MOUNTSTUART ELPHINSTONE IN INDIA
1796 - 1818

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History in the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand,

by

Elizabeth Hansen Tinker

1970.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iii1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION - The Setting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountstuart Elphinstone</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: NAGPUR</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: POONA I</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: POONA II</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAP** - showing the dominions of the Raja of Berar, and the surrounding territories, following page 184
The object of this study is to assess the place of
Mountstuart Elphinstone in the Indian political scene of his
time, to trace his influence upon and his opinion of events
and, also, by examining the circumstances in which he was
involved, to illustrate the mechanics of British expansion
in India. Only Elphinstone's career as a diplomat has been
dealt with. His later work as an administrator has been
virtually ignored, although it could provide subjects for
several theses, particularly in relation to Elphinstone's
educational work.

The main difficulty encountered in writing this thesis
arose from the necessity of obtaining many sources from other
centres, both within and outside New Zealand. Unfortunately,
I have not had access to, nor been able to explore, all the
existing material relevant to the early part of Elphinstone's
career, but have relied heavily upon the only detailed biography
of Elphinstone. It was written in 1884 by Sir Thomas Colebrooke
and is by no means a definitive work.

Some apology should, perhaps, be made for covering, in
the chapters on Poona, ground already dealt with by Professor
P.C. Gupta and Professor R.D. Choksey, but whereas they were
writing general histories I have concentrated upon Elphinstone.

The staff of the University of Canterbury, Victoria
University, and General Assembly Libraries have been very helpful. I would especially like to thank Dr I. J. Catanach for his valuable advice and encouragement and Mrs Reid who typed the manuscript.

E. H. T.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

THE SETTING.

In 1801, at the beginning of his career as a political agent, Mountstuart Elphinstone and a friend were approached by an Indian fakir at the great Hindu shrine of the Juggernaut; the fakir asked "'When will you take this country?' We answered 'Never!' He said 'Yes; you will certainly take it.'"\(^1\) The incident illustrates the basic reluctance of the British to "take" India, a reluctance which in retrospect seems rather surprising. For the expansion of the highly organised power of the British at the expense of their weaker and less stable neighbours appears now as an almost inevitable process, which, having gathered momentum, continued irresistibly, impelled by its own dynamics.

By 1818 the fakir's prophecy had come true; the British had conquered India "in spite of the most peremptory injunctions of forebearance from home".\(^2\) Official policy, laid down in Pitt's 1784 India Act, abjured expansionist ambitions as "repugnant to the wish, the honour and policy of

1. Elphinstone, Journal, undated 1801, T.E. Colebrooke, Life of Mountstuart Elphinstone (hereafter Colebrooke), I, p.25. Although this Victorian biography is composed almost exclusively of copious extracts from Elphinstone's journals and letters, frequently no date, or an incomplete one, is given.
this nation." 1 The Court of Directors of the East India Company, wishing to avoid the expenses of war and the responsibilities of rule, issued repeated instructions against the acquisition of territory, which it regarded as incompatible with its role as a trading company. 2

The Company had, of course, originally established factories and settlements in India for commercial reasons yet the causes of its expansion into the subcontinent between 1796, when Elphinstone arrived in India, and 1818, when the last independent indigenous power was defeated, were not primarily economic. The most important motives were political and diplomatic and were related to general strategy and the defence of existing possessions. The Company had to decide whether it was to be a merchant or a ruler. Lord Wellesley, believing trade depended on security, opted for the latter. 3

The problem of Britain's security in India was related both to the nation's role as a European and world power and to its position as an Indian power. The emphasis placed upon European rivalries in directing British expansion in Africa 4 can also be applied to the Indian scene in the late eighteenth century.

and early nineteenth centuries. In both cases the acquisition of areas, valuable for neither trade nor settlement, can be explained in terms of global strategy, international politics and the irrational fears by which they are sometimes governed.

It is significant that the growth of British dominion in India in this period coincided with the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and was provoked primarily by the hysterical fear of Jacobinism which accompanied them. During the Governor-Generalship of the Marquis Wellesley, British policy was directed towards the prevention of the growth of French power in India, either by direct invasion over land or sea, or by influence exercised through Indian durbars and the bands of French adventurers which frequented them. Attempts to eliminate the French danger were important motives behind the war which destroyed the Muslim power of Mysore in 1799, the conclusion of the Treaty of Bassein, and the subsequent Anglo-Maratha war of 1803-1804; these events resulted in an extension of the Company's territory and sphere of influence. Lord Wellesley's fears were not entirely without foundation, for the French had corresponded with Tipu Sultan of Mysore, and, in the very year in which Wellesley left England to assume office as Governor-General, Napoleon embarked on his quest for an eastern empire in Egypt. Lord Wellesley's sentiments were not,

1. G.G. to Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 13 Jul 1804, R. Montgomery Martin, ed., The Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley (hereafter Martin), IV, p.171. Durbar, a court of a man of rank. Also used as a synonym for government.
however, shared by his brother Arthur, who thought the actual invasion of India by the French a very unlikely occurrence.\footnote{Arthur Wellesley to John Malcolm, 20 Jun 1803, John Gurwood, ed., The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington (hereafter Gurwood), II, p.22. John Malcolm was, like his friend Elphinstone, a "political", or diplomat, in India. He was involved in many important diplomatic transactions and was especially associated with Lord Wellesley's policies.} Subsequently the Franco-Russian Treaty of Tilsit, concluded in 1807 during Lord Minto's Governor-Generalship, perpetuated fears of invasion by those states in collaboration with oriental powers. Embassies were sent to Persia, Afghanistan and the Sikhs, while a campaign was launched at sea against the remaining outposts of France and its allies in the far east. Nevertheless the French threat was exaggerated; it was more imaginary than real\footnote{S.P. Sen, The French in India, 1763-1816, pp.5, 533, 546-547.} and, like the Russian menace later in the nineteenth century, served only to consolidate British power.

As an Indian power the Company, in 1796, ruled only a few areas on the fringe of the subcontinent, namely Bengal, which comprised the modern provinces of Bengal and Bihar, with part of Orissa, Bombay, which was virtually confined to the two islands of Bombay and Salsette, and Madras, which included the surrounding villages, three districts wrested from Mysore in 1793 and a strip of the Malabar coast about two hundred miles long.\footnote{P.E. Roberts, India Under Wellesley, pp.22-23.} From these positions the British became involved in the struggle for power, which followed the break up of the
Mughal empire and the consequent political instability of India.¹ There were those, for example Charles Grant, who, reasoning that one power could never rule the entire subcontinent without dissipating its own energies, thought that British possessions should be limited to the extent of Clive's empire.² They adhered to what Sir William Lee-Warner has called the policy of the "ring-fence", which was based on the hope that the stronger powers beyond the Company's frontiers would absorb the weaker ones and thus establish stability.³ However, by Lord Wellesley's time, it was becoming clear that the Indian states would not work out their own balanced system corresponding to that achieved by the eighteenth century concert of Europe.⁴ The attitude was that, which later prompted Lord Minto to write, "at no period of the history of India do we recognise the existence of any such system of federation or balance of power of states."⁵ Therefore, to achieve peaceful co-existence, some of the British began to favour a notion of British supremacy,⁶ which, quite independent of European political developments, induced the Company to expand into India in the interests of self defence.

The British had themselves upset any chance of a

2. Ainslee Thomas Embree, Charles Grant and British Rule in India, pp. 226, 286-287.
5. Lord Minto, secret despatch, 14 Apr 1810, Countess of Minto, Lord Minto in India, p. 365.
political equilibrium by eliminating the power of Tipu Sultan of Mysore and by establishing a controlling influence at the court of the Subhadar of the Deccan, also known as the Nizam of Hyderabad. By 1800 the only independent power remaining to rival the Company was the Maratha confederacy; rift by internal conflict and internecine war, its turbulence posed a threat to British security. In fact, after the establishment of British preponderance over Mysore and Hyderabad, Sir John Malcolm questioned whether a collision between the Marathas and the British was not unavoidable. A description of this group of states is, therefore, relevant, as the problem of controlling them was to dominate British diplomacy in India for the next eighteen years.

Although described by contemporary authorities as a "confederacy" the term was used in the broadest sense. In practice the component parts acted quite independently. The nominal head of the confederacy, the Raja of Satara, was kept under strict surveillance by the orders of an hereditary Brahmin minister, the Peshwa, whose ancestors had emancipated themselves from the Raja's control during the course of the eighteenth century. The Peshwa, who held court at Poona, was for practical purposes regarded as leader of the confederacy. The other branches of this group of states were also governed by hereditary rulers, Sindia ruled from Ujjain and Gwalior, Holkar from Indore, and the Gaekwad from Baroda.

Although originally lieutenants of the Peshwas they had, by the late eighteenth century, established their own autonomy. The remaining member of the confederacy, the Bhonsla Raja of Berar, who ruled from Nagpur, was of the same ancestry as the Raja of Satara and contested the Peshwa's ascendancy in the confederacy. One of Lord Wellesley's mistakes had been to attribute to the Marathas the possession of a constitution.¹ His brother, however, recognised that the British had been mistaken regarding this question and realised that, in fact, the Peshwa had little authority over the other Maratha chiefs.²

Although the decline of Maratha power has been dated from their defeat at the Battle of Panipat in 1761,³ it was not immediately apparent, for they continued to have able leaders for some time. However all these leaders died within a short time of each other; Mahadji Sindhia in 1794, Tukoji Holkar in 1797 and Nana Fadnavis, the Peshwa's capable minister, and Govind Rao Gaekwad in 1800. The confederacy was then led by the Peshwa Baji Rao II and Daulat Rao Sindhia, whose influence at Poona was predominant. These two young men have been much maligned by historians, but, whatever their personal qualities, their conduct was certainly most impolitic. They alienated the older families in their respective states⁴ and failed to

conciliate a man who, until he became insane in 1808, was the most outstanding Maratha leader of the time, Jeswant Rao Holkar, the illegitimate son of Tukoji Holkar. Although the Maratha confederacy had long been characterised by a tendency towards decentralisation, inherent in any confederation, this sudden decline in personnel aggravated the disunity of the states. This was a factor which, when set against the more stable, non-hereditary methods of recruitment followed by the British, facilitated the establishment of the latter's influence within the confederacy.

Apart from political disunity the existence of a social disunity, due to caste differences, has been suggested by Professor R.D. Choksey, a Parsi historian, who refers to the "Brahmin usurpation" of the Peshwas. Grant Duff merely mentions this, while Elphinstone observed that the Brahmans were "very unpopular with the bulk of the people." C.S. Sardesai, himself a Brahmin, denies that caste differences affected politics. Such differences undoubtedly existed, but, as both Brahmans and non-Brahmins served the Peshwa, and as Brahmans were honoured at Maratha courts, Sardesai is perhaps right: such differences were probably relatively insignificant compared with other sources of disunity.

1. R.D. Choksey, British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas, p.xi.
The Maratha "imperialism", spoken of by Spear, was also a source of weakness. Outside the Peshwa's dominions, the homeland, the proportion of Marathas to original inhabitants was small, and ample evidence exists of the unpopularity of their rule. Their power had declined as it expanded and their armies now employed fewer Marathas. European intrusion into other areas has often provoked a nationalist reaction; however at this point in Indian, or even Maratha history no such phenomenon can be observed. Admittedly, following a period during which it had been fashionable to train troops under European officers according to European methods, there was, amongst the Marathas, a reversion to traditional methods of predatory and guerilla warfare. Holkar's successful use of these methods seems to have encouraged renewed confidence in them amongst the other Marathas. However this tendency was a result of necessity rather than a national reaction. The British had destroyed the Marathas European-trained troops in the 1803-1804 war and had excluded the French, who had largely officered these corps, from Indian courts.

3. For examples see Elphinstone, Journal, undated c. 1807, quoted in Colebrooke, I, p.155; and Thomas Duer Broughton, Letters written in a Mahratta Camp during the year 1809, p.178.
5. Colebrooke, I, pp.114, 340; Gupta, Baji Rao II and the East India Company, p.109; Choksey, British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas, p.xi.
The weakness and instability of the Maratha states, their predatory habits and the inability of the central governments to control their subjects, contributed to what has been described as a "turbulent frontier"; a factor of some importance in explaining British expansion into a power vacuum. Galbraith maintains that, confronted with the disorder of India, successive Governors-General could safeguard existing possessions only by extending British authority into areas which might not be economically profitable. They tried to eliminate disorder by annexations which produced new frontier problems and further expansion. Sir John Seeley had recognised this phenomenon in 1884, when he attributed initial British expansion to the necessity of defending the factories at Fort William, Fort St. George and Fort David.

In a discussion of the theory of the "turbulent frontier", in conjunction with India, the role of Bombay would not appear to be as significant as that of the other two presidencies. The early efforts of the Bombay Presidency to interfere in the affairs of the Marathas had been disallowed by Warren Hastings and his Council. Generally, the west coast appears to have been regarded as unimportant until the French threat exposed the defencelessness nature of this coast and the

2. Ibid., p.168.
possibility of a liaison being effected between the Marathas and the French via the area, and until the economic advantages of Gujrat became apparent. 1 Bombay was isolated from the rest of India by the Western Ghats, which impeded communications by land, and by the monsoons which interrupted contact by sea. 2 The main problem of disorder encountered seems, therefore, to have been connected with piracy along the coast 3 rather than with armed raiders on land. The Marathas were, in fact, part of the political hinterland of Bengal and Madras. It was not until the British assumed control over Oudh, Mysore and Hyderabad, and until the armies of Sindia threatened Bengal, that the need to establish a modus vivendi with the Marathas prompted the Supreme Government to intervene in the affairs of the confederacy.

The extension of British interests into these areas meant that the Company's frontiers were, in effect, adjacent to the Marathas whereas previously these areas had acted as buffers. The British, wrote Sir John Malcolm, "virtually succeeded to all the local and political relations which subsisted between the Marathas and those states." 4 They had inherited yet another problem of frontier disorder in the form of the predatory Maratha states.

3. Lee-Warner, The Native States, p.82.
It has been pointed out that the idea of a linear frontier is a particularly European concept closely associated with the idea of a nation state and is quite foreign to eastern tradition. In India the various states did not have clearly demarcated boundaries; instead their possessions were intermingled with the dominions of other states. The pattern, in contrast to the European patchwork, was one of multi-coloured polka-dots. The tangled nature of territorial and revenue claims - in particular the Maratha claim to levy chauth over much of India - provided inexhaustible excuses for border depredations and was conducive to perpetual turmoil. This situation was, in fact, an aspect of the "turbulent frontier" and provided yet another reason for British expansion. It is not mentioned by Galbraith, who has concentrated upon political and military disorder rather than the confusion of territorial claims. To preclude future depredations and conflicts among the surrounding states the British intervened, beyond their own immediate possessions, and tried to define claims, to rationalise frontiers and to

2. Chauth, or one fourth of the revenue, was a form of tribute forcibly exacted by the Marathas from the surrounding territories. Indian historians disagree as to whether it implied a claim to protection from other plunderers. Oxford History, pp. 452, 494 note.
confine their neighbours within linear boundaries.\(^1\) This policy was followed by Lord Wellesley,\(^2\) and many of the treaties concluded by the British with Indian powers frequently contained clauses stipulating the transfer of territories in order to create a well defined boundary. Alastair Lamb has shown how European colonial powers ignored local considerations and how, when they arrived in Asia, they checked, exploited, or altered the process and evolution of the sovereignties they found, according to their own strategic and economic needs.\(^3\)

In fact a fundamental conflict existed between the aims and preconceptions of the British and those of the Indians. The former's desire for a balanced international system, and neatly demarcated states, was totally opposed to the classical Hindu conception of foreign relations, expounded in the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya, which envisaged the ultimate objective of every state as the achievement of universal rule at the expense of its neighbours.\(^4\) Arthur Wellesley had noticed that "the Asiatic governments ... have no regular established system, the effect of which is to protect the weak against

---

1. Alfred Lyall, *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, pp. 261-262. This policy had, on occasion, amusing results. E.M. Forster describes how, in the twin states of Dewas, it was taken to the extreme of dividing a flagstaff between the two rulers, one having the upper and the other the lower portion, with the flag flying at half mast in a neutral position. E.M. Forster, *The Hill of Devi*, Penguin edn., pp. 15-16, 33.


the strong: on the contrary, the object of each of them separately, and all of them collectively, is to destroy the weak."\(^1\) While it is perhaps hardly possible to explain Maratha depredations in terms of classical Hindu political thought nevertheless, in practice, the intellectual dichotomy between Hindu and European was exemplified by the incompatibility of interests between the Company, which wanted peace and security for trade, and the Marathas whose economics functioned in quite a different way, being based upon a system of plunder and the exaction of tribute from their neighbours. Upon the merits of a compact territory Sindia's minister is reported to have commented "true, there is a visible immediate profit, but then there is the loss of an advantage which we Mahrattas think inestimable, that of having a finger in everyman's dish."\(^2\) Owing to their conflicting objectives Malcolm regarded the Marathas and the Company as natural enemies, between whom there could be no lasting peace unless the British became supreme.\(^3\)

Lord Wellesley abandoned any attempt to effect a mode of peaceful co-existence with the Indian states on equal terms; he was of the opinion that it was necessary to place the British "in that commanding position with regard to the other states, which affords the only possible security for the

2. Lord Hastings' Summary of the Operations in India, Affairs of the East India Company, P.F. 1831-1832, VIII, general appx. p.188.
permanent tranquillity and prosperity of these valuable and
important possessions." His method of achieving this
objective was by "a general system of defensive alliance and
guarantee". This system was not unique to British India
for it bears similarities to the methods used in inner Asia
by the Chinese and the Russians who, faced with frontier
problems similar to those of the nineteenth century British,
also attempted to solve them by annexation, or if possible, by
the establishment of buffer states which they could control by
diplomacy. For the British the establishment of influence
in the surrounding states enabled them to "throw forward their
military, considerably in advance of their political, frontier." Another result was that "the evils of war have been kept at a
distance from the sources of our wealth and our power."5

For the Indians the corollary of this British system of
paramountcy was, in fact, a decline in international status in
the law of nations.6 Although they were at first treated as
independent and equal powers, the spirit and the form of the

1. Marquis Wellesley to Secret Committee, 13 Jul 1804, Martin,
   IV, p.176.
2. N.B. Edmonstone, Secretary to Government, to Colonel Close,
   22 Nov 1802, P.P. 1803–1804, XII, p.65. "Edmonstone, of
   all his servants, notoriously was closest to Lord
   Wellesley's mind." Edward Thompson, The Making of the
   Indian Princes, p.142.
5. Arthur Wellesley to Major Shawe, 14 Jan 1804, Gurwood, III,
   p.667.
6. The gradual exclusion of non-European powers from the
   family of nations is traced by C.H. Alexandrowicz, An
   Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the
   East Indies.
treaties soon changed. In 1812 a British political
declared that this transition had been effected by the
Treaty of Bassein, and treaties subsequently concluded between
the British and the other Maratha powers, which "had completed
an entire new system of international law amongst all the
governments of India", former connections were dissolved and
all were bound to submit to British arbitration.\(^2\) The states
could, then, be described by the useful, but vague, term of
"protectorates".

