not render me less acceptable to yourself’, and requested his uncle to ‘look on me with a gracious Eye, and assist me with your endeavours’.<sup>127</sup> By 1719, the kinship network’s joint trading account, being the total amount each member invested in goods or provided as capital, stood at the substantial sum of 8,000 dollars. The success of his

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<sup>124</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 16 December 1717. For the textile trade, see Rasananda Tripathy, *Crafts and Commerce in Orissa* (Delhi, 1986), p. 38.

<sup>125</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 21 June 1718.

<sup>126</sup> Gerrit Knaap, ‘All about Money: Maritime Trade in Makassar and West Java, around 1775’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2006), p. 497.

<sup>127</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to Richard Williams, Fort St George, 12 July 1719.

family's private commercial trade route across the Bay of Bengal in these years transformed Joseph's own situation, describing to his brother John that 'I am now settled in a good handsome way of living'.<sup>128</sup> Unfortunately for Joseph, and his whole kinship network, disaster loomed on the horizon.

On 23 March 1719, great billows of smoke arose in the air five miles from Bencoolen. Unknown to the Company servants going about their business in Fort Marlborough, 'a General combination of Malays' had marched on the town, setting fire to the Company's houses and plantations as they went. Caught by surprise, the Deputy-Governor Thomas Cooke mustered a small body of the garrison's Malay soldiers to engage the invaders, but much of this army quickly melted away through desertion. The next day, as the council decided the best course of action, Fort Marlborough's magazine exploded, most likely through treachery, setting the rest of the settlement ablaze. A panic gripped the Company servants, their slaves, and those Malay who remained loyal, and soon enough a headlong flight to the shore ensued. The advancing Malay force was quick to capitalise on the confusion and pursued the Company's refugees to the surf, killing at least fifty people. Joseph Walsh himself was almost killed when he fell behind, but an African slave saved him and carried him to the waiting *Masulipatnam* which had arrived on the Coast just in time to carry off the survivors.

For six hours Joseph Walsh anchored off shore with his remaining colleagues, watching as Fort Marlborough as it burnt to the ground. 'I am involv'd in so unhappy a condition by my losses now', he lamented to his uncle Richard Williams, once he had finally reached Madras in July, 'being left without one farthing to help myself.'<sup>129</sup> It appears that much of the network's joint account was lost in the destruction of Bencoolen, being, at that time, predominantly tied up in goods awaiting shipment to

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 21 June 1718.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., Joseph Walsh to Richard Williams, Fort St George, 12 July 1719.

Madras.<sup>130</sup> ‘Whether I shall retrieve these losses I know not’, he melancholically concluded to his uncle.<sup>131</sup> To his brother John, Joseph wrote of the ‘inconsistent state of Fortune’s Empire’, in which he had been brought ‘from the highest prospect of Prosperity and success’ to the ‘lowest ebb of poverty and want’.<sup>132</sup> But the destruction of Bencoolen was also ruinous to many other Company servants and their networks who too had done much to lay the foundation of a new Bay of Bengal trading system based upon the Coromandel and West Coasts. Indeed, the urgent need to re-establish the private commercial interests of Company kinship networks and retrieve their lost fortunes was the primary reason that, barely three months later, an expedition was launched by Madras to resettle Bencoolen. ‘The Godfrey is now bound to Moco Moco and I have rec’d orders to proceed on her with one covenant’d serv’t more, an Ensign & some military for that place’, Joseph wrote to John in August, ‘wch if in being I am to remain there 2nd [of council]; if not shall trade down the Coast; either of which tis hop’d will be to my advantage’.<sup>133</sup> In fact, when the *Godfrey* reached the West Coast of Sumatra in 1720, Joseph was made chief of Moco Moco, the temporary capital of the West Coast establishment, and charged with resettling Bencoolen and reviving its trade and relations with the surrounding Malay.<sup>134</sup>

Madras justified the decision to return to the West Coast as one which would serve the Company’s public interest. ‘Fearing that we may render ourselves liable to Censure from our Honble Masters’, declared the governor and his council in April 1720, ‘should we not embrace this fair Opportunity of resetting Fort Marlbro & thereby prevent the greatest branch of our pepper trade from falling into ye hands of the

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<sup>130</sup> The biggest risk to European traders in Asia was having most of their capital constantly tied up in goods. See Marshall, *East India Fortunes*, p. 36.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort St George, 14 August 1719.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> RFSG, *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St. George, 18 August 1720, p. 145.

Dutch'.<sup>135</sup> But the speed with which Madras sought to re-establish the Company's presence on the West Coast of Sumatra betrays the growing importance the Bay of Bengal's private political economy had for servants there, and in which Sumatra had played such a pivotal role since the involvement of private kinship networks. Of course, an integrated Bay of Bengal trading system had already existed for centuries, one based upon intense commercial exchange between India and Sumatra through the activities of Muslim traders.<sup>136</sup> But the participation of Company kinship networks reshaped trade in the Bay in a number of fundamental ways. For instance, previously non-existent colonial ports such as Madras rose to dominance, eclipsing traditional Asian ports such as Masulipatnam further to the north, causing a physical shift in the geography of important trade routes. Certain staple trading commodities gained new value and distinction in new markets, such as the importance of pepper re-exports from Madras and Sumatra's value as a new market for textiles. Furthermore, the trade of Company kinship networks grew at the expense of Asian traders, and the *dhow* which had ploughed the Bay of Bengal for centuries was forced to compete with larger and heavier European shipping.<sup>137</sup> More importantly, by deepening the integration of the economies and markets of both Coasts, Company kinship networks ensured that neither region could become politically independent of one another. Indeed, the court of directors had no knowledge of the destruction of Bencoolen until early 1721, by which time Joseph Walsh and his colleagues had already presented them with a *fait accompli* by arriving back on the West Coast, thus preventing East India House from taking advantage of the situation to withdraw from Sumatra altogether.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 25 April 1720, pp. 66-7.

<sup>136</sup> Om Prakash, 'The Indian Maritime Merchant, 1500-1800', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2004), p. 449.

<sup>137</sup> This was also the case in the western Indian Ocean in this period. See Om Prakash, 'English Private Trade', p. 227.

<sup>138</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/101, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 14 February 1722.

The return to Bencoolen by Company servants long before East India House had any knowledge of events there, aptly demonstrates the way in which the commercial agency of Company servants in Asia determined the shape of emerging colonial systems of trade. Such a process provided the Company's presence with a territorial and political cohesion which stood in stark contrast to the fractured and disintegrating public interests which had previously bound together the Company's settlements along the littoral of the Bay of Bengal. Under Isaac Pyke, the first deputy-governor of the West Coast after Bencoolen's destruction, the dominance of Company kinship networks in Sumatra's trade was uncontested. For when the Company's annual ships arrived at Bencoolen from London in 1721 expecting to load their hulls with pepper, they discovered that Deputy-Governor Pyke had already shipped the entire pepper crop off the Coast in his own vessel, the *Perry*.<sup>139</sup> Inevitably, far from perceiving the resettlement of Bencoolen as advantageous for the Company, East India House resented both the temerity of their servants in acting without their permission, as well as the monopolisation of trade which the control of Sumatra provided for their servants in the Bay of Bengal.

East India House responded to the *fait accompli* by attempting to exert the Company's public interests over the private agency of their servants in Asia. In 1723 they again declared that they 'must be forced to quit Settlements which hitherto have never answer'd Our Charge'.<sup>140</sup> More than that, by maintaining the West Coast, 'the Company have been yearly very great sufferers, and lost a Prodigious Sum of Mony'.<sup>141</sup> However, after 'frequent discourse', they opted instead to regain control of Sumatra from their servants, as opposed to withdrawing altogether.<sup>142</sup> To that end, they

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., Orders and Instructions to James Macrae, London, 10 July 1723.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

despatched a supervisor from London who possessed 'Our Power and Authority' to contain the agency of their servants and thus to 'prevent the like Evils in future'.<sup>143</sup> The commission given to Supervisor James Macrae was sweeping, and was read out to all Company servants once he had arrived at Bencoolen in 1724, directing them 'to yield due obedience' to Macrae so that he could establish 'proper Rules and Restrictions for the future Regulating the Conduct of the Chief or Deputy Governour and Council and all their subordinates.'<sup>144</sup> The Company's public interest was to be established as the primary concern of Company servants on the West Coast, and it was clearly defined by Macrae as the need to ensure that all servants and subjects concerned themselves only with acquiring pepper and ensuring new vines were planted every year.<sup>145</sup>

East India House made it clear to Supervisor Macrae that private trade was the main malady on the West Coast. 'This gives us occasion to tell you', the directors informed him upon his appointment as supervisor, 'That it is very evidence Our People at Fort St. George are privately concern'd with those on the West Coast in this sort of Trade'.<sup>146</sup> The directors intended to deprive Company kinship networks of their ability to monopolise trade in the Bay of Bengal by reversing this form of commercial exchange in which their servants held the advantage. Upon his arrival at Bencoolen, Macrae declared an embargo on private trade between the Coromandel and West Coasts. The court of directors confirmed this in a letter to the new deputy-governor, Joseph Walsh: 'We have strictly forbid Fort St. George...supplying you with any Goods but what shall be solely for our account'.<sup>147</sup> East India House had rightly judged 'that by paying away Callicoes and other Indian Goods to the natives,' their servants on the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/102, Court of Directors to Bencoolen, London, 12 February 1724.

West Coast had made them ‘sufferers’.<sup>148</sup> But Macrae’s departure just six months after arriving at Bencoolen deprived the directors with the means of effectively implementing this embargo, and in the following year they were forced to lift it.<sup>149</sup>

The attempt by metropolitan authorities to overcome the private agency of servants operating in Asia had failed. Although Macrae succeeded in firing corrupt servants, reducing expenses, promoting the pepper trade and reforming the government, his supervision of the West Coast was effective only so long as he himself remained present there to oversee affairs.<sup>150</sup> The moment he set sail, the entire framework he had put in place to ensure adherence to the public interest was pulled down, and the private trade of Company kinship networks once again resurged. In 1723, Joseph Walsh was appointed deputy-governor through the influence of his wife’s relations at East India House.<sup>151</sup> When Supervisor Macrae arrived, he curtailed Joseph’s privileges as deputy-governor, such as the number of slaves he was allowed, and exposed a series of abuses he had committed, such as claiming more ‘diet’ allowance than he was entitled to.<sup>152</sup> Macrae’s presence at Bencoolen, as Joseph himself later admitted, prevented him or anyone else from undertaking private trade.<sup>153</sup> But when the supervisor departed, Joseph quickly re-established the monopoly of Company kinship networks over trade between the Coromandel and West Coasts, placing his own within a dominant position. Eager to recover his losses and that of his own kin from the destruction of Bencoolen, he exploited his authority as deputy-governor to gain access to the fort’s treasury, using two chests of the Company’s own silver to purchase licenses for opium, arrack and salt,

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., Court of Directors to Madras, London, 1 December 1725.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> For Macrae’s account of his time on the West Coast, see RFSG, *D&CB*, James Macrae to Madras, Fort Marlborough, 20 July 1724, pp. 126-136.

<sup>151</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur D546/1, Elizabeth Walsh to Sarah Maskelyne, Fort St. George, 16 January 1723. See also RFSG, *D&CB*, Covenant and Indenture appointing Joseph Walsh Deputy Governour on the West Coast of Sumatra, Fort St. George, 28 August 1723, p. 91.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., James Macrae to Madras, Fort Marlborough, 20 July 1724, p. 127.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., Consultation, Fort St. George, 18 June 1726, p. 71.

the goods of which were all exported by his network for sale at Madras.<sup>154</sup> Understandably, the size of the family's trade rapidly eclipsed its previous quantity, becoming so engrossing that the governor of Madras himself reminded Joseph that monopolising all trade was 'directly contrary to the Establish'd Laws of the Company'.<sup>155</sup> Despite this warning, the trade of Joseph's kinship network in the Bay of Bengal continued to grow, often in an aggressive and competitive manner.

Joseph's brother John was now captain of the Company's ship *Sarah Galley*, based in Bengal, and thus in a position to widen the interests of their private trade.<sup>156</sup> And although both their uncles, Richard and Anthony Williams, died in 1725, the Walsh kinship network expanded to include the relations of Joseph's new wife, Elizabeth Maskelyne, some of whom he appointed to positions at Fort Marlborough.<sup>157</sup> Shipments to Madras grew in size and value, such as the consignment sent in 1725 on-board the deputy-governor's private vessel, the *Goshawke*, which carried merchandize worth 16,000 dollars.<sup>158</sup> 'I thank God my fortune is really considerably increas'd since I left Madrass,' Joseph wrote to his brother John the following year, 'and I have more mony due to me here than I owe there, besides the vast stock of Goods on hand.'<sup>159</sup> Unfortunately for his kinship network, Joseph's embezzlement of Company funds in an effort to create a monopoly for the family over private trade in the Bay of Bengal was eventually exposed. According to one of his subordinates at Bencoolen, the discovery 'Ruined Mr. Walsh and his Family'.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., David Carnegie to James Macrae, Fort Marlborough, 2 December 1725, p. 109. The use of Company funds by senior servants for their own private trade was not uncommon. See Om Prakash, 'English Private Trade', p. 222.

<sup>155</sup> RFSG, *LFFSG*, Madras to Bencoolen, Fort St. George, 26 August 1723, p. 69.

<sup>156</sup> RFSG, *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St. George, 13 March 1720, p. 45.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 20 June 1726, p. 75; *ibid.*, Nathaniel Turner, John Emmerson and James Hubbard to Madras, Fort St George, 21 August 1727, p. 118.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., David Carnegie to James Macrae, Fort Marlborough, 2 December 1725, p. 110.

<sup>159</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort Marlborough, 23 June 1726.

<sup>160</sup> David Carnegie to James Macrae, Fort Marlborough, 23 June 1726, in RFSG, *D&CB*, p. 111.

Even as the Walsh kinship network suffered another major setback, other families stepped in to assume control of the lucrative private trading routes between the two Coasts. One of these was the network of James Macrae, who had previously been despatched by East India House as supervisor to end the very trade he now openly indulged in. His reward for supposedly doing so was the governorship of Madras, in which capacity Macrae had uncovered the frauds of Joseph Walsh, dismissing him from the Company's service.<sup>161</sup> Once this had been accomplished, the governor and his brother stepped in to maintain their own monopoly over private trade in the Bay. 'The old toad', Joseph Walsh wrote of Macrae in 1729, 'has his Brother for Capital and sole Super Cargo', and no other servant could 'carry a farthing but by his permission.'<sup>162</sup> Joseph Walsh lacked the political authority to compete with the Macraes.<sup>163</sup> Although he was eventually accepted back in to the Company's service, it was only in a subordinate capacity. As a result, the Walsh kinship network was gradually forced out of the lucrative textile-pepper trade between the Coromandel and West Coasts, and left to focus on the more traditional and less profitable sale of silver sent to him by family members in Britain.<sup>164</sup> Rather, the truth was that far more successful kinship networks were able to monopolise and control the political economy of the Bay of Bengal, and therefore enjoy its profits.

By the early eighteenth century, Company kinship networks had succeeded in laying the foundations of an increasingly politically and territorially integrated colonial space in Asia. East India house had contemplated withdrawing from Sumatra altogether due to the weakness of the Company's public interest there at the beginning of the

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<sup>161</sup> For Macrae's attempt to persuade his council of Joseph Walsh's 'faults' and their agreeing to dismiss him, see Consultation, Fort St. George, 18 June 1726, in *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>162</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur D546/1, Joseph Walsh to John Walsh, Fort St. George, 21 July 1729.

<sup>163</sup> Political authority often being a prerequisite to commercial success. See Marshall, *East India Fortunes*, p. 112.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

century. However, the commercial integration of the West Coast with the Coromandel Coast through Company kinship networks allowed both regions to pursue and maintain political interdependence with one another, providing the Bay of Bengal with a much greater scale of political cohesion.

## **Conclusion**

The first part of this thesis showed how the autonomous agency of Company servants served to undermine and decentre the Company's attempt to build a state in Asia, one that aimed to promote the public interest above all else. From this failure, those same Company servants were able to empower themselves and create their own highly effective – though often impermanent - political regimes. This chapter has revealed how integral the family networks established by Company servants were to this process. Based upon the exchange and circulation of capital, goods, information and people, kinship networks connected Company servants into a wider global community of families. In place of the inadequate and limited machinery of public governance as projected by East India House, this private community provided Company servants with the resources, capabilities and opportunities to consolidate their control over the sort of colonial space that would provide the foundations for a significant expansion of political power in places such as the Bay of Bengal.

While the Company remained far from a hegemonic power in Asia by the early eighteenth century, Company kinship networks were nonetheless driving the Company's development in a dynamic and expansive way. Whether penetrating deeper into regional economies, opening up new trade routes or integrating political jurisdictions, the landscape of Asia was being gradually transformed, a process which also transformed the Company itself. Family networks connected Company servants

together, but they also forged links with those who existed outside of the Company's official boundaries: wives, children, interlopers, Asian rulers and their subjects, other European companies and even households, interests and communities within Britain itself. The chartered and public borders of the Company were gradually negated by this set of porous, shifting and overlapping series of networks which blurred the national, cultural, commercial, social, political and colonial dimensions of the Company in the early modern period.

## Chapter Four

### Laying the Foundations of the Colonial State

While part one of the thesis revealed a process of political fragmentation within the Company by the turn of the eighteenth century, part two has so far shown how Company servants adapted to this new landscape through the creation of a global community of families connected through an expansive network of kinship. If the decentring of the Company led to the failure of state building, then family networks provided an alternative social, economic and political foundation through which Company servants could author the colonial state. The explanation of this apparent dichotomy lies in the opportunities provided by the decentralisation of the Company's political structure for smaller groups and configurations of power beyond the incoherent and impermanent regimes constructed by ambitious servants such as Joseph Collet. The juxtaposition of Company servants and expansive kinship networks created a new political driving force in Asia. As the process of fragmentation accelerated, it provided even greater scope for family networks to pursue their private interests across Asia, facilitating the emergence of the colonial state as they did so.

Colonial state formation through the pursuit of private interest has traditionally been ascribed to a much later period. Robert Travers argues that only with the arrival in India of military forces from Britain and the subsequent 'political upheavals' in Bengal were Company servants in Asia able to apply substantial political power in an effort to achieve their own private agendas.<sup>1</sup> In such an argument, Company servants appeared to be dependent on the metropolitan fiscal-military state in order to pursue their own forms of state building. However, when placed within the context of their wider family

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<sup>1</sup> Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, pp. 34-5.

networks, it is evident that Company servants were not only capable of exercising independent political agency, but on an often considerable scale, too. Although the networks themselves were not always at the centre of this process, they nonetheless provided Company servants with wider powerbases, increased resources and private channels through which they were able to realise their political ambitions. This chapter will reveal how kinship networks not only allowed Company servants in Asia at the turn of the eighteenth century to prevent the state building efforts of East India House, but also to acquire the political institutions capable of facilitating the emergence of the colonial state.

As the preceding chapter revealed, in the first half of the seventeenth century, Company servants had formed something akin to a diaspora in Asia, being forced to ingratiate themselves into local indigenous networks.<sup>2</sup> But the expansion of kinship networks across Asia in the later seventeenth century enabled Company servants to re-orientate themselves away from such regional frameworks and instead connect themselves into a global community. This process created new systems of governance which shaped the destiny of the Company in Asia.<sup>3</sup> In place of the ineffective corporate infrastructure of administration and governance created by royal charters and colonial institutions, this private governing apparatus was fully utilised. It was the political networks discussed in this chapter around which the contours of the early modern colonial state took shape. As Michael Braddick has argued for the domestic British state, rather than a construct of the metropolitan ‘centre’, the foundations of this

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<sup>2</sup> Om Prakash, ‘English Private Trade in the Western Indian Ocean, 1720-1740’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 50, no. 2/3, Spatial and Temporal Continuities of Merchant Networks in South Asia and the Indian Ocean (2007), p. 217; Games, *Web of Empire*, p. 198. For the English diaspora in Asia, see Mentz, *English Gentlemen Merchant*, especially pp. 41-8 and pp. 215-59.

<sup>3</sup> For the argument that kinship was fundamental to state formation in the early modern period, see Adams, *Familial State*, p. 29.

colonial polity were based upon ‘something that is extensive.’<sup>4</sup> As for the Dutch colonial state, its British counterpart would also be ushered in through ‘elite family networks’ operating across Asia ‘which actually created regional circuits of authority within the empire’.<sup>5</sup>

The ability for Company servants to drive forward colonial state formation through the agency of their wider kinship networks was revealed by a frustrated Sir Josiah Child at the end of the seventeenth century when he charged them with ‘perverting or misconstruing, procrastinating or neglecting our plain and direct orders to you, as if you were not a subordinate but a coordinate power with us’.<sup>6</sup> In Asia, Company kinship networks were a coordinating power in their own right, and not subject to effective regulation or control by the court of directors. It was in the absence of the latter that key members of these kinship networks emerged as crucial political figures, ‘borrowing’ impermanent and porous sovereign, political and public authority from the ‘centre’ to realise their own policies.<sup>7</sup> At the turn of the eighteenth century, these Company servants and the family networks they established determined the Company’s political landscape in Asia.

### **William Hedges and ‘that wicked confederacy’**

Company kinship networks played a direct, ambitious and visible role in the acquisition of political authority in Asia. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a small group of influential Company families seized control of the Bengal agency in an attempt to shape its political future in a way that would protect and facilitate their private interests. Some, like the Vincent and Pitt families, used their wider kinship

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<sup>4</sup> Braddick, *State Formation*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, *Networks of Empire*, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Originally cited in Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia*, p. 77. Also see Adams, ‘Principals and Agents’, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Lee, ‘Office Is a Thing Borrowed’, pp. 409-40.

networks to ensure the Company's Bengal settlements remained subordinate both to Madras and also to regional Mughal authorities. Others, like the Charnocks, formulated policies which led to the acquisition of new political rights over areas of Bengal that allowed the Company's political establishment to operate securely and autonomously of regional political orders. The result was the growth of Calcutta and the development of the Bengal presidency as the Company's most commercially and politically important region by the mid-eighteenth century. In both cases, Company servants were assisted by their networks in fundamental ways which helped shape and determine the foundations of the colonial state, sometimes in negative ways, sometimes in more positive ones, but always in pursuit of their own private interests.

As a reflection of its growing importance to the Company in terms of trade, but also in the hope that independence would lead to a more faithful adherence by servants to the public interest, as opposed to their past private indulgences under the authority of Madras, Bengal was made a separate agency for the first time in 1681.<sup>8</sup> The court of committees at East India House appointed one of their own, William Hedges, to be the first agent of Bengal.<sup>9</sup> Arriving at the port of Balasore in the Bay of Bengal in 1682, Hedges was tasked with exerting the East India House's authority over its settlements to ensure that the new agency would not be appropriated by the private interests of its servants.<sup>10</sup> He aimed to persecute private interests, clear interlopers from Bengal and purge the political establishment of 'corrupt' servants who neglected the Company's trade in favour of their own pursuits. Evidence of the subversion of the public interest was immediate. When Hedges left Balasore the following day to continue to Hugli, he sailed past a European who had 'hired a great house' and who was busy transporting

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<sup>8</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> WH Diary, London, 25 November 1681, in William Hedges, *The Diary of William Hedges during his Agency in Bengal* (hereafter *WH Diary*), Henry Yule, ed. (London, 1887-1889, 3 vols.), vol. 1, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> *WH Diary*., William Hedges to Balasore, Balasore road, 18 July 1682, vol. 1, p. 30.