The subsidiary alliance system exemplifies the assertion
that "refusals to annex are no proof of reluctance to control."\(^3\)
The system was, in fact, an experiment in informal empire,
similar to those conducted by Britain in the tropics during
the later nineteenth century, of which Professor McIntyre
writes; "the frontier had to be stabilised. The alternatives
frequently urged were new annexations or withdrawal of
existing involvement." In reality the alternatives were not
so stark and "instead a vague middle-of-the-road notion of
paramountcy was conceived and experiments in new forms of
'informal empire' were conducted."\(^4\) The subsidiary alliances

2. Richard Jenkins, Resident at Nagpur, to Lord Minto, 28 Aug
1812, *P.R.C.*, V, p. 320. The treaties were that of Deogaon,
with the Bhonsla and that of Surji Arjungaon with Sindia,
both in 1803, and that of Rajpur Ghat with Holkar in 1805.
3. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, "The Imperialism of
Free Trade", *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, Vol. VI,
no. 1, 1953, p. 3.
4. W. David McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics*,
1865-75, p. 9.
are also illustrative of such a middle-of-the-road policy. They were intended as a means of influencing the Indian states, but of avoiding involvement in their internal affairs and the responsibilities of assuming direct rule. The aim of the alliances was to ensure British security by preventing the states both from allying with Britain's European enemies and from forming a confederacy against the British amongst themselves. Sir John Malcolm states that Lord Wellesley also made the alliances to weaken the predatory system of the Marathas, and to change the principles of the confederacy in order to render them more favourable to tranquillity and the British manner of rule.¹

The Treaty of Bassein, which was concluded on the occasion of the British agreeing to restore the Peshwa Baji Rao II to the masnad,² may be regarded as the archetype of the subsidiary alliance. It also "fitted exactly with Wellesley's desire to complete, centralise and focus the whole system of subsidiary alliances"³ and, as it was concluded with the ostensible leader of the confederacy, the Governor-General hoped that the other Maratha chiefs would follow suit and also ally with the Company.⁴ His expectations were not fulfilled.

¹ Malcolm, Political History, I, pp.314-315, 466. Malcolm was writing twenty years after the events. Lord Wellesley was, if at all, less aware of the dangers of the predatory system than those of the French threat.
² The cushion upon which an Indian ruler sat, the "throne".
⁴ G.G. to Resident at Poona, 23 Jun 1802, P.P. 1803-1804, XII, p.37.
The other members of the confederacy united in opposition to the treaty, which established British influence at Poona to the exclusion of their own. After the ensuing war, in which the Company was victorious, alliances were imposed upon the other Maratha powers.

An examination of the Treaty of Bassein's provisions illustrates the main characteristics of the subsidiary alliances and the means by which the British exercised influence. First, the Peshwa's sovereignty over external affairs was curtailed. He was obliged to consult the British before entering negotiations with other powers and to submit to their arbitration in his disputes with specific powers. Also he could not employ the subjects of states at war with the British in his service. Secondly, the seeds of further intervention in the internal affairs of the state, were planted by the establishment of a Resident and a subsidiary force, paid for by the Poona state, within the Peshwa's dominions and by the obligation incurred to defend the Peshwa's dominions, and his power, against rebels and exciters of disturbance. It is a moot point whether it is possible to maintain a middle-of-the-road policy, without interfering more deeply in the affairs of the "protected" state, and we shall see how the stipulations of the Treaty of Bassein provided loopholes for British interference in Poona affairs.

Writing upon the later nineteenth century African scene, Robinson and Gallagher suggest that "the British advances may have been the culmination of the destructive workings of
informal empire". The observation may also be applied to the role of the subsidiary alliance system as a vehicle of expansion in early nineteenth century India. The Residents sometimes spoke of the desire of the British to maintain "the established order of things." However, the conclusion of the alliances, and the establishment of Residents at Indian courts, was conducive not to a static, but to a dynamic situation. For the British to try to preserve some hypothetical existing order of things was really to put new wine into old skins. Two aspects of the role of the alliance system in extending British power may be distinguished: the means by which the alliances led to British intervention within the individual states and the effects of the whole system upon India in general.

The probable effects of the alliances upon the individual states was recognised by those responsible for the extension of the system. Lord Wellesley himself stated that

the dependence of a state, in any degree,
upon the power of another, naturally
tends to increase a sense of security
derived from the support of a foreign
power, produces a relaxation in vigilance
and caution; and the operation of
natural causes

in his opinion, would augment "the dependence of
the Peshwa on the British power." In an oft quoted

1. Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, p. 18.
2. Elphinstone to G.G., 5 Mar 1805, R.W. Sinha and A. Avasthi, Elphinstone Correspondence, 1804–08, (hereafter E. Corres.), p. 179.
letter to the Marquis of Hastings, Sir Thomas Munro questioned the desirability of extending the system. He thought that it rendered all governments with which it came into contact weak and oppressive, and that it nourished the vices of bad government. It extinguished all "honourable spirit" among the upper classes and, in Munro's opinion, by protecting the ruler, it cut off the usual remedy for bad government in India: palace revolution, or rebellion. Also, as long as a spirit of "high minded independence" existed among the Indians, they would oppose British influence. As the British had to stamp out such opposition the effect of the alliances was to bring the "allied" states, sooner or later, under the Company.

It has been observed that "intervention was never impartial; it involved the selection and cultivation of only one strand of local political evolution." At this point the role of the Resident, within the subsidiary system, is of some importance. It was he whose duties included the "cultivation" of one group within the state and whose activities aroused the antagonism of other factions. When it became necessary to frustrate, or eliminate, the opposition which existed to British intrusion a further cause for intervention was supplied. It has frequently been

2. Ibid., p.464.
maintained that the "men on the spot", at the fringes of empire, were often responsible for expansion owing to their propensity for interfering in local affairs and then confronting the colonial government, or the home authorities, with the \textit{fait accompli} of added empire.\footnote{Galbraith, "The 'Turbulent Frontier' ...", pp. 153, 155; McIntyre, The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, p. 364.} Even when non-interference was stipulated the Company had to investigate "all the internal concerns of the native state submitted to its judgement, in order that its agents might see whether the cases in which its interference was called for were of a nature to justify it."\footnote{Owen, Wellington's Despatches, p. 471, quoted in P.E. Roberts, India Under Wellesley, p. 39.} However, on the other hand it may be argued that, although the Residents were obliged to intervene to maintain British security and interests, yet they were also aware of the extent to which expansion would be opposed by the indigenous population, of the practical difficulties of rule and of the dangers of over-expansion. It will be of interest to investigate Mountstuart Elphinstone's role in relation to this theory.

The effects of the extension of the subsidiary system over India greatly concerned Arthur Wellesley\footnote{Arthur Wellesley to Malcolm, 20 Jun 1803, Gurwood, II, p. 21; Arthur Wellesley to Shawe, 27 Dec 1804, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 583.} who approached the question from the military point of view. He was one of the first to appreciate the fact that, although no foreign powers remained to threaten the Company in India, the
extension of British arms and influence created another
danger in the form of the freebooter system. As the British
established influence over other states they, and their allies,
discharged troops, thus increasing the number of freebooters,
while at the same time the expansion of the Company's power
diminished the possible area available for plunder. It was,
therefore, necessary to find employment for the disbanded
soldiers who would otherwise prey on the public. Arthur
Wellesley's solution was to strengthen the forces of the
Company's allies, for, the danger of increasing their troops
was, in his view, not as great as that threatened by the
freebooter system. His penetrating analysis of the
situation had exposed the root of the problem which was
eventually to induce the Marquis of Hastings to establish
British paramountcy over India in 1818. Arthur Wellesley's
advice was not followed extensively. There were some who
opposed the communication of European military techniques to
the Indians. The British were in fact of a divided mind;
on the one hand they wanted strong stable Indian states to
negotiate with and to control disorder endangering British
frontiers, while on the other hand the very strength of these

2. Ibid., p.101.
3. Arthur Wellesley, Memorandum submitted to the C.G. on the
Freebooter System, 2 Nov 1804, ibid., p.520.
5. Earl of Buckinghamshire, President of the Board of Control,
undated 1812, quoted in Gupta, Baji Rao II and the East
India Company, pp.109-110.
states would threaten British security.

Under Cornwallis and Barlow as Governors-General the British attempted to limit the extent of their involvement to their existing possessions and sphere of influence. However, this experiment in self-containment was generally opposed by the "men on the spot", whose views were endorsed by older historians such as Auber. They argued that the policy of non-intervention did not conciliate the Indians, who mistook British moderation for fear and weakness, and that it encouraged Indian aggression thereby producing the very effects it was designed to avoid. They also held that, had Lord Wellesley's policy of alliances been followed, tranquillity would have been established, and the necessity of eventually intervening, when the enemy was stronger and the expense greater would have been avoided. Insofar as the British ultimately were obliged to intervene, it may be said that the experiment of withdrawal was a failure. Today, however, there is a tendency to vindicate the policy of self-

1. Malcolm, Political History, II, pp. 51-52. An anecdote, related by Broughton, indicates what the Indians thought were the British aims. On one occasion, beyond the Company's frontiers, as their Union Jack wore out, the British in Sindia's camp flew the white ensign as a substitute. There was an immediate sensation in the camp for "it was immediately assumed that the British were about to assume the general sovereignty of Hindoostan, of which the white flag was the emblem; while the coloured canton represented the contracted space which the Mahrattas were still permitted to occupy." Broughton, Letters written in a Mahratta Camp, p. 179.

2. Broughton, op. cit., p. 146; Grant Duff, II, p. 388.

containment, practised by Cornwallis and Barlow, on the
grounds that it gave the British time to recuperate and to
recover their finances, before embarking on the final
campaign which established their paramounty, and the
wisdom of Lord Wellesley's attempt to "hustle history" has
been questioned.

For both the Marathas and the British the period was one
of transition, flux and uncertainty, of mutual misunder-
standing when neither side was really certain of its objectives.
Neither followed one policy consistently and opinions could
be found on both sides for and against involvement with the
other. From the point of view of the Marathas, the period
between the Treaty of Bassein and 1818 was "one of peculiar
unrest and uncertainty for all India, owing to the particularly
undefined spheres of the various chiefs and potentates who
did not know what to choose between rebellion against or
submission to the British power." For the British, the
Marquis of Hastings declared "we do not, in fact, at
present, possess any complete system, but parts of two very
incongruous systems and most of the inconveniences we
experience are occasioned by a discordancy of the two."

1. Thompson, The Making of the Indian Princes, pp.136-139;
   Oxford History, p.559.
4. Minute of Moira, 1 Dec 1815, quoted in Biswanath Ghosh,
   British Policy towards Pathans and Pindaris in Central
   India, 1805-1818, p.321. Lord Moira was created Marquis of
   Hastings in 1817 for his victory in the Nepal War.
The main problem confronting the British was, in fact, one of self-restraint. Owing to their resources and their organisation they knew they could win any war against the Indian powers, yet they did not desire the inconveniences of rule, which would result from total victory. The difficulty was to know at what point intervention should cease in extent and depth. In other words, where should the Company's involvements end territorially and how much initiative was to be left to the individual Indian rulers?

MOUNTSTUART ELPHINSTONE.

Mr Elphinstone is, in every respect, an extraordinary man, possessing great activity of body and mind, a remarkable talent for, and application to public business, a love of literature and a degree of almost universal information ... and manners and conversation of the most amiable and interesting character .... With these remarkable accomplishments, and notwithstanding a temperance amounting to rigid abstinence, he is fond of society and it is a common subject of surprise with his friends, at what hours of the day or night he finds time for the acquisition of knowledge.2

Mountstuart Elphinstone reflected, in many ways, the spirit of his age; his personality and tastes exhibit many of the characteristics usually associated with Romanticism. A highly emotional person, he was subject to attacks of melancholy, which he described as "blue devils". He was

2. Reginald Heber, Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, III, pp.132-133.
impressed by the grandeur and sublimity of Indian scenery, on occasion comparing it to scenes in Dante,\(^1\) or contrasting it favourably with the tameness of the English landscape.\(^2\) The macabre aspect of the sublime had a fascination for him and once led him to visit the battlefield of Assye by night, where he found the spectacle of the dead, the carrion birds and scavenging dogs "horrible and sublime."\(^3\) Elphinstone was also inclined to indulge in the "Romantic" propensity for musings upon fallen greatness and mutability, while his love of the past endowed him with some sympathy for Indian tradition. "I could not help being sorry, as I was riding through the tombs, that the magnificent fellows who built them should be displaced by the sordid wretches that lately had this country."\(^4\)

Although introspective and emotional, Elphinstone did not cultivate his sensibilities. For there was another aspect of his character, an anti-Romantic element, which caused him to disapprove of excess of any kind and to favour the classical principle of moderation. Consequently he tried to control his emotions and weaknesses by the exercise of reason and will-power. He indulged in exercises in self denial and tried to

---

2. Elphinstone to Lady Hood, 27 Apr 1816, ibid., p. 315.
3. Elphinstone to Edward Strachey, 3 Oct 1803, ibid., pp. 74-75. Strachey was the friend and most frequent correspondent of Elphinstone, who was his assistant at both Benares and Poona. Later Strachey transferred to the judicial line. He left India in 1811 and in 1819 was appointed as assistant to the Examiner in the India Office together with James Mill and Thomas Love Peacock.
give up snuff and drink for the benefit of his body and mind. "Ever since I got well, which I attribute to having lived according to reason, I have been very moral, considerate, industrious and have lived according to Cicero".¹ He tried to control his temper "particularly on occasions of public business. I have long since given up the opinion that frequent anger expedites affairs, ... passion ... only injures dignity".² In an attempt to subordinate his personal feelings to public duty, he once accepted a position at the durbar of a ruler he disliked "to see whether reason will not enable me to get over passion in my dealings with him."³ Emotion, imagination and reason fused to endow Elphinstone with a penetrating insight and awareness, as well as a coolness of mind, an objectivity and a detachment that made him calm in the most critical situations.

Abhorrence of excess extended even to Elphinstone's political views. In his youth, like his fellow Scot Lord Byron, whose poetry he admired, Elphinstone was something of an aristocratic rebel. He had sympathised with the French Revolutionaries, had grown his hair long and sung "Ca ira".⁴ In later life, in common with many who had initially sympathised with the Revolutionaries, he changed his attitude and disapproved of the lack of moderation they displayed.

¹ Elphinstone to Strachey, 15 Nov 1803, ibid., p.185.
³ Elphinstone to Strachey, 23 Apr 1808, ibid., p.169.
⁴ The ruler was Sindia.

I used to adore them, probably because they were fond of the parade of liberty ... also because they were fine uncompromising fellows ... I am amazed when I see people who had Montesquieu in their hands, with so little of the virtues indispensable in legislators, moderation and that prudence which carefully adapts everything to what exists already, and which, when it cannot have the best, is content with the best possible.¹

While his later views probably merely reflected a loss of youthful idealism, and a knowledge that theories must be modified in practice, they could also be seen as the reaction of a European, who had once been a radical, but, who found himself in India, in a position in which he had to support a regime which was hardly radical in nature.

Although he "narrowly escaped being a republican" (he was once sent a red nightcap and tricolour cockade inscribed by his friends, "The Honble. M.E., alias Tom Paine") "he was always a Whig of the old school".² He believed in Great Britain's parliamentary system according to the eighteenth century idea of a balanced constitution and even went so far as to propose a similar form of government for Afghanistan, a country which, in Elphinstone's opinion, displayed a "vast superiority of materials ... for the construction of a rational constitution", although he knew the proposal could never be realised.³ In 1831, before the passage of the Reform Act, he

1. Elphinstone to Strachey, 26 Jun 1804, ibid., p.124.
2. Sir Robert Houston to Elphinstone's nephew, ibid., p.7.
wrote that

the destruction of the constitution by the preponderance of the Democracy, might be expected to follow ... From the extremity of those evils the good sense of the English people and their attachment to the Constitution will probably protect us.

He did, however, believe in gradual change and added

no contingency can render it wise or safe to withhold reform, or to delay making the necessary alterations in parts of the Constitution, while there is still sufficient attachment to the whole to prevent its being subverted during the operation.

As an aristocrat, Elphinstone had a contempt for commerce as well as a horror of the demes, feelings which led him to sympathise with the interests of the Indian ruling classes and to declare the Court of Directors "Bacon-fed knaves." The same pride of birth - "every moment of his existence was stiff with conscious aristocracy" - induced him to refuse a baronetcy; he wished to avoid admitting "the superiority of an honour which I should have shared with half the aldermen in London, over that which I derive from my birth, and which can never be held but by a gentleman."

Although he was employed in India as a diplomat and an administrator Elphinstone entertained certain scholarly and military aspirations. He wrote several books, collected

3. Elphinstone to his uncle, Lord Keith, 3 Oct 1818, Colebrooke, II, p.47. The Elphinstones were an ancient family belonging to the Scottish peerage. Mountstuart, as a son of the eleventh Baron Elphinstone, was born an "Honourable".
4. They were: An Account of the Kingdom of Cabaul, The History of India, and The Rise of British Power in the East.
vocabulary, studied languages and read widely. While his practical experience of Indian affairs undoubtedly influenced his attitudes to the land, and the nature of British rule over it, his reading gave him wide statesmanlike views, and enabled him to rise above a particular situation and to see things in their general perspective. The study of eastern and western history stimulated his thoughts upon the differences between their respective governments and societies and the reasons for their dissimilarity.

However, his greatest admiration was reserved for the ancients, who, he thought, were superior to the moderns. The Greek historian Thucydides particularly impressed him by his moderation and impartiality. It is tempting to postulate that this historian may have had a practical influence upon Elphinstone. One authority considers that Elphinstone modelled his despatches upon Thucydides and Tacitus, and the quality and conciseness of the style perhaps suggest this. Elphinstone himself wrote "Thucydides must be a book to carry about with me. He abounds in reasoning and in useful observations", and again, "there are several copies of treaties in to-day's reading. It would be curious to examine the character of Grecian diplomacy." Elphinstone habitually thought of himself and his contemporaries in terms of classical

literature, for instance as Homeric heroes. Classical allusion was, admittedly, characteristic of an educated person of his time; however, Elphinstone's allusions were often particularly appropriate to the British in India. Thucydides claimed that his work was written to last for ever,¹ in other words it was to be true of all wars. Certain broad parallels can be drawn between the hostility aroused against the Athenian hegemony of the Hellas of the fifth century B.C. and the Indian reaction to the influence of the British, who like the Athenians based their power upon the sea and commerce. That Elphinstone was conscious of some similarity is apparent in the remark "I trust in the genius and fortune of the republic for a happy termination of this war."²

In spite of his melancholy, introspective and scholarly temperament, Elphinstone was also a man of action; a man who revelled in the hunt, rode hard and greatly esteemed military glory. His heroes were such men as Alexander, Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington; the Duke once told him that he should have been a soldier. Throughout his life Elphinstone displayed an attachment to the army, possibly because he thought it more noble and heroic. In his youth he "dreamt of winning battles that would throw into the shade the great struggles of the age."³ In later life he was to prefer the society of "officers

3. Elphinstone, in conversation with his biographer, Colebrooke, I, p.4.
whom I am used to, and with whose ideas I sympathise" to that of lawyers, merchants and sailors. 1

The conflicts and tensions in Elphinstone's character, as well as his various interests, balance and complement each other. Altogether they add up not to a Romantic, but, as Philip Mason observes, to a Renaissance man. 2 In Renaissance terms Elphinstone was a complete man, the *uomo universale*. Scholar, statesman and man of action, he did everything well but, it must be remarked, that with such a diversification of his energies he did not achieve great brilliance in any particular field.

Elphinstone thrived upon bustle; activity made him "like a giant refreshed with wine," 3 and he was frankly depressed and bored by the loneliness of Residency life and the constant petty intriguing and spying in which a Resident became involved at an Indian court. In such conditions, any bustle was welcome to break the monotony: "I trust the stir of an impending French invasion will uproot every diplomatic man, and throw him 2,500 miles from his place, and me among others to Balkh." 4 How often were Residents tempted to wish for wars which would provide opportunities of their recommending themselves to their superiors, and of enjoying the company of their countrymen, as well as merely breaking the tedium of Residency life? It will be interesting

3. Elphinstone to Strachey, 1 Sep 1803, Colebrooke, I, p. 54.
to try to discover whether Elphinstone consciously chose a course of action which would provide him with opportunities to shine.

Professor Ballhatchet has described Elphinstone as "restless and ambitious."¹ However, he was not as openly ambitious as his friend John Malcolm,² and in later life he seemed to abandon any hope of great success.³ At some time he drastically reassessed his own abilities and chances of success. He wrote "some years ago (at Bassein, for instance), ... I used to think I had some genius! I have often wondered since what could have put that into my head."⁴ He lost, or suppressed, his youthful priggishness and arrogance. Reality did not live up to his expectations. One reason for his reassessment of himself may be traced to his complaint that "it is a wretched thing in our Indian diplomatic line that we have just praise enough to stimulate ambition, without the possibility of gratifying it."⁵ Therefore he decided

there cannot be a better plan than entire resignation to one's fate in matters of ambition.... a man who has eminent talents is sure to rise to the situation best fitted for their exercise, .... If you are disappointed in gaining a place of real difficulty, rely on it, there is some defect in yourself, and either rest quiet or study to improve yourself without blaming your fate or your superiors.⁶

¹. Kenneth Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1817-1830, p.4.
In attempting to trace the genesis of Elphinstone's ideas about India and Britain's relations with that country, it is difficult to distinguish what might have been the influence of specific people and events from a general climate of opinion produced by a large number of people all reacting to the same circumstances. The attitude of Elphinstone's generation to India was characterised by an awareness of the latent power of India. Having experienced a time when the Company's power was still seriously challenged by indigenous powers and having often lived on sufferance at Indian durbars, as Residents, they could never take British rule for granted. They knew they could maintain their supremacy only "by the greatness of our real power, and the greater power of our reputation." 1

During his early career, before he was placed in a position of responsibility, Elphinstone came into contact with three men who may well have influenced his character and his ideas. They were Samuel Davis, Barry Close, and Arthur Wellesley.

On his arrival in India in 1796, Elphinstone entered the civil branch of the East India Company's service and was appointed as assistant to the magistrate's registrar at Benares. The magistrate, Samuel Davis, was a scholar and mathematician of some note, as well as co-author of the famous

Fifth Report issued by the House of Commons Select Committee in 1812. Professor Ballhatchet has traced the influence of Davis' ideas on Elphinstone, an influence which was more relevant to the latter's work as an administrator than to his career as a diplomat. However, since Davis certainly inculcated Elphinstone with a respect for Indian institutions, the Benares experience, insofar as it encouraged his tolerance of India, prepared Elphinstone well for his political activities. Davis' influence can, perhaps, be perceived in Elphinstone's response to Arthur Wellesley's low opinion of Indian governments and laws. The latter laughed "at talking of the Peshwa's and the Nizam's governments as governments; their ministers as you would ministers in Europe. I repelled this argument." It was Davis who actually encouraged Elphinstone to accept the position as assistant to the secretary of the Poona Residency, a position which transferred him to the diplomatic line for the next eighteen years.

"Davis gave me his advice in a quotation which rang in my ear for the best part of my life:-

'We see in this life to lock it From action and adventure?'"

1. Davis was a friend of Sir William Jones and Henry Colebrooke and was a distinguished member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The Fifth Report criticised the Cornwallis system of revenue settlement in Bengal and praised the rival system worked out by Thomas Munro in Madras with the aim of using Indian methods as far as possible. Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change, p.31.
2. Ibid., p.31-32.
4. Elphinstone to Strachey, 18 Oct 1803, Colebrooke, I, p.82.
5. Elphinstone, Journal, undated, ibid., p.23. The words, which recur in Elphinstone's letters and journals, are from Cymbeline, IV, 4.
On his way to take up his position at Poona Elphinstone was able to study the country and its languages. He left Calcutta early in 1801, journeyed south through Madras, and northwards through Hyderabad, took almost a year to reach Poona, and circumscribed half India in doing so.

At Poona Elphinstone was placed under Colonel Barry Close, whom he nicknamed Fullan, or Forlorn. Arthur Wellesley had described Close as "the ablest man in the diplomatic line in India." Sir James Mackintosh was more specific. Close, he said,

has a calm understanding, wholly employed in practice, united to a strength of reserve which qualifies him equally for a cautious and vigorous policy. He is a very superior man, who might easily pass among common observers for a very common man.

Edward Thompson referred to Elphinstone as Close's "disciple" maintaining that Close taught Elphinstone self control, wisdom and tolerance. Philip Mason also commented that Close was "one of those founders of the Political Service

1. Literally "such a one", Colebrooke, I, p. 56 note. Colonel, later Sir Barry, Close is not to be confused with Lieut. R. Close who was Elphinstone's assistant at Nagpur and Poona, and who was later Resident with Sindia. Lieut. Close was probably the nephew of Sir Barry mentioned by Viscount Valentia, Voyages and Travels to India ..., 1802-1806, II, p. 126. Colonel Close died in England in 1813, C.E. Buckland, Dictionary of Indian Biography, p. 86, not at Hyderabad as P.C. Gupta states in Baji Rao and the East India Company, pp. 96-97.
who is not remembered only because he is overshadowed by his pupils .... Here [at Poona] Elphinstone learnt his work."¹

The influence of Close upon Elphinstone may have been overestimated. Elphinstone was with him for only a short time - from early 1802 till a year later, when the younger political left Poona to join Arthur Wellesley's army as a political secretary to the General. He does not appear to have seen Close again, except during a short visit the latter made to Nagpur in 1804. However, although the time Elphinstone spent with Close was brief, it was intensely busy and included the negotiation of the Treaty of Bassein. Close's enigmatic and non-committal conduct was well suited to foil the vagaries and contradictions of Maratha diplomacy, and as a practical example of diplomatic finesse may well have influenced Elphinstone's own delaying tactics during the Poona crisis of 1816-1817.

That Elphinstone admired Close is indisputable. When Close died he wrote

*I doubt whether such an assemblage of manly virtues remains behind him. A strong hardy frame, a clear head, and vigorous understanding, fixed principles, unshaken courage, contempt for pomp and pleasure, entire devotion to the public service, joined to the utmost modesty and simplicity ... - a character such as one would rather think imagined in ancient Rome than met with in our own age and nation.*²

It is true that Elphinstone's entries in his journal during

his period at Poona record various attempts at abstinence and self control, as if he were trying to emulate his chief. However, Close could not teach him the capacity for self criticism which caused Elphinstone to alter his conduct; the principles of moderation, according to which he tried to live, could equally have been the result of experience and maturity.

A case can also be made for Arthur Wellesley as an important influence in Elphinstone's life. The future Duke was one of the few who measured up to Elphinstone's idea of the heroic character. Elphinstone had been impressed with the General's calmness under fire at the battle of Assaye, and Arthur Wellesley had given him practical advice upon implementing treaties, according to the general principles on which they were negotiated. Elphinstone's references to Arthur Wellesley are more numerous than those dealing with Close, who is infrequently mentioned in the selection of Elphinstone's writings presented by Colebrooke.

Certainly Elphinstone changed his attitude towards Arthur Wellesley's brother, Lord Wellesley, at some time during, or immediately after, his term of office at Poona. Originally,

2. Elphinstone to John Adam, undated, c. Sep-Oct 1803, Colebrooke, I, p.72. Adam, Elphinstone's cousin, was secretary to various departments of the Supreme Government.
3. Arthur Wellesley to Elphinstone, 7 Jan 1804, Gurwood, II, pp.629-630.
4. Colebrooke's selection of Elphinstone's writings would be influenced by the fact that Arthur Wellesley was one of the heroes of the public for which Colebrooke was writing, whereas Close was, outside India, an unknown and obscure person.
he had disapproved of the Governor-General's policies, had composed an epigram criticising them and had dubbed Wellesley "Villainy." Colebrooke states that it was after the Assaye campaign that Elphinstone became one of Wellesley's supporters. While this change of attitude may have been due to the altered circumstances in which the Company found itself, or to the martial prowess of Arthur Wellesley, the grounds for the change may have been prepared by Close.

Although he did not concur in the Governor-General's expansive policies without some reservation, Close was basically a Wellesley man. He spoke respectfully of "Lord W." but lamented "that we knew not where to stop, and said that no government that had not fixed the extent of its conquests could be stable in anything." Questioned by Elphinstone upon the possibility of a Maratha war, he answered that "if anybody could think of such a thing it would be Lord Wellesley, but that even he could not run into so dreadful an evil for any ambitious designs." Close did, however, support the subsidiary system - his own experience of it at Mysore had been conspicuously successful - and he later wrote to Malcolm deploring the non-intervention policy of Cornwallis and Barlow. Close's opinions may have determined Elphinstone's

2. Ibid.
own support for Lord Wellesley's system. At any rate the
former seems to have been associated, in Elphinstone's mind,
with the subsidiary alliances; after the annexation of the
Deccan by the British Elphinstone reflected, "Poor Sir Barry
gone, and the system he was labouring to found already swept
away." ¹

Whatever the impact of Close and Arthur Wellesley upon
Elphinstone, their respective influences were not conflicting
or contradictory. The two men were friends and colleagues,
Close being the recipient of a large proportion of Arthur
Wellesley's published Indian despatches. The impression
gained from these despatches is that the two co-operated
easily and shared similar views; they were both conservative
and supported Lord Wellesley without giving him their
unqualified allegiance. If a distinction had to be made
between the impressions they made respectively upon Elphinstone,
it might be said that while Arthur Wellesley, an eminently
practical person, impressed Elphinstone as an heroic figure,
Close impressed him as a man.

Elphinstone's connection with Arthur Wellesley was,
however, of great practical advantage to Elphinstone. The
General obtained for him his first sole charge, the Nagpur
Residency - a position for which Elphinstone was, by 1804, so
well qualified that he found the work to be of a somewhat

routine nature. Arthur Wellesley wrote of him:

he is well versed in the languages, has experience and a knowledge of the interests of the Marhatta powers, and their relations with each other, and with the British government and its allies. He has been present in all the actions which have been fought in this quarter during the war and at all the sieges; he is acquainted with every transaction that has taken place, and with my sentiments upon all subjects. I therefore take the liberty of recommending him to Your Excellency.  

Elphinstone's career as a political falls conveniently into three parts. First, his period as Resident at Nagpur, which coincided with the policy of withdrawal under the Governors-General Cornwallis and Barlow; secondly, his mission to Kabul and the earlier, more peaceful, part of his Residency at Poona, which is closely connected with the gradual movement towards intervention under Lord Minto, and, finally, the latter part of his Residency at Poona, which witnessed the establishment of British paramountcy in India under the Marquis of Hastings.

CHAPTER II

NAGPUR

Elphinstone's main problem at Nagpur was a personal one. He was bored. His own tastes, the nature of Nagpur itself, and the fact that at the time more interesting appointments were available for young politicians elsewhere, made Nagpur altogether uncongenial. In Elphinstone's opinion public business ruined the sensibilities, and the lonely existence of a Resident was not conducive to a philosophic life, but rather to coarseness. ¹ Therefore, although longing for company, he further isolated himself by building a bungalow outside Nagpur, ² where he retired to study or to weep over old letters from Europe. ³ From the beginning he had been reluctant to go to Nagpur, because he dreaded the solitude of a society "where the people speak what they don't think in Moors", ⁴ and where later he discovered "I have no way open to my ambition." ⁵ He would have preferred to remain with the victorious army of Arthur Wellesley. ⁶ But the latter, who greatly respected his young assistant's abilities, had advised Elphinstone to go to Nagpur where there was a possibility of rapid promotion. ⁷

1. Fragment of a letter written by Elphinstone during the latter part of his Residency at Nagpur, Colebrooke, I, p.137.
3. Elphinstone to Strachey, 4 Apr 1806, ibid.
4. Elphinstone to Strachey, 18 Dec 1803, ibid., p.108; Moors = Hindustani.
7. Ibid.
This prediction proved correct, for Elphinstone, who was actually appointed Secretary to the Residency, became acting Resident on his arrival in January 1804, and in June of the same year was appointed Resident.

Relative to the rest of India little happened at Nagpur while Elphinstone was there. During his first year at the Residency, the British were involved in a war with Jeswant Rao Holkar in Hindustan and experienced a series of reverses at the hands of that chief, which marked the nadir of the Company's reputation in India during Elphinstone's period. This protracted war did much to damage Lord Wellesley's reputation, and was one reason for the Court of Directors demanding his recall. Then followed the controversial reversal of policy, initiated by the home authorities for economic reasons, and, carried out by Cornwallis and Barlow as Governors-General. It was decided to make peace immediately with Holkar, who had not yet been entirely subdued. Barlow also declared that British political involvement would cease at the Jumna river; a declaration which broke faith with several British allies, left the countries beyond the river prey to Maratha depredations, and provided a breeding ground for Pindaris.

2. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 15 Jun 1804, E. Corres., p.52. Elphinstone's appointment as Resident was due to the death of Josiah Webbe, who had originally been intended for the office.
3. The reverses were, the long siege of Bharatpur, Monson's retreat and Holkar's almost successful capture of Delhi.
4. For the Pindaris or freebooters, see below pp.120-121.
Together with other politicians, "men on the spot" such as Malcolm, Charles Metcalfe and Barry Close, Elphinstone deplored the policy of non-intervention. "Hang the subject!" he ejaculated "it makes me sick."\(^1\) He thought that the policy of conciliation was ill-timed, and should have been applied earlier, but that now only war would answer.\(^2\) The conciliation of Sindia, who had forcibly detained the British Resident, Richard Jenkins, during the war with Holkar, particularly incensed Elphinstone, who wrote to Strachey,

> I entirely concur in your censure of the conduct of all affairs with Sindia and Holkar, particularly with the former. While he behaved well he was bullied; when he did everything but murder our ambassador he was treated with kindness and respect.\(^3\)

In yet another letter to Strachey, Elphinstone summed up his views upon British expansion; views which he was to hold consistently till 1818 when the Company became virtually paramount in the subcontinent. He thought peace could be purchased with cessions only in the moment of victory. He knew

> as well as anybody how fatal extensive conquests are to a constitution like ours, and think it might have been well if we had never been forced into wars here; but I cannot believe that it is possible to recede. If you restore all your conquests your enemies are stronger,

2. Elphinstone to Strachey, 27 Sep 1805, ibid., p.134. Cf. the policy of appeasement of Germany in the 1930's.
3. Ibid.
but not less your enemies. Your generosity will only inflame their wounded pride, and give them a prospect of effacing their late disgraces.¹

The political agents also had a more personal interest in continuing Lord Wellesley's policy. As they were connected with it, both by virtue of having implemented it and by their own known views, they realised that their ambitions would have little hope of gratification under the new policy. "All my plans of removal", Elphinstone lamented, "of course end with Lord W.'s administration."²

Apart from the fact that he could possibly have been employed in a more exciting position Elphinstone disliked Nagpur for its remoteness. It was "completely separated from the great centres of interest in India"³ and looked "very inconsiderable."⁴ It does not appear to have been a centre of communications either, for few Englishmen passed through the town. The only hint of his discontent that Elphinstone ever dropped in an official despatch concerned this matter; he stated that

having been upwards of two years absent from English society I was induced to take advantage of the quiet state of affairs at Nagpoor and of the nearness of Colonel Doveton's encampment to pay a short visit to his Detachment.⁵

1. Elphinstone to Strachey, 18 Sep 1805, ibid., p.133.
2. Elphinstone to Strachey, 22 Aug 1805, ibid., p.132. At about the same time Charles Metcalfe wrote "all Secretaries are swept from the face of the earth; this, in all probability, will affect my prospects." Metcalfe to J.W. Sherer, 6 Aug 1805, Kaye, Life of Metcalfe, I, p.160.
4. Elphinstone, Journal, undated c. Jan 1804, Colebrooke, I, p.120.
Politically, Nagpur had traditionally inclined towards an isolationist policy and had "stood somewhat aloof from the politics of Poona, and maintained a neutrality very favourable to the British Government." Since the Treaty of Bassein, however, the state had inclined towards the other Maratha powers and had threatened British security. A recent historian of the Marathas has called the Nagpur state a "phantom power" with small revenues and a second-rate army. This view corroborates the assessments of nineteenth century historians, for example, Grant Duff who considered the Nagpur army inferior to those of Sindia and Holkar, which had sometimes severely taxed the abilities of the British. Malcolm would have agreed; he thought that habits of intrigue were deep rooted at Nagpur "for it is more to the efforts of its policy than of its arms that it has for many years past owed its existence." The Raja, Raghuji Bhonsla II, cannot therefore have been entirely lacking in ability. Elphinstone described this ruler as "a man of Business, the whole of his time is occupied in the affairs of his Government; he seems to attend to every department himself and nothing is done without his knowledge and directions." As a person the Raja was "an old, fat, black, mean fellow of fifty, very heavy looking and sad in his appearance, but quiet and civil in his

2. Sarkar, Foreword to P.R.C., V, p.ii.
manners."¹ T.E. Colebrooke, whose father Henry Colebrooke had been Resident at Nagpur before Elphinstone, described Raghuji as "feeble in energy and destitute of any military talents," and as pursuing a "trimming policy" of non-involvement.²

Despite the Bhonsla's weakness, Lord Wellesley was not prepared to risk a conflict, even with a phantom. He was aware of Nagpur's inferior army, but thought it would be dangerous added to a confederacy.³ Also, the Raja held strategic territories, the possession of which could prove inconvenient to the British, and, in Lord Wellesley's opinion, he derived an ascendancy and influence from his descent, the magnitude of his dominions and resources, his "supposed" wealth, and his hostility towards the British.⁴ To achieve the Governor-General's object of weakening and immobilising the Nagpur state the Treaty of Deogaon was concluded, on 17 December 1803, with the Bhonsla, after his defeat by Arthur Wellesley at the battle of Argaon.

The Treaty of Deogaon was not so much a subsidiary alliance as a treaty of peace; nevertheless it did contain elements of a subsidiary treaty. It excluded the subjects of European or American powers from service with the Raja; it

1. Elphinstone to Strachey, 12 Jan 1804, Colebrooke, I, p.121.
4. Ibid. Of all his territories and forts, commanding the dominions of the Company and the Nizam, the Raja's possession of Cuttack posed the greatest threat to British security.
required the Raja to renounce the Maratha confederacy formed against the British; it provided for the mediation of the Company in disputes between the Raja and the Nizam, and established a permanent Resident at the Nagpur court. Legally, therefore, the Bhonsla's sovereignty was limited in the field of external relations, in particular his right to make peace or war. The British also took advantage of their position to demand a considerable amount of territory from Raghuji.

Arthur Wellesley, who had negotiated the treaty with the Bhonsla as well as one with Sindia, naturally took a personal interest in their success. He complained to Malcolm that although he had made "two very good treaties of peace" he had not the influence to carry them into execution. His interest in appointing Elphinstone to Nagpur, or to Sindia's court, was therefore probably motivated by a desire to ensure that the treaty was interpreted as he intended. Elphinstone was really the ideal person to implement the treaty for he had been present at all the negotiations and was acquainted with Arthur Wellesley's opinions and with those of Malcolm, who had several long conversations with the prospective Resident before the latter departed for Nagpur.

It was Elphinstone's first duty to ensure that the stipulations of the treaty were carried out and to supervise

the cessions of territory required by the treaty. His other tasks were to prevent the Raja joining any future confederacy against the British, and to conclude a subsidiary alliance with the Bhonsla.