‘divers Chests of money ashore, and was very busy in buying of goods.’<sup>11</sup> Upon enquiring, Hedges discovered that the person was not a Company servant, but in actual fact Thomas Pitt, an infamous interloper.<sup>12</sup> Hedges himself was on his way to meet the Company’s most senior servant in Bengal, the chief of Hugli, Matthias Vincent, who also happened to be Pitt’s kinsman and principal business partner.<sup>13</sup>

Despite decades of interloper activity in Asia, East India House was only just beginning to understand the symbiotic relationship between private interest and Company kinship networks, whose roots had sunk deep into Bengal’s political establishment. Shortly after Hedges had arrived in Asia in 1682, the court of committees had written to Madras, reiterating previous orders to ‘Seise and send home any English that you shall but suspect may aide the Interloper[s]’. This time, they also urged authorities in Madras to look out for any Company servants who ‘intermarry with any women that go over with any Interloper’. The governor was to ‘dismiss forthwith such persons so marry’d from our Service and send them home with their Wives.’<sup>14</sup> At the heart of Hedges’ attempt to exert East India House’s control over affairs in the new Bengal agency, was the need to sever the extensive kinship ties that had already developed between Company servants and interlopers. The court of committees was fully aware of the most important and influential kinship network in Bengal: that established between the Pitt and Vincent families. ‘In the first place wee do require you with all possible speed’, the committees instructed Hedges as he departed for Asia, to imprison Matthew Vincent ‘to answer to the severall breaches of trust and other notorious abuses committed by him.’<sup>15</sup> In another letter, the court anxiously urged the governor of Madras to assist Hedges with the simultaneous arrest of Pitt, as he was ‘Mr

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 19 July 1682, vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Hugli, 21 July 1682, vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/89, Court of Committees to Madras, London, 27 October 1682.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, pp. 27-28.

Vincent's cousin'.<sup>16</sup> If Pitt was to appear anywhere within the Madras agency, he was to be caught and returned to Europe, 'whatever the cost'.<sup>17</sup> Hedges had arrived from Europe with a guard of soldiers specifically to end the power of Vincent's kinship network in Bengal.

When Hedges anchored offshore at Hugli, Chief Vincent issued out of the fort to welcome the new agent, attended by several ships, a retinue and a large armed guard.<sup>18</sup> Vincent held an official reception for Hedges at the Dutch Gardens outside of town, 'where he had provided an entertainment for me', according to Hedges, which lasted into the night.<sup>19</sup> Vincent's extravagant display, elaborate trappings and ostentatious ceremony confirmed to Hedges the chief's extensive private interests and intimate collaboration with interlopers. Unfortunately for Hedges, his guard of soldiers had been travelling in another vessel, one which had been delayed at Balasore due to poor weather conditions. Although Vincent had been made aware of Hedges' intention to arrest him, he nonetheless used the opportunity to humiliate the agent by having his own soldiers escort Hedges to attend the festivities. Meanwhile, Vincent used the time to evacuate his goods, papers and person to the nearby Dutch settlement of Chinsurah. There, he levied a force of Portuguese and Asian soldiers, making himself impervious to arrest.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Pitt arrived with three ships and landed at Hugli 'in great state', according to Hedges, 'with 4 or 5 files of soldiers in red coats, well armed, and great attendance of Native Soldiers and Trumpeters'.<sup>21</sup> Pitt then joined his cousin at Chinsurah, where they built their own warehouse, enticed Bengal's most prominent

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<sup>16</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> *WH Diary*, Hugli, 24 July 1682, vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Asian merchants away from Hugli and set up their own trade to Europe.<sup>22</sup> When, several months later, Hedges attempted to attack and seize Pitt and Vincent, the ex-chief's influence with the Mughal governor of Hugli meant that they were prevented from doing so, and was even counter-attacked by Mughal troops.<sup>23</sup>

There was little Hedges could do during his governorship to undermine or control the kinship networks which shaped the Bengal agency. They transcended the public and private, connecting Company servants with interlopers and even operating beyond the Company's own jurisdiction to cross into the factories of other European companies as well as the local Mughal order. To have neutralised their grip on the political establishment in Bengal would have been to radically deconstruct and rebuild the nature of the Company's presence there altogether, an act beyond the mitigated and diluted authority of East India House in Asia. Hedges' unwillingness to trust any Company servant with familial connections to interlopers led to his complete isolation. For example, in 1683 he railed against his deputy John Beard for keeping 'a familiar private correspondence with disaffected persons and Interlopers', referring to his interloping brother-in-law James Lowdon.<sup>24</sup> On the same day, he also wrote letters to every chief of a factory in Bengal accusing them of 'Conceite', 'factious' and 'great disorder' in maintaining relations with those who sought to subvert the interests of his masters at East India House.<sup>25</sup> Their combined opposition to Hedges' attacks brought enough pressure to achieve his replacement as agent by John Beard in the following year.<sup>26</sup>

Company kinship networks were far too adaptable, expansive and ingrained in Bengal commerce and politics for metropolitan regulation and oversight. Agents sent

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> WH *Diary*, Hugli, 10 October 1683, vol. 1, pp. 124-6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 17 July 1684, vol. 1, p. 152,

from East India House were ultimately unable to mitigate the ability for the familial to shape the political, or the private to determine the public. Hedges realised this himself shortly before his removal. ‘The best of the Company’s servants being thus subject to corruption’, declared the agent in 1683, meant that East India House ‘can never be well served till...their Agent turne out those that...keepe Company and Feast dayly with ye Interlopers, as ye most precise of us doe here frequently’.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the intimacy between interlopers and Company servants had to be completely severed. The case of Matthias Vincent as chief of Hugli is demonstrative of the inability of the metropole and their agent to do just that. Although Vincent addressed Pitt as his nephew, the latter had in actual fact married his niece, Jane Innes, at Hugli in 1679, after the two men had engaged in several joint trading ventures between Bengal and Persia. Vincent used his influence as chief of Hugli to protect Pitt’s interloping activities and facilitate his trade in horses with Asian merchants and rulers, investing himself in his new kinsman’s voyages.<sup>28</sup> But Vincent’s family ties in Bengal were even more extensive than this, including, amongst others, his cousin Richard Edwards, the chief of Balasore.<sup>29</sup> East India House’s attempts to reduce the influence of this family over their affairs in Bengal was thus liable to failure unless all of these men were seized and imprisoned, which, given the weakness of metropolitan control in Asia, was unlikely, if not impossible. Indeed, when Hedges was dining on the banks of the Hugli outside of Balasore in 1683, he watched helplessly as one of Pitt’s ships sailed pass uninhibitedly, carrying its owner and Vincent to Europe.<sup>30</sup>

The actions and policies of Vincent and his kinship network scattered throughout Bengal had a profound impact upon the development of the fledgling Bengal

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 17 November 1683, vol. 1, p. 139.

<sup>28</sup> See Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>29</sup> See *WH Diary*, vol. 3, p. clxiii.

<sup>30</sup> *WH Diary*, Balasore, 2 February 1683, vol. 1, pp. 65-6.

agency. In resisting arrest by William Hedges and, as a consequence, challenging the authority of East India House, Vincent and his extensive kin forced the Company to unsuccessfully contest their position within the local Mughal political order, which eventually led to their greater subordination to the Mughal governor of Hugli. Although several further skirmishes between the Company's and the governor's forces ended in stalemate, Hedges' willingness to exercise military force against the governor led to the latter granting Vincent and Pitt a *firman* with special commercial privileges which threatened the position of the Company at Hugli.<sup>31</sup> As a consequence, Hedges was forced to go in person to Dacca, to seek resolution from Shaista Khan, the nawab of Bengal, to a political situation which had impeded much of the Company's trade at Hugli. But even leaving the settlement proved challenging, as Hedges' party was attacked by the governor, and two vessels were taken.<sup>32</sup> When the agent finally reached Dacca, he requested that the nawab order all interlopers to leave Bengal and that he might reduce the custom dues on Company goods. After six weeks of negotiations, Hedges returned to Hugli convinced that he had finally ensured that the 'Company shall never be troubled with Interlopers'.<sup>33</sup>

In actual fact, however, Hedges had achieved very little. Unlike Company servants such as Matthias Vincent who had operated in Bengal for more than thirty years and who thus had a far more accurate understanding of local conditions and realities, Hedges was unaware of the significant autonomy enjoyed by Mughal governors.<sup>34</sup> The nawab had instructed the governor of Hugli to respect the Company's rights and to lift the heavy customs and dues on their goods, as well as to banish interlopers from his jurisdiction, much to Hedges' satisfaction. However, the governor

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<sup>31</sup> C. R. Wilson, *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal, being the Bengal public consultations for the first half of the eighteenth century* (London, 1895, 3 vols.), vol. 1, p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 80.

<sup>33</sup> *WH Diary*, Dacca, 6 January 1683, vol. 1, pp. 61-62.

<sup>34</sup> See Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 94.

of Hugli took little notice of imperial decrees issued from Dacca concerning the European companies.<sup>35</sup> Eventually, Hedges was forced to submit to the governor's authority and even agree to pay the punitive Mughal customs on the Company's goods there.<sup>36</sup> The fact that the man who was assigned to weaken the grip of the kinship networks in Bengal, ended up alienating almost the entire political establishment there and was superseded after just two years, is illustrative of the hold Company kinship networks had over Bengal. After being superseded, Hedges was then dismissed from the Company's service, retreating first to the Dutch settlement in Chinsura and then fleeing Bengal altogether on an interloping vessel headed for Persia, hounded by the agency's most powerful kinship networks.<sup>37</sup> Hedges described the worst of these, Matthias Vincent and his kin, as 'that wicked confederacy', and thanked god for having given him 'Deliverance' from them.<sup>38</sup>

The social, commercial and political monopoly of Company kinship networks over the newly constituted Bengal agency ultimately ensured its short-term weakness in relation to the local Mughal political order. As a direct consequence of the efforts of the Vincent kinship network, the agency was demolished and Bengal was once again made subordinate to Madras in 1685. This allowed Company servants, their family networks and their interloping members to continue to operate independent of East India House and thus free to pursue interests across a number of jurisdictions, borders and political orders. The Budgen network was reflective of this outcome. As chief of Balasore, Edmund Budgen furthered the interests of his kinship network in Bengal, most notably by establishing lucrative commercial ventures with his interloping brother and father, both named John Budgen. Edmund was eventually dismissed in 1679 for this very

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<sup>35</sup> As eventually noted by the agent himself. See *WH Diary*, vol. 2, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see *ibid.*, Hugli, 23 December 1684, vol. 1, p. 172.

<sup>37</sup> Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> *WH Diary*, Balasore, 10 January 1685, vol. 1, pp. 176-177.

reason. But in the wake of the agency's abolition, he was readmitted into the Company's service at Hugli, followed by his three sons in 1691, where the kinship network prospered with interests at Hugli, Balasore and Madras.<sup>39</sup> But that is not to suggest that all Company kinship networks sought only to subvert the emergence of an independent political establishment in Bengal for their private gain. In fact, many Company servants sought to shape the colonial state in more positive ways through the agency of their kinship networks.

### **The Foundations of the Bengal Presidency**

While Company servants like Matthias Vincent strangled the new Bengal agency, others, such as Job Charnock, sought to restart the process of gaining independence from Madras. Specifically, he wanted to acquire greater political and sovereign authority for the Company's Bengal establishment which would also provide it with security and autonomy from the Mughal political order in which the Vincents had forcefully kept it, to the benefit of their own interests. Over the next four decades, in the wake of the failures of Agent Hedges, Job Charnock emerged as the proponent of a policy which acquired and developed the settlement of Calcutta into a secure and independent sovereign space for the Company in Bengal. His kinship network proved integral to this development.

The historiography has traditionally depicted Job Charnock in overtly negative terms. Assessments of Charnock have been formed through a Victorian discourse of 'difference' in which the Agent has been described as having 'spent his life in almost isolated positions among natives', the result of which left him 'deeply tinged with

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<sup>39</sup> See Master, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 349, fn. 2.

native habits of thought and action.’<sup>40</sup> Charnock was in fact intimately connected to local society through his establishment of an interracial family network. As the mariner Alexander Hamilton related after visiting Calcutta shortly after Charnock’s death, the latter had married an Indian woman. Supposedly, Charnock had observed an instance of *sati*, or widow-burning, only to fall in love with the intended victim whom he had ordered rescued from the pyre and brought back to Calcutta. According to Hamilton, ‘they lived lovingly many Years, and had several Children’.<sup>41</sup>

While Hamilton’s account is no doubt embellished and romanticised, Charnock had indeed married an Asian woman. Charnock had arrived in Bengal in 1658 as a young factor, where he was stationed at Kasimbazar.<sup>42</sup> By 1679, when Charnock was promoted to chief - in effect the most senior Company servant after the agent at Hugli - he was the longest-serving and most experienced servant in Bengal.<sup>43</sup> In such a capacity he had cultivated extensive commercial, social and political relationships throughout Bengal, both with the servants of other European companies as well as the officials of the Mughal regime. The latter, in particular, were consolidated through Charnock’s integration into the local political elite upon his marriage to a Rajput noblewoman whom he renamed ‘Maria’, a relative of Roy Bulchund, the Mughal governor of Hugli and Kasimbazar.<sup>44</sup> Much like the Powneys at Madras, the Charnocks in Bengal established a kinship network which straddled and crossed the boundaries between the social, political and commercial worlds of the indigenous political elites and the various European Companies in Bengal.

From the 1680s onwards, the Charnock family transitioned into an expansive kinship network, integrating a large group of Company servants into the family through

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<sup>40</sup> For example, see Henry Yule’s account of Charnock in WH, *Diary*, vol. 2, p. XC.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies* (London, 1721), vol. 2, p. 33.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>44</sup> WH, *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 52.

marriage to Charnock's children, Maria having provided her husband with three daughters and a son.<sup>45</sup> The eldest mixed-race Charnock child, Mary, was married to Charles Eyre, a councillor at Dacca. Eyre, who would eventually succeed his father-in-law to become the first governor of a newly independent Bengal Presidency, was himself from an interracial Company family. Sir John Goldsborough, appointed supervisor in 1693, noted Eyre's multicultural family connections when he visited Calcutta, reporting that 'he is very much for the Country habits and Customes.'<sup>46</sup> Catherine, another of Charnock's daughters, married Jonathan White, a senior merchant who served his father-in-law first as a councillor and then as his secretary.<sup>47</sup> The youngest of the Charnock daughters, Elizabeth, was similarly married into the Bengal establishment, to a senior merchant at Calcutta, William Bowridge.<sup>48</sup> Both the White and Bowridge families had numerous kin stationed throughout the Bay of Bengal acting as free merchants and interlopers, providing the Charnock family with even wider interests across Asia.<sup>49</sup>

The establishment of the Charnock kinship network allowed Job Charnock to consolidate his hold over the Company in Bengal, a process which led to the creation of a powerful social, political and commercial faction that supported Charnock's policies. The latter's influence over this faction can initially be discerned after his marriage to 'Maria', upon which Charnock adopted his wife's Islamic religion.<sup>50</sup> According to one Company servant who arrived at Calcutta shortly after Charnock's death in 1693, many of the Company's servants had followed Charnock's example, marrying 'black wives'

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<sup>45</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, pp. 246-7.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. xci.

<sup>47</sup> See Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 92, pp. 332-333.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> For an account of the Charnock family and its larger kinship group, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 307-386.

<sup>50</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies* (London, 1721), vol. 2, p. 33.

and showing little regard 'for our Religion', as he reported to East India House.<sup>51</sup> In fact, there was little room in Bengal for those who either existed outside of the Charnock kinship network or resisted Job Charnock's influence over their affairs. When Richard Trenchfield attempted to compete against the family's commercial concerns at Kasimbazar in 1679, for example, he was summarily dismissed.<sup>52</sup> The punitive nature of his dismissal by Charnock was demonstrated by his acquittal of the charges by Agent Matthias Vincent as well as the governor of Madras, Streysham Master, the latter of whom declared that Trenchfield's only crime was to attempt to prevent Charnock and his allies from being 'factious'.<sup>53</sup>

The extent of Job Charnock's grip over Bengal was illustrated when a string of de jure Company authorities based at Hugli, from Streysham Master himself to William Hedges, encroached either accidentally or intentionally upon his wide-ranging interests. When Master arrived in Bengal on a tour to reform the settlements, he discovered that Charnock was at the centre of what he described as a network of 'corruption'. At Patna he found the Indian merchants smuggling saltpetre out of the Company's warehouse on the orders of Charnock, to sell to the Dutch at a much higher profit.<sup>54</sup> At Hugli, Master discovered that the agent, Matthias Vincent, had little control over Kasimbazar, which Charnock ruled like a private fiefdom. He seldom sent letters to the agent at Hugli, and he dispatched shipments of goods on his own schedule.<sup>55</sup> In 1679 Master wailed in frustration from Hugli that there was 'no saltpetre come from Pattana, and fearing the worst by reason we heard not from Mr. Charnock in many days'.<sup>56</sup> When Master provided Charnock with a final deadline to appear in person

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in WH, *Diary*, vol. 2, p. xciii.

<sup>52</sup> Master, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 284.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>56</sup> Master, *Diaries*, Streysham Master to Joseph Hynmers, Hugli, 8 December 1679, vol. 2, pp. 323-4.

before him at Hugli, the latter ignored the warning and arrived a week after Master had left that city for Balasore. ‘I call God to wittness I had noe designes of my owne’, Charnock wrote to Master, undoubtedly tongue-in-cheek.<sup>57</sup>

Charnock used the influence of his network and the power of his faction to similarly oppose Master’s successor, William Hedges. When Hedges’ private cargo was stopped and seized at Kasimbazar in 1683, Charnock wrote to the agent to explain that it was done so on the orders of the Mughal governor, Roy Bulchund.<sup>58</sup> Shortly after, however, Hedges discovered that Charnock himself had prevailed on the Mughal governor to order the seizure, facilitated, no doubt, through their shared kin-connection.<sup>59</sup> ‘I consider Mr Charnock did this on purpose,’ declared Hedges, ‘to lessen my esteeme...to show that the Chief of Cassumbazar’s Dustuck [seal] is in greater esteeme...than mine.’<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Hedges was shocked to find several dismissed or disgraced Company servants dining with the Charnocks at Casimbazar and even living within their household. When he ordered Charnock to expel James Harding, whom he had earlier dismissed for ‘Blashphemy and Athisticall tenetts’, as well as for ‘fornicating with a slave wench’, Charnock simply ignored him.<sup>61</sup> Charnock financially and politically assisted these disgraced servants, who in return joined Charnock’s faction and supported him at every opportunity.

Agent Hedges lamented the ‘little regard’ shown by Charnock to his instructions on a range of matters.<sup>62</sup> The new agent was initially puzzled by Charnock’s insubordination, as he asked a fellow servant ‘why Mr Charnock was so cross to me, & thwarting every thing I proposed or did for ye Honble Compy’s service?’ When Hedges

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Job Charnock to Streyntsham Master, Hugli, 14 December 1679, vol. 2, p. 353.

<sup>58</sup> *WH Diary*, vol. 1, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 59.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 106.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

had first arrived in Bengal, Charnock had requested that he dismiss a particular enemy of his. When Hedges refused, Charnock 'was thereupon resolved to blast and frustrate all your actions & proceedings as much as he could,' Hedges was informed, 'and never to councell or assist you more as long as he lived.'<sup>63</sup> This explanation reveals that Charnock had become accustomed to wielding de facto authority in Bengal. From 1684 onwards, the Charnock faction had virtually usurped the government of Bengal from Hedges, carrying on a correspondence with all of the other Company chiefs of factories in Bengal to the exclusion of Hugli, 'as if I and this Councill of Hugly were such traitors to ye Company, as not fit to know what was transacted betwixt them in that grand affair of ye Company's concerns,' Hedges complained.<sup>64</sup> Having established a virtual monopoly over power and authority within Bengal, Job Charnock sought to lay the foundations of a presidency with himself at its head, independent of both Madras and the Mughal authorities in Bengal. Over the next fifteen years, he achieved exactly this.

The policy for an independent Bengal became critical after the Charnock network's commercial interests came under severe pressure from the Mughal authorities. In the wake of Hedges' failure to exert the Company's authority over the governor of Hugli, the Mughal Empire placed intolerable fiscal and commercial demands upon the Company's settlements in Bengal, such as demanding, in 1684, arrears on taxes from which the Company had previously been made exempt.<sup>65</sup> This was also part of a wider squeezing of intermediary and marginal groups by regional nawabs within the Mughal Empire to meet the fiscal demands of imperial expansion in

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 102-103.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>65</sup> RFSG, *LTFSG*, Hugli to Madras, Hugli, 15 December 1684, pp. 35-36.

the Deccan and elsewhere.<sup>66</sup> When these were not met, the major Bengal factories were attacked and placed under siege, including Dacca, Hugli and, most damaging for the Job Charnock and his kinship network, Kasimbazar itself.<sup>67</sup> Hedges' successor, John Beard, pursued a conciliatory and submissive policy, sending presents to the nawab to placate him, while suggesting to Madras in early 1685 that the factories at Patna and Dacca should be abandoned, and even urged evacuating the entire establishment to Balasore and withdrawing from Bengal altogether.<sup>68</sup> Beard believed that the Company's place within Bengal's political order was one of a local merchant whose legitimacy and right to trade depended solely on Mughal concessions.

Beard's submissive policy was thoroughly opposed by Charnock and other prominent members of the network, including Charles Eyre at Dacca, whose private interests were considerably damaged by the ongoing crisis. Charnock and Eyre criticised the chief's management of the crisis in a stream of private letters sent to Sir Josiah Child, chairman of the court of directors.<sup>69</sup> In mid-1685, as the situation in the besieged settlements became desperate, Beard was ready to admit total defeat and allow the loss of all of the Company's servants, goods and property in Bengal, rather than responding 'in a Hostile way [which] cannot be done without fighting and killing...which will make an Irreparable breach, and be proclaimed an Open Warr'.<sup>70</sup> While decrying this course of action in letters to East India House, Charnock wrote of the need to make a show of force against the nawab of Bengal which would lead to a negotiated peace, one that could very well procure a treaty for greater political and

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<sup>66</sup> Om Prakash, 'Trade and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Bengal', in Seema Alavi, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in India* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 140-141.

<sup>67</sup> RFSG, *LTFSG*, Hugli to Madras, Hugli, 5 January 1685, p. 39.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-37.

<sup>69</sup> See *WH Diary*, vol. 2, p. lxxiii; Keay, *Honourable Company*, p. 161.

<sup>70</sup> RFSG, *LTFSG*, Hugli to Madras, Hugli, 15 June 1685, pp. 138-148.

territorial rights for servants in Bengal and thus allow them to operate independent of regional Asian states, much like they did at Bombay, Madras and Bencoolen.<sup>71</sup>

To East India House, Charnock described the ‘grand designe’ of making the Company a territorial power in Bengal. In response, the court of directors admonished Chief Beard’s policy of submission, observing ‘how sheepish you are in submitting to such unreasonable affronts’.<sup>72</sup> They informed him of ‘Mr Charnock[s] wisely observed’ policy to create a ‘breach’ with the Mughals in order to ‘resettle’ Bengal on better terms, namely through the expansion of its political authority.<sup>73</sup> It would be wrong to attribute this policy solely to Charnock and members of his network alone, however, although they were certainly its chief driving force. In fact, the majority of Company servants in Bengal at the time opposed continued submission to the nawab, especially in the wake of Hedges’ humiliating treatment at the hands of the governor of Hugli. The support of Charnock’s network and his influence over a powerful faction of Company servants within Bengal ensured that, once Beard died two months later, the council at Hugli immediately wrote to Charnock, urging him to make his way there and assume the office of chief of Bengal. Fortunately, as Charnock did so in early 1686, ships arrived from Europe with several companies of English troops. With these, Charnock lifted the siege of the Company’s factory at Hugli and then sacked the Mughal town itself. The new chief of Bengal then set about implementing ‘the grand designe’ for acquiring a fortified and independent Company settlement, moving downriver to select the site of this new colonial stronghold.

The way in which the ‘grand designe’ was to be pursued attracted considerable opposition from East India House. Charnock’s strategy consisted of a short, contained and largely token military campaign against the nawab of Bengal in order to gain a

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<sup>71</sup> See *WH Diary*, vol. 2, p. lxxiii.