In their demand that the Raja cede certain territories to them, the British had been motivated by a desire both to weaken the Nagpur state and to prevent future disputes by rationalising the frontiers of the Company and its allies. The principal areas acquired by the Treaty of Deogaon were the province of Berar, which lay south-west of Nagpur and adjacent to Hyderabad, the province of Cuttack, which separated the British presidencies of Fort William (Bengal) and Madras, and finally an area to the west of Cuttack including the parganas of Sambalpur and Patna.¹

In Berar the territories and revenue claims of the Bhonsal and the Nizam were intermixed "in a manner that seems strange to Europeans."² To prevent confusion the British transferred all the districts west of the Wardha river to the Nizam's authority alone. The "great object" gained by this measure, in Arthur Wellesley's opinion, was the establishment of a definitive frontier³ which "freed him [the Bhonsla] from the continual contests naturally attending the

1. Pargana, a district.
2. Colebrooke, I, p.112.
exercise of double authority in collecting revenues of the same country. "1 The Governor-General had also hoped that the elimination of the Bhonsla's claims upon the Nizam would curtail his influence at the Court of Hyderabad.2 However, a definitive frontier was not really established for the Raja was permitted to retain the fortress of Gawilgarh,3 which lay to the west of the river Wardha, as well as certain districts which he shared with the Nizam east of the river.4

Cuttack was the most valuable cession under the Treaty of Deogaon. It was naturally a wealthy area,5 and had long been coveted by the British.6 Lord Wellesley thought the area important apart from the financial and commercial viewpoint; the intermixture of the Company's territories with those of the Marathas, on the southern frontier of Midnapur, had occasioned disputes between the subjects of both and had provided an asylum for robbers in Maratha territory.7 Strategically, the British would also benefit by the possession of Cuttack. Communications could be established more easily between Bengal and Madras, the Bengal frontier would be strengthened against the Marathas,8 who previously held land almost up to Calcutta,9

the navigation of the Mahanadi river would be commanded,\(^1\)
and the Marathas would be cut off from the sea and possible
contact with foreign enemies of the British.\(^2\)

The remaining districts acquired by the British, namely
the *parganas* of Sambalpur and Patna, were of neither strategic
nor economic value. They were covered in jungle, scantily
populated and ruled by petty Rajput chiefs, over whom the
Marathas had set up claims to supremacy and tribute, but over
whom they had never been able to establish any recognised
influence or authority.\(^3\) Although the region controlled the
passes into Cuttack, and therefore the trade of that province
with Nagpur and the passage of invaders,\(^4\) in Arthur Wellesley's
opinion to secure this additional barrier to Cuttack was an
inferior object to ridding the province of Berar of the
Bhonsla.\(^5\) Sambalpur and Patna had actually been acquired as
part of the operations of the 1803 war without any thought of
annexing them to British territory.\(^6\) The Governor-General had
ordered that the inhabitants be conciliated and that
proclamations be issued offering protection to all who did
not oppose the British.\(^7\) Also, treaties were to be made with

\(^1\) George Harcourt, Commissioner for Cuttack, to Elphinstone,
24 Mar 1804, *Selections from the Nagpur Residency Records*,
E. Corres., p. vi.

\(^2\) G.G. in Council to Secret Committee, 13 Jul 1804, Martin,
IV, p. 134.

\(^3\) Mill and Wilson, *History of British India*, VII, p. 41.

\(^4\) Colonel E.S. Broughton to Elphinstone, 28 Jan 1804, E. Corres.,
enclosures p. v.


\(^6\) G.G. in Council to Secret Committee, 13 Jul 1804, Martin,
IV, p. 167.

\(^7\) G.G. to Lieut. Colonel Campbell, commanding the Northern
Division of the army, 3 Aug 1803, Martin, III, pp. 269-271.
those chiefs, or zamindars, who had rendered themselves independent of the Marathas, and they were at least to acknowledge the Company’s authority. As the inhabitants welcomed and assisted the British forces against the Marathas, this technique (which was similar to that used by Arthur Wellesley during his operations in the southern lands of the Peshwa, when he was restoring Baji Rao) appears to have been successful. However, the British were in a dilemma after the conclusion of the peace, for they had to decide whether to abide by their understandings with the zamindars, or to conciliate the Raja by returning the former to his jurisdiction.

Under the 10th article of the Treaty of Deogaon, the Raja had agreed to confirm all treaties made between his subjects and the British before the treaty was concluded, and a list of zamindars affected by this article was to be forwarded subsequently by the British to the Bhonsla; through this loophole the Company took more territory than the Raja expected. Arthur Wellesley questioned the justice of the Governor-General claiming the operation of the 10th article so extensively, and questioned the nature of the agreements made with the zamindars, which he dismissed as "previous verbiage". In his opinion general letters, typical of what British officers received from Indians, had been construed as proper treaties by the

1. Ibid.; Zamindar, a landholder.
Governor-General, whose moderation "in any other man would pass current for ambition," to increase the limits of British acquisitions. Arthur Wellesley also accused the "men on the spot," the Commissioners for Cuttack, of forcing a construction upon the treaties "which will tend to the increase of their own petty power and authority."\(^2\)

The Governor-General, however, did admit that the agreements were not proper treaties, but he held that the British were nevertheless bound where both sides had concurred in "certain reciprocal obligations"\(^3\) and where evidence existed of such a contract. However, Lord Wellesley's brother thought the Raja had been deceived and that his own promise to the Raja's vakil, that the 10th article would be liberally construed, had not been fulfilled.\(^4\) He declared that the national faith had gone "to the devil"\(^5\) and that he was "dispirited and disgusted with this transaction beyond measure".\(^6\)

Influenced perhaps by his brother's public letters, the Governor-General decided that to establish a reputation for moderation and justice amongst the Indians\(^7\) and to conciliate the Raja were more important objects than the annexation of

Sambalpur and Patna. To prove that considerations of preserving public faith had alone induced him to annex the areas, he assured the Raja that the British had no intention of exercising authority over the zamindars and offered to guarantee the full amount of revenue which the Raja derived from the territories and also to compensate him for his loss of dominion. He did, however, insist upon the justice of British actions and emphasised that the compensation was for loss of dominion and revenue and was in no way intended as reparation for an act of injustice. Lord Wellesley also offered to return Sambalpur and Patna to the Raja if the zamindars agreed to release the British from their engagements, a contingency which the Governor-General knew was highly unlikely. Lord Wellesley's offer foreshadows the policy of Cornwallis and Barlow and illustrates the point, made by Thompson and Garratt in another context, that the withdrawal policy actually began under the Marquis. The Raja, however, while acknowledging the list of zamindars refused to accept compensation, an indication that he had not yet renounced his claim to the districts.

2. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 4 Mar 1804, ibid., p. 21.
3. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 5 Sep 1804, ibid., pp. 69-70.
4. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 4 Mar 1804, ibid., p. 21.
5. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 6 Mar 1804, ibid., p. 24.
7. Marquis Wellesley to the Court of Directors, 13 Jul 1804, Martin, IV, p. 169.
Cornwallis decided to restore Sambalpur and Patna to the Raja for two reasons: to economise by doing away with the expense of defending "those distant and unprofitable territories", and to conciliate the Bhonsla, who had suffered more than Sindia and Holkar by a war in which he had taken the least part. Writing in general terms to Raghuji, Cornwallis expressed a wish to regulate his conduct according to the principles of his previous administration, and his intention to abstain from interference and to compensate the Raja. Although it was unlikely that the British would restore all their conquests, the Raja chose to interpret Cornwallis' letter as a promise to return all he had lost including Berar and Cuttack. It was Elphinstone's task to "explain away the precipitate generosity of the noble writer" and to dispel the Raja's misconceptions. The Raja would, Elphinstone thought, act on British fears in the hope of getting more. The Raja however had some reason to hope, for, he rightly contended that there was little difference between the Company's giving up Sambalpur and its restoring Cuttack

2. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 13 Sep 1805, E. Corres., p.228.
3. Cornwallis to Raja Raghuji Bhonsla, 18 Sep 1805, P.R.G., V, pp.159-160. Cornwallis was Governor-General of India from 1786 to 1793. His second term was from 30 Jul to 5 Oct 1805.
and Berar. The British argued, with some plausibility, that they could not dispose of Berar, which now belonged to the Nizam, but "with less show of reason," that they could not be expected to surrender Cuttack, which had been acquired in a defensive war not a war of regular ambition; an argument which, if used at all, could not be applied to Cuttack alone. They also protested that they were pledged to protect the landowners of Cuttack, but this was equally true of the zamindars of Sambalpur and Patna. The zamindars were eventually persuaded to renounce their claims in the area in return for grants of territory elsewhere. However when the time came they refused either to evacuate the country or to submit to the Raja's officers. Although Wilson is to a certain extent right in stating that the zamindars' conduct was held to exonerate the British from protecting or compensating them, Elphinstone did suggest that the Governor-General might take an interest in the zamindars, "notwithstanding the levity and inconsistency of their late conduct." The advice was accepted, together with the

5. Ibid.
7. Elphinstone to G.C., 8 Dec 1806, P.R.C., V, pp. 181-182.
Resident's proposals providing for the evacuation of some of the leading zamindars. These proposals were designed to put into effect the Governor-General's original plan of conciliating the Raja and providing for the zamindars. Although the Company returned Sambalpur and Patna to Raghuji it unequivocally rejected all the Raja's claims to be put in possession of the area on the grounds that, among other things, it was inconsistent with the relationship in which the British stood to the zamindars to use force against them.

Nowhere does Elphinstone explicitly record his own views upon the question of the zamindars, and it is possible only to suggest his opinion. In the case of Lord Wellesley's initial adherence to the understandings with the zamindars, it would appear that Elphinstone's silence implied consent. In a private letter to Strachey he wrote of his impatience of the Raja's "cool way of refusing to confirm the treaties with the Zemindars". He did not attribute this refusal to any claim to justice on the part of Raghuji (who, Elphinstone felt, really recognised the British claim) but to a desire to enhance the value of his sacrifice. Before the Bhonsla's ministers at least, Elphinstone assumed that the Company's word bound them to the zamindars rather than to the Bhonsla,

1. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 1 Jan 1807, E. Corres., p. 358.
2. Elphinstone to G.G., 8 Dec 1806, P.R.C., V, p. 184.
4. Elphinstone to G.G., 8 Dec 1806, P.R.C., V, p. 183.
for he said that if the British broke their faith in this case they could not expect anyone, including Raghuji, to trust them again. 1 Under Cornwallis and Barlow Elphinstone continued to reserve his personal opinion on the matter of the zamindars. In this case, however, his silence can probably be attributed to dissent and to his ambition, for as one who held pro-Wellesley views, he could not afford to displease his new superiors. There is evidence of dissent in a remark recorded in his journal: "in the present discussions I am embarrassed by Lord Cornwallis's excessive professions". 2 Arguing by analogy with Elphinstone's opinions on the withdrawal policy effected by Cornwallis and Barlow in Hindustan, it may perhaps be assumed that he would have disapproved of the return of Sambalpur and Patna to Nagpur.

The return of these parganas to Nagpur neither conciliated nor strengthened the Bhonsla, whose hopes of gaining more had merely been encouraged, and while his expectations remained unfulfilled he continued to harbour grievances against the British. The situation bears certain similarities to that which obtained at Poona, where the British had virtually bound themselves to the Peshwa's jagirdars 3 before concluding a treaty with the Peshwa himself. Both zamindars and Raja,

1. Ibid., p.32.
3. Jagirdar, holder of a jagir, an assignment of land and its rent with or without conditions of service.
like the Peshwa and his jagirdars, had either legal or moral claims upon the British, who tried rather unsuccessfully to please both. The Company's behaviour, in the case of the Bhonsla and the zamindars, was not entirely consistent with the agreements it had made, but, as both the policy of recognising the zamindars' claims and the policy of recognising the Bhonsla's claims could be justified, the British supported first one side and afterwards the other according to their convenience; they did not forget that "the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost."¹

*   *   *

In addition to dealing with cessions of territory Elphinstone had to prevent the Bhonsla joining any confederacy against the British. To achieve this he had to rely upon a system of intelligence and the Company's reputation. He was convinced that Raghuji would renew the war if given an opportunity,

because this man's character makes it probable that he will conspire to involve us in another war. If we know of his machinations, I believe it possible to defeat them without force. If we do not we must have a contest which will end in his ruin.²

Thus a major part of his work involved intelligence;³ indeed, one of the reasons for establishing a permanent Resident at

Nagpur under the Treaty of Deogaon was to acquire information, which had previously been difficult to obtain from that court. It was also necessary to maintain British dignity and an appearance of confidence, for British power in India then, and subsequently, was based to a not inconsiderable degree upon reputation. A Resident's behaviour could influence the conception the court at which he resided had of British power. This aspect of a Resident's duties was particularly important in 1804, when the British were so embarrassed by Holkar's successes.

The British attitude towards the Bhonsla was typical of their ambivalent attitude towards the Marathas in general. The principle upon which the peace treaties with Sindia, Holkar and the Bhonsla were made was to reduce the power of every state individually, so that the Company would be secure from further aggression, while at the same time leaving the states with enough strength to preclude any change in the political balance amongst them. The British did not really want "a contest which will end in his ruin", because even if they succeeded in establishing a government at Nagpur "it must be weak and precarious." Thus, although the Treaty of Deogaon was intended to weaken the Raja, the British were also interested in maintaining some degree of his strength: for

2. Jenkins to Minto, 30 Dec 1811, P.R.C., V, pp. 388-389.
example, they encouraged him to increase his forces against the Pindaris.  

The Raja for his part was also of a divided mind, and the British were quite aware that his views varied "according to the temporary aspect or supposed condition of affairs." Barry Close advised Elphinstone that "the Rajah's policy is to preserve the independence of his Government by pursuing a middle line, calculated to save him from the necessity of uniting with either side." But, continued Close, he might abandon this "insecure system of policy" if Sindia's fortunes rose and if there were a possibility of his regaining his territories. However, it was unlikely he would place himself in the hands of a plundering band. Although Raghji still cautiously followed a "trimming policy", he could not really be as neutral in his sentiments as he was before 1803, for now he had a grievance. "He could not forgive himself for his folly in throwing away his family's long neutrality and joining a losing cause, or forgive the British for having stripped him of his best territories." His conduct, during Elphinstone's term of office, can be regarded as an attempt to regain his lost possessions by negotiation or force.

Raghji's efforts seem to have been directed towards

1. Elphinstone to G.G., 5 Mar 1805, E. Corres., p. 179.
2. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 22 Dec 1804, P.R.C., V, p. 215.
3. Colonel Close to Elphinstone, 30 May 1805, Ibid., p. 123.
4. Ibid.
Colebrooke, I, p. 111, expresses a similar opinion.
Cuttack and Berar. Immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of Deogaon he disbanded his troops and tried to persuade the British to recognise his rights over the zamindars on the frontiers of Cuttack and to return various cessions transferred to the Nizam "out of friendship and favour." His failure perhaps contributed to his future hostile schemes.

Concurrent with Holkar's success in Hindustan the Bhonsla began to assemble troops near Hoshangabad in a position where it would have been easy to effect a junction with Sindia and Amir Khan. However, as it became apparent that the movements of the Raja's troops were not designed to recover Hoshangabad, Elphinstone was led to conclude that the recovery of that fortress, and the invasion of Amir Khan, were misrepresentations which were intended to enable the Raja to effect such a junction. In a letter, in answer to one of Holkar's many invitations to join a confederacy, Raghuji had replied that, if his country had not been so exposed, he would

4. Hoshangabad, a fortress of the Bhonsla's which had rebelled while his army was involved with the British. Elphinstone to Arthur Wellesley, 17 Jan 1804, E. Corres., p. 6.
have shown his attachment but that if the confederates moved into the Deccan he would co-operate against Berar or Cuttack.¹ Elphinstone had certain information that the Raja would join with Holkar and invade Cuttack,² and evidence existed of his hostile intrigues with his officers on the frontiers of that province.³ While intrigues were afoot in Cuttack, Raghiji's brother, Nana Saheb, assembled troops and invaded Berar, and although the Raja disclaimed any association with it Elphinstone considered the latter responsible.⁴

The mobilisation of the Raja's troops, the invasion of Amir Khan, and the invasion of Berar which followed shortly afterwards, occurred during the latter half of 1804 and were really the only notable incidents which interrupted the peace of Elphinstone's stay at Nagpur, apart from occasional, and as yet not formidable, Pindari raids. Elphinstone's reaction to these incidents provides an opportunity to observe the conduct of a "man on the spot", and some of the considerations governing his conduct.

At first Elphinstone had abstained from remonstrating to the Raja against the mobilisation of troops, because he did not think the troops were in a dangerous position,⁵ and because he did not want to prejudice British operations in Hindustan, where events were not favouring the Company. He thought that,

1. Elphinstone to G.C., 12 Aug 1805, E. Corres., p.216.
3. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 4 Oct 1804, E.Corrès., p.78.
5. Elphinstone to G.C., 1 Nov 1804, ibid., p.90.
if the Raja were awaiting the outcome of the contest with Holkar, it would be to the Company's advantage to avoid bringing matters to an issue. Nevertheless Elphinstone was conscious of the necessity of maintaining the British reputation, and therefore he tried to dissuade Raghuji from assembling more troops. He feared that, if he admitted the Raja's excuses for doing so, the Nagpur court would attribute such an admission to the desire of the British to avoid a rupture. The result would be to "remove his fear of our power and induce him to hasten his operations." For delaying his remonstrance till after Amir Khan's invasion, Elphinstone was severely criticised by the Supreme Government. It was said that he had "tacitly permitted" the preparation of troops and had unwisely believed rumours of Holkar's success. His actions "were not consistent with the judgement and discretion which you have manifested in the general tenor of your conduct at the Court of Nagpur" and in future he would learn not to ascribe to Holkar "any extraordinary exertion or any degree of military skill, gallantry or enterprise".

In delaying the remonstrance in order to prevent bringing matters to an issue, Elphinstone had, in fact, acted in accordance with the Governor-General's instructions of

1. Elphinstone to Colonel Close, 28 Jan 1805, P.R.C., V, p.111.
2. Elphinstone to G.G., 1 Nov 1804, E. Corres., pp.87-88.
4. Secretary to Government to Elphinstone, 22 Dec 1804, ibid., p.218.
4 October 1804. The incident, therefore, illustrates, first, Elphinstone's caution - he had pursued the safest course considering that he was isolated at Nagpur with about sixty men - and secondly, his ability to act as part of a corps. He thought of affairs in Hindustan and did not seek to direct the spotlight onto himself by precipitating a crisis at Nagpur.

On the occasion of the invasion of Berar by the Raja's subjects, Elphinstone was quick to remedy his mistake and to assert the dignity of the British government. He immediately held the Raja responsible and decided to quit Nagpur if the Bhonsla did not agree to his demands. If he remained at Nagpur, Elphinstone thought, "it would give rise to a most improper opinion of our reluctance to meet the Raja's attack", and that, if the Raja's army remained where it was, it would encourage his hostile designs while it "lowered the character of Your Excellency's Government in the eyes of the natives." Elphinstone also thought that if Raghiji discharged his troops it would shake the confidence of Sindia and Amir Khan in him.

Arthur Wellesley, who had a high opinion of Elphinstone, disagreed with the latter's precipitate conduct over the invasion of Berar and questioned the justice of holding a ruler such as the Bhonsla responsible for his subjects. However

1. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 4 Oct 1804, E. Corres., p. 79.
2. Elphinstone mentions a small force, twenty seven sepoys and about as many Mysore horse. Elphinstone to G.C., 29 Nov 1804, ibid., p. 114.
3. Elphinstone to G.C., 5 Dec 1804, ibid., p. 120.
4. Ibid.
5. Elphinstone to G.C., 7 Dec 1804, ibid., p. 125.
6. Arthur Wellesley to Lord W. Bentinck, 11 Jan 1805, Gurwood, III, pp. 604-605. The same question is raised today by Lebanese guerrilla activities against Israel.
Elphinstone could not afford to be so charitable. For it was he who would be held responsible for failing to prevent any threat to the British, as the Governor-General's criticism of his delayed remonstrance against the previous mobilisation of troops had shown. Elphinstone's response to the invasion of Berar seems, however, to have reinstated him in the favour of the Supreme Government. Although the Governor-General could "not altogether approve" his resolution to withdraw from Nagpur, in the specific circumstances, he attributed Elphinstone's conduct to the "excess of a meritorious and honourable zeal for the public interests". ¹

* * *

Elphinstone did not successfully accomplish his remaining task, that of concluding a subsidiary alliance. Usually the opportunity to conclude such an arrangement arose during a succession crisis in which one candidate appealed to the British for support. But no such crisis occurred at Nagpur till 1816, after Elphinstone's departure, when his successor Richard Jenkins was able to negotiate a subsidiary treaty. Overtures for the granting of a British force were made, in the early days of Elphinstone's Residency, by one of Raghují's ministers, ² but they appear to have been a gesture to conciliate the British rather than a serious proposal. ³

2. Elphinstone to G.G., 20 Dec 1804, ibid., p. 130.
Arthur Wellesley had thought that if the Raja was sincere he would request a subsidiary force immediately after the peace of 1803. However, Elphinstone more correctly predicted that he would not do anything until matters with Holkar were settled. The Governor-General had really chosen the wrong time to try to conclude such a treaty, for during 1804 the Bhonsla still manifested signs of restlessness and hostility.

By the time the war with Holkar was drawing to a close Lord Wellesley did not consider the state of Indian affairs rendered a subsidiary alliance with the Bhonsla absolutely essential; while, after his departure, the policy of non-intervention precluded the extension of the subsidiary alliance system. Elphinstone had, at one time, thought that the threat of invasion by Sindhia or Amir Khan might lead the Raja to solicit an alliance. The Raja, however, hoped to receive the benefits of British assistance without the inconvenience of a subsidiary treaty. His expectations were not altogether unrealistic as proposals for aiding the Raja, in the event of a serious threat, were mooted by the British and eventually, in 1809-1810, the Bhonsla did receive aid against the Pindaris.

without a subsidiary treaty being imposed as a condition.

Although the treaty with Nagpur did not provide for the most characteristic feature of the subsidiary alliance system, namely a subsidiary force within the ally's dominions, it may be argued that this was immaterial, for in some cases the effects of the treaty with Nagpur were the same. Despite the fact that there was no strong detachment on the spot to enforce the Company's wishes, the Resident could always rely on the threat of force to bolster his authority. The Raja did tend to illustrate the point that Indian rulers, united to the British by the subsidiary system, were inclined to rely upon British aid rather than their own exertions for defence. For example Raghují hoped the British would put him in possession of Sambalpur and Patna, and during the Pindari invasions of 1805

placed his whole dependance on the English, and that considering the friendship which existed between his State and ours, he trusted he had little to fear from the enemies who now threatened him.

However the Raja did on occasion exert himself. He was victorious against invaders in 1805, and in 1809 repulsed a considerable body of Pindaris before the arrival of British assistance.

2. Elphinstone to G.G., 11 Jun 1805, Ibid., p. 201.
Materially, the Treaty of Deogaon may perhaps have weakened the Raja. His ministers certainly attributed Nagpur's problems, confused finances, and difficulty in paying the army and defending the country to the losses sustained in the war. However his territories seem to have been generally unproductive and inhabited by indigenous races from whom it was difficult to collect tribute. Some of his most valuable territory had been lost in the war and the country he was left with was unproductive. But how much revenue he derived from the areas he lost is debatable. Cuttack had been valuable because, among other things, the Raja had derived prestige and revenue from the possession of Juggernautpur, a centre of Hindu pilgrimage. From the west of the Wardha river he had apparently derived little revenue and the same was true of Sambalpur and Patna, which belonged to his brother.

The subsidiary alliances often encouraged further British intervention within the allied states. Major Close, who was Elphinstone's assistant at Nagpur, said that no opening had been provided for interference at Nagpur because no subsidiary

1. Elphinstone to Minto, 23 Mar 1803, E. Corres., p.360.
treaty had been concluded. It is true that, during Elphinstone's Residency, the British were able to adhere to a policy of non-interference in internal affairs fairly closely. Apart from spying, pensioning ministers and implementing British policy in relation to the zamindars, the only instance of the Resident interfering in internal affairs was on the occasion of the invasion of Berar, when Elphinstone demanded that Raghujı confiscate his brother's jagir and sequester his person as proof of his intention to desist from hostilities.

The placing of a Resident at an Indian durbar almost invariably aroused opposition. At Nagpur on the one hand stood the Resident, the chief minister Shridhar Pandit, and the vakils Jeswant Rao Ramchandra and Jaikishan Rao, and on the other hand a group opposed to the British and led by Vyankoji Manja Bapu, the Raja's younger brother, who was commonly known as Nana Sahib and who was always supported by his mother.

The former group, which for convenience sake could be called "the ministers", was attached to the British by the granting of pensions. The ministers' interests also lay with the British because the latter had allowed them to retain their possessions in Berar, when the province had been transferred to the Nizam. They seemed to rely on British security for

1. Major Close, Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, East India Affairs, P.P. 1831-1832, XIV, p. 47.
2. Elphinstone to G.G., 7 Dec 1804, R. Corres., p. 122. The jagir was subsequently restored. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 14 Mar 1805, ibid., p. 189.
they asked that their pensions might take the form of land within the Company's territories around Benares. However, as the ministers incurred the Raja's displeasure for holding that the only safe course he could adopt was to adhere to the British, it would appear that they were not motivated by self interest alone but were genuinely trying to promote Nagpur's interests.

Vyankoji, described by Elphinstone as "almost the avowed enemy of our government and partisan of the enemy," had "always been of the war faction". Unlike the ministers, he had suffered by the Treaty of Deogaon, for he had lost Sambalpur and Patna. That Vyankoji should oppose his brother's allies was not surprising, for he had long been hostile to Raghoji, and was probably jealous because the British did not support his own schemes. In Henry Colebrooke's time Vyankoji had approached the British for support and Elphinstone was to receive similar overtures inviting him to support Vyankoji's aspirations to independence.

Vyankoji's overtures indicate that he cannot have been opposed

2. Elphinstone to G.C., 29 Apr 1808, ibid., p.367.
to the British as such but was prepared to conciliate them for his own advantage. Owing to the confidence the Raja had placed in Vyankoji during the war against the British, Elphinstone inclined to think that the Raja did not distrust his brother. However, the threat of the Company in 1803-1804 had produced many extraordinary, but temporary, unions among the Marathas and Vyankoji's subsequent overtures to Elphinstone do not demonstrate an inclination to co-operate with the Raja. Jeswant Rao said that Elphinstone overestimated the brothers' friendship, which was a hollow affection preserved by their mother. It would appear then that in the case of Nagpur the British, by appointing a Resident to the court, had not really created opposition but had only supported a pre-existing faction. The situation is, in fact, illustrative of Professor McIntyre's assertion that "intervention was never impartial" because the intervening power had to support "one strand of local political evolution."

In carrying out the Supreme Government's orders in relation to Nagpur Elphinstone was reasonably successful. He persuaded the Raja to accept the list of zamindars with whom the British had made treaties, and he protested against the Raja's mobilisation of troops upon the frontiers and

2. Elphinstone to G.G., 20 Dec 1804, ibid., p.128.
forced him to withdraw them. However, that the Raja did not join a confederacy was more likely a result of his own caution and the insuspicious circumstances than of Elphinstone's cajoling and threats. It is indicative of the true foundation of British influence in India that, on all the occasions when Elphinstone compelled the Bhonsla to adopt a policy against his will, persuasion was supported by the threat of force or of the withdrawal of the Resident, which was in effect the same thing. For to break diplomatic relations was to declare war. Elphinstone did fail to conclude a subsidiary alliance and this was the one thing which could not be imposed upon the Bhonsla, for it had to appear as if solicited by him¹ - and soliciting such an alliance was an expedient he would not resort to unless he was in the most unfavourable circumstances. It was, therefore, really a matter of luck or contingency that Jenkins, not Elphinstone, eventually concluded the alliance.

At Nagpur Elphinstone had, for the first time, sole charge of a Residency and the sole responsibility for the decisions he made. He had to reconcile his own ideas of nobility of character, his personal principles and his integrity, with the actions required of him as a diplomat. The clandestine methods by which intelligence was obtained worried him because

¹. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 31 Dec 1804, E. Corres., p.159.
I hate anything that is secret and indirect, and abhor to do what I should be unwilling to avow. If the Raja discovered that I was inquiring into the situation of his armies and the intrigues of his Court, what should I say? I should avow it.

He decided that cunning management was "contrary to my own character and that of my nation". Thus he refused to enter into hostile, secret negotiations with Raghiji's disaffected brother, and saw no reason to conceal from the Bhonsla the fact that the British were granting pensions to his ministers. At about this time, reflecting upon the French Revolution, Elphinstone concluded that in turbulent times a man must abandon common rules and fix his eyes "on some few broad principles, which he should determine on before he enters the scene." He had once asked how far one could justly go to procure intelligence and on another occasion declared "it appears to me indispensable to try every way to get it". Seen in the light of his thoughts upon the French Revolution, it would appear that he resolved to use any means to gain intelligence to the greater end of preserving British power. He decided to become intimate with Jaikishan Rao and to discuss business with him, but he felt his own particular fault was a "want of boldness, and respecting too

4. Ibid., p.169.
6. Elphinstone to Strachey, 12 Jan 1804, ibid., p.121.
much the talents and integrity of the natives." In fact, on a personal level he seems to have succeeded in conciliating the Nagpur court. It was reported "that the Raja and his ministers are much pleased with him", while Elphinstone's major opponent at the court, Vyankoji, displayed no personal animosity towards him and suggested that, although they had ceased to meet in public, they might say "how d'ye" when out riding.

On the whole Elphinstone had rather an unexciting time at Nagpur; he had written to John Adam at Calcutta that "a child could do the business here that was likely to take place". Perhaps the very value of the experience, which gave little indication of the interesting career to follow, lay in its unexciting nature. It provided an opportunity for a high spirited young man, flushed with pride in Arthur Wellesley's military victories, to work out the principles governing his conduct as a diplomat and to learn his diplomacy the hard way, amidst the petty intrigues of a court which could, without prejudice, be termed a backwater.

CHAPTER III

POONA I

That Lord Minto was, in his time, one of India's most underrated Governors-General is a view now so generally held by historians that an examination of the activities carried out under his auspices is worthwhile. His administration has been described as one of "quiet consolidation" within India while his external policy was designed "to cement the cracks in the Company's north-western front and then to attack the remaining centres of French power." In the specific areas of Afghanistan and Poona, Elphinstone was instrumental in carrying out Lord Minto's external and internal policies respectively.

Elphinstone's last days at Nagpur, and his subsequent short term as acting Resident with Sindia, had occurred during Lord Minto's early rule but nothing of great moment had happened. Writing to his friend Strachey, Elphinstone confessed his lack of confidence in the new Governor-General. He believed that he observed "a hesitation, a want of decision," which he considered "quite fearful in times like these, when a Governor must be ruined if his objects are not clear, his plans bold, and his execution rapid and vigorous." 3

1. Thompson and Garratt, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule, p. 246.
3. Elphinstone adds: "For God's sake tear or burn this, for fear the Laird of Stobbs should seize the opportunity of showing his firmness by turning me out of my place." Elphinstone to Strachey, 5 Jul 1808, Colebrooke, I, pp. 181-182. Gilbert Elliot of Stobbs was the ancestor of Lord Minto.
The ruin predicted did not overtake Lord Minto, who displayed an ability to act boldly when necessary. But, he differed from previous Governors-General in that he preferred to delay, when he thought it was unaccompanied by danger, and to reconcile the authorities in England to the measures he contemplated. The important result of his conduct was to impress the home authorities with the impracticability of persevering in a neutral policy. What was, perhaps, more important to Elphinstone personally was that employment was provided to satisfy his craving for activity.

The mission to Kabul was the great hope and the great disappointment of Elphinstone's career. He had requested the task himself, in the hope of rendering himself useful and of gratifying his ambition. However although he fulfilled the objects of his embassy, namely the conclusion of a defensive alliance against the prospective French invasion, his efforts were negated by the deposition, shortly afterwards, of the King with whom he had negotiated. The episode had a significant effect upon Elphinstone's character; it is

2. Ibid., p.440.
3. The kingdom of Kabul had broken away from Persia in 1747 on the death of Nadir Shah of Persia; from this event the existence of Afghanistan as a nation dates. Ahmad Shah Durrani, the first king of the new state, defeated the Marathas at the Battle of Panipat in 1761 during one of the many Afghan invasions of India. See Arnold Fletcher, Afghanistan, Highway of Conquest, pp.40-42, 53-55.
Elphinstone wrote his Account of the Kingdom of Cabaul on his return from the mission.
supposed to have cured him of ambition.¹

The experience was not entirely unprofitable, however, for Elphinstone was able to formulate his opinions upon the limitation of British expansion in the north-west of the subcontinent. Here, no particularly definite political barriers existed to impede the British advance.

For strategic reasons, Elphinstone thought it unwise to send an army to Afghanistan, even as an ally, for to do so would be "to meet the French on equal terms and to waive the advantages of the strong position to the westward presented by the rivers of the Punjab, the Indus, and the desert."² However, as some influence was necessary to counteract the possible machinations of the French, Elphinstone was prepared to suggest that a small subsidy paid to the King would enable him to overcome his rivals, lend stability to his government, and bind him to British interests against western invaders.³

Having created an efficient ally out of Kabul, which Elphinstone regarded as preferable to Persia for such purposes, the Company could then turn its whole "attention and resources to the defence of the noble frontier formed by the desert, the mountains and the Indus."⁴

Sind was another possible avenue of French infiltration, and Elphinstone did not exclude the possibility of actually

1. J.S. Cotton, Mountstuart Elphinstone and the Making of South-Western India, p.75.
3. Ibid., pp.219-220.
acquiring the country. This possibility had arisen when the
government of Afghanistan, the acknowledged nominal ruler of
Sind, found itself in financial difficulties and offered the
British, first, the revenue of Sind as security for a loan, and
then the complete cession of the area in return for an annual
payment.¹ At first Elphinstone rejected the proposal.² But,
when he received intelligence of the likelihood of French and
Persian interests being established in Sind to the exclusion
of the British, he placed the proposal before the Governor-
General and accompanied it with the suggestion that it would
be "more for the benefit of both states that we should take
Sind for ourselves than for the King of Cabul."³

As the French threat had passed by the time the suggestion
was received at Calcutta it was not accepted. To the somewhat
severe reprimand, which accompanied its rejection, Elphinstone
replied that he had not been motivated by "mere purposes of
aggrandisement."⁴ His intention, admittedly founded on
imperfect information, was to preclude the chiefs of Sind
transferring their allegiance to Persia,⁵ which was open to
French influence. Elphinstone's suggestions regarding Sind
may have been "a spasm of youthful diplomatic energy to which,
doubtless, in his maturer years, he did not look back with
much satisfaction."⁶ However, Elphinstone had strategic

². Ibid.
³. Elphinstone to G.G. undated despatch 1809, ibid., p. 223.
⁴. Ibid., p. 224.
⁵. Ibid.
reasons for favouring British influence in Sind, and a little later he was still of the opinion that British India was most vulnerable through Sind and that the possession of this area would "render the southern route impassable".¹

As a postscript to these opinions it is interesting to record Elphinstone's reaction to the exploits of Lords Auckland and Ellenborough in the north-west during the late 1830's and the 1840's: he heartily disapproved of them. The British, he continued to maintain, should confine themselves behind the Indus.² From his personal experience of Afghan patriotism, he knew that the disastrous invasion by the British succeeded only in turning a neutral country hostile and had therefore weakened the position against Russia.³ In fact, Elphinstone seemed so convinced of the inexpediency of treating Afghanistan as a subsidiary ally that he disputed the very idea of having an agent in Kabul.⁴ The annexation of Sind he described as "a sad scene of insolence and oppression", and compared its acquisition after the retreat from Afghanistan to the actions of "a bully who had been kicked in the streets, and went home to beat his wife in revenge."⁵ Elphinstone seems to emphasise the injustice rather than the inexpediency of British activities. Although he condemned

¹ Elphinstone, memorandum, "probably written in 1811-1812", Colebrooke, I, p.228.
² Elphinstone, Journal, 26 Jan 1852, Colebrooke, II, p.381.
³ Elphinstone, to an anonymous correspondent in Kaye's History of the Afghan War, quoted in Colebrooke, II, p.374.
⁴ Ibid., p.375.
⁵ Elphinstone to Metcalfe, undated, ibid., p.374.
British demands for a subsidiary treaty and for the free passage of troops through Sind, he did not disapprove their limited demand for admission to the navigation of the Indus and seems to have been of the opinion that a limited influence was desirable in Sind to secure the navigation of that river. Certainly his 1809 proposals on Sind demonstrate that as a "man on the spot", involved with problems of security, and a weak ally, he could advocate expansion.

* * *

Elphinstone never reflected on the Kabul mission with pleasure, but his next office, as Resident at Poona, was to compensate amply for the deficiencies of Kabul. It was probably his most satisfying post. Poona itself was an important city: it was commercially prosperous and was the nerve centre of the Maratha polity. To the British it was "the most important civil and diplomatic post in the political service, since everyone on the inside recognised that for the British the Maratha question was the clue to the future in India." For Elphinstone personally the post was congenial in that the climate suited him and he enjoyed a "way of life which never leaves me either solitary, or idle altogether."

Baji Rao II the ruler, or Peshwa, of the Poona state had impressed Elphinstone on their first meeting, in 1802, as a "very handsome, dignified, unaffected person", whose "face is good and dignified, though there is something vulgar in his mouth." On first meetings Baji Rao usually created a good impression; Sir James Mackintosh who had met two other "chiefs of nations," George III and Napoleon, preferred the Maratha, but he added, "the Peshwa is neither a hero, nor a sage; he is a superstitious voluptuary, devoted only to women and to the gods". By 1815 Elphinstone was well aware of the Peshwa's faults. Yet he granted him some redeeming qualities. The key to Baji Rao's character was, Elphinstone felt, fear. The Peshwa, he wrote,

is eager for power, though he wants the boldness necessary to acquire it, and is tenacious of authority, though too indolent to exercise it .... Though capricious and changeable in his humours, he is steady in his serious designs. Concession encourages him to persevere, and opposition only increases his obstinacy, unless it operates on his fears. He is vindictive in the extreme.

To balance this Elphinstone admitted that the Peshwa was by no means deficient in abilities, that he is scrupulously just in pecuniary transactions; humane, when not actuated by fear or revenge; frugal but not parsimonious in his expenses,

2. Gupta, Baji Rao II and the East India Company, p.216.
4. Ibid., p.287.
and at once courteous and dignified in his manners.¹

This assessment of the Peshwa is considerably more balanced and tolerant than that of some modern historians who have denounced Baji Rao as "a monster of duplicity and cruelty".² P.C. Gupta has sympathetically drawn attention to the unhealthy atmosphere of the Peshwa's childhood spent in prison.³ Such an environment would do little to educate him for his subsequent position and may partially explain his lack of appreciation of the realities of power. Although most of the Peshwa's extravagant claims were the product of tradition or ambition, it is possible that he had a tendency to confuse the name, or title, with the substance of authority.

Elphinstone tried to control his contempt for the Peshwa and his ministers.⁴ The latter he was sure were worse than those at Nagpur who, as far as he could remember, were never as "intriguing, prevaricating, shuffling, lying, cavilling, grumbling, irritating a set of rascals as they are here."⁵ Whether this represents a hardening of attitude towards the Indian rulers, or whether it was merely due to the fact that at Poona Elphinstone encountered more obstructions, it is difficult to say. Certainly at Poona the more intimate

2. Thompson and Garratt, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule, p. 213.
connection maintained by the subsidiary alliance provided more loopholes for intervention and consequently provided more opportunities for opposition.