<sup>72</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/90, Court of Directors to Hugli, London, 12 August 1685.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

negotiated settlement that would result in the acquisition of territory for a new settlement. However, fully converted by a stream of persuasive letters from members of the Charnock family, Sir Josiah Child hoped to achieve even more than this. He succeeded in pressuring the court of directors to agree for the need to challenge the existing political order in Bengal, but he believed that this should be done through an extended campaign which would form part of a wider assault on the Mughal Empire and include the capture of Chittagong and even Dacca itself, the nawab's capital in Bengal.<sup>74</sup> Thus when Charnock opened up negotiations after he defeated a small Mughal army at Hijili and sacked both Hugli and Balasore in 1687, the court of directors wrote to admonish him for not using his resources to make 'all possible reprisals you can' and ordered him to drive inland and take Dacca.<sup>75</sup>

Charnock, primarily concerned with protecting the family's interests, discarded the court's policy and continued to negotiate with the nawab. In response, the directors wrote again the following year to notify him that they 'do rationally conclude against the opinion of our Agent Charnock'.<sup>76</sup> When the negotiations failed to produce results, the directors were scathing in their assessment. They declared themselves 'grieved to see how you trifled away time upon frivolous pretences', a policy which had led to the 'irreparable dishonour of our Nation, and the ruin of our Trade in Bengall.'<sup>77</sup> It was their conclusion that Charnock was simply 'disobeying or neglecting our orders.'<sup>78</sup> In 1689 the directors sent Captain William Heath to Bengal to enforce metropolitan oversight of the war by providing him with powers to overrule Charnock and capture Chittagong. However, the agent and his faction first opposed, then ignored and eventually isolated Heath altogether. Finding that he could do very little without

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<sup>74</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/91, Court of Directors to Bengal, London, 27 August 1688.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1687.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 27 August 1688.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Charnock's support, Heath gave up before the end of the year and sailed to Madras in frustration.<sup>79</sup> Charnock successfully strangled any metropolitan intrusion into the Company's affairs in Bengal, freeing himself up to determine the development of the future Bengal presidency.

Initially, Heath had derailed the negotiations with the nawab by attempting to attack Chittagong, thereby forcing Charnock and the remainder of the Bengal establishment to temporarily retreat to Madras. But in 1690 Charnock returned to Bengal, and selected the small village of Sutanati on the bend of the Hugli as the site over which he would attempt to make the Company a sovereign ruler. Sutanati, the future site of Calcutta, was hazardous to the health, strategically vulnerable and just as inaccessible to shipping from the Bay as the rest of the Company's settlements in Bengal had been. Knowing this, East India House urged Charnock to move elsewhere, but he favoured the location for being distant enough from the main Mughal centres of power to acquire autonomy and avoid interference, but remaining in close proximity to Bengal's main trading routes.<sup>80</sup> Writing to Madras of Charnock's refusal to adhere to their war strategy, the directors explained that, 'since he likes Chuttnauttee [Sutanati] so well', they had conceded to allow him to establish a factory there.<sup>81</sup> Thus, instead of attempting to capture Dacca, Charnock settled down at the future Calcutta and opened negotiations with the nawab to acquire a *firman* for the possession of Sutanati and, ultimately, for an expansion of the Company's political authority in Bengal.

Settled in Sutanati, Charnock utilised his kinship network in furtherance of his designs to expand the Company's political authority in Bengal. Despite East India House's opposition to Charnock's policies after he returned to Bengal in 1690, the unsettled and fluid situation nonetheless forced them to grant him unprecedented

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<sup>79</sup> Keay, *Honourable Company*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>80</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/91, Council of Bengal to Court of Directors, Fort St George, 30 September 1689.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 15 February 1689.

‘Power and Authority that he may with or without the Advice or Consent of his Council, place or displace any of his Council of Bengall, or any of our Servants there, at his Discretion’.<sup>82</sup> With his new powers, Charnock promoted a number of family members to key positions within Bengal, the most important of these being his son-in-law Charles Eyre, who was appointed the new chief of Dacca. In this capacity, Eyre conducted negotiations with the nawab to concede to the Company’s possession of Calcutta.<sup>83</sup> At Dacca, Eyre zealously furthered his father-in-law’s ‘grand design’, requesting an imperial grant for the possession of Sutanati. He informed Charnock of the nawab’s ‘great courtesy’ as well as his ‘passionate desire for our [permanent] return and settlement’ in Bengal.<sup>84</sup> In 1693, Eyre succeeded in gaining new trading rights for the Company in Bengal, allowing their goods to once again be custom free.<sup>85</sup> Although an imperial *firman* for Sutanati remained elusive, Eyre remained at Dacca to support the family’s interests by pursuing the grant. Indeed, when Charnock died later that year, Eyre succeeded him as chief, despite the opposition of East India House who sought to appoint someone else.<sup>86</sup> The network’s monopoly of the political establishment in Bengal by the 1690s, however, ensured his continuance in that post.

Eyre continued to pursue the expansion of the Company’s political authority in Bengal, particularly by consolidating the network’s control of Calcutta’s council. For example, Catherine Charnock’s husband, Jonathan White, was promoted to the Calcutta council.<sup>87</sup> Over the next few years, Eyre also appointed his own son-in-law, John Russell, to the council. The intimacy of the Charnock kinship network at this time is

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<sup>82</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/92, Instructions to Sir John Goldsborough as Commissary General of India, London, 29 February 1692.

<sup>83</sup> Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 117.

<sup>84</sup> Cited in *WH Diary*, vol. 2, p. cvii.

<sup>85</sup> Madras to Court of Directors, Fort St. George, 20 November 1691, in C. R. Wilson, *Old Fort William in Bengal: a selection of official documents dealing with its history* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), vol. 1, p. 10 (hereafter Wilson, *OFW*).

<sup>86</sup> See *WH Diary*, vol. 2, p. cxxxii.

<sup>87</sup> See Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 92, pp. 332-3.

demonstrated in the will of Jonathan White in 1704, in which many of the network's members featured prominently.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the symbiotic relationship between familial intimacy and the formation of political policy in Bengal was revealed in White's will, where he asked to be interred in the Charnock family mausoleum which Eyre built ostentatiously in the centre of the protean town of Calcutta.<sup>89</sup> At the heart of the council's policy was the completion of the family's vision by finally gaining recognition of the Company's possession of Calcutta and in making it a secure base for the network's private interests. They succeeded on both accounts. Under Eyre, the insignificant villages on the banks of the Hugli would be transformed into the city of Calcutta: a colonial stronghold from which the Company would establish its rule over much of Bengal over the proceeding century.<sup>90</sup>

When Charnock died in 1693, the nawab of Bengal continued to withhold the *firman* legitimising the transfer of political control over Sutanati to the Company. Thus the pursuit of a *firman* for the town became the foremost concern of Eyre's chieftainship. In 1694, the court of directors ordered him to establish a court of judicature in the new settlement.<sup>91</sup> But Eyre replied that until a *firman* was obtained from the nawab, the foundation of a legal framework for the Company in Bengal would not in itself be legal or legitimate.<sup>92</sup> As the governor of Madras noted that without the *firman*, those at Calcutta could 'neither Settle, build or trade upon any Sollid foundation or Security'.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, Eyre did proceed to establish a stream of revenue by taxing the small Asian population of Sutanati, but refused to take any further action 'till wee

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 350-352.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., Last Will and Testament of Jonathan White, Calcutta, 14 November 1704, pp. 349-51.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Travers, 'Death and the Nabob: Imperialism and Commemoration in Eighteenth-Century India', *Past and Present*, vol. 196, no. 1 (2007), p. 90.

<sup>91</sup> John Bruce, *Annals of the Honorable East-India Company, from their establishment by the charter of Queen Elizabeth, 1600, to the union of the London and English East-India Companies, 1707-8* (London, 1810, 3 vols.), vol. 3, p. 144.

<sup>92</sup> Wilson, *OFW*, Bengal to Court of Directors, Calcutta, 14 December 1694, vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., Madras to Court of Directors, Fort St. George, 25 May 1691, vol. 1, p. 8.

can procure a Grant for our firm Settlement.’<sup>94</sup> Both Madras and East India House had argued against the occupation of Sutanati, but by 1695 the court of directors wrote that, as their servants ‘are in a great measure already settled’ there, then they had no choice but to designate it as the official seat of the Bengal establishment.<sup>95</sup>

In the following year, an opportunity to finally acquire a *firman* presented itself when a local *zamindar*<sup>96</sup> rebelled against his suzerain, the nawab of Bengal, and captured Hugli.<sup>97</sup> With the council firmly under his control, Eyre was able to exploit the confusion of the situation to fortify the Company’s settlement, justifying it as an act of self-defence against the rebel raja. Both the Dutch and French Companies followed suit, raising fortifications at their towns of Chinsura and Chandanagore respectively.<sup>98</sup> In fortifying Sutanati, the first European defensive works to be built in Bengal, Eyre had carved out a de facto sovereign authority for the Company in Bengal, physically separating the settlement from the surrounding Mughal province. He then diffused this potentially controversial measure by providing timely military assistance to the nawab against the rebels. Eyre raised additional units of native troops and, in late 1696, ordered several ships to block the rebel advance across the Hugli, which forced them to halt their invasion of eastern Bengal.<sup>99</sup> In assisting the nawab, Eyre ensured that the Company’s new fortifications avoided demolition, while also receiving a letter of thanks from the nawab himself for the Company’s part in ending the rebellion.<sup>100</sup> As a sign both of respect and of its growing importance, the governor of Hugli visited Sutanati in early 1697 to meet with Eyre.<sup>101</sup> The latter followed up these positive

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/92, Court of Directors to Bengal, London, 6 March 1695.

<sup>96</sup> See below.

<sup>97</sup> Charles Stewart, *The History of Bengal: from the first Mohammedan Invasion until the Virtual Conquest of that Country by the English A.D. 1757* (London, 1813, repr. Cambridge, 2013), p. 328.

<sup>98</sup> Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 147.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 148-150.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., Madras to Court of Directors, Fort St. George, 30 September 1696, vol. 1, pp. 19-20.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., Consultation, Calcutta, 15 April 1697, vol. 1, pp. 22-23.

developments by once again applying for an imperial *firman* recognising the Company's rule, not just over Sutanati, but of the neighbouring villages of Govindpur and Kalikata. In April 1698, the negotiations with the new nawab, the Mughal Prince Azim-us-Shan, finally produced the hoped for result, and the three villages were conceded to the Company.<sup>102</sup> Servants at Bengal quickly referred to these collectively as Calcutta.

The nature of the *firman* is itself revealing of the way in which private agency directly determined the foundations of the emerging colonial state in Asia. The grant came in the form of a *zamindar*, a Persian term meaning 'landowner'.<sup>103</sup> Bengal, as in many other Mughal provinces, consisted of thousands of *zamindar* of differing size, influence and power, from those who governed several square miles of territory to those who ruled over vast regions of the province. The *zamindari* at once granted a proprietary right to rule the land as sovereign, at the same time as being a political office with duties and privileges.<sup>104</sup> However, it was also an intensely personal office, one that was conferred on individuals, not groups, corporations or cities. Thus once the *firman* had been issued, it was Charles Eyre himself who was invested by Nawab Azim-us-Shan with the *zamindari* of Sutanati, Govindpur and Kalikata on the banks of the Hugli. And as *zamindar*, Eyre personally exercised sovereign rule over the territory, in which, amongst other things, he was to 'collect the rents and keep the three native towns in order'.<sup>105</sup> The Company's political and sovereign authority in Bengal was thus embodied in its individual servants. This, however, was in direct opposition to the

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Sutanati, 14 April 1698, vol. 1, p. 37.

<sup>103</sup> For the complicated and historically-debated definition of the *zamindar*, see Marshall, *Bengal: the British Bridgehead*, pp. 52-60. For an excellent account of their powers and position within Bengal, see Jon E. Wilson, *The Domination of Strangers: Modern Governance in Eastern India, 1780-1835* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 104-132.

<sup>104</sup> Again it must be stated that these definitions have become highly contentious amongst historians, especially in regards to the extent to which the Company was capable of transforming Indian society. See Nicholas B. Dirks, 'From Little King to Landlord: Property, Law and the Gift under the Madras Permanent Settlement', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (April, 1986), pp. 309.

<sup>105</sup> Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 1, p. 162.

orders of East India House, always anxious to retain authority over their servants and thus over the formation of the colonial state. After Eyre informed them of his decision to pursue political rights over the villages, they declared in 1697 that ‘we utterly forbid all Jemmidarring [i.e. acting as the *zamindari*] by any of our Servants or any English whatsoever, it being only the Companey’s prerogative to hire Lands of the Government’.<sup>106</sup> They further warned that they expected ‘Conformity from your Selves and all other English’ in this matter.<sup>107</sup> Despite this, political authority continued to be invested in individual Company servants, and not the Company as a whole. Furthermore, much like their Mughal counterparts, for whom appointment as a *zamindar* was usually through hereditary succession, so the *zamindari* of Calcutta was often held by members of the same kinship network, for instance Eyre’s kinsman Henry Frankland and his son Charles Eyre, who assumed the *zamindar* of Calcutta in 1716 and 1721 respectively.<sup>108</sup>

Under Charnock, Company servants at Calcutta had lived in what was described as ‘a wild unsettled Condition’, in which they built ‘neither fortified houses nor Goedowns, only Tents, Hutts and boats’. Criticising the entire settlement and Charnock’s policies, the governor of Madras concluded that Calcutta was ‘a doubtful foundation wholly depending on the good Nabobs stay and favour...the Kings promise Phyrmaund, being not yet sent them’.<sup>109</sup> However, after Eyre’s accession as *zamindar*, the court of directors wrote to Calcutta to recognise his achievement. ‘Being now possessed of a strong fortification and a large tract of land,’ they observed in 1699, ‘hath inclined us to declare Bengall a Presidency, and we have constituted our Agent (Sir Chas. Eyre) to be our Presidency there and Governor of our fort, etc., which we

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<sup>106</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/92, Court of Directors to Bengal, London, 16 April 1697.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> See *Zamindar Accounts for September 1717*, in Wilson, *Early Annals*, vol. 2, p. 290; Wilson, *OFW*, Consultation, Calcutta, 1 May 1721, vol. 1, p. 111.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Madras to Court of Directors, Fort St. George, 25 May 1691, vol. 1, p. 8.

call ffort William.<sup>110</sup> Calcutta represented a significant and transformative expansion of the Company's political authority in Bengal. When a force under the command of a neighbouring *zamindar* 'came into the Neighbourhood of our Towns' in a threatening manner, Eyre 'sett up the English fflags at the utmost extents of our Libertyes and forbid the [Z]emidars People coming within our Bounds'.<sup>111</sup> The policy of Charnock, Eyre and their kin to expand the Company's political rights in Bengal created a sovereign jurisdiction in which the colonial state could emerge and develop largely free from external interference. Thus in 1701, when the nawab was ordered by the Mughal Emperor to seize all Company servants and goods as a result of European piracy in the Arabian Sea, he could do little against the strength of Calcutta, and after three months the attack was called off and an agreement reached.<sup>112</sup> In light of this, the governor of Bengal informed the directors that Calcutta was finally 'strong enough to Secure Your estates and Servants...in the Kingdome of Bengall'.<sup>113</sup>

Both Charnock, Eyre and their kin who succeeded them as governors of Bengal worked to ensure that their policies for political expansion were legitimate and recognised by the Mughal Empire. Eyre ensured that the Company did not have to depend so arbitrarily on the local political order, but he also made sure that in doing so the Company did not subvert or weaken that very order. His brother-in-law and successor, John Russell, continued this policy during his own governorship. This was acknowledged by the court of directors themselves, after Russell had made several diplomatic gestures to improve relations with various Mughal authorities, including the nawab of Bengal and his overlord in Delhi, the emperor. The court wrote to commend him for being 'always ready to do them [the Mughals] service when in your power'.

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<sup>110</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/93, Court of Directors to Bengal, London, 20 December 1699.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 April 1708.

<sup>112</sup> A. Karim, 'Murshid Quli Khan's Relations with the English East India Company from 1700-1707', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 4, no. 3 (December, 1961), pp. 267-269.

<sup>113</sup> Wilson, *OFW*, Bengal to Court of Directors, Calcutta, 8 January 1702, vol. 1, p. 49.

This, they observed, was the policy of his brother-in-law Charles Eyre, ‘who did his business by good words and good correspondence’ with the Mughal authorities in order to further Calcutta’s interests. If Charnock had acquired Calcutta and Eyre had legitimised its acquisition, it was Russell who cemented its position within Bengal by preserving its independence from surrounding powers.<sup>114</sup> Although military force was often deployed against the Mughal Empire, ultimately all three kinship members had facilitated the formation of the Bengal presidency through diplomatic engagement. The Charnocks, Eyres, Russells and Franklands, each family intimately bound into a wider kinship network, pursued their policies against the often active opposition of East India House. But in the end, it was they, and not the directors, who laid the political foundations of the Company’s Bengal Presidency.<sup>115</sup>

The hereditary nature of service with the English East India Company has often been noted by historians, but always fleetingly and with little analytical consideration – remarkable for its quirkiness but never its political significance. However, as this part of the chapter has demonstrated, the political monopoly established by Company kinship networks in Asia was a transformative dynamic. Chairmen and directors in East India House occupied their positions temporarily, and were thus rarely able to pursue long-term policies. In Asia, on the other hand, families and their wider kinship networks allowed Company servants to form, implement and develop particular colonial policies over an inter-generational period which shaped the political environment around them in a consistent and coordinated manner. Between 1681 and 1728, nine out of the fourteen agents and governors of Bengal came from just three Company families. In fact, from the formation of Job Charnock’s ‘grand design’ in 1684, until the appointment as governor in 1726 of his great-granddaughter’s husband, Henry

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<sup>114</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/97, Court of Directors to Bengal, London, 5 January 1711.

<sup>115</sup> For the argument that Company servants formed colonial policy and not the directors, see Refai, ‘George Oxinden’, p. 581.

Frankland, five members of the kinship network ruled the Bengal establishment and facilitated its emergence from a subordinate agency dependent upon the Mughal political order, to an independent presidency which was the Company's most commercially and politically valuable possession in Asia.<sup>116</sup> As the directors conceded to Charles Eyre in 1699, the *zamindari* of Calcutta had 'in a short time render[ed] the Territory within your late Grant the most flourishing Spott of Ground in Bengall.'<sup>117</sup>

### **Company Kinship Networks and Colonial Governance**

At the same time as one Company kinship network sought to consolidate the foundations of a new political landscape in Bengal, another worked to prevent a more established one at Madras from disintegrating altogether. While the issue of interlopers had largely been resolved in Bengal by the time of Eyre's governorship in 1699 – due in part to the increased powers Company servants now enjoyed there - a renewed threat at Madras emerged in the 1690s as a result of metropolitan challenges to the Company's monopoly. Since the 1680s, the Company's monopoly over the Asian trade had come under increasing legal and constitutional attack, and in 1698 a consortium of merchants and politicians succeeded in creating a rival 'New' Company to participate in the trade.<sup>118</sup> In many respects, this was a product of interlopers in Asia utilising sources of metropolitan authority in competition against the Company. Throughout Asia, contested areas of jurisdiction were formed where both companies competed. But whereas rivalry between the Companies at Bombay and Surat was characterised by conflict and violence, on the Coromandel Coast Company servants used their kinship networks to

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<sup>116</sup> By the 1720s, Bengal provided approximately half of the Company's exports from Asia. See Marshall, 'Trade to Dominion', in Marshall, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 490.

<sup>117</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/93, Court of Directors to Calcutta, London, 20 December 1699.

<sup>118</sup> Henry Horwitz, 'The East India Trade, the Politicians, and the Constitution: 1689-1702', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1978), pp. 1-18.

create cross-corporate connections which transcended spaces of conflict and ultimately tied the 'Old' and 'New' Companies together.<sup>119</sup>

The most senior representatives of the two Companies on the Coast were cousins: Thomas Pitt as the Old Company's governor of Madras and John Pitt as the New Company's consul. When the latter left Europe to take up his appointment as consul, he was part of the Pitt kinship network which, since the 1680s, had included a dozen members and stretched between the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal. Some members of this network had been in the service of the Company, like the consul, but some had not, like the governor who, as related above, had in fact been one of the most successful interlopers of the seventeenth century prior to his appointment at Madras.<sup>120</sup> Kinship ties connected Pitts serving the Company with their illegal kin counterparts operating as interlopers, and a network spread between them across Asia, circulating capital, knowledge and opportunity amongst its members.<sup>121</sup> After Thomas Pitt's marriage to Matthias Vincent's niece in 1678, the family was provided with powerful allies and patrons in the Bengal establishment, which both facilitated greater trade and provided protection for those Pitts acting as interlopers.<sup>122</sup> After his accession as governor of Madras in 1697, Thomas Pitt sought to bring as many kin members into the Company's legitimate fold as possible. One such was his brother-in-law, Thomas Curgenvin, who the new governor appointed as a factor in Bengal.<sup>123</sup>

Thomas Pitt had been the driving force behind the network's expansion in Asia in the later seventeenth century, and the relationship between himself and his cousin John Pitt was an important part of this. As young men in Britain, Thomas found John 'in a deplorable condition', disowned by his uncle George Pitt who 'had Supported him

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<sup>119</sup> For the 'New' and 'Old' Company rivalry, see Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, pp. 143-269.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>121</sup> *WH Diary*, John Pitt to Thomas Pitt, Bengal, 4 February 1685, vol. 3, pp. xci-xcii.

<sup>122</sup> See *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. xxvii.

<sup>123</sup> Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, p. 105.

from his infancy'. Thomas advised his cousin to travel with him to India, where he 'Supply'd him with money for his outset, whereby he appeared handsomely abroad, and from that time Supply'd him in such a manner as I may say without vanity I was, under God, his only Support', as he recalled to a friend after his cousin's death in 1704.<sup>124</sup> As well as acting as John Pitt's main creditor and trading partner, Thomas Pitt was also responsible for his cousin's nomination for the post of chief of Persia.<sup>125</sup> More personally, John Pitt was the godfather of his cousin's son, Robert Pitt, a supercargo on ships trading to China, and also beneficiary of his godfather's will, whilst Thomas Pitt had made him executor of his.<sup>126</sup> Although relations between John Pitt and his cousin were strained by the time of his death, to the extent that wills had been changed and insults traded, their membership of the same kinship network shaped their public relationship and, in turn, shaped the interaction of the two Companies on the Coromandel Coast.

As Consul Pitt's ship neared the Indian Coast, he wrote several letters to inform his cousin Governor Pitt of the situation, invoking kin ties and familial bonds. Having informed him of his appointment as consul and the sensitive matter of his orders to supersede him on the Coast, he wrote of 'the great obligations I have to you and from whose converse I propose myself very great advantage in carrying on my Masters Interest.' The new consul hoped to deal with the transfer of the government of Madras quietly in his cousin's garden beyond the walls of the city 'for I would not injure my kinsman as much as to propose [meeting in] the Fort.' He concluded anxiously that 'I have wrote to my Kinsman the President, but can't tell how he'l relish it before I have his answer...your young Ladys are well'.<sup>127</sup> Although their exchanges were heated once

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<sup>124</sup> WH, *Diary*, Thomas Pitt to Robert Raworth, Fort St. George, 11 January 1704, vol. 3, p. lxxxv.

<sup>125</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/55, Thomas Pitt to John Pitt, Fort St. George, 12 November 1699.

<sup>126</sup> WH, *Diary*, Thomas Pitt to Robert Raworth, Fort St. George, 11 January 1704, vol. 3, p. lxxxv.

<sup>127</sup> BL APAC, IOR/E/3/55, John Pitt to Thomas Pitt, onboard the Degrave, 26 July 1699.

the consul arrived at Madras in 1699, especially as they attempted to force one another to recognise their respective commissions, correspondence was nonetheless couched in familial terms and appealed to the private nature of their connection, always ending 'Your affectionate Kinsman'. Their private correspondence allowed them to transcend corporate loyalties, reinforced through the typical exchange dynamic which maintained kinship networks – in this case a shipment of wine which Consul Pitt had brought out from Europe for his cousin.<sup>128</sup>

When public relations between the two cousins became strained, their inclusion in a wider kinship network which spanned Asia and Europe, maintained a private connection which provided them with a means of navigating the politically sensitive nature of their public differences. After a lengthy letter disparaging the consul's position on the Coromandel Coast, Governor Pitt wrote that he supposed the letter would 'be as tiresome to you to read as 't is to me to write'. He then went on to discuss an exchange of horses between the two and a further gift of ten chests of wine from Persia.<sup>129</sup> Another letter followed this up in which Governor Pitt informed his cousin of his son's appointment as supercargo to China, his own health, and asked about their wider kinship network. 'If your more weighty business will permitt I should be glad to hear what is become of our Relations...Is George Pitt married or about itt?'<sup>130</sup> Their network was constantly drawn upon to connect the divided Companies on the Coromandel Coast. For example, both consul and governor corresponded frequently with the same family members. Both had written individually to their cousin, another John Pitt, at Gravesend, offering his son employment with their respective Companies.<sup>131</sup> While that particular cousin ended up sending his son to serve his name-sake with the New

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., Thomas Pitt to John Pitt, Fort St. George, 28 July 1699.