Grant Duff, who later worked under Elphinstone, pointed out that Elphinstone's "habit of communicating with the natives direct", and his discontinuing of the introduction of business through the channel of an agent, aroused the enmity of the agent, or Mudhi, attached to the Poona Residency. The Mudhi's loss of consequence, added to a quarrel he had with Sadashiv Mankeshvar, the Peshwa's chief minister, caused him to use his considerable influence over Baji Rao to prejudice the Peshwa against Elphinstone. Apparently as a result "many subjects, hitherto kept back, were now brought forward into discussion in hopes of creating a necessity of again interposing the agency of the Moodhee".

However the British themselves were not averse to settling certain outstanding issues. Official policy continued to follow a line of non-interference, but the Company's security and obligations had to be maintained, even Barlow had, for such reasons, refused to modify the Treaty of Bassein. Elphinstone's acts at Poona exemplify the increasing involvement of the British in the affairs of an Indian state during Minto's period of "quiet consolidation".

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp.420-421.
During his early days at Poona Elphinstone wrote to Charles Metcalfe that at the Poona Residency the plan was "the excellent one of really sticking to the treaty, and keeping off the evil day of our having to take the government into our own hands as long as possible."\(^1\) However, in the same letter he outlined his two major tasks - tasks which were, in fact, to be the means by which the arrival of the "evil day" was accelerated. His tasks were "to prevent the destruction of the few old families that remain in this Empire," which was "almost the only internal affair with which we meddle," and "a still more difficult task ... to prevent the Peishwah meddling in other people's affairs, of which he is very fond, and for which the vast pretensions of this government afford many opportunities."\(^2\) In addition to the Peshwa's jagirdars, these "other people" included the remaining states of India, especially the members of the Maratha confederacy. An examination of the Peshwa's relations with both his jagirdars and other Maratha states, and the British attempts to exercise a pervading influence over those relations, will demonstrate the mechanics of British involvement.

* * *

The jagirdars with whom Elphinstone had to deal were both military commanders and civil administrators.\(^3\) They were

2. Ibid.
entrusted with the superintendence of lands allotted to them for the purpose of raising revenue. In theory, this revenue was to be applied to the payment of a particular body of troops,\(^1\) who were to be employed in the service of the state.\(^2\)

Strictly speaking they were not really **jagirdars** but **saranjams**, for the unusual feature of the system was that accounts had to be submitted to the Peshwa annually, when the grants of land could be renewed or changed.\(^3\) However for the sake of convenience and custom they may be spoken of as **jagirdars**.

Elphinstone pointed out that the **jagirdars** did not hold their land by feudal tenure as had been supposed,\(^4\) an error which has been perpetuated by the custom of some authorities of referring to the **jagirdars** as "feudatories" of the Peshwa, in an attempt to approximate their function in European terms. Also Elphinstone discovered that the **jagirdars** were not vague and ancient functionaries, but relatively recent creations of the Peshwas, from whom they held regular commissions.\(^5\)

The **jagirdars** had, however, excused themselves from the Peshwa's service on various pretences from about the time of Baji Rao's succession, and the rebellion of the head of the

3. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 26 Oct 1811, *P.R.C.*, XII, p. 81 and note; Arthur Wellesley to Strachey, 3 Jul 1804, Gurwood, III, p. 398. Sardesai, *Main Currents of Maratha History*, pp. 86-87, states that the terms **saranjam** and **jagirdar** meant almost the same thing in common parlance. He does not define the two words but merely states that **saranjam** means a provision.
5. Ibid., p. 86.
powerful Patwardhan family in 1796, from which most great changes in the southern "countries" dated.¹ Now that the Peshwa was protected by the Company he had no need for the jagirdars' services and consequently tried to reduce their possessions and to increase his own.² To achieve these ends, Baji Rao hoped the British would assist him.³ Although the British admitted the justice of the Peshwa's claims,⁴ they were in a dilemma as to whether to support them or not. Under the 9th article of the Treaty of Bassein, the Company was bound to chastise rebels and to correct dependants of the Poona state who withheld its just claims. On the other side the jagirdars had some claims on the Company's good faith owing to their conduct in 1803.⁵ At that time they had supported Arthur Wellesley against the freebooter Dundia Wagh, and had again rendered him assistance on his march northwards to participate in the restoration of Baji Rao. However, the British were not legally bound to the jagirdars, for Arthur Wellesley had been careful not to commit the Company and had refrained from concluding agreements with the jagirdars, merely promising to recommend them to the Peshwa.⁶

For reasons of policy and expediency the British sought

1. Ibid., pp. 88-90.
3. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 4 Aug 1811, P.R.C., XII, p. 55.
4. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 26 Oct 1811, ibid., p. 99; Governor General's Minute, 3 Apr 1812, ibid., p. 151.
to mediate between the Peshwa and his servants, but they did not intend to lend their unqualified support to either party. They wished to avoid arousing jealousy. 1 Also, it was to their disadvantage to make British troops carry out all the unpopular and violent acts of their Indian allies. 2 Lord Minto considered that in Wellesley's time the question of the jagirdars and the Peshwa had been discussed in terms of expediency but that, according to the spirit of the Treaty of Bassein, if the Peshwa solicited their assistance, the British obligations to the jagirdars did not preclude their interfering to establish the Peshwa's lawful authority. 3

The principal interests consulted by the British in settling the relations between the Peshwa and the jagirdars were those of security, law and order. To enable the Peshwa to maintain the alliance, and to strengthen him as an ally, the Resident was to encourage him to conciliate the jagirdars, upon whom the Peshwa's power depended. 4 Owing to the necessity of diverting his troops to the south to watch the jagirdars, Baji Rao could not defend his northern frontiers against the Pindaris, 5 and was generally useless as a military ally. As long as the south was unsettled the jagirdars would excuse themselves from service on the grounds that they had to

1. Edmonstone to Colonel Close, 30 May 1803, Martin, III, p.112.
3. Governor General's Minute, 3 Apr 1812, P.R.C., XII, p.152.
4. Edmonstone to Colonel Close, 30 May 1803, Martin, III, p.111.
5. Elphinstone to Vice President, 9 Aug 1811, P.R.C., XII, p.57.
defend their own possessions against each other, and against the neighbouring independent state of Kolhapur, with which Poona was traditionally at war. Hence the British also had an interest in adjusting differences between the Peshwa and the Raja of Kolhapur. As far as Elphinstone was concerned the jagirdars "were always a thorn in our side in time of war", for the success of any extensive schemes could be jeopardised if they misbehaved. This was a possibility that could not be overlooked, for during the 1803-1804 war the jagirdars, who were not basically ill disposed towards the British, continued to intrigue with the enemy, Sindia and Holkar.

Apart from consolidating the Peshwa's authority, the British were concerned with more immediate problems. Their own frontiers of Madras and those of their allies, Mysore and Hyderabad, had to be defended. Communications had to be kept open between Mysore and Poona, and piracy eliminated from the west coast of India. Upon the good order of the Peshwa's dominions these objects largely depended. However, such conditions did not exist in this area, which provided a refuge for the freebooters who invaded Hyderabad and Mysore.

1. Arthur Wellesley to Strachey, 8 Jul 1804, Gurwood, III, p.398. The ruler of Kolhapur was descended from a younger branch of the family of Sivaji, founder of the Maratha "nation". Kolhapur was thus of a similar status to Satara and did not acknowledge the authority of the Peshwa.
2. Elphinstone to Strachey, 12 Jul 1813, Colebrooke, I, p.252.
To prevent the freebooters' depredations the British were obliged to support local authorities on the frontiers, such as the jagirdars, and therefore had some interest in preserving the latter's powers against the encroachments of the central government at Poona. Arthur Wellesley had advocated a strong government upon the frontier. In particular he supported the Patwardhan family because they checked freebooters. Henry Russell thought that, once this family's power was reduced to proper limits, it could more effectively be entrusted with the administration of its territories than any new authority acting in its stead, an authority which, incidentally, would have created further disorder in seeking to establish itself. Thus the defects of the Peshwa's government, the small degree of authority it had over the people and its lack of real interest in the prosperity of the country, were arguments for preserving the great chiefs, in the interests of tranquillity.

The state of Kolhapur harboured freebooters. But, the reasons for the British desiring a settlement with that power, and with the neighbouring state of Savantvadi, also provide

3. Henry Russell to G.G., 23 Nov 1810, F.R.C., VII, p.525. Russell was acting Resident at Poona from Colonel Close's departure in 1809 till Elphinstone's arrival there in February 1811. He was Resident at Hyderabad, 1811-1820.
6. Savantvadi, like Kolhapur, was an old Maratha state. It had received its deeds from Sivaji's successor and was independent of the Peshwa's authority.
one of the few cases where commercial motives directly influenced the Company's expansion at this time. The British wanted certain ports and forts, belonging to these states, to protect trade from piracy, an evil which they had failed to eliminate by previous expedients: expeditions, treaties and blockade.

To preserve their interests in the south the British had to decide to what extent they would intervene. When the question was first raised Arthur Wellesley had mooted several alternative schemes. First, the British could assist the Peshwa destroy the jagirdars and, secondly, they could "leave them and the Peshwah to their fate". But either of these courses would "infallibly occasion a contest" which would affect the peace of the Company's lands and Mysore. A more effective mode of proceeding, Arthur Wellesley thought, was "to make the jaghiredars at once independent states, under the protection, arbitration and guarantee of the British government," without the Peshwa as an intermediary. However, he realised that such a policy could be followed only if the

1. Elphinstone to G.G., 23 Jun 1812, P.R.C., XII, p.165; Grant Duff, II, p.422.
2. In 1765 expeditions had been sent against Kolhapur and Savantvadi. Treaties with the former, in 1766 and 1792, had not been observed. G.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, VIII, pp.177, 214. Arthur Wellesley considered the Company's blockade of the ports ineffectual and risky, but refused to raise it unless Kolhapur paid Bombay merchants for former piracies. Arthur Wellesley to Colonel Close, 11 Jul 1804, Gurwood, XII, pp.415-416.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
Peshwa broke the Treaty of Bassein, and that it was impracticable at the time because it required an amount of detailed information regarding the jagirdars - information which the British simply did not possess. "It therefore appeared advisable to steer a middle course", in other words to interfere to a certain degree; to ascertain the extent of the service to which the Peshwa is entitled from the southern jaghiredars; to oblige them to afford it, and, on the other hand to protect them from the oppression of the Peshwah's government, and to guarantee to them their possessions, so long as they shall continue to serve the Peshwa with fidelity.

When, in his turn, Elphinstone had to recommend a course of action, he followed Arthur Wellesley's reasoning and chose the same alternative, on the grounds that, if either Baji Rao or the jagirdars overcame the other, they would disturb the neighbouring countries, or form combinations with enemies of the British and that the latter and their allies would then have less power to restrain them.

Elphinstone has been accused, by Professor R.D. Choksey, of following a policy of divide and rule in his relations with the Peshwa. He claims that "a discontented aristocracy would enable the British to maintain a balance of power favourable to their diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwa." This charge must be contested, for it appears to rest on the false

1. Ibid., pp.178-179.
2. Grant Duff, II, p.421.
5. Choksey, British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas, p.344.
assumption that the Peshwa and the jagirdars had more to unite than to divide them. In fact, the dissensions of the two seem to have posed a greater threat to British security than the possibility of a united body of jagirdars under the Peshwa's leadership attacking the Company. Admittedly, there were official orders advising the Resident to do everything to avoid facing a combination of jagirdars, but the only instance of anything resembling a policy of divide and rule occurred during the settlement of the Peshwa's dispute with the Raja of Kolhapur. Elphinstone tried to keep the Raja of Kolhapur's interests separate from those of the jagirdars, to prevent them from combining against the British and the Peshwa. He also determined to show Baji Rao that his interests were different from those of Appa Desai, a jagirdar who had conquered territory from Kolhapur. As the British wished to safeguard their own frontiers and to enable the Peshwa to carry out the terms of the alliance, they could not base their security upon the disunity of his dominions, for such a policy would defeat their own ends. Their object was to establish "a unity of authority in the empire, and some strength to carry all the measures of government." The means to this end were the promotion of a settlement, not a conflict, between Baji Rao

2. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 22 May 1812, P.R.C., XII, p. 159.
and his subjects. Some authorities, in fact, assert that, far from creating dissension, the arrangement which Elphinstone concluded actually averted civil war in the Poona state. 1

Although Lord Wellesley had wished the British to arbitrate between Baji Rao and the jagirdars, 2 it was not until Elphinstone became Resident at Poona that the question was finally settled. There were several reasons for the delay. The first attempt by Arthur Wellesley's envoy, Edward Strachey, failed largely owing to the Peshwa's immoderation. He would not conciliate the jagirdars. And the envoy's activities were counteracted by a general distrust of Baji Rao. 3 Strachey considered that, if Baji Rao had been moderate and pardoned old offences and forgone old pecuniary demands, he would have been served. 4 During the 1804 war against Sindia, Holkar and the Bhonsla, the British had to abandon their attempt at a settlement in the south as troops were required in the north. 5 At the conclusion of the war the adoption of a policy of non-intervention caused the question of the southern jagirdars to be shelved once again. However, during Lord Minto's period

3. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 26 Oct 1811, P.R.C., XII, p.100.
5. Arthur Wellesley to Thomas Sydenham, 29 Jan 1805, Gurwood, III, p.633. Thomas Sydenham was acting Resident at Poona in 1805, when Colonel Close was invested with the full civil and military powers (which were formerly held by Arthur Wellesley as Chief Political and Military Officer in the Deccan and southern Maratha country) and sent on a mission to Sindia. Sydenham was Resident at Hyderabad, 1805-1810.
of office there was a gradual return towards intervention on Arthur Wellesley's principles, and it was decided that the aid of the subsidiary force could not perhaps be withheld from assisting Baji Rao to establish his claims over the jagirdars. 1

Henry Russell really initiated British intervention in the relations of the Poona state with its subordinates by threatening the recalcitrant Appa Saheb Patwardhan with force, if he failed to satisfy the Peshwa's demands. Russell was persuaded that this demonstration of the Company's willingness to assist the Peshwa would provide an example to the other refractory chiefs. 2 Elphinstone himself admitted that the other jagirdars had been more tractable since the interposition of the British in the affairs of Appa Saheb. 3 Also Russell's threat, Elphinstone thought, contributed to his own success in taking steps towards effecting a general agreement with the jagirdars. 4 Russell had, in fact, wanted to enforce a settlement upon the jagirdars in 1810, but the Governor-General had refused, saying that the British lacked sufficient information to act as arbitrators. 5 It was Elphinstone who, in a lengthy despatch of 26 October 1811, supplied the materials which were wanting to determine the expediency or inexpediency

1. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 12 Jul 1811, P.R.C., XII, p.42.
2. Russell to G.G., 27 Dec 1810, P.R.C., VII, pp.543-545.
3. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 4 Aug 1811, P.R.C., XII, p.55.
4. Elphinstone to Vice President in Council, 23 Jun 1811, ibid., p.40.
of interposing British influence, and it was Elphinstone who gained the Governor-General's consent to intervene.¹

However, Elphinstone arrived late on the scene, and his predecessors had already laid the foundations for his success. Henry Russell's role in facilitating the business of bringing the jagirdars to negotiate has already been mentioned. From Close, Elphinstone adopted a conciliatory approach towards the jagirdars and "endeavoured to adhere to the guarded manner of expression which Major General Close used in all correspondence with the Southern Jagheerdars."² The tactics Elphinstone followed (he first obtained the Peshwa's consent to arbitrate, then approached the Raja of Kolhapur and the most important jagirdars before others) and the terms of the agreement he concluded between Baji Rao and the jagirdars, were all suggested by Arthur Wellesley.³

Elphinstone's contribution to the settlement, apart from assembling information on the matter, was the more difficult, but less tangible, task of actually persuading both parties to journey to, and negotiate at, Pandharpur⁴ in July 1812.

1. Governor General's Minute, 3 Apr 1812, F.R.C., XII, pp. 150, 152-155.
2. Elphinstone to Vice President, 24 Nov 1811, ibid., p.118.
4. Pandharpur, a famous place of pilgrimage for those of the cult of Vithoba (a Marathi term for Vishnu) whose shrine is erected there. The cult is specifically associated with Maharashtra. See I. Karve, "On the Road, a Maharashtrian Pilgrimage", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXII, No. 1, Nov 1962, pp.14, 22, 25.
achieve this the time had to be well chosen and the parties
well disposed to treat. Elphinstone believed that it was
consistent with the previous conduct of the British in India
to interpose in time to avoid possible calamities. Such
conduct was, in fact, one cause of expansion, of which his own
attitude to the jagirdars is illustrative. As the jagirdars
had a tendency to behave with greater or lesser moderation
according to the Company’s ability to interfere, Elphinstone
considered the British should choose their own time to settle
the question to prevent the jagirdars distracting the Company’s
attention in the future, when it might not be able to intervene.
As far as timing was concerned, Elphinstone secretly made
preparations to take advantage of the Peshwa’s pilgrimage to
Pandharpur, where the latter’s presence near the south would
lend weight to the agreement. Also Elphinstone held out
against Sir Samuel Auchmuty’s opposition to choosing the rainy
season to effect arrangements with the jagirdars, on the
grounds that the country would be free of Pindaris during the
rains.

To choose a favourable time and to bring the jagirdars
to terms was to solve only half the problem. For Elphinstone

1. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 22 May 1812, P.R.O., XII, p.160.
2. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 26 Oct 1811, ibid., p.100.
3. Elphinstone to G.G., 10 Jul 1812, Peshwa Daftar, quoted in
Choksey, British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas,
p.370. Daftar, records office.
Sir Samuel Auchmuty had considerable military experience.
He was Commander in Chief at Madras and had just taken
Java and Batavia from the Dutch.
had yet the formidable task of persuading the Peshwa to moderate his demands. Since they had first interested themselves in the question this had been the constant aim of the British, Arthur Wellesley, Close, Strachey and Russell. Baji Rao wanted to push things to extremities and to seize the first opportunity of depriving the jagirdars of their lands, while the British held that it was both disreputable and impolitic to destroy the great families. However, by demanding too much the Peshwa might create such opposition that he would lose more. As he had strengthened his position against the jagirdars since the Treaty of Bassein, all Elphinstone's persuasive powers were needed to bring Baji Rao to compromise. When the agreement was eventually concluded the Peshwa was disappointed, for he expected to be able to resume his lands. It is also probable that he entertained hopes of British military aid to accomplish this; for to conclude the settlement Elphinstone had implied a threat of force to the jagirdars by assembling an army at Pandharpur and moving it southwards.