<sup>129</sup> Cited in Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, p. 155.

<sup>130</sup> BL APAC, IOR/E/3/55, Thomas Pitt to John Pitt, Fort St. George, 12 November 1699.

<sup>131</sup> WH, *Diary*, John Pitt to Thomas Pitt, Gravesend, 8 January 1702, vol. 3, p. lxxi.

Company, the son of another cousin, Edward Ettrick, went out to serve with Governor Pitt at Madras.<sup>132</sup>

The exchange of gifts, information and people between the two supposed rivals, bound as they were into the same kinship network, led to Sir William Norris, the newly arrived ambassador for the New Company, reporting to its directors that Consul Pitt 'acted more for the Old Companey's Interest then ours, and I doubted not had been sufficiently brib'd to doe soe.'<sup>133</sup> In fact, the consul had made such little headway in establishing his jurisdiction and authority over the Coromandel Coast that the New Company was absorbed by its rival in 1702 and John Pitt was given the post as deputy-governor of Fort St. David, becoming his cousin's second-in-command on the Coast.<sup>134</sup> Coincidentally, it was the New Company who originally recognised the need to work through the Pitt kinship network on the Coast to achieve its ends. As the Old Company reported to Governor Pitt, the New Company had sent his cousin to the Coromandel Coast in the expectation that it would 'influence Affairs in their favour.'<sup>135</sup> With their ability to cross public and private boundaries, transcend spaces of jurisdictional conflict and create alternate formats of political dialogue, kinship networks ensured the political and sovereign integrity of the Company at the turn of the eighteenth century.

As well as crossing and binding together contested spaces of Company jurisdiction and authority, kinship networks also counteracted the significant limitations posed by official channels of communication within the Company by utilizing and sharing their own informational networks. Theoretically, the court of directors in Europe sought to increase and maximise their receipt of information by maintaining an efficient bureaucracy through insistence on organised record keeping and ordered

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., Robert Pitt to Thomas Pitt, 21 January 1702, vol. 3, p. lxxii.

<sup>133</sup> Cited in Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, pp. 174-6.

<sup>134</sup> Keay, *The Honourable Company*, p. 215.

<sup>135</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/E/3/93, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 15 December 1698.

correspondence by their servants.<sup>136</sup> In Asia, communication was hierarchically and lineally arranged. The numerous subordinate stations and their agents were at the bottom of the ladder, communicating only through their presidency towns, of which the latter's governors and councils possessed a monopoly over channels of communication to the directors in London. Subordinate stations could not directly cross-communicate with each other, nor with presidency towns to whom they were not subordinate, and most especially not directly with London. Likewise, presidency towns could not directly communicate with stations subordinate to other presidency towns.<sup>137</sup> The rigidity of this system was made worse by the infrequency of communication, which was limited to one annual letter from London to the main presidency towns, replied to by one from each presidency town with the return of the ships, a process that could take up to two years.<sup>138</sup>

The asymmetrical information flow produced by the Company's hierarchical monopolisation of communication served to create a culture of long-term accountability.<sup>139</sup> What it did not serve to create, however, was a comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge of Company affairs, either for governors and their councils in Asia, or for the directors in London.<sup>140</sup> Sir Josiah Child acknowledged these limitations in 1681. Observing the greater control exerted by the Levant Company over its servants and affairs in Turkey, Child pointed out that 'India is at a far greater distance: no certain return of a Letter to be had once in Twelve moneths: and the Princes and Ports there, are at a wider distance one from another, than it is from *England* to *Turkey*'.<sup>141</sup> Thus,

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<sup>136</sup> Ogborn, *Indian Ink*, pp. 67-103.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80 and pp. 92-3.

<sup>138</sup> H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: the East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 154.

<sup>139</sup> For example, see Bhavani Raman, *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India* (London, 2012).

<sup>140</sup> Bowen, *Business of Empire*, p. 151.

<sup>141</sup> Philopatris, *A Treatise*, p. 37.

temporal, spatial and, most importantly, administrative obstacles limited the speed, frequency and accuracy of information flow and placed official authorities at a distinct disadvantage in their decision-making processes, and thus in governing the Company itself.

These limitations had been exposed as early as the 1680s, when Asia was opened up to a swarm of interlopers, trading directly from England in defiance of the Company's monopoly. Before the arrival of the New Company in 1698, the Bay of Bengal had already emerged as a contested space of jurisdiction as European interlopers attempted to carry on a trade with merchants of the Mughal Empire up and down the Coromandel Coast and across Bengal. The ports of Balasore and Hugli in particular had, by the 1690s, become active interloper bases, with potentially ruinous consequences, not just for the Company's trade, but its political authority in Asia. The problem lay in the fact that Company servants stationed at these ports collaborated with, and protected, interlopers in order to profit from their illicit trade. For example, the future governor of Madras, Thomas Pitt, was an active interloper at Hugli who married the daughter of the Company's chief agent there and undertook joint commercial ventures with him.<sup>142</sup> While both East India House and Madras were aware of the problem, they had little idea of the extent of such collaboration, which reached the highest levels in Bengal. Only when the Company's chaplain at Madras, John Evans, suddenly absconded from his duties in 1693 and joined a ship heading to Balasore, was the scale of the conspiracy between interlopers and Company servants revealed, with the governor of Madras summoning his brother-in-law, Richard Trenchfield, to account for his actions.<sup>143</sup>

Before the inclusion of the Scattergoods, as related in the previous chapter, the Trenchfield family had established a kinship network which stretched across the Bay of

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<sup>142</sup> See below.

<sup>143</sup> RFSG *D&CB*, Consultation, Fort St George, 28 June 1693, p. 102.

Bengal. Since 1684 members had been stationed in the Company's main settlements in Bengal, including Dacca, Balasore and Hugli, as well as down the coast at Madras. At Balasore, for example, Richard Trenchfield, John Evans and their cousin Thomas Pointall had engaged in trade with interlopers. Indeed, the Chief of Bengal William Hedges had described Richard at that time as 'a great favorer of ye Interlopers', while his chaplain brother-in-law was reported by Hedges as 'too much in trade and merchandize, for a man of his Coat: being certainly one of ye greatest traders in Hugly.'<sup>144</sup> Evans had absconded from Madras in 1693 to manage the network's trading interests with the interlopers at Balasore when Richard Trenchfield had returned from there with his new Scattergood family. However, when Richard was summoned by the governor to account for his brother-in-law's actions, he made his network's correspondence available for the governor and his council to read.

The correspondence revealed the breadth of collaboration between interlopers and Company servants as well as providing Madras with a detailed account of the situation in the Bay of Bengal and even the wider political and constitutional situation in Europe regarding the Company's monopoly.<sup>145</sup> Governor Nathaniel Higginson admitted to having little knowledge about such developments, and had received 'no advice' from the court of directors as to what measures they should take.<sup>146</sup> The council was surprised to discover that English merchants were 'being sent out by the Kings Parliament to overhall all the affairs of India and make report in England in order to the settlement of a new Company...and have allso struck in with the Countrey [i.e. Mughal] Government to drive a trade separate from and in Competition with the Companys'.<sup>147</sup> By mobilizing the channels of information provided by the correspondence of the

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<sup>144</sup> WH *Diary*, Hugli, 2 July 1684, vol.1, p. 148.

<sup>145</sup> RFSG *D&CB*, Consultation, 8 January 1694, pp. 170-1.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

Trenchfield kinship network, the Company was able to understand the true extent of collaboration between Company servants and interlopers, and confront the challenge to their commerce and authority in Bengal.<sup>148</sup> As Governor Higginson declared in council following these revelations, 'wee doe thinke ourselves obliged to doe all that in us lyes to prevent such a publick mischief', a statement which was followed up with tougher sanctions and policies against the growth of interlopers.<sup>149</sup>

Kinship networks proved adept at facilitating non-linear information flow around the Company by crossing official hierarchies and subverting communication monopolies. 'This short letter only serves to introduce you to my brother Trenchfield', John Scattergood wrote to Sir Robert Nightingale, chairman of the court of directors, from the Chinese port of Canton in 1719. '[He] can inform you fully how all India matters attend on all sides'.<sup>150</sup> At Canton, the Chinese authorities forbade European companies from establishing permanent factories until 1751.<sup>151</sup> Thus in the early eighteenth century, the Company was forced to rely on lengthy relays of information between the supercargoes of ships visiting Canton and the presidency towns to which they returned with their goods who then, eventually, passed information on to the directors in London regarding the Chinese coast.

Elihu Trenchfield's arrival at the Company's headquarters in Leadenhall Street, London, provided the chairman and court of directors with a crucial connection to Canton and the Company's affairs there. As supercargo of the Company's ship *Bonita* trading to Canton, with his uncle Thomas Harris as captain, John Scattergood was able to feed Chairman Nightingale with detailed accounts of the trade and politics of the

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<sup>148</sup> Watson, *Foundation for Empire*, pp. 255-71.

<sup>149</sup> RFSG *D&CB*, Consultation, 8 January 1694, pp. 170-1.

<sup>150</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, John Scattergood to Sir Robert Nightingale, Fort St. George, 29 May 1719.

<sup>151</sup> Leanna Lee-Whitman, 'The Silk Trade: Chinese Silks and the British East India Company', *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1982), p. 22.

Chinese coast through letters carried and received by his brother Elihu.<sup>152</sup> In doing so, Scattergood's kinship network circumvented official hierarchies and monopolies of communication, writing directly to London through his kinship network. That private correspondence reached London quicker and more regularly than the official despatches of the presidency towns was constantly lamented by the directors.<sup>153</sup> The letters sent by John Scattergood and disseminated by his brother, built up a detailed picture of commodity prices, foreign competition and political rivalry at Canton, information which was crucial to the Company's success in this new commerce. 'The China trade now is going to decay by the reason of so many ships coming here', John wrote to his brother, for Sir Robert's benefit, in November 1719, 'which is making everything prodigious dear, especially gold'.<sup>154</sup> The advantages in relying on kinship networks to provide accurate and comprehensive flows of information was argued by John Scattergood himself who informed Chairman Nightingale that his brother was the most suitable provider of information from Asia as he had 'been in all parts and being thoroly acquainted with all persons and affairs'.<sup>155</sup> This stood in stark contrast to the asymmetrical and rigid channels of communication which limited the Company's ability to ascertain relevant information and knowledge of its affairs in Asia.

To some extent, the Pitt, Trenchfield and Scattergood networks facilitated East India House's control over affairs in Asia, whether by integrating servants from rival companies or by creating efficient channels of communication between East India House and its servants. While this might appear to represent the institutionalisation of what had previously been antagonistic and aggressively independent networks, the

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<sup>152</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, 'Covenant between the Company and Messrs. John Scattergood and Thomas Harris Owners of the Ship Bonetta Lycenced by the Company to go to India', London, 29 November 1717.

<sup>153</sup> Bowen, *Business of Empire*, p. 163.

<sup>154</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/3, John Scattergood to Elihu Trenchfield, Canton, November 1719.

<sup>155</sup> BL APAC, MSS Eur C387/2, John Scattergood to Sir Robert Nightingale, Fort St. George, 29 May 1719.

contrary was in fact true. Kinship networks were occasionally willing to facilitate greater central control over Asia as long as it served to benefit the private interests of its members. For example, Thomas Pitt appeared to contemporaries to have utterly reformed from his interloping days when he had physically opposed the authority of the Company in Bengal in conjunction with his cousin, Matthias Vincent. According to one Company servant at Madras when discussing Pitt's loyalty to East India House, the governor was 'very zealous to the Interest he espouses.'<sup>156</sup>

However, after the two rival companies merged to form the United East India Company in 1704, East India House was increasingly dominated by the Heathcote family, whose head, Sir George Heathcote, was chairman of the court of directors. The Heathcotes were determined to remove Governor Pitt from Madras for his part in opposing the New Company, in which they had held substantial shares.<sup>157</sup> Urging Pitt to act in a more submissive manner towards Sir George in 1705, John DuBois, secretary of the Company, warned that 'he and his family have a very large stock...and one brother or other of them will always be of the Managers [of the Company].'<sup>158</sup> When East India House sent out a supervisor to investigate Pitt's private interests, particularly his use of 60,000 Company pagodas in his own trading ventures, they chose Robert Braddyll, one of the governor's greatest enemies.<sup>159</sup> The reason behind this aggressive move against Pitt by the Heathcote family was obvious. As a friend of Pitt's informed him in 1707, 'Sir Gilbert is the Sovereign of the New [United] Company...The snake in the grass is jealous of power.' As a result, the chairman of the directors had become Pitt's 'mortal enemy, and will omit no opportunity to affront you.'<sup>160</sup> As Thomas Pitt's interests came under attack, he responded by abandoning the relationship with East India House

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<sup>156</sup> Cited in WH, *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 46.

<sup>157</sup> Dalton, *Thomas Pitt*, p. 107.

<sup>158</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>160</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

and turned instead to obstructing their designs at Madras. In 1707, for example, Thomas Pitt wrote to the court of directors in an attempt to persuade those of the Old Company to dissolve their union with the New Company.<sup>161</sup> He also dismissed and imprisoned William Frasier from the council, a man handpicked by East India House to eventually replace Pitt at Madras.<sup>162</sup> ‘I think there is not such a Wretch in the world for Mischeife and Compassing Confusion’, Pitt wrote of Frasier to friends in Britain, ‘and this is a Saint of the New Company’s.’<sup>163</sup> Pitt was willing to facilitate East India House’s authority in Asia only so long as his network’s interests had been served. As soon as this beneficial arrangement broke down, the governor was quick to reassert his independence and subvert the public interest of his masters at Madras.

## Conclusion

This chapter has revealed how the agency of Company servants and their wider kinship networks between 1680 and 1730 facilitated the emergence of the colonial state in Asia, a polity that was developed predominantly through private interests. By transcending public and private boundaries, as in the case of the Pitts at Madras, or monopolising political establishments, as the Charnocks did in Bengal, Company servants and their kinship networks created private systems of governance and expanded political rights and authority in Asia. As processes of state formation, they were sometimes unconscious, often incidental and even, in some cases, unintended, as was the case for the Vincents in Bengal. But they could also be coherent, planned and rigidly pursued over long periods of time, as they certainly were at Calcutta. Whether purposeful or not, such agency transformed the political position of the Company in Asia between 1680

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>163</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 333.

and 1730. The result was the formation of a politically amorphous colonial polity, comprised ‘not so much [of] bounded entities, but rather specific juxtapositions of multiple trajectories’.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Alan Lester, 'Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire', *History Compass*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2006), p. 135.

## Chapter Five

### Metropolitan Networks in the Later Eighteenth Century

The battle of Plassey in 1757 and the subsequent conquest of Bengal has fascinated both contemporary and modern historians. They have seen it as a prism through which the Company's engagement with South Asia is to be understood.<sup>1</sup> It has also been represented as the catalyst for private interests in India.<sup>2</sup> Most significantly, it has been seen as the point when the Company transitioned from 'merchant to sovereign'.<sup>3</sup> Even the most recent scholarship continues to use the battle of Plassey as the focal point for the study of the Company's development in Asia.<sup>4</sup> David Armitage summarised this trend when he concluded that the British Empire's 'ascent began with British victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757', from which it continued unabated until after the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> Despite the various analytical contexts of Plassey, a consensus has emerged amongst historians that the conquest of Bengal represented a fundamental shift in the history of the Company in Asia, and the British Empire more widely.<sup>6</sup> However, as this study has so far revealed, much of what historians believe Plassey represents, including the contest between public and private interests, the beginning of imperial expansion and even the formation of the colonial state, had been underway for more than a century. When placed within the context of Company kinship networks, the battle

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<sup>1</sup> See Travers, *Ideology and Empire*.

<sup>2</sup> See Marshall, *East India Fortunes*.

<sup>3</sup> This has been the case for most histories of the Company. But for a recent example, see the collection of essays in Bowen, Lincoln and Rigby, *Worlds of the East India Company*.

<sup>4</sup> For the most recent examples, see James Lees, 'A "Tranquil Spectator": The District Official and the practice of Local Government in Late Eighteenth-Century Bengal', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2010), pp. 1-19; Spencer A. Leonard (2014), "'A Theatre of Disputes": the East India Company Election of 1764 as the Founding of British India', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, DOI: 10.1080/03086534.2014.895134.

<sup>5</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> The obvious exception is Stern, *The Company-State*.

of Plassey and the subsequent conquest of Bengal do not seem to signify as revolutionary a break in the Company's development as has been suggested. It rather appears as a continuity with the longer history of private agency in which Company servants shaped and transformed the political environment in Asia in conjunction with their family networks.

For instance, the successful efforts of Job Charnock and his kinship network in transforming the Bengal establishment from a string of dependent factories into an independent territorial power, as discussed in the previous chapter, provided the political conditions for the subsequent conquest of much of Bengal by the Company from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. After Charnock's acquisition of the village of Sutanati and the assumption by his son-in-law Charles Eyre of the *zamindari* of Calcutta in 1698, a fundamental shift in the political development of the Bengal establishment took place. In the 1680s, the nawab of Bengal and his local governors had squeezed Company servants at their various factories for taxes, loans and bribes, seizing goods, expelling servants and laying siege to factories when opposed. The weakness of the Bengal establishment, as revealed by Agent Hedges' humiliation at the hands of the governor of Hugli in 1683, facilitated such exploitation.<sup>7</sup> But when another governor of Hugli attempted to extort a large sum from the Company at Calcutta twenty years later, the latter declared to the court of directors that they were 'resolved to part with nothing choosing rather to spend your Honours money in powder and Shott then to be always giving to every little Rascall'.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the agency of kinship networks, Company servants at Calcutta were secure in their European fortifications and in their exercise of

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, *OFW*, Bengal to Court of Directors, Calcutta, 15 August 1702, vol. 1, p. 51.

political independence and thus willing to both deploy and project military force against regional Mughal authorities.<sup>9</sup>

The Company's metropolitan authorities at East India House were unable to adequately project their policies in Asia in the face of the political agency of their servants and the networks they established and utilised. Furthermore, as this final chapter in part two argues, the Company's metropolitan authorities were themselves gradually prone to being reshaped by these networks. For example, the role of East India House in acquiring royal charters for expanding the Company's constitutional and legal authority, as discussed in chapter one, is often cited as proof of its ability to determine the political environment of Asia. However, new charters merely reflected or ratified rights and actions already acquired and committed by Company servants and their networks in Asia. The acquisition of a charter from James II in 1686 authorised the Company to wage war and claim territory in its own right, independent of parliamentary or royal oversight. But far from empowering servants in Asia with new military powers, the charter rather sought to legitimise a process already underway. Indeed, Company servants had waged war before 1686, as evidenced by the campaigns of Agent William Hedges and his successor Job Charnock at Bengal against the Mughal authorities.

In fact, Sir Josiah Child pursued the charter in reaction to these campaigns. In 1680, the court of directors, including Child, had declared that they were 'averse to all kinds of war in India', emphasising the 'very great imprudence' to be met with in fighting 'those great and mighty princes which might seem to obstruct our trade and ruin us.'<sup>10</sup> Barely six years later, however, after the failed conflict between Hedges and the governor of Hugli, and during the early stages of Charnock's subsequent war against the nawab of Bengal, Child applied to James II for the charter. Indeed, his policies as

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<sup>9</sup> For the role of European fortresses in imperial expansion, see Geoffrey Parker, *Success is Never Final: Empire, War, and Faith in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2002), pp. 194-218.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Keay, *Honourable Company*, p. 177.

the Company's new chairman were shaped by his correspondence with Charnock, who, then in the midst of sacking and burning the Mughal town of Balasore, advised the chairman that 'peace is best made with the Sword in hand, ffor a Mogull's perfidiousness is too Subtill [subtle] for any other pollicy'.<sup>11</sup> Too weak to implement its own designs in Asia, policy formation in East India House was becoming predominantly reactionary to the actions of its servants and their kinship networks. King James II confirmed this when he declared that the reason for granting the Company the right to wage war and claim territory in 1686 was because he was 'given to understand that many of the Native princes and Gov[e]r[nor]s of India...taking opportunity from ye Divisions, distractions or rebellions, amongst the English, occasioned by the late licentious trading of Interlopers, have of late...besieged their factories invaded their Libertyes [and] endammaged and abused their Chiefs and ffactors'.<sup>12</sup>

Rather than representing the beginning of the colonial state in Asia, or a sudden shift from trade to rule, the conquest of Bengal was actually the process through which Company servants and their kinship networks deconstructed metropolitan authority at East India House and reshaped it according to their own interests. Many historians have argued that the later eighteenth century was the period in which the British state began to intervene and oversee the Company's affairs in Asia, transforming it into a colonial arm of the domestic state.<sup>13</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, the reverse was in fact true. From the 1750s onwards, as their private interests spread across Asia on an unprecedented scale, Company kinship networks intervened in the metropole to secure support and protection for their gains and successes. While thinking about the application of new imperial history methodologies, Catherine Hall has identified that

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<sup>11</sup> WH *Diary*, Job Charnock to Sir Josiah Child, Little Tanna, 10 February 1687, vol. 2, p. lxiv.

<sup>12</sup> BL, APAC, IOR/A/1/40, His Present Majestyes Charter, 12 April 1686.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Huw Bowen, *Revenue and Reform: The Indian Problem in British Politics 1757-1773* (Cambridge, 1991).

this process represented ‘a return to the centre, but now from the margins, a process not of affirmation, but of deconstruction’.<sup>14</sup> This process of counter-colonialism - of political realities in Asia informing and determining the policies and designs of the metropole – was particularly evident in the Clive kinship network’s involvement in the conquest of Bengal from the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Clive Family and the Political Settlement of Bengal**

Much like the foundation of the Bengal Presidency at the turn of the eighteenth century, the subsequent subjugation of the province was driven by the agency of Company servants and their family networks. As deputy-governor of Fort St. David and commander and chief of the Company’s forces in India, Robert Clive and his subordinates, many of whom were also members of his family, sought to capitalise and expand the policies of the Charnocks a generation before. But far from just preserving the Company’s political independence in Bengal, they sought to expand its authority and rights over the entire regions, predominantly by expanding the military capabilities and resources of the Bengal establishment.

However, the scale of the project required the application of force beyond what local resources could offer Company families in Bengal. While the Charnocks created an independent colonial stronghold at Calcutta with no more than 300 troops, the Clives would require several thousand, along with the materiel and capital which would be necessary to maintain such a war machine. Thus, after the battle of Plassey, in which Robert Clive installed a puppet nawab on the throne, the Clive family reshaped the aims of their kinship group which had spread across Asia by 1757. Responding to the needs

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<sup>14</sup> Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (London, 2012), p. xvi.

<sup>15</sup> For this concept in relation to law, see Biko Agozino, *Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason* (London, 2003).

of the Clives, what had been an extensively Asian-wide network became a predominantly metropolitan network, tasked with managing the reception and reaction of East India House to the new conquests carried out by the Robert Clive and his kin. This metropolitan network shaped the court of directors' political response, ensuring that the settlement of the new conquest, one engineered by Robert Clive and, as such, particularly advantageous to the Clive kinship network, would endure through the metropole's continued financial and military assistance. Furthermore, recognising the decentred nature of the metropole itself, the Clive network looked beyond East India House, canvassing and influencing other metropolitan authorities, including parliament, the aristocracy and the Crown.

On the eve of his departure from Calcutta in August 1757, at the head of the Company's army to march on the French settlement of Chandernagore further north up the Hugli, Robert Clive sat down to compose a detailed letter to his father, Richard Clive, in London. 'A Revolution has been effected...scarcely to be paralleled in History', he declared in somewhat dramatic fashion.<sup>16</sup> Robert was speaking, of course, about the infamous battle of Plassey between the Company's forces and those of Siraj-ud-daula, nawab of Bengal. Robert then proceeded in some detail about the campaign and the battle from which the Company emerged victorious, hinting at the vast gifts now bequeathed to him by a grateful Mir Jafar, whom Robert had just installed in Murshidabad as the new nawab: 'If I can get into Parliament I shall be very glad', Robert concluded to his father.<sup>17</sup> A flurry of correspondence to Britain followed, with Robert relaying the campaign and its consequences to various family members, including his cousin Sir Edward Clive, or 'the Judge' to his family. Apologising for not having the

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<sup>16</sup> National Library of Wales (NLW), Clive Papers (CP), CR4/2, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Calcutta, 19 August 1757.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

time to write a longer letter, Robert reassured his cousin that 'My Father will receive a journal of our military proceeds and I have desired him to show it to you.'<sup>18</sup>

Robert Clive described his victory at Plassey to his father as having been achieved 'by means of the Military only'.<sup>19</sup> In doing so, he fashioned a particular representation of events for consumption by the directors at East India House. Indeed, Robert and his Clive relations were proponents of an expansion of political rights for Company servants in Bengal and elsewhere in Asia, a result which could be achieved only through the projection of military force over regional rulers. This policy was partly formed through a common political ambition of Company servants in Asia at that time, as seen in the previous chapter, but also, as a Lieutenant Colonel himself, Robert and his wider kin had much to gain through an expansion of the Company's military resources and capabilities. It was therefore essential that East India House believed that the expansion of the Company's political power in Bengal following the battle of Plassey was due entirely to the Company's army and particularly Robert's strategic brilliance, rather than the extensive negotiations and intrigues between the resident at Murshidabad, William Watts, and disaffected members of the nawab's regime, including Mir Jafar.<sup>20</sup>

The French Wars in the Carnatic since the 1740s had led to a considerable militarisation of the Company's settlements, including the arrival of regiments from the regular British Army as well as the augmentation of the Company's own military establishment.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, whilst the entire Madras Presidency maintained only 350

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<sup>18</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to Sir Edward Clive, Calcutta, 21 August 1757.

<sup>19</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Calcutta, 19 August 1757.

<sup>20</sup> For a contemporary narrative of the complex negotiations between Watts and Mir Jafar, see, William Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal, Anno. Dom. 1757* (London, 1759), pp. 74-99.

<sup>21</sup> J. P Lawford, *Britain's Army in India: From its Origins to the Conquest of Bengal* (London, 1978), p. 172.

European soldiers in 1751,<sup>22</sup> Robert Clive commanded 1,000 Europeans at Plassey a mere six years later.<sup>23</sup> Although this growth was set to continue, especially as the conflict with the French and their Indian allies intensified, new responsibilities following the victory at Plassey required a far greater increase in military resources. At first glance, the treaty signed between Mir Jafar and Robert Clive seemed conservative in its demands: confirmation of Mir Jafar as the new nawab in exchange for recognition of the Company's *firman* rights and the payment of reparations for the Company's war effort.<sup>24</sup> In reality, a considerable expansion of the Company's political and territorial power in Bengal had been achieved, including the acquisition of a much larger *zemindari* south of Calcutta and an alliance with the nawab.<sup>25</sup> The military resources required to uphold this settlement, in manpower alone, proved to be enormous. Robert Clive's main priority following the battle of Plassey was thus to secure the settlement's future, principally through an expansion of the Company's military capabilities.

Much like the battle which had made it possible, Robert Clive described his new settlement of Bengal as a 'revolution'. Although it is unlikely that he thought of it in terms of the beginning of a great empire in Asia, he certainly believed it to have dramatically tipped the balance of power within Bengal in the Company's favour, with a Company-backed nawab providing special rights and privileges to Company servants there.<sup>26</sup> Such an advantageous situation could only survive, believed Robert, if the Company was willing to provide the necessary manpower: 'I persuade myself the importance of your possessions now in Bengal', Robert wrote to the court of directors a

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<sup>22</sup> Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, its Officers and Men* (London, 1986), p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/3/1, Robert Clive to Madras, Calcutta, 2 July 1757.

<sup>24</sup> Marshall, *Bengal: the British Bridgehead*, p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> For all articles of the treaty, see John Malcolm, *The Life of Robert, Lord Clive* (London, 1836, 2 vols.), vol. 1, pp. 268-9.

<sup>26</sup> For example, see his letter to the chairman of the court of directors: BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/1, Robert Clive to Thomas Rous, Madras, 17th April 1765.

month after Plassey, 'will determine you to send out...a large and early supply of troops and good officers.'<sup>27</sup> It was a plea that he made constantly to the directors as he struck out across Bengal in the wake of his victory at Plassey, enforcing the new political settlement with what he viewed to be an insufficient number of men, as when he wrote to convince the Director William Mabbot to send out more officers, 'for be assured there are very few in your service at present.'<sup>28</sup>

The settlement with Mir Jafar and the belief that the new advantages gained for the Company from the 'revolution' could only be maintained with an expansion of the military and its use to protect the Company's interests, was Robert's own policy. As the main instigator and executor of such a policy, Robert's standing within the Company and his reputation at home stood to gain or decline according to its success. Indeed when he wrote to the newly enthroned Mir Jafar in 1757 that 'The fate of the English is twisted with yours like two threads', he was well aware that he had the most to lose should such threads become unravelled.<sup>29</sup> For while the decision to retake the Company's settlement of Calcutta after it had been sacked by Siraj-ud-daula in 1756 was virtually unanimous at Madras and London, the loss of which cost the Company an estimated £2m and sent its stock plummeting,<sup>30</sup> Robert was fully aware that using the force now under his command to enact a regime change by attacking and dethroning the nawab would have exceeded his mandate.<sup>31</sup> Since Robert's victory over Siraj-ud-daula in February 1757 had secured Calcutta and forced the nawab to conclude peace with the Company, he had been placed under intense pressure by Fort St George to return to Madras where the struggle against the French had become acute. 'I make no doubt but the forces are impatiently expected at Madras', Robert wrote to the governor, George

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<sup>27</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/3, Robert Clive to Court of Directors, Murshidabad, 26 July 1757.

<sup>28</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to William Mabbot, Calcutta, 21 August 1757.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (London, 1974), p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> Keay, *Honourable Company*, p. 305.

<sup>31</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/3/1, Robert Clive to Court of Directors, Murshidabad, 6 August 1757.

Pigot, 'It is a very great blow which has detained them - no less than the attack and taking of Chandernagore'.<sup>32</sup> But every new campaign Robert launched in Bengal after the battle of Plassey had to be justified in the face of increasing opposition. Indeed, the biggest threat against the Company was materialising in the south of India, where the French were closing in on Madras and Fort St David. Despite this, Robert claimed to Pigot that the conquest of Chandernagore was 'of more consequence to the Company, in my opinion, than the taking of Pondicherry itself'.<sup>33</sup>

Aware of his critics and their opposition to further expansion in Bengal, Robert announced to the congregation at Mir Jafar's installation ceremony following his victory at Plassey that the Company would now 'attend solely to commerce' which was their 'proper sphere'.<sup>34</sup> He did so in the hope of reassuring not just his audience of anxious Bengalis, but also his peers in India and East India House in London. The cost to the Company of the loss of Calcutta had been put at some £2m, while the Plassey campaign had placed an almost unbearable burden on the Company's treasury.<sup>35</sup> The new chairman, Laurence Sullivan, lamented that £1m in goods and stores were dispatched to India in 1757 alone.<sup>36</sup> Robert's incessant campaigning in the wake of Plassey only confirmed the court of directors' worries that the Company's new obligations in Bengal would drain its finances and absorb all of its military resources. But for Robert, any reduction in the Company's military effort would not only have undermined his 'revolutionary' new political settlement in Bengal, but also his own personal authority and private gains as head of the military establishment. Robert was incessant in conveying just how dependent the new regime would be on force of arms, as he

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<sup>32</sup> Cited in George Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive* (London, 1918, 3 vols.), vol. 1, p. 400.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 154.

<sup>35</sup> George McGilvary, *Guardian of the East India Company: The Life of Laurence Sullivan* (London, 2006), p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

informed his cousin Sir Edward, barely a month after placing the new nawab on his *munsud*, that Mir Jafar 'by his misconduct hath occasioned no less than 3 Rebellions in his Dominions which are now [finally] at an End by our taking the Field'.<sup>37</sup>

Such demands on his army reduced Robert's forces to 500 Europeans and 3,500 Indian *sepoys* at the end of 1757. This was further reduced in the following May after increasing criticism from the council at Calcutta forced Robert to send 2,000 *sepoys* back to garrison the city.<sup>38</sup> Anxious that his dwindling resources might prevent him from securing his settlement of Bengal, Robert wrote to Calcutta that before he returned to Britain he hoped the settlement with the nawab 'will be fulfilled' and that 'such a force arrived from England as may secure to the Company their valuable acquisitions'. These objectives, he concluded, 'are what I have always had much at heart'.<sup>39</sup> Robert's settlement, which consisted of upholding the nawab's authority in Bengal with Company troops while using the revenues of his province to increase the Company's commercial profits and political authority, was referred to by contemporaries as the 'dual system' and acted as the foundation of Robert's policy for India.<sup>40</sup> He believed that his political settlement for Bengal was utterly incapable of surviving without the Company's force of arms, and Mir Jafar's authority was only enforceable 'under the Wings of the English reputation', as he noted to Chairman Sullivan at the end of 1758. 'I am persuaded You will believe I do not want to aggrandize the Company,' his letter concluded, but only a substantial amount of force 'can enable us to secure our present Acquisitions'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to Sir Edward Clive, Calcutta, 21 August 1757.

<sup>38</sup> BL, APAC, G37/15/5, Robert Clive to Roger Drake, Budgerow, 11 May 1758.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 117.

<sup>40</sup> For his commitment to the dual system, see BL, APAC, G37/15/3, Robert Clive to General Carnac, Calcutta, 3 May 1765.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Clive to Laurence Sullivan, Calcutta, 30 December 1758, cited in Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 120.

By detaining the Company's largest army on the sub-continent in Bengal for so long, Robert left the Madras Presidency dangerously exposed to French attack. He was aware of the risk, as he wrote to his cousin, John Walsh, in early 1759. 'There are many in Calcutta who think strongly of my marching to the north with our whole Force at a time when we are fighting for our All at Madrass.'<sup>42</sup> As his attempt to consolidate and expand his own authority in Bengal following Plassey attracted increasing opposition from Company servants in India and criticism from East India House, Robert sought to utilise his kinship network to ensure the survival of his 'dual system' of power, one in which the nawab was to act as the de jure ruler of Bengal while the Company would act as its de facto ruler. By not only representing the Plassey campaign in a positive light, but one that both emphasised the importance of the military and himself as its commander, Robert Clive hoped to gain support for his policies and private gain for himself and family. The metropolitan connections of the Clive kinship network were to gain new significance in shaping the early modern colonial state in Asia.

### **Metropolitan Networks and the Reshaping of Company Policy**

The metropolitan members of the Clive kinship network had been instrumental in promoting the family's wider colonial ambitions long before the battle of Plassey in 1757. Indeed Robert Clive had relied on family and kin in Britain to influence the policies and perceptions of East India House as early as 1751. As Robert converged on the French-controlled settlement of Arcot at the head of a small Company force in southern India in 1751, his father Richard Clive was simultaneously converging on London where he had moved the Clive family to live in a large house in Swithin's Lane. He did so to be closer to the official centres of metropolitan authority: East India House

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<sup>42</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/5, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Mahomed Poor, 14 March 1759.

and Parliament. From the practical proximity of Swithin's Lane, Richard lobbied politicians and other influential groups on his son's behalf.<sup>43</sup> As the most zealous and active member of the metropolitan circuit of the Clive kinship network, Richard took his role so seriously that in a letter from Robert's mother Rebecca, she stated that they moved purposefully close to the post office to receive Robert's correspondence from Asia as quickly as possible.<sup>44</sup> Richard saw every advantage in his son's interpretation of events in India being the first East India House and the political community in London consumed, a view shared by Robert. For example, when actively campaigning and unable to write, Robert made sure that his wife Margaret took over the role, 'to write you all the particulars', as he had informed his father before leaving Madras for Bengal in 1756.<sup>45</sup>

Robert Clive's letters to his father were not just personal correspondences, but were consciously written for a wider audience, being carefully composed to describe a particular representation of events or to emphasise a certain opinion or policy. Richard too reacted appropriately. Upon receiving these letters, journals and correspondence, he personally delivered them to important political figures both within and without East India House. He frequently waited on the chairman of the court of directors or the foreign secretary, recounting his son's campaigns and canvassing support for his policies. This strategy quickly bore fruit, for both father and son. In 1752, Richard disseminated the news and details of his son's victories in the Carnatic against the French-backed nawab, Chanda Saheb, to London society at various dinners and parties. The effectiveness in using the metropolitan circuit of his kinship network to distribute news is evident upon Richard's visit to East India House at the end of 1752. When he arrived to provide the court of directors with an account of Robert's success in the

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<sup>43</sup> Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 74.

<sup>44</sup> BL, APAC, G37/7/14, Rebecca Clive to Robert Clive, London, 16 December 1752.

<sup>45</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur G37/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Fort St. George, 5 October 1756.

Carnatic, Richard discovered that he had taken the directors by complete surprise as they had yet to receive any news themselves through official channels from India.<sup>46</sup> Richard then proceeded to wait on three of the most influential directors, 'to find out if I could what they proposd for you...they are very desirous to do you any Service in their power', as he informed his son immediately after.<sup>47</sup> Having made an intimate acquaintance of one of these directors, Richard urged his son to stay at Madras to await his reward from the Company.

Richard's visit to East India House had the desired effect. Shortly afterwards, the court of directors wrote to the governor of Fort St. David 'of the great regard they had for the merit of Captain Clive, to whose courage and conduct the late turn in our affairs has been mainly due; he may be assured of our having a just sense of his services.'<sup>48</sup> However, Robert had already departed for Europe. When he reached Britain in October 1753, the court presented him with a diamond-encrusted sword worth £500. More importantly, however, they declared their willingness to defer to 'his Opinion on Affairs in those parts' of Asia.<sup>49</sup> When Robert made his case for an expansion of the Company's military establishment in India, the directors appointed him as the new deputy-governor of Fort St. David, the second most important post on the Coromandel Coast, as well as promoting him to Lieutenant Colonel. When he sailed in 1755, Robert was accompanied by a Royal Navy fleet with enough forces to contest the supremacy of southern India with the French.<sup>50</sup> He was also able to appoint a number of his kin to important positions that would provide them with lucrative private gains. For example, Robert 'had made' his cousin George Clive judge advocate of the expedition, responsible for distributing any prize money, from which he could also claim a

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<sup>46</sup> BL, APAC, G37/7/14, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 15 December 1752.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 1, p. 224.

<sup>49</sup> CMD, Court of Directors to Madras, London, 15 February 1754, p. 229.

<sup>50</sup> NLW, CP, CC1/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Bombay, 31 January 1756.

commission.<sup>51</sup> By using his kinship network to disseminate accounts of his exploits in India and gain support for his policies within the metropole, Robert had successfully undermined the official channels of communication by at once being the first to convey knowledge of events there, and, more importantly, doing so in a way favourable to his own, and his family's, advancement.

Robert Clive continued to depend on his metropolitan kinship network to further the interests of the family in Asia. When the expedition which he commanded arrived at Bombay in 1755, it was decided that the pirate base of Gheria which had, for many decades, preyed on the Company's shipping at Bombay, would be attacked. Robert was aware that such a campaign would enhance his own reputation in Britain. He relayed to his father in the following January that 'The Strength we carry against [Gheria] by Sea & land gives us hope of Success; the news of which may serve to make a Paragraph in the news Papers'.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately for Robert, as he soon discovered, Gheria's disposition made it almost unassailable from land, which meant that Admiral Watson, commander of the fleet which Robert had sailed to Asia with, was more likely to capture the pirate-base. After two days of bombardment by Watson's fleet, Gheria in fact capitulated. Robert was then quick to play down the victory, writing to his father, for transmission to the directors, that news of Watson's victory might now 'swell' the papers with a 'Pompous account of the taking of the place' which, he concluded, actually 'proved a very easy conquest'.<sup>53</sup> Having belittled Watson's achievement, Robert nonetheless sent a journal to the directors detailing his own role in the expedition, which included an account of his marching the army inland to block an advancing Maratha force from acquiring a share of the spoils.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> NLW, CP, CC1/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Gheria Fort, 9 March 1756.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Perhaps the most ambitious use of his metropolitan kinship network before his victory at Plassey in 1757, however, came when Robert landed in Bengal earlier in the year to retake the Company's settlement of Calcutta, which had been captured by Nawab Siraj-au-Daula in 1756. When he accomplished this with relative ease, Robert seized the opportunity to attack the nawab's entrenched army not far from Calcutta, which was quickly driven off. He recounted the military action in considerable detail in a letter to his father Richard and informed him that his victory had most likely saved the Company, and as such it was now 'a proper time to push my interest'.<sup>55</sup> Robert informed his father that he wished to be appointed 'Governor General' of all Company settlements in India, and tasked Richard with the responsibility of realising this ambition. 'I would have you manage this affair', he wrote to his father. 'I shall send you a journal of our military proceedings, and I enclose you the letters to Great Men under flying seals for your perusal and for your delivery.'<sup>56</sup> Robert enclosed more copies of his military journal for Richard to present to various politicians, including the secretary of state, Henry Fox, and Lord Barrington, secretary at war.<sup>57</sup>

Although within a few months Robert's actions at Calcutta were to be eclipsed by his victory at Plassey, Richard nonetheless fervently set about the task of canvassing support for his son's appointment as governor-general of India. He visited directors, shareholders, ministers and peers, delivering Robert's journals and letters, discussing his victories and generally seeking support for his policies amongst the metropole's political elite. 'I took care to let the Great men have your Letters', Richard replied to his son. 'Every body I meet say why is not the Colonel sent for home that we may have success in England which were to be wished for indeed'.<sup>58</sup> Meetings with, amongst

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., camp near Chandernagore, 16 April 1757.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G34/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 9 November 1757.

others, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Hardwicke, Henry Fox and Lord Barrington led to the beginning of important political alliances for Robert Clive, each of whom furnished Richard with letters for his son of congratulations and expressions of support for his victories and subsequent designs for the Company in Bengal. As Richard noted, they 'desire their willingness to serve you and [do] anything in their Power'.<sup>59</sup>

The importance of the metropolitan ties of the Clive kinship network reached new levels of significance following Robert's victory at the battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757, in which he defeated the nawab of Bengal and placed his own candidate on the throne. When news of Plassey arrived in Britain in late 1757 and early 1758, Richard redoubled his efforts in promoting his son's achievements and in furthering the family's interests at East India House and in Parliament. He did so specifically with the aim of increasing the Company's military establishment, the result of which would protect Robert's new settlement in Bengal and thus the substantial gains made by many members of the network who had travelled with him. Richard's tireless efforts soon earned the notice of societal gossip Horace Walpole who, observing Richard bustling between the anterooms of the rich and powerful, presenting letters and journals from his son, nicknamed him the 'old rustic' on account of its seeming absurdity.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, despite building a strong political relationship with the Duke of Devonshire on Robert's behalf, Richard's constant canvassing of his son's achievements led to the Duke's friend, Lord Kinnoull, writing to him of Richard in 1758 that 'I believe he is an honest, hearty friend to you; but really the extraordinary success of his family seems almost to have

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 21 November 1757.

<sup>60</sup> Horace Walpole to the Earl of Hertford, London, 29 December 1763, in Walpole, H. *The Letters of Horace Walpole* (London, 1877), p. 148.

overset his mind. It appeared so to people at Buxton this summer where he passed two or three days.<sup>61</sup>

Robert was himself conscious of the need for the metropolitan members of his kinship network to operate more subtly in pursuit of his ambitions and policies. For example, several months before Plassey, in the same letter to his father in which Robert had announced his desire to be made governor-general of India, he also cautioned his father Richard to manage the design 'with great prudence and discretion', requesting that he not mention the title 'Governor General' outright unless someone brought it up first, while also urging him to keep the very contents of the letter a secret.<sup>62</sup> After the victory at Plassey, however, Robert worried that 'this good news may set my Father upon exerting himself too much' and would thus cause him to pay too many visits to East India House and Whitehall. 'I know my Fathers Disposition leads this way,' he wrote to a friend from Calcutta, 'which proceeds from his affection for me.'<sup>63</sup> He therefore wrote again to Richard and urged him to consult his cousins, Sir Edward Clive and William Smyth King, the latter having recently returned from the Company's service at Madras, on how best to further his interests and policies.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, Richard did not operate in isolation in the metropole. Robert was able to draw upon the most competent and influential members of the network in Britain to assist his father, maintaining a regular correspondence with each in which he disseminated news of events in India and his own part in them. Robert then urged them to work closely with his father on how best to proceed and gain the maximum advantage for the Clive family from such developments. This is best illustrated on the topic of the post of governor-general, so coveted for a time by Robert. William believed

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<sup>61</sup> Cited in Lewis Namier, and John Brooke, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754-1790* (London, 1964, 3 vols.), vol. 1, p. 224.

<sup>62</sup> NLW, CP, CC1/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, camp near Chandernagore, 16 April 1757.

<sup>63</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to William Belchier, Calcutta, 21 August 1757.

<sup>64</sup> NLW, CP, CC1/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, camp near Chandernagore, 16 April 1757.

Robert's father was beginning to push the subject too far with various directors, and when he began negotiating with one shareholder to put forward a motion in court to have Robert made governor-general, William wrote to Robert to suggest that the whole plan should be dropped as it was only serving to antagonise people.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, regular gatherings brought metropolitan members of the network together to discuss such decisions, plans, and strategies, for example after Richard had dined with Sir Edward Clive and William Smyth King in May 1757, he then paid a visit to East India House to wait upon the directors.<sup>66</sup> Again in November 1759, Robert's cousins Henry Clive and William Smyth King, and his brother-in-law Edmund Maskelyne, dined at Sir Edward Clive's house, at which they drank Robert's health and discussed his 'Success against the Moguls son', the Shahzadah, who was repeatedly invading the Bengal frontier province of Bihar.<sup>67</sup>

Sir Edward Clive was perhaps the most influential of the metropolitan network before Robert's success in India in the 1750s. Sir Edward had been called to the bar in 1725 and stood for the borough of Mitchell in parliament from 1741 until he was appointed to the bench in 1745 where, as a friend and ally of Lord Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor, he was made a Baron of the Exchequer.<sup>68</sup> From this position of influence, Sir Edward provided Robert and his family with connections to powerful metropolitan figures. 'Sister Judith hath been with the Judge and his Lady', Richard commented to his son in 1756, '& bring her so much into the Company of Great Folks'.<sup>69</sup> Through the good offices of Hardwicke, Robert was provided with an avenue to some of the metropole's most powerful politicians, such as Lord Sandwich, leader of the House of Lords and a man consummately interested in the affairs of India and the Company.

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<sup>65</sup> Malcolm, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 159.

<sup>66</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 4 May 1757.

<sup>67</sup> NLW, CP, CR12/1, Henry Clive to Robert Clive, London, 1 December 1759.

<sup>68</sup> J. H. Baker, 'Clive, Sir Edward (1704-1771)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>69</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 22 December 1756.