The most important stipulations of the agreement concluded at Pandharpur between Baji Rao and the jagirdars

1. Elphinstone to G.G., 13 Apr 1811, P.R.G., XII, p.9; Malcolm, Political History, I, p.399.
2. Elphinstone to Vice President, 9 May 1811, P.R.G.XII, pp. 14, 16.
provided for the mutual oblivion of past injuries, and a British guarantee of the jagirdars' possessions as long as they served the Peshwa faithfully and surrendered the lands they had usurped. As these terms had been laid down by Close and Arthur Wellesley there was little room for Elphinstone to make any original contribution. His importance lay in his success in putting his predecessors' suggestions into practice. While persuading Baji Rao to agree, he found his chief interest in the military aspects of the settlement, which were concerned principally with taking precautions against the jagirdars' possible resistance. He wrote "my business becomes more and more interesting. I have a large plan for the reduction of the Southern Jageerdars to arrange" and, following a description of the disposition of troops, he concluded "I therefore entertain sanguine hopes of easily effecting a useful and necessary arrangement." 1

The settlement at Pandharpur did not terminate British interference or Elphinstone's connection with the jagirdars. Although the adjustment was subject to perpetual appeals from both Peshwa and jagirdars and involved continual interference on the part of the Company, 2 it was important for it provided the basis for British relations with the jagirdars when the Company eventually annexed the Peshwa's dominions. The jagirdars were to hold their lands from the British as they

2. Elphinstone to Thomas Hyde Villiers, 5 Aug 1832, Minutes of Evidence, East India Affairs, P.P. 1831-1832, XIV, p. 155.
had held them from the Peshwa.\(^1\) Owing to his previous experience Elphinstone was virtually indispensible to the settlement of Baji Rao's former dominions\(^2\) and it was Elphinstone who was responsible for finally settling the legal position of the jagirdars as "little independent poligars under our protection".\(^3\)

\* \* \*

By the Treaty of Bassein the British had left the Peshwa's relations with other members of the Maratha confederacy "in a state of ambiguity perhaps with deliberation. There was then no occasion to define the Peshwa's position with reference to the other members."\(^4\) Although legally the confederacy was not dissolved (the Peshwa renounced his leadership of it in 1817) from the conclusion of the treaties at the end of the 1803-1804 war the British maintained that the ancient order of things no longer existed.\(^5\) The members of the confederacy were regarded as separate entities independent of the Peshwa's authority. Even the normal

1. Adam to Elphinstone, 15 Dec 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.271.
2. In order that Elphinstone would still control the Deccan, Hastings, when Elphinstone became Governor of Bombay, transferred the Peshwa's former dominions to that Presidency instead of placing them under a Lieutenant-Governor, an office he had originally intended to create for Elphinstone. Hastings to Elphinstone, 2 Jul 1819, Colebrooke, II, p.102.
attributes of sovereignty were denied the Peshwa, for by the 17th article of the Treaty of Bassein, he had agreed

neither to commence nor to pursue in future, any negotiations with any other power whatever, without giving previous notice, and entering into mutual consultation, with the Honourable East India Company's Government.4

The words "other power" were assumed, by the British, to include other Maratha states. Relations with other states were also circumscribed by clauses providing for the Company's arbitration between the Peshwa and the Nizam and the Gackwand respectively. These stipulations were not strictly enforced; intrigues with other states, if not dangerous, were tolerated and attributed to habit and love of personal consequence, not to evil designs.2 However though agents from other courts continued to reside at Poona, and though diplomatic exchanges were uninterrupted, all ostensible negotiations were carried on through the British.3

The Peshwa, it has been remarked, "had no idea that he was renouncing that position",4 that is, his leadership of the confederacy. Considering the indefinite behaviour of the British, and their laxity in enforcing the treaty in certain respects, it is understandable that Baji Rao supposed, or at least acted as if he supposed, that he could still exercise certain traditional rights over the confederacy. On one such

occasion his ministers tried "to prove that the great Maratta
feudatories were the Paishwa's subjects, and that no
misconduct of theirs and no treaties between them and the
British Government, could free them from their allegiance", 1
while this may have been a piece of diplomatic bluff it does
indicate an attitude of mind which was not uncharacteristic
of the response of weak Indian rulers to their somewhat
pressing British ally. In Bengal, for instance, distressed
princes tried to keep up the face of regality, to restore the
old order of things, and to defend the dignity and power of
their states against the British, who acted as if the states
were theirs by conquest. 2

At Poona, too, the exigencies of practical diplomacy
required the British Residents to make decisions exhibiting
their real attitude. This real attitude was never entirely
disguised by the equivocal attitude they had adopted (partly
in order to conciliate the Peshwa, and partly because minute
control was unnecessary) towards the diplomatic activities of
the court. They continued to oppose any extension of the
Peshwa's influence and to assert, as Elphinstone did, that the
Maratha system of politics must now rest on the existing state
of affairs. 3 Just as Lord Minto defined the Company's
attitude towards the Imperial dynasty at Delhi 4 so, during his

1. Elphinstone to Vice President, 13 Oct 1811, P.R.C., XII,
p. 79.
2. Abdul Majed Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 1756-1775,
pp. 16, 275, et passim.
3. Elphinstone to Vice President, 13 Oct 1811, P.R.C., XII,
p. 79.
4. Percival Spear, Twilight of the Mughuls, studies in late
Mughul Delhi, pp. 43-45.
term of office, the British defined the Peshwa's claims and
his powers in relation to his former subjects.

The British were concerned with preserving the status
quo, based on their own treaties and de facto power. They
were pragmatically endeavouring to establish their own
security and were not anxious to recognise ancient rights.

When the Peshwa had attempted to claim sovereignty over Sindia,
Holkar, and the Bhonsla, Elphinstone had said that, if such
claims were to be raised, he might ask by whose sanads the
Peshwa held his country and whether the British should assist
the "King of Delhi" to recover his dominions. When the
minister replied that the Peshwa held his lands from God
alone Elphinstone retorted that if that were the case "his
right was extinguished when Providence was pleased to resume
its gift."¹ Arthur Wellesley had exhibited a similar outlook
when he described the particular claim of chaunth as a "right
of the sword, which ceases when the sword is no longer in
the hand."² Elphinstone, however, did not entirely concur in
this opinion. Neither did he totally disparage traditional
rights. He once pointed out that, if the Peshwa were forced
to resign all he had acquired by violence, he would be stripped
of most of his dominions and the rest of his title would be
doubtful.³ Also the British had, in fact, in specific

1. Elphinstone to C.G., 27 Jun 1812, P.R.C., XII, p.171.
Sanad, a grant, a charter.
2. Arthur Wellesley to Kirkpatrick, Resident at Hyderabad,
5 Mar 1805, Gurwood, III, p.678.
3. Elphinstone to Francis Warden, Secretary to the Bombay
Government, 12 Jul 1814, P.R.C., XII, p.336.
instances, recognised the Peshwa's rights, for example by the Treaty of Salbai and the Treaty of Bassein. During his Residency Elphinstone tried to convince Baji Rao of the basic impracticability of his vast pretensions, which he had insufficient power to put into practice, and to thwart his attempts at reviving ancient claims.

The three main questions, which Elphinstone had to tackle, were later cited by the Marquis of Hastings as examples of Baji Rao's efforts to assert his paramount rights as executive head of the Maratha Empire. They were the cases of the deputation of a sirsubadhar, or viceroy, to Hindustan, Holkar's request for a khilat, or dress of investiture, and the Peshwa's claims upon Baroda.

In Hindustan, or north India, the Peshwa had, from the time of Close's Residency, evinced a desire to revive the office of sirsubadhar. To this he added, during Elphinstone's term of office, a wish to accept the district of Garha Kotah, a former possession of the Peshwa's which Buda had recently reconquered and now offered to him. Elphinstone was obliged to prevent those schemes, which would create disorder on the Company's frontiers. The appointment of a sirsubadhar in Hindustan would confuse the British allies in Bundelkhand and perhaps cause disputes with Sindia and Holkar, while if the

1. Ibid.
2. Hastings to the Court of Directors, 4 Sep 1817, Hostilities with the Peshwa, P.R., 1812, XI, p.228.
4. Elphinstone to Moira, 5 Nov 1813, P.R.C., XII, p.303.
Peshwa accepted Garha Kotah, he would embroil himself with the other pretenders and present occupants of the area, and would cause the very disturbances which the treaties were supposed to prevent. Also it was an unsuitable time, in Elphinstone's opinion, to arrange other territories when the Peshwa's immediate dominions were unsettled.

Legally, Elphinstone opposed the Peshwa's acceptance of Garha Kotah because it was contrary to the Treaty of Bassein, but he also tried to convince Baji Rao that his interests lay in following the line assumed by the British, by giving him reasons against accepting the district. He pointed out that Garha Kotah was remote, probably unproductive, and Sindia's offer probably insincere. It was better, Elphinstone told the Peshwa's minister, to relinquish some claims, such as the doubtful claim to Garha Kotah and that to the chauth of all India, than for Baji Rao to injure his dignity by interfering with countries he could not occupy or protect. In approving Elphinstone's conduct, the Governor-General elaborated this last argument. He made it clear that the British would not guarantee the recovery of old territorial claims, arising out of the ancient constitution of the Marathas, for it was difficult to limit claims such as those to universal chauth, and no guarantee could be extended to rights not acquired.

1. Elphinstone to Vice President, 18 Aug 1811, ibid., p.63.
2. Elphinstone to Vice President, 24 Nov 1811, ibid., p.120.
3. Elphinstone to Vice President, 18 Aug 1811, ibid., p.60.
4. Ibid., p.62.
5. Ibid., p.61.
without the Company's consent. 1

Although the Peshwa had certain rights in Hindustan, which the British did not contest, it was found expedient to supervise even those; for example, the Company discouraged the appointment of a sirkubahdar in Hindustan, but would permit an officer to collect dues under British supervision. 2 Elphinstone felt that the Peshwa had no grounds for complaint as long as the British looked after his interests in Hindustan, which apparently they did, for even the Peshwa acknowledged that remonstrances made by the Resident at Sinda's court to Sinda were more effective than the proposed official could have been. 3 Elphinstone maintained that, in fact, the only chance the Peshwa had of realising his claims in Hindustan was to act in concert with the British and that the British would be prepared to mediate when furnished with Baji Rao's claims. 4

The question of Holkar's investiture also involved an attempt to revive former rights. On this occasion the Peshwa did not take the initiative, for Holkar actually requested a kullat for himself and his son Malhar Rao. His request demonstrates the truth of the observation that there was a considerable and, perhaps, a natural bias in the minds of all the Marhatta chiefs still to look up to the Poona state as their head, and to attribute to it a degree of

1. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 13 Sep 1811, ibid., p. 69.
2. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 3 Jan 1812, ibid., p. 133.
4. Elphinstone to Adam, 21 Dec 1815, ibid., pp. 460, 462.
weight and authority, and even independence
in its connection with the British Government,
which enables them to consider it as their
rallying point in case of a future revival of
better prospects.¹

To counteract such a bias Colonel Close had distinctly
maintained that Holkar and Sindia were now heads of independent
governments, and he had opposed any measures which revived the
old relationships destroyed by the Treaty of Bassein.²
Jenkins, at Nagpur, was of the opinion that the investiture was
counter to the treaty and opened the way for views of
aggrandisement.³ The Supreme Government, in a despatch to
Charles Metcalfe, stated that although the investiture was
unobjectionable, insofar as it strengthened Holkar's government,
yet the general policy of separating the "co-estates" of the
Maratha confederacy, and preventing the revival of "the efficacy
of their constitutional federation," outweighed any motives
for acquiescence, such as the disappointment of Holkar's
durbar.⁴ Many of the British, as Spear remarked of a similar
situation at Delhi, did not altogether understand dignity
without power.⁵

Over the question of Holkar's investiture Elphinstone
aroused a mild reproof from the government at Calcutta for his

¹ Jenkins to Moira, 20 Jan 1814, P.R.C., V, p.415.
² Colonel Close to G.C., 24 Feb 1807, P.R.C., VII, pp.285-
286; Colonel Close to G.C., 26 Aug 1807, ibid., pp.311-312.
³ Jenkins to Minto, 28 Aug 1812, P.R.C., V, p.321.
⁴ Elphinstone to Metcalfe, Resident at Delhi, 2 Aug 1811,
P.R.C., XII, p.51.
⁵ Spear, Twilight of the Mughals, p.37.
tendency to take a view which implied recognition of the
continued relations of the confederacy. ¹ At first he had
not opposed Holkar's request but had refused to interfere on
the grounds that it was an internal concern of the Poona
government. ² In Elphinstone's view the whole question was
"a mere matter of ceremony, similar to the practice of the
investiture of the different chiefs of India by the King of
Delhi", and therefore he "regarded it as a pageant in which
I had no part, and which could have no effect on any of the
affairs of real life."³ He believed that it was the custom
of independent rulers to send honorary dresses to each other
on the accession of a new ruler; this view is corroborated by
Broughton's definition of a khillat as being "presented by
friendly powers to any Prince upon his accession to the
Munsi, and is regarded as an acknowledgement of his rights."⁴
It did not necessarily imply subordination. Elphinstone held
that both durbars would consider a refusal to allow the
investiture as harsh treatment.⁵ The Peshwa, in particular,
would consider it as "a direct attack on his rank and
consequence", for, although his actual authority had always
been disputed, his nominal authority was never contested and
although he had long since given up the exercise of his

1. Edmonstone to Elphinstone, 31 May 1811, P.R.C., XII, p. 21.
2. Elphinstone to Holkar, 10 May 1811, ibid., p. 18.
4. Broughton, 15 Nov 1809, Letters written in a Marhatta Camp,
p. 226.
5. Elphinstone to Vice President, 24 Nov 1811, P.R.C., XII,
pp. 122-123.
sovereignty over the Marathas he was still "as fond of the name as a native might be expected to be". The situation is reminiscent of an earlier occasion in Bengal, when the British had similarly tried to discourage the presentation of khillats and the minister of that state had protested that to reduce or abolish the khillats would be to abolish the name of the Nizamat also. Elphinstone, however, subordinated his own interpretation of the situation to the Governor-General's orders. He eventually opposed Holkar's request and, for the benefit of the latter's vakil, he argued that owing to Holkar's de facto power, and to his independent negotiations, which had created precedents for his autonomy, he had no need of a khillat.

The episode indicates that Elphinstone, in order to conciliate the Peshwa, was prepared to countenance the perpetuation of ancient rights provided they were harmless. Elphinstone's own Romanticism is also revealed by his sympathy with a "pageant" with fallen glory and with the Indians' attachment to an empty ceremony. This was, in fact, the sort of attitude which could lead Indian rulers to assume a false sense of their own true position. The comparison with the "King of Delhi" can be extended. The Supreme Government

1. Ibid.
3. Elphinstone to Holkar, 22 Jun 1814, F.R.C., XII, p.36. Elphinstone received later applications for the Khillat "in the spirit of your Excellency's instructions to the Resident at Delhi". Elphinstone to Vice President, 24 Nov 1811, Ibid., p.122.
itself had to conciliate opinion and was not entirely free of Romanticism, for it continued to maintain the shadow of an Emperor at Delhi – an Emperor whose legal position (it could be argued) was unaltered, until 1857, when he provided a focus for the mutineers, who in common with many Indians of the time still regarded him as the paramount authority of the subcontinent.

The method employed by the British to settle the Peshwa's claims upon Baroda is illustrative of their inconsistency. In this case, in contrast to their interposition in Hindustan, the British did not use their right, established by the Treaty of Bassein, to arbitrate between the Peshwa and the state upon which he had claims. Elphinstone decided to allow the two states to attempt a settlement directly. The reason he gave for this decision was that, if it acted as arbitrator, "the British Government must run the risk of offending both parties as is usual in such cases without the smallest prospect of advantage to itself." There was in the case of Baroda, which was closely controlled by the British Resident, less chance of the Peshwa's negotiations causing disturbances than there was in Hindustan. Also the outstanding pecuniary claims of the two states made it difficult to close all correspondence between them.

4. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 25 Mar 1811, F.R.C., XII, p. 3.
5. Elphinstone to Adam, 21 Sep 1813, ibid., p. 276.
The experiment failed, just as Gangadhar Shastri, the Gaekwad's vakil at Poona, and Elphinstone predicted it would. Although he intended to render every assistance that was proper to the Shastri, whose abilities he greatly admired, Elphinstone did not propose that the British arbitrate until the Peshwa suggested it. Yet, in his reluctance to arbitrate, he did not put aside the Peshwa's request for British mediation. Elphinstone thought that, considering that little could be expected of negotiation between the parties, and as it was difficult to suggest any other plan by which the Peshwa's call for arbitration could be put aside, it would save trouble in the long run if the British could find means to remove the grounds of the complaints by which their Government was constantly assailed.

The disputes between Baroda and Poona concerned arrears of tribute owed by the former to the latter, and the renewal

1. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 26 Mar 1811, P.R.C., XII, p.3; Elphinstone to G.G., 26 Mar 1814, ibid., pp.316-317.
2. Ibid., p.318; "Gungadhur Shastree, is a person of great shrewdness and talent, who keeps the whole state of Baroda in the highest order ... Though a very learned Shastree, he affects to be quite an Englishman, walks fast, talks fast, interrupts and contradicts, and calls the Peshwa and his ministers 'old fools' and 'damned rascals', or rather 'dam rascal'. He mixes English words with everything he says". He called Holkar "Bhot tricks walla" and "kukhye" (cockeyed - Holkar had lost an eye). Elphinstone to Strachey, undated 1814, Colebrooke, I, p.276.
3. Elphinstone to Adam, 21 Sep 1813, P.E.C., XII, p.276.
of the Gaekwad's lease of the revenue farm of Ahmedabad from the Peshwa. This lease was due to expire in June 1814. As a corollary, the problems of the extent to which the Peshwa could interfere in the Gaekwad's government, and the limits of his territorial influence in Gujerat, were raised.

In setting out the problem Elphinstone wrote that, although Baji Rao might argue that his old rights were not extinguished, he himself was not sure that they were just, or consistent with existing treaties. It could be argued that, as the Peshwa had failed to assist the Gaekwad in 1800, the latter was now released from his former engagements with the Peshwa. During a civil war in Baroda, from 1800 to 1802, the Gaekwad, in order to preserve his government, had thrown himself under British protection. The Peshwa could be held to have consented to this state of affairs because by the Treaty of Bassein he had acknowledged the subsidiary Treaty of Baroda, which had been concluded with the Gaekwad and which was inconsistent with ancient usage. Elphinstone protested that Baji Rao's pretensions were contrary to the Treaty of Bassein and the Treaty of Baroda, which established

1. When Ahmedabad was conquered from the Mughals by the Peshwa and the Gaekwad In 1758 the victors had divided it between themselves. Elphinstone to Warden, 24 Mar 1816, F.R.C., XIII, p.39. In 1800 the Peshwa had granted his share of the revenue in farm to Baroda. Grant Duff, II, pp.322, 437. Colonel Close secured another lease in 1804, with difficulty. Elphinstone to Moira, 5 Nov 1813, F.R.C., XII, p.301.

2. Elphinstone to Adam, 21 Sep 1813, F.R.C., XII, pp.276-277.

the new order, but denied that the British wished to subvert the Peshwa's rights. Although the Gaekwad was protected by the British, Elphinstone reassured the Peshwa's minister that the former was sovereign as far as internal government was concerned and that he was still a dependent of the Poona state. However, Elphinstone professed himself unable to pronounce the degree of dependence while the subject was under arbitration.

The Gaekwad himself admitted the Peshwa's claims to tribute and military service, but advanced claims for remissions. For the sake of expediency the Resident advised Baji Rao not to complain of abandoning some rights, if this was a means of preserving the rest, and warned him that to pursue the subject would disturb the existing order. The Peshwa, however, was not very attached to the existing order. He said, wrote Elphinstone, that the Gaekwad was

in his Shikum (I wish he was), and I have to disprove the assertion .... the Mahrattas express the dependence of one state on another by saying that one is in the other's Shikum. The Peshwa had gobbled up ... so many states that there is great trouble in getting him to disgorge them. He is still 'a belly fat with unlawful mouthfuls.'