Sandwich was only too happy to put Robert forward for the borough of Mitchell, which lay within his interest, after Sir Edward lobbied on Robert's behalf when the latter returned to Britain after his celebratory campaigns in the Carnatic, to which he was duly elected in 1754.<sup>70</sup> When Robert informed his cousin 'of the Grand Revolution affected in this part of the world by the Forces under my Command' shortly after the battle of Plassey in 1757, his intended audience was his political allies, including Lord Sandwich and Henry Fox, the latter of which Robert Clive considered to be the patron of the East India Company, and to whom he asked his father to visit and present a copy of his military journal.<sup>71</sup> 'I have seen your Father', Fox wrote to Robert soon after Richard's visit in which he conveyed the news of Plassey, '& He is to tell me when it may be proper for me to [write]...He thinks nothing more necessary than that I assure you, as I most sincerely do, of the high Esteem & very great Regard, with which I have [for you]'.<sup>72</sup> Through the combined and coordinated efforts of metropolitan members of the Clive kinship network, Robert Clive was provided with important channels and connections to some of the country's most powerful men: 'I have now access to L[or]d Hardwick...whenever I wait on [him]', Richard told his son in 1757, who, along with other prominent politicians, now had 'the most Sincere friendship for you'.<sup>73</sup>

Expressions of friendship were not enough to realise Robert's ambition to become governor-general after his cousin William Smyth King suggested abandoning it. However, the careful cultivation of both political and public support for Robert during and immediately after the Plassey campaign by his family network nonetheless considerably shaped his image as a great military hero during these years. This consequence ensured the predominance of Robert's 'dual system' of government in

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<sup>70</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/3/1, Robert Clive to Edmund Maskelyne, London, 3 March 1754.

<sup>71</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to Sir Edward Clive, Calcutta, 21 August 1757.

<sup>72</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/7/16, Henry Fox to Robert Clive, London, 20 November 1757.

<sup>73</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 6 December 1757.

Bengal and its adoption by the Company's directors. Delivering Robert's first-hand accounts of his battles and campaigns in India to certain cabinet ministers helped shape the notion of India as a military theatre of importance in the Government's mind as global war with France occupied the country's attention and resources. For example, after forming a coalition with the Duke of Newcastle, William Pitt spoke at length in Parliament of India, where 'There he was pleased to say was a Heaven born General who...[was] not afraid to attack a very numerous army with a handful of Soldiers'. Richard wrote to his son that Pitt had given him 'the highest character such as I have not words to express...I have since left your journal [and] a Letter I copied from several of yours...for his inspection'.<sup>74</sup> Similarly much had been done to cement Robert's reputation and interests within royal circles as well. As his father reported to Robert in December 1757, when the Commander-in-Chief of the British army had asked the King at court if a particular aristocrat could be sent as a volunteer to the Prussian army to gain valuable military experience, George II replied that 'if he has a mind to learn the art of War let him go to Clive'.<sup>75</sup>

The political capital and popular support which Robert's metropolitan network succeeded in acquiring in the years before and after Plassey, were in turn deployed by its members in support of Robert's interests and policies in Bengal. For example, before Plassey, despite his success in retaking Calcutta, defeating the nawab and expelling the French from their principal settlement at Chandernagore in early 1757, factions existed within East India House which opposed Robert's policies of further expanding the Company's military operations and political interests, refusing to acknowledge his gains and reward him accordingly. At the head of this faction was the chairman, John Payne, who, in a general court of shareholders at East India House, accused Robert of placing

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

his private interests about the public by excessively profiting from the expedition to Gheria. Robert Clive, Payne declared, was indebted to the Company, not the other way round.<sup>76</sup> At this, the Clive kinship network mobilised the political capital they had worked hard to build and called upon the assistance of certain Government ministers, such as Lord Barrington and the Duke of Newcastle, both of whom spoke individually with the directors in favour of Robert Clive to such an extent that the directors complained that they were being virtually dictated to.<sup>77</sup>

In combination with such ministerial intervention, Robert instructed his network to put their support behind the deputy-chairman, Laurence Sullivan, a man who was openly contesting Payne's chairmanship. Though they were to become the bitterest of enemies later, after 1757 both Robert Clive and Laurence Sullivan agreed to the need for a strong military establishment in Bengal to secure the Company's new acquisitions and revenues.<sup>78</sup> 'You will make use of all your Interest & that of your Friends, in support of Mr Sullivan', Robert wrote to his father in 1758.<sup>79</sup> He also urged his cousin William Smyth King to put his support behind Sullivan, 'because I am persuaded his endeavours are used for the good of the service.'<sup>80</sup> Such endeavours included overturning the previous chairman's system of rotational governors for the Bengal Presidency, which as the name suggests rotated the office between four individuals, a system designed by Payne to intentionally exclude Robert Clive.<sup>81</sup> Once elected, however, Sullivan confirmed Robert's support for him by abolishing the rotational system and replacing John Holwell with Robert as governor of Bengal, with Robert's close friend and ally

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 21 November 1757.

<sup>78</sup> McGilvary, *Guardian of the East India Company*, pp. 46-9.

<sup>79</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Calcutta, 29 December 1758.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Clive to William Smyth King, Calcutta, 29 December 1758, in Malcolm, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 116.

<sup>81</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G34/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 23 March 1758.

William Watts as his successor.<sup>82</sup> With his authority reinforced in Bengal and the support of Whitehall and East India House behind him, the Clive kinship network had succeeded in creating a dominant position for Robert within the Company in the wake of his victory at Plassey, a fact which subsequently enabled him to enforce his new political settlement across Bengal. His private interests in Bengal shaped the development of the colonial state there for decades to come.

The metropolitan circuit of the wider Clive kinship network proved significantly effective in supporting the private interests of the family in Asia. This was partly as a result of the significant emotional bonds existing between family members within the network. For example, in a letter to Robert's wife Margaret Clive in 1758, the former's cousin Sarah Clive had described how Richard Clive had 'dined with us yesterday and tried to read one of the Colonel's letters, but his joy made him continuously burst into tears.'<sup>83</sup> However, members of the network stationed within the metropole were also driven by the substantial gains they stood to make from the exploits of their kin in Asia. Of old Shropshire gentry, the Clives owned the rather impoverished estate of Styche which had been in the family for centuries, and by the time it was handed down to Robert's father, produced rents of barely £500 a year. As well as being badly indebted, Styche Hall itself was in a poor state and in desperate need of repair.<sup>84</sup> To service the crippling mortgage on his property, Richard had by the 1750s practised in London at the court of Chancery for almost thirty years.<sup>85</sup> For the Clives in Britain, then, tangible benefits deriving from Robert Clive's interests in Asia were certainly welcome. Robert's growing reputation in Britain presented an opportunity for raising themselves out of pecuniary difficulty and Shropshire obscurity. After repeated visits to the Duke of

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<sup>82</sup> J. Z. Holwell, *India Tracts by John Zephaniah Holwell, Esq. F. R. S. and Friends* (London, 1774), p. 168.

<sup>83</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/25, Sarah Clive to Margaret Clive, 26 December 1758.

<sup>84</sup> Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G34/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 22 December 1756.

Newcastle, for example, Richard told his son that the peer 'promises to do for me and last time I saw him he told me it must be something in my own way'.<sup>86</sup> Shortly thereafter, Richard was appointed to the lucrative office of commissionership of bankrupts in 1756.<sup>87</sup> A more glittering prize came after Plassey, in 1759, when Lord Powis had Richard returned to Parliament for his seat of Montgomery.<sup>88</sup> Access to the great and powerful could bring even more immediate benefits. When a business partner of Richard's died suddenly in 1759, he was left to pay almost £9,000 worth of taxes on a joint-debt. However, after Richard appealed to the Duke of Newcastle, the latter 'postponed the payment to a future date'.<sup>89</sup>

### **John Walsh and the Survival of the 'Dual System' in Bengal**

In making full use of his metropolitan network, Robert Clive was able to deconstruct and then reshape the Company's public interests regarding his expansion of the Bengal establishment. The careful management by his family of his success in the Carnatic from 1751 had forced the court of directors to defer to Robert's opinion 'on Affairs in those parts', a situation which led to a substantial increase in the military capabilities of the Company's settlements with augmentation from the regular armed forces. Similarly, as the new governor of Bengal, Robert again mobilised his kinship network to ensure his political settlement of Bengal was supported by East India House. Though his father and cousins all continued their roles within this network, from 1759 John Walsh emerged as its principal member. As young men in 1743, Robert and Walsh had met at East India House, along with Robert's cousin William Smyth King, where they had gone to be admitted into the Company as writers and to receive their orders to sail for

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<sup>86</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/7/14, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, Stych, 26 September 1755.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> NLW, CP, CR12/1, Henry Clive to Robert Clive, London, 1 December 1759.

<sup>89</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/3, Richard Clive to Robert Clive, London, 29 July 1759.

Madras.<sup>90</sup> During their time in India, Robert and Walsh remained the closest of friends and when Robert married Walsh's cousin Margaret Maskelyne, they also became kin. But whereas on the capture of Madras in 1746 Robert transferred to the military, Walsh remained in civil employ and by 1749 had risen to join the Madras council.<sup>91</sup>

When Robert set sail from Madras to retake Calcutta from the nawab of Bengal in 1756, he was accompanied by a number of family members who would form his inner circle in his campaign in Bengal. Walsh was one of these, whom Robert had appointed to the lucrative offices of secretary and paymaster. Walsh's eventual prominence within the metropolitan circuit of the Clive kinship network arose directly from his involvement in the Plassey campaign, during which Robert immersed him in the intricate complexities of Bengali politics. For example, after the retaking of Calcutta, Walsh was sent to the camp of Nawab Siraj-ud-daula to discuss proposals for a treaty, but was forced to flee in the middle of the night when he learned that the nawab meant to take him prisoner, convinced that he was actually an assassin.<sup>92</sup> After the battle of Plassey, Walsh raced towards the nawab's capital of Murshidabad in order to 'quiet[en] the metropolis' and secure the state treasury.<sup>93</sup> In control of the capital, Walsh acted as its temporary governor and supplied crucial intelligence to Robert. Upon the latter's arrival, Walsh advised him on the political situation and was the architect of the Company's official take-over. In this capacity, he informed Robert that 'It will be necessary for you to make some parade, music, drums and colours...two pieces of cannon would add to the pomp and I am persuaded give no kind of umbrage'.<sup>94</sup> For the noticeable part he had played in placing Mir Jafar on the *musnud* [throne] as the new

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<sup>90</sup> Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> , BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/2, Elizabeth Walsh to Sarah Maskelyne, Fort St. David, 2 November 1749.

<sup>92</sup> Luke Scrafton, *Reflections on the Government of Indostan with a Short Sketch of the History of Bengal, from 1738 to 1756, and an Account of the English Affairs to 1758* (London, 1759), p. 64.

<sup>93</sup> Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal*, p. 114.

<sup>94</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/22, John Walsh to Robert Clive, Murshidabad, 25 June 1757.

nawab of Bengal, Walsh was awarded five lakhs rupees, or approximately £56,000, a considerable fortune in the later eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup> As a chief actor in the conquest of Bengal, as well as one of its chief beneficiaries, Walsh emerged as the senior member of the Clive kinship network in the following years.

Towards the end of 1758, Robert Clive wrote once again to his father to acquaint him in detail of developments in India. In doing so he related his position as dominant, competent and secure, especially in Bengal where there were no French forces 'within 600 miles of us', while his colleagues in Madras were being 'scandalously' incompetent, having been driven out of Fort St. David and being saved from the French only by Robert's own efforts from Calcutta.<sup>96</sup> To Robert, it was clear that the wisdom of his 'revolution' in Bengal now spoke for itself. Again, as usual, he urged his father to transmit news about his situation to influential people in London and to 'make use of all your Interest ' on his behalf. At the end of the letter, however, Robert informed his father that Walsh was returning from Asia and would 'often call upon you...from him you may have all the detail of all our India transactions.'<sup>97</sup> Whether obvious to Richard or not at the time, from the point of Walsh's return in 1759 he would form the centre of the metropolitan network, being the first to receive the most sensitive information from Robert, by whom he was charged with the most important tasks and trusted explicitly with managing Robert's reputation and policies politically, socially and financially.

As more of Robert's kin returned from India in the years following Plassey, including his cousin George Clive and his brothers-in-law Edmund Maskelyne and Thomas Kelsall, his kinship network became increasingly more metropolitan. It was John Walsh who assumed the role as leader of this transformation. Indeed, in 1765, during Robert's third term in India as governor of Bengal, he wrote to Walsh to thank

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<sup>95</sup> Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> NLW, CP, CR4/2, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Calcutta, 29 December 1758.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

him for all his services over the years: 'Our Friendship & Connection have been of so many Years standing, & I have always observed in you so much real Warmth of Heart, and Zeal for my Interest, & Honor, that I think of these marks of your affection in this distant part of the Globe, with great satisfaction.'<sup>98</sup> Robert's father was competent enough to manage his son's interests when he was a Lieutenant Colonel fighting the French in the Carnatic. But as governor of Bengal, Robert needed a member of the network like Walsh, both a veteran of the Plassey campaign and an authority on the Company's affairs in India, to manage the perception and reception of Robert's actions and ensure the support and adoption of his policies in the metropole.

Once Robert was secure as governor and his new ally Sullivan as chairman, Walsh arrived at East India House in late 1758 with strict instructions from Robert to lay his entire Bengal policy before Sullivan, as well as his plans for the long-term establishment of the Company's position in India. Walsh handed the chairman a letter in which Robert introduced to Sullivan the man who had delivered it: 'Mr. John Walsh; his abilities & the knowledge he has acquired by acting in the quality of my Secretary during the Bengal Expedition make him by much the fittest Person to lay before You the whole extent of my designs.'<sup>99</sup> With a concise and ambitious mandate from Robert, Walsh laid out the latter's policies, not just for the political settlement of Bengal in the wake of Plassey, but for the future of the Company in Asia. Walsh explained that henceforth the revenues from the Company's new territorial acquisitions - not bullion exported from Europe - were to underwrite the annual investment in trade. He showed Sullivan copies of accounts he had brought with him from India of the net revenues of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, totalling some £2m annually.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, Walsh explained how the political authority of the Company in India

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<sup>98</sup> NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Calcutta, 30 September 1765.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Clive to Laurence Sullivan, Calcutta, 30 December 1758, in Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 121.

<sup>100</sup> McGilvary, *Guardian of the East India Company*, p. 70.

needed to be further militarised with a larger standing army, and described how Robert believed the costs of this expanded establishment could be met by the Indian princes for whom Robert would provide protection.<sup>101</sup>

Ultimately, Walsh's short-term success was limited. The enormous bill for the Plassey campaign, ongoing expenses with Robert's pacification of Bengal, and the struggle against the French in the Carnatic, prevented Sullivan from fully supporting these ambitious policies. On the contrary, Sullivan ordered Company servants in Asia to confine themselves as much as possible to 'mercantile tracts' without parade or military forces.<sup>102</sup> Time and again Robert Clive's demands for an increase in the Company's European forces in the wake of Plassey fell on reluctant ears, as when he warned the court in December 1758 that the only way to enforce the cooperation of the Indian princes was by 'keeping up such a force as will render it unsafe for them to break with us'.<sup>103</sup> However, Walsh was clearly able to convince Sullivan of the financial aspects of Robert's 'dual system'. Some years later, as Sullivan reflected on the disastrous finances of the Company, he recalled that he had formulated his own policies as chairman 'upon the veracity of his [Clive's] statement of the revenues...which Mr. Walsh brought home, and by Clive's order, delivered to me privately'.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, despite Robert's repeated complaints of not receiving the reinforcements of European troops necessary to uphold his settlement of Bengal, something which arose principally from Sullivan's attempts to limit the Company's military expenditure, nonetheless the chairman went to considerable lengths to raise and pay for the upkeep of a number of royal regiments for

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Clive to Laurence Sullivan, Calcutta, 30 December 1758, in Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, pp. 119-121.

<sup>102</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>103</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> Cited in McGilvary, *Guardian of the East India Company*, p. 70.

the Company's use in Asia, while most of the £8.5m spent on the Company's military effort between 1756 and 1761 was raised under his direction.<sup>105</sup>

Anticipating the short-term challenges Walsh might face in attempting to shape East India House policy along lines determined by himself, Robert also formulated a long-term design that he hoped would secure his hard-won gains in Bengal, gains which were by early 1759 under intense pressure. 'It seems having fought with Nabobs, Rajahs, & Subahs', Robert lamented to Walsh in March, 'we must now try our hand with the Royal Family for the Mogul's eldest Son...was arrived at the banks of the Caramnasser'.<sup>106</sup> The last threat was a full-scale Mughal invasion of Bengal in an attempt to reclaim the province for the Empire. Thus, even as Walsh met privately with Sullivan and spoke about the need for an increase in the fledgling Bengal Presidency's military capabilities, Robert had already composed a letter for Walsh to deliver to the Secretary at War, William Pitt, which he did in November. Appealing to metropolitan authorities outside of East India House to intervene in Company politics was an unprecedented step, but one Robert justified through the directors' reluctance to secure or defend his settlement of Bengal. The letter Walsh laid out in front of Pitt detailed Robert's 'dual system'. In the introduction, Robert wrote that Walsh was 'a thorough master of the subject, and will be able to explain to you the whole design, and the facility with which it may be executed, much more to your satisfaction and with greater perspicuity than can possible be done in a letter'.<sup>107</sup>

Accordingly, Walsh attempted to persuade Pitt of the need to defend Robert's newly acquired territories in India. He did so by offering to transfer the sovereignty of the new colonial conquests from the Company to the British Government, along with the annual revenue of £2m for the cash-strapped Exchequer, in return for 2,000 British

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<sup>105</sup> Marshall, *Making and Unmaking of Empires*, p. 129.

<sup>106</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/5, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Mahomed Poor, 14 March 1759.

<sup>107</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/15/17, Robert Clive to William Pitt, Calcutta, 7 January 1759.

troops to secure Robert's position there. 'I have represented to them [the court of directors] in the strongest terms the expediency of sending out and keeping up constantly such a force', Robert wrote in his letter to Pitt. 'But so large a sovereignty may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile company.'<sup>108</sup> Walsh's part in articulating Robert's designs and policies was considerable, and his subsequent letters to Robert betray the contribution his own knowledge and experience of Indian affairs made to the meeting with Pitt. The meeting itself lasted for an hour and a quarter, during which time Walsh challenged Pitt's sincerity in his positive reception to Robert's policies, speculated about the latter's own intentions as governor, gave his views on the position of the French in the Deccan, discussed the strategy of taking Mauritius, and spoke about his own ideas on the inevitable extension of the Company's territorial dominion in India.<sup>109</sup>

In relaying the meeting back to Robert, Walsh believed that Pitt would not seriously contemplate seizing the Company's territories in India for the Crown. 'As far as I could judge by what passed then', he concluded, 'it will be left to the Company to do what they please.'<sup>110</sup> Nonetheless, Walsh's canvassing of metropolitan authorities outside of East India House had serious long-term consequences. On the one hand, it assisted in reconfiguring Asia's position within Britain's wider imperial concerns, bringing the Indian theatre from the margins to the centre of Britain's war aims, a fact which led to increasing British reinforcements to India. In fact, when the French were finally defeated on the subcontinent at the battle of Wandiwash in 1760, Pitt had committed some £4.5m of military and naval assistance to the Company there.<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, Walsh's appeal for British forces to secure Robert's settlement of Bengal in

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Malcolm, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, p. 127.

<sup>110</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Marshall, *Making and Unmaking of Empires*, p. 128.

return for its transfer to the Crown, led to a gradual process of intervention by the nation-state in the affairs of the Company. This process manifested itself through a series of India Acts which sought to oversee and regulate the Company in Asia, attempting to subject much of its political, commercial, judicial and financial decision-making to Parliamentary control.

Though the results of operating through his metropolitan network during Robert's governorship of Bengal were more nuanced than those achieved during the Plassey campaign and its immediate aftermath, they were nonetheless just as decisive and pervasive in shaping the Company's colonial acquisitions in Bengal. For example, despite his reluctance, Sullivan committed the Company to upholding Robert's political settlement in the years following Plassey and, by his own omission, arranged the Company's future finances according to Robert's new strategy of using Indian revenues to balance the Company's commercial investment. Furthermore, the appeal to metropolitan authorities outside of East India House, such as the British Government, led to an increase in military assistance which ultimately secured Robert's vulnerable territorial and political gains in Bengal, but, perhaps less sought after, also attracted the closer attention of ministers to the Company's affairs, who from that point onwards increasingly scrutinised the behaviour of Company servants in Asia, including that of Robert Clive himself when he was called before the House of Commons in 1772.<sup>112</sup>

Unable to immediately appreciate or benefit from Walsh's efforts, however, Robert returned to Britain on 9 July 1760 to ensure that 'proper measures may be taken at home for the better security of this [Bengal] valuable settlement'.<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, when Robert returned to India in 1765 as governor of Bengal for the second time, Walsh once again proved invaluable within the kinship network, indeed now more than

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<sup>112</sup> See Robert Harvey, *Clive: the Life and Death of a British Emperor* (London, 1998), pp. 355-6.

<sup>113</sup> Cited in Forrest, *Lord Clive*, vol. 2, pp. 169-170.

ever, as Robert sought to reform what was perceived as the rampant corruption of the Bengal establishment. 'To you and you only,' he wrote to Walsh shortly after arriving at Calcutta, 'I shall communicate every transaction of Consequence which has passed since our arrival...I have referred many of my Friends to you for Information, but you will communicate to them what you think proper.'<sup>114</sup>

Over the next three years, as Robert attempted to cleanse the 'Augean Stable', as the court of directors described the control private interests exerted over their new province of Bengal, Walsh was tasked with conveying the success of his efforts once more to influential men at East India House and Westminster.<sup>115</sup> These included George Grenville, the Prime Minister, to whom he presented a copy of an advantageous peace treaty Robert had concluded following victory at the battle of Buxar over the combined forces of the nawabs of Bengal and Awadh and the Mughal Emperor in 1764. Walsh also presented Grenville with a 'Map of Bengal with some Marginal Explanations'.<sup>116</sup> This was followed by a similar visit to the deputy-chairman of the court of directors, Sir George Dudley, from whom Walsh attempted to gain support for Robert's dismissal of William Sumner as his successor as governor of Bengal, in favour of his close friend Henry Verelst.<sup>117</sup> As well as determining his own succession, Robert also tasked Walsh with meddling in the affairs of Madras, where he hoped to have another friend installed as governor. 'If a Successor to Mr Palk [governor of Madras] is not absolutely fixed upon,' Robert wrote to Walsh during a stop at Madras on his journey to Bengal in 1765, 'I beg you will exert your whole Influence with Mr. Rous [the chairman] in favour of Mr. Call...by far the most proper Person in this Settlement to succeed to the

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<sup>114</sup> NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Calcutta, 30 September 1765.

<sup>115</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/1, Richard Clive to Thomas Rous, Madras, 17 April 1765.

<sup>116</sup> , NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Calcutta, 30 September 1765.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Government'.<sup>118</sup> As well as being personal friends, both Verelst and Call also acted as Robert's trustees and business agents in Bengal and Madras respectively, and would thus maintain his private interests even when Robert was absent or had returned to Europe.

As with Richard Clive in previous years, John Walsh was similarly assisted by a number of other metropolitan network members in carrying out his responsibilities. Walsh held regular meetings with Robert's cousins Henry and George Clive and William Smyth King, at which they would discuss, according to Robert's wife Margaret in a letter to her husband, 'what your affairs shall be'.<sup>119</sup> Sir Edward Clive also continued to act as an influential member of the network. Now as Justice of the Common Pleas, 'the Judge' repeatedly expressed his intention to 'lend his assistance to forward your interest', as Margaret commented to Robert, and regularly visited her to obtain the latest news relating to her husband's affairs in India.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, Robert's father Richard kept up his own role within the network. As Margaret noted in a letter to her husband, 'As soon as I received your letter I went to town to tell them [his parents] of it'.<sup>121</sup> Originally the centre of the metropolitan network, Richard was now a second-hand consumer of news relating to his son, usually delivered by either Margaret or one of Robert's cousins. 'Your Father...was here yesterday & read your letters & heard every thing,' Margaret wrote to him in 1765. 'He has received none from you, & fears you have not written to him...it is impossible to conceive his impatient desire of letters from you, nor how your writing, or your silence affects him.'<sup>122</sup>

From Robert's second governorship of Bengal onwards, Richard was increasingly relieved of his responsibilities within the network and moved to its

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<sup>118</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/1, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Madras, 17 April 1765.

<sup>119</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, London, 12 March 1765.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 November 1766.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 January 1767.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 March 1765.

margins. He finally found himself the victim of exclusion when Robert's cousin Thomas Kelsall, one of his trustees in Britain, halted the refurbishment of Styche Hall, the ancestral Clive family home in Shropshire and Richard's main residence. Richard took grave exception to this, and complained that it demonstrated the 'Opinion the Trustees have of Lord Clive's Father that he should never be consulted'.<sup>123</sup> Richard's age - he was seventy one in 1764 - and almost constant afflictions of health, including a severe eye injury, impaired his ability to act efficiently within the network. This fact was keenly felt by his son Robert, who wrote to his father wishing that his constitution would carry him 'to an Age nearly equal to that of your Aunt Judy'.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, Robert's cousin and namesake, Robert Clive, wrote to him in 1765 that his father's afflictions were so serious 'that I doubt there is but little probability of his ever meeting you again in this world'.<sup>125</sup> Richard's decline consolidated Walsh's position as the prominent member of the metropolitan network, one he fulfilled until Robert's death in 1774. 'I pursue my Plan', Robert wrote to Walsh from Calcutta in 1766, 'of making you alone a thorough Master of all our Transactions in these parts, that you may act in my Behalf for the Good of the Company'.<sup>126</sup>

### **The Matriarchy of 45 Berkeley Square**

The agency of Richard Clive and John Walsh within the metropolitan circuit of the Clive kinship network was considerable, meeting with directors, petitioning politicians and attending the king's court in furtherance of the family's wider colonial interests. However, this was not just a circle of influential and patriarchal men. The agency of women and matriarchs within metropolitan networks was similarly significant. Indeed,

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<sup>123</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/3, Richard Clive to Thomas Kelsall, 16 June 1764.

<sup>124</sup> NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, Calcutta, 25 September 1765.

<sup>125</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/4/3, Robert Clive to Robert Clive, Moreton Say, 5 January 1765.

<sup>126</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/5, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Calcutta, 5 February 1766.

the study of family networks throws into relief the prominent role of the less prominent actors within the early modern British Empire. The role of women in the early colonial state, for example, has traditionally been an invisible one. Historians considered European women in Asia before the nineteenth century as marginal or absent actors, predominantly due to their limited numbers.<sup>127</sup> In relation to the Company, women are often portrayed in one-dimensional terms as potential wives for Company servants, and Asia has been cast as a marital space for European women.<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, although a vibrant scholarship on gender colonialism has emerged in the past two decades, British women in Asia in the period before the later eighteenth century have yet to be given serious consideration, nor has their relation to, or impact upon, the Company been adequately explored.<sup>129</sup> This stands in stark contrast to their dynamic and transformative role in others parts of the early modern British Empire, where European women undertook the process of creating cultural constructs that laid the foundations of a gender frontier, stretching from British Columbia to New South Wales.<sup>130</sup> More importantly, with the emergence of a cult of domesticity and sensibility in Britain, European women on the frontiers of empire were sanctified as symbols of civilised society, representing virtue and domesticity.<sup>131</sup> In doing so, they were contrasted with their colonial counterparts, a process which emphasised the degradation

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<sup>127</sup> For example, see Sudipta Sen, *Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India* (London, 2002), pp. 128-9; Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Gender, and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century', in Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004), p. 36; Spear, *The Nabobs*, p. 13.

<sup>128</sup> Theon Wilkinson, *Two Monsoons* (London, 1976), pp. 99-101; Marshall, 'British Society and the East India Company', p. 107.

<sup>129</sup> For gender colonialism, see Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire*; Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (London, 1999). An excellent overview of this historiography can be found in Durba Ghosh, 'Gender and Colonialism: Expansion or Marginalization?', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September, 2004), pp. 737-755.

<sup>130</sup> For example, see Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (North Carolina, 1996).

<sup>131</sup> Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago, 2004), 2. For the emergence of sensibility and domesticity in British society in the eighteenth-century, see: G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992); Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge, 2009); Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, pp. 101-124.

and backwardness of native women, feeding into a discourse of ‘difference’ which helped to reinforce the emerging colonial order.<sup>132</sup>

European women were also able to engage with empire in more direct ways. In the later eighteenth century, Elizabeth Marsh, a British woman who wrote pioneering travel accounts, engaged with trade, piracy, slavery and exploration, and ultimately created a Company family of her own, repeatedly crossed national, cultural, imperial and geographic boundaries, creating and disseminating colonial knowledge.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, in the metropole itself, women directly confronted and contested imperial institutions to shape and transform colonial policy, as had the wives of captured Royal Navy servicemen in the late seventeenth century, when they staged a protest outside of the Navy Office in the hopes of receiving the pay of their husbands languishing in Dutch gaols.<sup>134</sup> It is evident, then, that European women in the later eighteenth century engaged directly and profoundly with processes of empire and colonial state formation. Very frequently, women in Asia in the eighteenth century operated as multiplex actors, in that they engaged with and connected people, places and spaces together ‘through more than one role, position or context’.<sup>135</sup> In doing so, they also facilitated the expansion of their respective kinship networks, both in Asia and within the metropole.

That women assumed such critical roles within their kinship networks, especially in engaging with the Company’s metropolitan authorities, was nowhere more evident than in the Clive metropolitan network. As Robert Clive consolidated his personal hegemony over Bengal in the 1760s, so his wife Margaret Clive

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<sup>132</sup> Catherine Hall, ‘Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century’, in Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire*, p. 53; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 107-110.

<sup>133</sup> Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: How a Remarkable Woman Crossed Seas and Empires to Become Part of World History* (London, 2007).

<sup>134</sup> Margaret Hunt, ‘Women and the Fiscal-Imperial State in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries’, in Wilson, ed., *New Imperial History*, pp. 29-47.

<sup>135</sup> Aslanian, ‘Social Capital’, pp. 385. See also Mark S. Granovetter, ‘The Strength of Weak Ties’, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, no. 6 (1973), pp. 1360-1380.

simultaneously consolidated her own hegemony over their kinship network in the metropole. By constructing a powerful matriarchy, Margaret was able to mobilize her expansive family to support her own engagement with the Company, one in which she sought both to promote the colonial policies of her husband as governor of Bengal, but also to secure advantages for herself and her wider family. That she was able to do so was intimately bound up with the private benefits metropolitan members of Company kinship networks gained from the colonial expansion they precipitated in Asia. Indeed, before the battle of Plassey in 1757, Margaret Clive had been a marginal figure within the Clive kinship network. In fact, it was the opinion of her cousin Sarah Mathisson that Margaret was ruled by her younger cousin Jenny Kelsall.<sup>136</sup> But this dynamic quickly changed following Robert's victory at Plassey in the following year, whereupon the social prestige and material wealth available to Margaret transformed her position within the network, as Robert Clive's cousin Sarah Clive made clear. 'I don't know what title I must give you now', she wrote to Margaret in 1758 after hearing of Plassey, 'but I am sure I may say "To the agreeable Mrs. Clive"...with your bags of money, and bushels of diamonds'.<sup>137</sup> Margaret's elevated position changed the way her kin perceived her, allowing the newly endowed Lady Clive to establish a matriarchy over her expansive yet predominantly impoverished metropolitan kinship network.

As Margaret provided the members of her network with pensions, annuities, gifts, employment and patronage, they in turn became her social and familial subordinates. 'I am providing abundance of fine things for You', Robert Clive wrote to Margaret in 1766, 'indeed the finest Muslins Dimmitys Diappers Long Cloth &c making for the use of our Family'.<sup>138</sup> As a principal recipient of the luxury goods of Asia, Margaret was in turn able to redistribute these goods across the network as gifts,

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<sup>136</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur D546/5, Sarah Mathisson to John Walsh, Bombay, 28 March 1756.

<sup>137</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/25, Sarah Clive to Margaret Clive, 26 December 1758.

<sup>138</sup> BL, APAC, G37/4/1, Robert Clive to Margaret Clive, Calcutta, 31 January 1766.

binding its members to her through the ties of obligation, duty and loyalty.<sup>139</sup> Margaret was also regularly supplied by her husband with a stream of precious stones. Indeed, diamonds were the primary gift of diplomatic exchange in northern India, and thus the governor of Bengal was often a great beneficiary.<sup>140</sup> 'It would amaze you', Robert wrote to Margaret from Benares in 1765, 'to hear what Diamonds Rubies & Gold...have been offered to Lady Clive'.<sup>141</sup> Many of these were duly acquired and sent back to Margaret, who in turn gifted them to her sisters-in-law, cousins and whomever else she chose to favour. For example, in 1765 Margaret received a parcel of rough and smooth topaz and amethyst diamonds from her husband worth £300. Margaret proceeded to have them cut and then set as necklaces, earrings and buckles which she then presented to her husband's 'Sisters & Friends'.<sup>142</sup>

Pecuniary gifts were also an important source of Margaret's matriarchal authority, consolidating her hold over less affluent or socially prestigious network members. Annuities and dowries were generously conferred on them by Margaret, transforming her sisters, cousins and wider kin into clients and dependents.<sup>143</sup> When Margaret originally intended to accompany her husband to India in 1765, the latter settled £200 a year on his cousin, Harry Clive, to assist him in their absence. But when pregnancy forced Margaret to stay behind, she told her husband that 'I do not wish him to be deprived of it' and continued to pay the annual settlement to him.<sup>144</sup> Robert was aware of his wife's generosity, and when he executed a bond Harry had sent him in India, he sent it specifically to Margaret so that she would 'present it with your own

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<sup>139</sup> Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism*, p. 226.

<sup>140</sup> See chapter 3 for Clive's involvement with the diamond trade. Also: NLW, CP, CR2/16, Robert Clive to John Chamier, Calcutta, 23 January 1767.

<sup>141</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur G37/4/1, Robert Clive to Margaret Clive, the Ganges near Benares, 24 August 1765.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, Robert Clive to Margaret Clive, Cape of Good Hope, 2 January 1765.

<sup>143</sup> Amos, *Culture of Giving*, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, London, 12 November 1766.

Hands & receive that [satisfaction] which you always enjoy upon doing a good and generous action'.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Margaret asked her husband to visit and assist her distressed cousin Thomas Kelsall, a writer at Madras. When Robert set him up with £4,000 of trading capital and recommended him to the court of directors for a seat on the Madras council, he allowed Margaret to inform her cousin's family of the good news.<sup>146</sup>

As well as material gifts and pecuniary largesse, Margaret's matriarchy was also exercised and maintained through her powers of patronage. Family members on the metropolitan periphery of the Clive kinship network were particularly prone to petitioning Margaret for favours. Thus in 1765 Margaret's cousin William Cox approached her to request that her husband use his influence with the Bombay council on behalf of his son Robert Cox, a writer at that place.<sup>147</sup> The following year a more distant cousin of Margaret's, Captain Hodgson, asked her to recommend a friend of his, an ensign in the Company's Bengal army, to Robert's favour.<sup>148</sup> More immediate metropolitan family members also applied for Margaret's patronage. Her brother Nevil Maskelyne, for instance, approached Margaret to enlist her help in lobbying for his candidanship as Royal Astronomer, a position he attained partly thanks to Robert Clive's interest with the Prime Minister, George Grenville.<sup>149</sup> Margaret was often perceived as the gateway to her husband's vast resources and favour, but she also commanded her own patronage network. This was recognised by Margaret's brother Edmund Maskelyne, who wished to put forward another one of their Cox cousins, this time as a writer in Bengal: 'in case you should learn...that he is not appointed I am

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<sup>145</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur G37/4/1, Robert Clive to Margaret Clive, the Ganges near Benares, 24 August 1765.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, Robert Clive to Margaret Clive, Calcutta, 29 September 1765.

<sup>147</sup> BL, APAC, G37/7/16, Robert Clive to Henry Strachey, n.d.

<sup>148</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, Westcombe, 2 December 1766.

<sup>149</sup> NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to George Grenville, Calcutta, 30 September 1765.

persuaded your Interest will be sufficient to get it effected', Edmund wrote to his sister in 1764.<sup>150</sup>

Gift-giving and patronage were the cornerstones of Margaret Clive's matriarchy, placing her at the centre of the metropolitan network, alongside the likes of John Walsh. As matriarch, Margaret was able to draw on her wider network in support of her family's private interests in Bengal. This was particularly evident at 45 Berkeley Square, the London residence of the Clives after their return to Britain in 1760 which they leased, and then later purchased for £10,000.<sup>151</sup> Although not a grand London mansion along the lines of Devonshire House, nonetheless Berkeley Square was 'a gentleman's town house writ large...with its Palladian façade of stone, its grand staircase and its spacious rooms'.<sup>152</sup> Domestic spaces held great significance for metropolitan networks. As the historian Kate Smith has recently argued, Company families 'placed great importance on houses as sites that located ideas of familial belonging and identity so important to imperial endeavours.'<sup>153</sup> It was from 45 Berkeley Square that Margaret managed and orchestrated the family's vast metropolitan interests, mostly in relation to the Company, but also including the day-to-day financial, political and social concerns of the family and its private interests.

Indeed, Margaret described to her husband how she was 'constantly employed in opening & reading notes & letters...which was so great a fatigue in my spirits.'<sup>154</sup> As well as correspondence, Margaret was also constantly making executive decisions, whether in meetings with various directors from East India House, in deciding to extend or withhold patronage, when politically canvassing or even in managing the family's

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<sup>150</sup> BL, APAC, G37/15/1, Edmund Maskelyne to Margaret Clive, Rio Janeiro, 19 October 1764.

<sup>151</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur B383, Margaret Clive to John Carnac, London, 15 March 1761.

<sup>152</sup> Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 190.

<sup>153</sup> Kate Smith, 'Imperial Families: Women Writing Home in Georgian Britain', *Women's History Review*, (forthcoming, 2015), p. 2. I thank Dr Kate Smith for sharing her work with me before publication.

<sup>154</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, Berkeley Square, 12 March 1765.

investments as one of five family trustees. Some of these concerns proved so delicate that Margaret could become uncharacteristically anxious. 'My fears of doing something wrong when I have been obliged to act on my own judgement and to give opinions and orders about any affairs relative to you or your house', she told her husband in 1765, 'have more than once disturbed my peace. I shall be happy if you judge what I have done to be right.'<sup>155</sup> Nonetheless, as matriarch Margaret persevered with her workload and provided her husband and other members of the kinship network in Asia with an organised and efficient domestic administrative headquarters able to deal with all aspects of their interests in the metropole. 'I hope you will be supplied with every necessary, & ever intelligence you desire from us', Margaret concluded to her husband, although she could not help but add with some relief that she also hoped he would 'soon put us out of your office, & take the administration again on yourself.'<sup>156</sup>

As part of her matriarchy over the kinship network, Margaret called upon various metropolitan family members to assist with her various responsibilities. One such drafted member was John Kelsall, who had been a captain in the Bengal marine service where he had married Margaret's aunt, Alice Maskelyne, in Calcutta in 1729.<sup>157</sup> John assisted Margaret in answering the constant flow of correspondence pouring into Berkeley Square, wrote duplicates of her letters, managed the accounts and acted as a steward, running the domestic and financial affairs of the household establishment.<sup>158</sup> Margaret came to depend on John's assistance a great deal and in 1766 informed her husband that 'I have a sincere regard for him & my aunt who has been extremely attentive to our family, and very useful', adding that they were both 'attached to our

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 21 December 1765.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 12 March 1765.

<sup>157</sup> C. Manning, *Fortunes A Faire: The French in the Asian Trade* (London, 1996), p.116.

<sup>158</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, Berkeley Square, 12 March 1765; *ibid.*, 27 November 1766.

interest'.<sup>159</sup> In return John and Kelsall were handsomely accommodated in Berkeley Square, living alongside a plethora of other kin who were similarly obliged to Margaret and fulfilled a variety of tasks to support her. These included Margaret's cousin Jenny Latham and her two children, and Robert Clive's cousin William Smyth King, amongst others.<sup>160</sup>

Robert's cousin Harry Clive had been the first member of their metropolitan network to live and work at Berkeley Square, joining the Clives there shortly after they moved in, in 1760. Although unconnected with the Company, Harry was regarded by the whole family as an integral member of their kinship network, and Edmund Maskelyne wrote to his sister Margaret of the obligation he was under due to Harry's friendship. 'China, Persia & India shall be ransacked & pour out their Stores to return this Goodness', he wrote in 1764 as he accompanied Robert Clive to India.<sup>161</sup> Harry regularly canvassed on the family's behalf, visiting the various parliamentary seats of his kinsman across the country, as when he travelled to Robert's seat of Shrewsbury to ensure his 'interest is as high as ever'.<sup>162</sup> Harry was also a trustee of Robert's estate, sitting alongside Margaret and a select few family members to make executive decisions regarding Robert's financial assets, as well as managing investments, stocks, and properties.<sup>163</sup> Harry kept his cousin and patron constantly informed of the trustees' decisions, writing in 1764 that 'everything with the Trustees is friendly and agreeable'.<sup>164</sup> Margaret commented frequently to her husband of Harry's sincerity and devotion to her and the family, noting that despite his being outspoken about certain

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 November 1766.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 January 1767; BL, APAC, Photo Eur 287/1, Margaret Clive to Edmund Maskelyne, Cundover, 10 September 1763.

<sup>161</sup> BL, APAC, G37/15/1, Edmund Maskelyne to Margaret Clive, Rio Janeiro, 19 October 1764.

<sup>162</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur G37/4/3, Harry Clive to Richard Clive, London, 22 November 1764.

<sup>163</sup> NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to Richard Clive, John Walsh, George Clive, & John Kelsall, Calcutta, 27 September 1765.

<sup>164</sup> BL, APAC, Mss Eur G37/4/3, Henry Clive to Robert Clive, London, 22 November 1764.

members of the family, 'it is my command that he shall refrain' from doing so, at which he did.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, Margaret offered her kin accommodation, employment and security, and they obliged by assuming socially and emotionally subservient roles within her matriarchy. As she wrote to her husband on his departure for India: 'I love them all very well, & believe I am beloved by them'.<sup>166</sup>

Margaret's matriarchy did not exist solely for her benefit, however. Rather, she used her commanding position within the Clive kinship network to engage directly with the Company's metropolitan authorities, specifically East India House, in support of her husband's interests and policies as governor of Bengal. As the historian Kate Smith has recently argued, 'Women were important actors in the spaces that exist between and within private and public, personal and political.'<sup>167</sup> This was particularly true for Margaret's role in shaping the politics of East India House. In March 1765, Margaret wrote to her husband in Bengal that 'Tomorrow I shall have a great deal of company indeed all the people of quality &c.'<sup>168</sup> She had organised a concert and paid the Italian soprano Giovanni Manzuoli £80 to sing at 45 Berkeley Square, with the young Mozarts, Wolfgang and his sister Maria, playing the harpsichord.<sup>169</sup> Margaret combined her appreciation of culture with the magnificence of her home to impress upon her audience the prestige of the Clive family, amongst whom were a large portion of her own kinship network, as well as Company directors, shareholders and officials. The concert and the soprano's singing, she told her husband, 'exceed everything I had a mind to...be seen by the company.'<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, Berkeley Square, 12 March 1765.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 November 1765.

<sup>167</sup> Smith, 'Imperial Families', pp. 1.

<sup>168</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, London, 12 March 1765.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

Margaret's attempt to overawe the principal policymakers of East India House in March 1765 was strategically timed. From 1763 onward, barely two years after returning from India, Robert Clive had intervened directly within the leadership of the court of directors, launching a campaign to challenge the incumbent chairman, Lawrence Sullivan, for supremacy over the headquarters of the Company's public interest.<sup>171</sup> Although Robert lost in that year's election - Sullivan being returned as chairman - he was victorious in 1764 when he and his allies succeeded in having their own candidate, Thomas Rous, elected to the chair.<sup>172</sup> However, despite securing short-term metropolitan support for his political settlement of Bengal, Robert was aware that the next election in 1765 would be the most hotly contested in the Company's history, with Sullivan deploying all of his wealth, influence, and support to regain his lost position. As every year the election was held in April, Margaret's grand concert in the magnificence of 45 Berkeley Square in the preceding month was timed to consolidate her husband's supporters and to recruit any Company shareholders and directors still on the fence, or indeed voting with the opposition.

Amongst those of the opposition were the Ducarel family, who in previous elections had voted for Sullivan and whom Margaret had invited to the concert specifically to convert to her husband's cause.<sup>173</sup> In the previous month, Margaret entertained James Ducarel at Berkeley Square before his departure for India.<sup>174</sup> At this meeting she utilised her patronage, promising to recommend James to her husband when he arrived in Bengal.<sup>175</sup> Following their meeting, James wrote to his mother, admonishing her for not travelling down to London to meet Lady Clive which might, he

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<sup>171</sup> See McGilvary, *Guardian of the East India Company*, pp. 130-147.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.139-140.

<sup>173</sup> For the track record of the family's support and votes for Sullivan, see Gloucestershire Archive, Ducarel Correspondence (hereafter GA, DC), D2091/F10/8, James Ducarel to Mrs Ducarel, Portsmouth, 3 April 1765.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, James Ducarel to M. Ducarel, London, 5 Feb. 1765.

<sup>175</sup> GA, DC, D2091/F10/12, James Ducarel to M. Ducarel, Gravesend, 15 Feb. 1765.

said, have offended her, something he and his brothers, all in the service of the Company, could not afford as her husband 'could make our fortunes or ruin us in Bengal'.<sup>176</sup> After Margaret's concert at Berkeley Square, James wrote to his sister Maria that 'if you had gone to London you might and would most easily have renewed your intimacy with Lady Clive...with the most happy consequences to your Brothers...by the means of Musick in which you are so much improved since you saw her'.<sup>177</sup> That Margaret's efforts had born fruit was confirmed when James wrote to his mother shortly after the election in April 1765, congratulating her on the Clive victory and expressing his gladness that they no longer had to rely on Sullivan for their patronage.<sup>178</sup> Margaret considered the entire event a complete success, observing to her husband that 'every body seems to have their eyes open...& will most of them vote properly; at least this is our [the family's] opinion'.<sup>179</sup> The success of Margaret's campaign on behalf of her husband and the impressionable statement of the entire family at Berkeley Square was evidenced in 'the total Overthrow of Sullivan & his Party', preserving control of the Company's metropolitan authorities at East India House to the Clive family.<sup>180</sup>

## Conclusion

Rather than heralding the emergence of the colonial state in Asia, then, the battle of Plassey was significant in allowing Company kinship networks to reengage with the metropole and eventually to even reshape and subordinate the public interest to the private interests of servants at the very core of the Company. Where once East India House had attempted to contain their servants within hierarchies and suppress their

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<sup>176</sup> GA, DC, D2091/F10/16, James Ducarel to Elizabeth Ducarel, Portsmouth, 16 Mar. 1765.

<sup>177</sup> GA, DC, D2091/F9/4, James Ducarel to M. Ducarel, Portsmouth, Mar. 1765.

<sup>178</sup> GA, DC, D2091/F10/21, James Ducarel to Elizabeth Ducarel, Portsmouth, 6 Apr. 1765.

<sup>179</sup> NLW, CP, R3/2, Margaret Clive to Robert Clive, Berkeley Square, 12 March 1765.

<sup>180</sup> NLW, CP, CR3/1, Robert Clive to John Walsh, Calcutta, 30 September 1765.

private ambitions and gains, the court of directors itself was now overrun by private interest, each contesting for control of the Company's future. Indeed, the unprecedented resources available to Company families after 1757 allowed them to mobilise the metropolitan circuits of their kinship networks on a scale and in a way which had not proved possible beforehand.

Following Robert Clive's victory at the battle of Plassey, his family and kin in Britain were capitalised on his reputation as Pitt's 'heaven-born general' to reshape the policies of East India House in support of his settlement of Bengal. This proved highly beneficial to the Clive family in terms of wealth, power and prestige. The network lobbied the support and resources of other metropolitan authorities, such as parliament, to gain support for Robert Clive's designs for the Company in Asia. In this respect, the female members of metropolitan networks proved crucial in engaging with East India House. Robert's wife Margaret Clive was able to use the profits of empire to transform her position within the network, a dynamic which allowed her to apply the concentrated efforts and resources of the wider family in securing her husband's hegemony over the court of directors and thus ensuring the survival of the 'dual system' of power in Bengal.

## Conclusion

### The Making of the Early Modern Colonial State

This thesis so far has examined the complex and amorphous origins of the early modern colonial state in Asia. In order to conclude this study, however, it is also necessary to identify the end of that process of early modern colonial state formation. There are several obvious epochs that can be cited here. The lapsing of the Company's charter in 1833 and the subsequent loss of its monopoly over the Asian trade in 1833 is a potential contender.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps even more definitive is the institution of Crown rule over the Company's territories in 1858, which legally signalled the end of the Company as a sovereign power in Asia.<sup>2</sup> While these dates clearly act as watershed moments in the history of the English East India Company, as they present a definitive ending point, they are less useful in detecting the end of the early modern colonial state itself. Despite what the historiography might suggest, the emergence of the 'modern' colonial state in Asia from the ashes of its early modern forebear cannot be so easily pinpointed.

Historians have argued that many points in the later eighteenth century were all transformative developments which abruptly replaced the 'private' government of a commercial corporation with a 'modern', 'public' and centralised bureaucratic British colonial state. Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773, which introduced the supreme office of governor-general over all of the Company's disparate territories, is one of these.<sup>3</sup> Another is William Pitt's India Act of 1784, which created a board of control to regulate the Company's court of directors at East India House, and thus provided

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<sup>1</sup> K. N. Chaudhuri, 'India's Foreign Trade and the Cessation of the East India Company's Trading Activities, 1828-40', *Economic History Review*, new series, vol. 19, no. 2 (1966), pp. 345-363.

<sup>2</sup> Robin J. Moore, 'Imperial India, 1858-1914', in Andrew Porter, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 423-46.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, 'Company Rules', p. 56.

parliamentary oversight to affairs in Asia – spectacularly so, in the case of Warren Hastings.<sup>4</sup> And finally, the reforms of Lord Cornwallis in 1792 created a racially segregated, bureaucratic system of governance as well as a permanent revenue assessment.<sup>5</sup> There is little doubt that each of these creeping interventions by the nation-state in the affairs of the Company succeeded in systematically establishing a centralising force over the Company’s servants and their family networks across Asia, reducing their ability to exercise the political agency to which they had become accustomed. Indeed, comparing the swampy backwater of Charnock’s Calcutta, with its mud-walls, makeshift warehouses and tiny Eurasian community, to the mighty metropolis of the ‘City of White Palaces’ in the early nineteenth century, complete with British judiciary, European theatres and steam-ship mail service, it becomes all too apparent that the early modern colonial state had at some point been swallowed up and replaced by the expanding reach of the nation-state.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Unmaking of the Early Modern Colonial State**

There was no precise moment at which the early modern colonial state was ‘swallowed up’, however. No grand act of parliament or violent rebellion permanently swept it away. Yet there were signs that the polity which had begun to emerge in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was under significant pressure to conform to the encroaching modernity of the nation-state by the later eighteenth century. To return to the beginning of this thesis, the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings as governor-general of India may serve as a symbolic moment in which the early modern regime

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<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Bernstein, *Dawning of the Raj: the Life and Trials of Warren Hastings* (London, 2000), pp. 203-64.

<sup>5</sup> Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The Imperial Years* (Chapel Hill, 1980), particularly pp. 37-97.

<sup>6</sup> P. J. Marshall, ‘British Society in India under the East India Company’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (February, 1997), pp. 89-108; P. J. Marshall, ‘The White Town of Calcutta under the Rule of the East India Company’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (May, 2000), pp. 307-331.

gave way to a more modern successor. Edmund Burke's prosecution of Hastings was brought about in part through the combined efforts of the governor-general's political enemies. Many of these belonged to powerful Company kinship networks who had been disenfranchised in India as a result of Hastings's army of 'sophisters, economists, and calculators', according to Burke.<sup>7</sup>

Philip Francis was one such political enemy. He was a loyal supporter of Robert Clive's 'dual policy', and had used his connections with Pitt's Government to gain parliamentary support for the political settlement of Bengal in the 1760s. In return, Clive gave his 'assent' to Francis's appointment as one of the new supreme councillors for Bengal, a position which came with a salary of £10,000 and increased powers to overrule Governor-General Warren Hastings after the passing of Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773.<sup>8</sup> Before his departure, Francis stayed with the Clives for two weeks in July 1773. During this time, Robert Clive indoctrinated Francis with his policies in regards to the governance of India, which included a critique of Warren Hastings, whom Clive believed had been dismantling his 'dual policy' since 1772.<sup>9</sup> Francis, who left for India shortly after with a memorandum in his pocket from Clive on how India should be governed, later described the Clives as 'my best Friends'.<sup>10</sup>

The political contest between Philip Francis and Warren Hastings is too well known to be recounted here.<sup>11</sup> Suffice to say, between 1774 and 1780 the two battled for control of political authority in Bengal, Francis mostly succeeding in vetoing Hastings's policies through a majority in council. As the latter took further steps to 'dismantle' Clive's political settlement, Francis counteracted by buttressing it in key areas, such as

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<sup>7</sup> Burke, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 240. See also the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/9/1, Philip Francis to ? [most likely Henry Strachey, a former clerk of the War Office and now private secretary to Robert Clive], London, 5 January 1769.

<sup>9</sup> Bence-Jones, *Clive of India*, p. 292.

<sup>10</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/9/1, Philip Francis to Robert Clive, Calcutta, 30 November 1774.

<sup>11</sup> For the most recent account, see Travers, *Ideology and Empire*, pp. 141-289.

revenue, diplomacy and law. But they were also waging a larger symbolic war for the future of the colonial polity. Francis sought to maintain the prominence of individual Company servants and their family networks in the processes of colonial state formation, while Hastings attempted to squeeze such agency out and centralise political authority through a hierarchical bureaucracy. This struggle culminated in the conflict for control over the Benares residency in the 1780s, a key institution in shaping the Company's future expansion across northern India.<sup>12</sup>

As Francis departed for India, Clive had asked him to 'promote the Interest' of his cousin's nephew, Francis Fowke, who had left for Bengal as a writer earlier in the year.<sup>13</sup> The Fowke family had a long history of serving in Asia, stretching back to the later seventeenth century. More recently, the Fowke siblings Francis and Margaret, had been raised by their uncle John Walsh, spending a considerable time in the Clive household.<sup>14</sup> Philip Francis obliged Clive by rapidly promoting his young relative through the Company's establishment in Bengal.<sup>15</sup> In return, Francis Fowke, along with his father Joseph Fowke, a free merchant based at Calcutta, supported Philip Francis in his disputes with Hastings. The result was that, in 1775, against the opposition of Hastings, Francis secured a majority vote to appoint Francis Fowke as the new resident of Benares, 'an office of great importance & emolument' with control over affairs in northern India.<sup>16</sup>

In 1776, Hastings managed to regain power over the Bengal council with the death of one of Philip Francis's allies, which led to the loss of the majority vote against Hastings. The governor-general's first official act was to replace Francis Fowke as

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<sup>12</sup> See Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Initial British Impact on India: A Case Study of the Benares Region', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4 (August, 1960), pp. 418-431.

<sup>13</sup> NLW, CP, CR6/2, Robert Clive to Warren Hastings, London, 12 February 1773.

<sup>14</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Photo Eur 32, 'Memoir of Lady Walsh', vol. 1, p. 13

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 67.

resident of Benares with a more experienced and senior Company servant.<sup>17</sup> When Margaret Fowke arrived at Calcutta from Madras in 1776, she discovered that Hastings had used his new advantage to relentlessly pursue Philip Francis and the Fowkes. In fact, Joseph and his son, who was still without a position, were forced to remove themselves from Calcutta and live in the Dutch settlement of Chinsurah, further down the Hugli river.<sup>18</sup> Although the efforts of the metropolitan circuit of the Fowke network – particularly John Walsh - had succeeded in having an order dispatched from the court of directors demanding that Hastings reinstate Francis Fowke as resident of Benares, the governor-general simply ignored it.<sup>19</sup> The Fowkes finally returned from exile in Chinsurah when Philip Francis brokered a temporary truce with Hastings on the condition that Francis Fowke be reinstated as resident of Benares, a deal which also included a substantial annual pension for his father, Joseph Fowke.<sup>20</sup>

The residency at Benares became a powerbase for the Fowke family. Francis oversaw an expansion of the resident's authority in the region which allowed him to rival the raja of Benares in power and gain a fortune of over £80,000 in the process.<sup>21</sup> The Fowkes were able to consolidate their hold over the political establishment through an expansion of the kinship network. Their greatly enlarged 'family circle' included the marriage of Margaret Fowke to John Benn, the assistant resident.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, much of the pecuniary gain experienced by the family went into aggrandising a new residency, named Sickrout. Larger than the raja's own palace, the residency became an

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<sup>17</sup> *Extracts from the Records at the East India House, of Proceedings relative to Mr. Francis Fowke, Resident of Benares, in the appointment and re-appointment of him to that Residency, and his first and second recall from thence* (London, 1782), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Photo Eur 32, 'Memoir', vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> *Extracts*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Photo Eur 32, 'Memoir', vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 91.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 85.

expression of the family's power and ambition.<sup>23</sup> Company servants and their families crossed northern India to attend balls and concerts there, including the Orientalist Sir William Jones, as well as the Mughal Crown Prince, the Shahzadah.<sup>24</sup> Yet the situation proved temporary. No sooner had Philip Francis returned to Britain in 1780, than Hastings had again dismissed Francis Fowke as resident of Benares, only to reinstate him in 1783 after John Walsh 'once again set all of his powers to work' on the court of directors.<sup>25</sup>

Warren Hastings had been quite clear about why he persistently contested Francis Fowke's appointment as resident of Benares. In a consultation at Calcutta in 1781, he declared that the process of centralising political authority was a 'right which under any other system of government would be conferred on it as an indispensable obligation'. Hastings argued that the government, of which he was the head, could not allow such an important position as resident of Benares to be held 'by an authority independent of theirs'.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Francis Fowke, independent authority included the influence of his family, whom Hastings and his allies believed were really in control of policy at Benares and, by extension, in northern India.<sup>27</sup> 'I consider the present appointment as the appointment not of Mr. Francis Fowke', declared Hastings in 1775 at the beginning of the contest, 'but of Mr Joseph Fowke, whose influence over his son will reduce the authority of the latter to a mere shadow.'<sup>28</sup> The message was clear: no authority besides the constitutionally empowered government of the Company was to reign in Asia. The decentred early modern colonial state of Charnock, Pitt and Clive was being dismantled in favour of a modern, centralised bureaucracy accountable to the

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<sup>23</sup> Ian Woodfield, 'The "Hondistannie Air": English Attempts to Understanding Indian Music in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 119, no. 2 (1994), pp.189-211.

<sup>24</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Photo Eur 32, 'Memoir', vol. 1, p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> *Extracts*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

governor-general and East India House alone. The Company's development in Asia would no longer be the preserve of independent Company servants who maintained power through the agency of their kinship networks.

Modernising the colonial state through the disenfranchisement of the 'confederacy of little platoons' in Asia was Hastings's main priority as governor-general. Attacking the influence of the family over colonial governance was a key aim of this strategy, one that would reduce the independent agency of Company servants. Hastings had been correct to identify Francis Fowke's father as the power behind the residency. Joseph Fowke had accompanied his son to Benares 'in a private capacity'.<sup>29</sup> Once there, he used his position of influence to help 'prompt and direct' Philip Francis and his allies on the Bengal council in their contest with the governor-general.<sup>30</sup> His daughter, Margaret Fowke, recalled how Joseph had become intimately involved in 'fierce quarrels' with Hastings, creating 'strife and intrigue' between Calcutta and Benares. Her father, she declared, supplied Philip Francis's faction with 'information, incited them against Hastings, & was the lie, & soul of the violent opposition which they carried on against every act of his Government.'<sup>31</sup> Joseph's 'great object appears to have been the overthrow of Hastings', a design he impressed upon his son at Benares and his allies in Calcutta.<sup>32</sup> Hastings responded by indicting Joseph Fowke on charges of treason and conspiracy in 1775, arguing that he had joined with Raja Nandakuma Bahadur in producing false evidence against Hastings which supposedly revealed him to have engaged in various illicit activities.<sup>33</sup> Although he was eventually acquitted of these charges, Joseph Fowke was nonetheless fined heavily and eventually expelled

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<sup>29</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Photo Eur 32, 'Memoir', vol. 1, p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 63-4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> Lucy S. Sutherland, 'New Evidence on the Nandakuma Trial', *English Historical Review*, vol. 72, no. 284 (July, 1957), pp. 438-465.

from the Company's service.<sup>34</sup> For Hastings, these victories brought the modern colonial state into being, an accomplishment which he believed had been his 'public duty'.<sup>35</sup>

Warren Hastings had won the contest in Asia for the future modernity of the colonial state. However, when he returned to Britain in 1785, he found himself embroiled in a fresh round of conflict, instigated by Edmund Burke through the encouragement of, amongst others, Philip Francis and Joseph Fowke. The latter's grandson, in recalling the opinion of his mother Margaret some years later, stated that she believed 'the whole subsequent trial [impeachment] of Hastings' originated in the opposition of Joseph Fowke at Benares.<sup>36</sup> Both Francis and Fowke had certainly found a sympathetic ear in Edmund Burke when they returned to Britain. The famous orator repeatedly put Fowke's case of unfair dismissal from the Company before the House of Commons; while Francis, on the advice of Clive's secretary Henry Strachey, had been criticising Hastings to Burke in a stream of letters since at least 1777.<sup>37</sup> Burke had led the Rockingham Whig opposition to greater Government control over the Company, most notably as part of a parliamentary committee in January 1781. But when Francis arrived in Britain at the end of the year, he succeeded in converting Burke into a radical critic of Hastings, and the two began immediate plans to have Hastings recalled in disgrace.<sup>38</sup> In 1782 parliament did censure Hastings's government and his conduct, but it had to wait until 1785 until he was recalled. In the following year, Burke was able to

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<sup>34</sup> For the trial itself, see *The Trial of Joseph Fowke, Francis Fowke, Maha Rajah Nundocomar, and Roy Rada Churn, For a Conspiracy against Warren Hastings...* (London, 1776).

<sup>35</sup> *Extracts*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Photo Eur 32, 'Memoir', vol. 1, pp. 47-8.

<sup>37</sup> Bernstein, *Dawning of the Raj*, pp. 155-63.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

recruit enough support for parliament to officially impeach the former governor-general of India.<sup>39</sup>

The impeachment proceedings against Warren Hastings dragged on for more than seven years, in what is the most infamous parliamentary trial in British history. Every facet of Hastings's government was exposed to the incriminating eye of parliament, court and the public. Nonetheless, Burke, Francis, Fowke and Hastings's other political enemies were unsuccessful in their charges against him, Hastings being acquitted in 1795. Despite Burke's hyperbolic oratory and the confederacy of scorned Company servants and their networks ranged against him, Hastings's exoneration was less the product of his own virtue as it was a reflection of the changing nature and needs of the nation-state. Beginning in the 1780s, new forces of global change, including revolution, total-warfare and fiscal crises, demanded durable polities with centralised, bureaucratic and resourceful systems of governance capable of facing these challenges. This changing dynamic placed untold pressure on the 'networks that structured eighteenth-century political societies' which, as a result, 'broke down in a relatively short space of time.'<sup>40</sup> According to C. A. Bayly, by 1820 the 'relationship between the individual, the family and political society' that had underpinned the early modern colonial state, had largely unravelled.<sup>41</sup>

In the same year that Warren Hastings was acquitted, Britain was engaged in a global war against Revolutionary France, while contesting control of southern India with Mysore and northern India with the Marathas. The fiscal-military demands placed upon the domestic British state forced it to centralise and exploit all possible resources, including those available to the Company in Asia. Such circumstances demanded more

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<sup>39</sup> For what is still the best account, see P. J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Oxford, 1965).

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, *Domination of Strangers*, p. 188.

<sup>41</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (London, 2004), p. 86; Wilson, *Domination of Strangers*, p. 188.

than the private government of a network of families. Even in the 1770s Philip Francis had foreseen the vulnerable future of the early modern colonial regime in Asia, even as he fought so desperately to prolong it. ‘We have no separate Interests’, he wrote to Clive in regards to Company servants in India and the encroaching reach of Hastings’s army of bureaucrats. For Company servants, Asia ‘was Paradise before the Fall’, Francis claimed, but now, under Hastings, ‘the Foundation is Shaken’.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Persistence of Private Agency and Family Networks**

Yet, well into this later period, historians have suggested that ‘the Company-State in India remained in any number of ways an early modern regime.’<sup>43</sup> Despite the centralisation of fiscal-military power evident in the vast territories and resources underpinning British expansion on the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere in Asia by the early nineteenth century, its political development and colonial governance was, in many respects, still determined by the political agency exercised by individual Company servants and the family networks that they had established in Asia. The administration of Madras under the governorship of Robert Clive’s son, Edward Clive, provides a window into the enduring and persistent family relationships which shaped the colonial state in southern India as late as the turn of the nineteenth century. Almost half a century after his father’s era, Edward, Baron Clive of Walcot, governed according to his family’s private interests. Arriving in Madras in 1798 with his wife and their two children to take up the post of governor, Edward’s first official act was to visit the Company’s principal ally and dependent in south India, the nawab of Arcot, Umdat-Ul-Umra. The nawab’s own family had been drawn in to the Clive family network through a complex and intermeshing web of interests and alliances which Robert Clive had first

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<sup>42</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur G37/9/1, Philip Francis to Robert Clive, Calcutta, 30 November 1774.

<sup>43</sup> Stern, *Company-State*, p. 208.

established in the 1750s. Describing their meeting, Edward wrote to his mother, a significantly aged Margaret Clive, that 'I find he is not as agreeable as his father was'.<sup>44</sup> Edward had grown up with the recollections and stories of his own father's campaigns in the Carnatic in support of Muhammad Ali Khan, the current nawab's father, and his claim to rule the Carnatic. Robert forged a strong political and personal relationship with the nawab after he had helped defeat his rival claimant, Chanda Sahib.<sup>45</sup> It was Muhammad Ali who had in turn helped propel Robert onto his career as a military hero to whom East India House constantly turned to in time of need, granting him the title *Sabit Jang*, 'steady in war', and awarding him Rs 40,000.<sup>46</sup>

The relationship of Muhammad and Robert's sons was thus from the outset conditioned by the mutual interests established between their two families: 'He spoke much of the friendship that had subsisted between [our] fathers', Edward informed his mother of Umdat-ul-Umra.<sup>47</sup> Shortly after this initial meeting, the nawab paid a return visit to the governor. Carried in to Fort St. George in a gilt framed palanquin and accompanied by a personal band playing the 'country musick', the nawab met Edward at the Governor's House. Constructing a political and personal dialogue through their shared family heritage, the governor and his Indian subordinate continued to shape their discourse according to their respective families. 'He remembers you', Edward wrote again to his mother of this further meeting, '& described you as not being to tall as myself which is having a good memory you will allow, as it was not yesterday that you were here'.<sup>48</sup> There was more than mere sentiment behind these exchanges. By appealing to their family's connections and shared interests, Edward was reminding the

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<sup>44</sup> BL, APAC, Photo Eur 287/2, Edward Clive to Margaret Clive, Fort St. George, 29 August 1798.

<sup>45</sup> For a concise military account of the First Carnatic War, see: Lawford, *Britain's Army in India*, pp.103-124.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Clive to Stringer Lawrence, Fort St. George, n.d., in Forrest, *Life of Lord Clive*, vol. 1, p. 222.

<sup>47</sup> BL, APAC, Photo Eur 287/2, Edward Clive to Margaret Clive, Fort St. George, 29 August 1798.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

young nawab of Robert Clive's role in helping to preserve the Carnatic and thus its dependence on the new governor's lineage. The nawab, in turn, sought to reiterate the benefits gained by the Clives when working closely and in alliance with his own family, at a time when the independence of the debt-ridden Carnatic was under pressure from its main creditors, a collection of Company servants stationed at Madras.<sup>49</sup>

The persistent role of families in wider state formation processes even beyond the later eighteenth century betrays the continued importance of smaller, private configurations of social, cultural, economic and political power in the British Empire. For every official policy telegraphed to India from Whitehall and with every new Company servant trained at Haliburton College who stepped ashore to take up his post, there were a dozen instances of early modern practices and attitudes shaping affairs throughout Asia. When Joanna Rumbold accompanied her husband, Thomas Rumbold, to Madras in 1778, she joined no less than five brothers stationed in the Company's service throughout India. Adding to this existing kinship network her own considerable family who had accompanied her to India, Joanna described the role the family played in her husband's governorship of Madras. For example, when she gave birth to her third child, despite wanting to name him Edward, she was obliged to change it to Anwen after a request by the nawab of Arcot, with whom the Rumbolds had grown particularly close.<sup>50</sup> Governor Rumbold used his wife's relations to consolidate his authority in India, appointing one brother to Sir Eyre Coote's military staff, another to the council at Patna, a third to the revenue board of Calcutta and a fourth who carried to Britain the news of Rumbold's capture of the French settlement of Pondicherry. 'This with the

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<sup>49</sup> For the nawab's debts, see J. D. Gurney, 'The Nawab of Arcot's Debts' (PhD dissertation, Oxford University, 1968).

<sup>50</sup> BL, APAC, MSS Eur Photo Eur 99, Joanna Rumbold to Edward Rumbold, Madras, 29 October 1778.

other transactions of my Government I flatter myself will be highly approved at home', Rumbold declared to his own brother in 1778.<sup>51</sup>

Public meetings between the governor of Madras and the nawab of Arcot were similarly family affairs. In 1779 the two families met at Arcot, where the Rumbolds were covered in flowers and baptised with rose water. At a reciprocal meeting in Madras, the governor's youngest son Tommy 'gave the Nabob some good hits when he first saw him.' Afterwards, the nawab's eldest son and successor gave the governor 'two beautiful Horses'.<sup>52</sup> At a period when the highest rungs of the centralised bureaucracy was in the hands of Richard Wellesley, a governor-general who ruled India by appointing his brothers Arthur and George to senior military and political positions, the family networks of Company servants were still serving to significantly decentre political authority within the colonial state and shape its systems of governance into the nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

The unmaking of the early modern colonial state was as gradual, ambiguous and complex a process as its making had been two centuries before. Beginning with the breakdown of trust and fictive kin ties amongst members of an increasingly global Company by the mid-seventeenth century, as outlined in chapter 1, the Company's transformation from a social community to the 'dreadful totality of the corporate body' pitted the public interests of East India House in London with the private interests of their servants in Asia. After the breakdown in public governance and authority at Madras in the 1660s, the governor and committees in London responded by composing

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Thomas Rumbold to Edward Rumbold, Madras, 25 October 1778.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., William Rumbold to Edward Rumbold, Madras, 10 March 1779.

<sup>53</sup> Iris Butler, *Eldest Brother: Marquess Wellesley the Duke of Wellington's Eldest Brother* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1973).

a discourse of state building which called for obedience to the public interest through hierarchy and order. However, as chapter 2 revealed, the practice of such state building was subverted by the pursuit of private interests by those servants who had been empowered by East India House to realise their centralisation of political authority in Asia. Rather, Company servants significantly decentred the development of the Company in regions such as the West Coast of Sumatra, by drawing on alternative metropolitan sources of authority to establish private colonial regimes which served their own holistic range of interests. Instrumental in such a process were the networks which connected Company servants to the metropole and, from the later seventeenth century, to other Company servants across Asia through the ties of family and kin.

As examined in chapter 3, such networks shaped the interests and actions of Company servants through the exchange, circulation and movement of goods, capital, information and people between members. The expansion of kinship networks across Asia by the early eighteenth century allowed Company servants to pursue what chapter 4 argued was an incoherent and often incidental process of state formation, but one that nonetheless powerfully determined the decentred and private nature of the Company's political expansion in places such as Bengal following the foundation of the settlement of Calcutta. Finally, the conquest of Bengal in the later eighteenth century as explored in chapter 5, prompted the metropolitan networks of Company servants to reshape the policy of East India House, securing their gains in Asia at the same time as they established the hegemony of private interest in the heart of the public hierarchy of their masters in London. What had thus emerged through the development of the English East India Company in Asia by the later eighteenth century was not a monolithic, centralised, public institution, effectively managing the political or commercial concerns of a group of shareholders in London. Rather, it was an amorphous, porous,

shifting and contested set of commercial, political, social, cultural and territorial boundaries: an early modern colonial state formed through the conflict between the public and the private, driven by a 'confederacy of little platoons' that had laid the foundations of the British Empire in Asia.

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