The Peshwa had based his right of interference in the Gaekwad's affairs upon his duty to relieve the Baroda

1. Elphinstone to Warden, 13 Oct 1814, P.R.C., XII, p.342.
2. Elphinstone to Mr Secretary Babington at Bombay, 27 Oct 1814, ibid., p.344.
3. Elphinstone to Adam, 21 Sep 1813, ibid., p.277.
government from the oppression of the Shastri's control. Ordinarily, Baji Rao's minister maintained, the Peshwa would not interfere in the Gaekwad's internal concerns, but when the latter was a prisoner he must interfere to preserve the existence of a feudatory state.¹ He also denied that his sovereignty over Baroda had been prejudiced by the Treaty of Bassein.²

Elphinstone limited his objections to opposing the Peshwa's pretensions to interfere in the internal concerns of Baroda; he did not question his right of investiture, which he compared to that exercised over the Peshwa himself by the Raja of Satara.³ However, on this question of the Gaekwad's investiture, and the Shastri's power to receive the investiture from Baji Rao, Elphinstone disagreed with the Bombay Government, to which negotiations conducted with Baroda had to be referred. The Presidency was of the opinion that to allow the investiture would be to acknowledge the Peshwa's right to intervene and that the Shastri had exceeded his powers in saying the Gaekwad would accept such an investiture.⁴

Elphinstone's support of the Peshwa's investiture of the Gaekwad, and his defence of the Shastri, were consistent with the line he pursued in relation to Holkar's khillat, and

1. Elphinstone to Babington, 27 Oct 1814, P.R.C., XII, p. 343.
2. Elphinstone to Warden, 18 Oct 1814, ibid., p. 342.
manifests the same tolerance of harmless ceremonies. On the other hand, Elphinstone tried to persuade Baji Rao to abandon traditional rights, if they had potential nuisance value. For example, he attempted to make the Peshwa accept the reality of his diminished power in relation to his territorial and administrative claims in Hindustan and his pretensions towards adjusting the internal affairs of Baroda, and resuming his territorial rights there.

The Company's attitude to the territorial claims of Baroda and Poona was determined by its need to protect certain districts in Gujerat, especially around Surat, ceded to the British under the Treaty of Bassein. Potential causes of conflict could be reduced if the dominions of the respective states were consolidated; the two alternative ways of achieving this object were by the renewal of the Gaekwad's lease of Ahmedabad and by the mutual cession of territories. Already, the intermixture of the two states' villages rendered it impossible to prevent direct contact between the officers of the respective governments, although they did not actually participate in the collection of revenue from the same villages.¹ It was therefore necessary, in Elphinstone's opinion, that the rights of the two states over Ahmedabad be fixed with precision.² Elphinstone suggested that, in the event of disputes arising between officials, the Resident

2. Ibid., p.333.
at Baroda should arbitrate and thus lend weight to the Peshwa's authority; a course which, although contrary to Maratha custom, he had also advised in relation to the Peshwa's claims in Hindustan and their adjustment through the Resident with Sindia.

It was, however, preferable to exclude the Peshwa from Ahmedabad altogether. The Gaekwad's interests were here identical to those of the British; both wished to obtain the renewal of the lease. From the Gaekwad's point of view "the evils of divided authority would be avoided, and his own districts become more valuable in consequence." The Government of Bombay also had a particular interest in the tranquillity of the area. It had maintained a policy of excluding the Peshwa from Gujerat, of which Ahmedabad and Kathiawar are part, and had actively intervened and expended considerable efforts in establishing order there. The Gaekwad had been assisted to subject the turbulent chiefs of Kathiawar and the British had guaranteed his agreements with them. From their personal observations of the Peshwa's administration, British officials felt that to return Ahmedabad to the Poona state would mean a relapse into the anarchy and insubordination from which they had rescued Gujerat. Elphinstone agreed with these opinions; he thought

1. Ibid., p.334.
2. Grant Duff, II, p.437.
3. Chief Secretary of Bombay to Elphinstone, 11 Apr 1815, P.R.G., XII, p.364.
4. Warden to Elphinstone, 10 Nov 1813, Ibid., p.304.
that, for the sake of the national reputation, the Kathiawar agreements should be kept and that, for practical reasons, Ahmedabad should continue in the Gaekwad's hands. As Ahmedabad was adjacent to the Gaekwad's territory he could easily keep order there, whereas if the district were returned to the Peshwa the very process of transfer would create disturbances.

Instead of renewing the Ahmedabad lease, an alternative method of consolidating territory was by the exchange of territories - a course of action which had already been suggested by the Supreme Government for settling the Peshwa's claims upon the Nizam. This was, in Elphinstone's opinion, the only way of abolishing the Peshwa's connection with the Gaekwad in reality while it continued in name.

The opportunity for effecting such a solution arose when Gangadhar Shastri himself proposed that the Gaekwad should liquidate the Peshwa's claims upon him by the cession of territory. The Bombay Government was eager to take advantage of such an opportunity to release the Gaekwad from the Peshwa's claims. Also the British, whose own parganas in Gujerat were inconveniently situated and already too intertwined with the Peshwa's possessions, could benefit from the arrangement by

1. Elphinstone to Warden, 12 Jul 1814, ibid., p.334.
2. Elphinstone, Paper delivered to the Peshwa, 10 May 1814, ibid., pp.329-330.
4. Ibid.
5. Chief Secretary of Bombay to Elphinstone, 11 Apr 1815, ibid., p.363.
exchanging them for territories of the Gaekwad. This arrangement would also have the desirable effect of placing the territory of the British, rather than that of the Peshwa, in contact with Baroda. However, it appeared that the only way to prevent disputes was to renew the Ahmedabad lease for, owing to the position of the Gaekwad's capital upon the Peshwa's frontier, it was impossible to consolidate territories by mutual territorial cessions alone.

To renew the lease, however, entailed overcoming the opposition of Baji Rao, who wanted to resume the farm to extend his political influence in Gujarat. The negotiations over Ahmedabad thus provide an exception to the assumption that the Marathas always procrastinated and prolonged negotiations. In this case it was the Peshwa who was eager for a settlement and Elphinstone who, on his own admission, deliberately delayed negotiations to postpone the necessity of the Gaekwad surrendering the revenue farm. As the Peshwa was the only party that stood to benefit from the negotiations, his anxiety for them to be concluded was natural and he did eventually succeed in regaining Ahmedabad. However, he was less eager for the British to settle his other claims.

1. Ibid., p. 365.
2. Ibid.
3. Elphinstone to Adam, 5 Oct 1815, Ibid., p. 444.
5. Elphinstone to Warden, 12 Jul 1814, F.R.C., XII, p. 336.
upon Baroda as the outcome might be less to his advantage.  

A settlement of the Peshwa's claims upon Baroda, or the transfer of negotiations to the British, would entail the return of the Shastri to Baroda; an event the Peshwa was desirous to prevent for a variety of reasons. If the British took over negotiations the Peshwa would be further excluded from interference in the Gaekwad's affairs and fewer channels of communication with Baroda would exist. The Shastri was not really a favourable contact with Baroda, for the Peshwa, who had not received him well, feared that on his return the envoy might wreak vengeance upon Poona. Also the reappearance of the Shastri, who was pro-British, at Baroda would be accompanied by a strengthening of the Company's influence there to the detriment of Baji Rao's schemes. Therefore, the Peshwa and his favourite Trimbakji Dengle, tried to prevent the Shastri's departure from Poona by forming a more intimate connection with him; an intimacy which was to prove fatal to the Shastri and ultimately to the Peshwa, Trimbakji and the subsidiary alliance with Poona.

1. The British eventually settled the whole question by the Treaty of Poona, in 1817. Under this treaty Ahmedabad was ceded permanently to the Gaekwad, who was to continue to pay four lakhs and a half of rupees to the Peshwa, in consideration of the latter's losses. See below p.143.
CHAPTER IV

POONA II

I was settling into retirement and aversion to bustle and society, when events occurred that forced me to break my quiet. These led in time to the gratification of the sort of ambition which I most desired, and least expected to indulge; and if I were now retiring from the service, I should have every reason to be contented with the success I have experienced.¹

The situation which enabled Elphinstone to gratify his ambition was produced by the coincidence of two separate series of events. First, in the sphere of general Indian affairs, the British embarked on a campaign against the Pindaris, and secondly, at Poona in particular, a crisis developed between the Peshwa and the British quite independently of the British conflict with the Pindaris.

The Pindaris were mounted freebooters whose object was plunder; they did not fight battles but dispersed into small bands which travelled at a tremendous speed and usually reached the Pindari strongholds before any government could take measures against them.² They travelled light, lived off the country and lacked firearms, their principal weapons being swords and spears.³ Originally they had served a useful purpose in the Maratha armies, in which they had been

² Extract from Capt. Sydenham's Memorandum of the Pindaris, towards the close of 1809, enclosed in Vice President of Council to Secret Committee, 6 Aug 1811, Pindari and Maratha War, P.P. 1812, xvIII, p.592.
³ Ibid., pp.592, 596.
employed as auxiliary troops or on foraging expeditions. 1
With the decline of Maratha authority the Pindaris had become
independent of any control, their division into adherents of
Holkar and Sindia respectively being purely nominal. 2 They
were, in fact, as dangerous to their employers as to anyone
else. 3 The term Pindari is often used to include the Pathans,
who were also mounted plunderers, but who were better organised
and had infantry, artillery, and a fixed, but unpunctually
received rate of pay. 4 Also, unlike the Pindaris who plundered
universally, the more systematic Pathans associated to plunder
the states they could overpower. 5 Both Pindaris and Pathans
had established their bases between Indore and Saugar, 6 where,
owing to the British policy on non-interference beyond the
river Jumna, they were able to augment their power unchallenged
and to increase their numbers with troops thrown out of
employment by the British and their allies after the 1803-1804
war.

On the general Indian scene, the Marquis of Hastings'
decision to abandon the policy of non-interference had been
foreshadowed by his predecessor's assertion that in future
political and military operations would have to be taken to

1. Jenkins, Memorandum relative to the Pindaris, 1812, Extract
from the Secret Consultations of the Government of Bengal,
21 Jun 1814, ibid., p.624.
2. Ibid., p.619, 624.
3. Capt. Sydenham's Memorandum of the Pindaris, 1809, ibid.,
p.596.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p.499.
strike at the root of the Pindari problem. During Lord Minto's term of office British policy towards the Pindaris had shifted from the defensive to the offensive as the numbers of freebooters increased and the chances of their invading the Company's possessions became more likely. Grant Duff considered that the state in which India had been left by the "half measures and selfish policy" of the British meant no part could long remain exempt from plunder. In 1809 the British had taken the offensive by assisting Nagpur against the Pindaris, who if they penetrated south of the Narbada river could endanger the British and their allies. In 1812 when, at Mirzapur, the Pindaris made their first serious attack on British possessions, the British responded by pursuing the invaders into neighbouring states. At first, owing to the Nepal war and to the necessity of converting the home authorities to his views, Hastings was not free to intervene against the Pindaris. Although Hastings made moral appeals to arouse humanitarian feeling against Pindari outrages, his policy also had more practical arguments in its favour.

Fundamentally the existence of the disorderly Pindaris was irreconcilable with the Company's security and its interests.

1. Minto to Secret Committee, 2 Oct 1812, P.P. 1819, XVIII, p.603.
6. Ibid.
Existing defensive arrangements against them were expensive but ineffectual;¹ expensive because the amount spent annually on the existing system was estimated as equal to that of one conclusive campaign against the Pindaris,² and ineffectual because the Pindaris simply slipped between detachments of British troops posted on the frontier.³ Therefore, for economic and strategic reasons, it was expedient for the British to exercise some form of paramountcy over all India. Metcalfe thought in 1805 that the British were,"better able to maintain our supremacy over the whole than we should have been, in a few years, to preserve a portion of our dominion."⁴

Owing to the intimacy of the connection between the Marathas and the Pindaris, Hastings was quite prepared for a war with the former if he embarked on a campaign against the latter,⁵ for the states had a certain interest in preserving the predatory system, which was their own potential field of recruitment.⁶ The Marathas apparently saw the attack on the Pindaris as an excuse to extinguish their own independence,⁷ and not without cause, for Hastings wished to establish British

1. Ibid.
paramountcy over the states, whose relations with the British, he complained, had previously lacked definition. Hastings' policy was considerably influenced by Charles Metcalfe, who held that the Pindaris and the great military powers should be annihilated or reduced to weakness for, while the former in particular existed, no political or military operations could take place without danger to the Company's possessions. As the Marathas had undermined the Mughal empire so, Metcalfe warned, might the Pindaris destroy the British dominion.

The Governor-General was also under pressure from other "men on the spot". Elphinstone wrote to Captain Close that every opportunity of showing the "vices of the system of 1806" should be seized, and encouraged his correspondent's "spiriting up" of the Governor-General. Elphinstone's own opinion was that the time had long since past when the Company could have avoided the jealousy of Indian rulers. He thought the policy of 1806 had stopped short in the midst of the only other line that was either safe or consistent, that of establishing our ascendancy over the whole

4. Ibid., p.435.
of India. In consequence, we have all the odium without the energy of a conquering people, and all the responsibility of an extensive empire, without its resources or its military advantages ... our enemies are enriching themselves by the plunder of our provinces, while we are wasting our resources on ineffectual preparations.

There was also the important consideration of the Company's dignity. While its troops and subjects became dispirited, the Marathas appeared to gain confidence from the hope that by adopting ancient methods of predatory war they could defeat the British and re-establish Maratha greatness. Elphinstone felt, therefore, that their proceedings could not be tolerated without injury to the Company's reputation.

Meanwhile at Poona events were developing towards a confrontation between the British and the indigenous power, a confrontation which resulted in a war and the deposition of the Peshwa. Tidious as it is once more to relate the murder of Gangadhar Shastri, the incident is part of the essential background to relations between the British and the Peshwa. When Elphinstone decided the Shastri could return to Baroda, Baji Rao and his favourite, Trimbakji Dangle, did their utmost to persuade the envoy to stay. Despite their earlier hostility to him the Shastri was sufficiently conciliated to agree to a marriage alliance between his son and one of Baji Rao's

2. Ibid., p. 342.
3. Elphinstone to Lord Keith, 27 Apr 1816, ibid., p. 316.
family. However, the Shastri soon realised that his standing at Baroda would be jeopardised by his connection with the Peshwa's interests, and consequently he tried to withdraw from his intimacy with the Poona court.Shortly afterwards the Shastri was struck down in a street leading from the temple at Pandharpur. The circumstances of his murder were considered, by the British, to implicate Trimbakji and possibly the Peshwa. However, even before an investigation was made into the circumstances, Elphinstone suspected Trimbakji, who was in the Peshwa's confidence and who, as a parvenu and a politician, was detested by the Resident. Elphinstone did not really think the Peshwa guilty, on account of the latter's religious principles, which would preclude the killing of a Brahmin. However, even if Baji Rao were guilty, Elphinstone knew that the British could punish only those who were his instruments.

According to Professor Gupta, a recent investigator of the crime, the Peshwa was not guilty because he lacked sufficiently strong political motives; the real culprits were, Gupta thinks, enemies of the Shastri's from the Baroda court. Against this view Edward Thompson has produced evidence, from untranslated

2. The incriminating circumstances were, first, the fact that Trimbakji had insisted the Shastri visit the temple despite the latter's reluctance, and secondly, the conspicuous lack of any enquiry into the event on the part of the Peshwa's government, which was usually vigilant in preserving order in the towns. Ibid., pp.197-198.
4. Ibid., p.385.
5. Ibid.
documents in the Peshwa daftar, which indicates that Baji Rao's wife thought that her husband was implicated.¹

Whoever murdered the Shastri, the more significant, but less sensational aspect of the affair, is Elphinstone's use of the incident to remove his opponent from the Peshwa's councils. When the Peshwa protested that, if he complied with the Resident's demand that he arrest Trimbakji, in future the British could demand the arrest of any minister they found objectionable, Elphinstone replied that all he wanted was the removal of the minister from situations where he could injure the British.² In this case the British were not concerned with justice, but with politics, and Professor Gupta has rightly emphasised Elphinstone's dislike of Trimbakji's politics as explaining his attitude towards him.³ Other considerations, such as the need to satisfy the Gaekwad's courts desire for satisfaction,⁴ and to prove that the British were capable of pursuing measures against the atrocity,⁵ were less influential

¹ Thompson, The Making of the Indian Princes, p.206.
² Paper presented by Elphinstone to the Peshwa, 19 Aug 1815, P.R.C., XII, p.405.
³ Gupta, Baji Rao II and the East India Company, p.151. Gupta points out (p.155) that Elphinstone was wrong in assuming that Trimbakji was illiterate. Sardesai states that Trimbakji wrote a " Modi hand" and possessed the practical education of his day, Sardesai, XII, pp.451-452. Although Grant Duff bore witness to Trimbakji's "activity, intelligence and vigour" he also commented that his measures were marked by ignorance, violence and treachery. Grant Duff, II, pp.426, 429.
⁴ Elphinstone to Warden, 20 Oct 1815, P.R.C., XII, pp.449-450.
⁵ Adam to Elphinstone, 10 Sep 1815, ibid., p.428.
motives. When, after his surrender to the British, Trimbakji escaped from his European guards, Elphinstone was not concerned with his punishment but was prepared to leave him alone provided he created no disturbance.¹ However, Trimbakji did raise insurrection and the Peshwa, who was considered by the British to be secretly assisting the rebels, was now regarded as having clearly implicated himself in the murder by failing to exert himself to suppress Trimbakji and his followers. By this time the murder (a vastly overwritten incident) had become submerged in a larger issue, namely, could the alliance survive a fundamental conflict of interests between the Peshwa and his allies?

Sardesai placed events in their true perspective when he declared that "estrangement arose in the relations between the Peshwa and the Residency which required only a spark to burst forth in a conflagration. The Shastri's murder supplied the spark."² The crisis which arose in the relations of the Peshwa and the British was not created by the murder or Trimbakji's counsels alone. Its origins lay in the inherent tensions of the British middle-of-the-road policy, and in the augmented strength and confidence of the Peshwa and in his gradual disillusionment with the benefits which could be expected from the British connection.

In retrospect Elphinstone argued that the conflict with

¹. Elphinstone to Strachey, 29 Nov 1816, Colebrooke, I, p.346.
². Sardessi, III, p.452.
Baji Rao was inevitable, and the Marquis of Hastings had agreed.¹ Looking back shortly after the Shastri's murder, the Resident was convinced that, owing to Trimbakji's conduct and measures, a crisis would have occurred sooner or later without the assassination. ² The British, he maintained, would soon have had to demand Trimbakji's dismissal, for it would have been impossible to carry out any enterprise while he was still in power ³ especially as Trimbakji was the chief channel of communication between the Peshwa and the Residency.⁴ This reasoning was not entirely post hoc ergo propter hoc, for even before the Shastri's murder Elphinstone had predicted that Trimbakji's appointment would lead to "more active endeavours to realise the Peshwa's pretensions, and more unreasonable resistance to our advice when at variance with our designs, than we have ever experienced from the present minister."⁵ He did not, however, initially oppose Trimbakji's appointment because to have done so would have necessitated employing means inconsistent with the Company's declared policy.⁶

5. Elphinstone to G.G., undated Mar 1815, Colebrooke, I, pp. 293-294. The "present minister" was Sadashiv Mankeshvar, whose influence declined at this time. Ibid., p.292.
6. Elphinstone to G.G., 16 Aug, E.R.C., XII, p.365. Elphinstone had on an earlier occasion postponed delivering Lord Minto's disapproval of Sadashiv Mankeshvar to the Peshwa on the grounds that it might have entailed asking for the minister's dismissal - a course which would not have been desirable on general principles. Elphinstone to G.G., 13 Oct 1812, Ibid., pp.226-227.
The British had, in fact, eventually to face a situation inherent in any system of informal control or political compromise: influence was no longer effective and the possibility of replacing it by forcible intervention had to be considered. The schemes associated with Trimbakji - the reduction of Gujarat, the cajoling of the British, the intimidation of the Nizam, and the possible restoration of the confederacy - were precisely the policies of the Peshwa to which the British were most opposed. However, they could not directly accuse Baji Rao of such designs without involving themselves too deeply in the affairs of his state. Hence Elphinstone seized upon the murder of the Shastri to demand Trimbakji's removal from office, but not to exact concessions from the Peshwa. In the normal course of events any demand for the minister's removal would probably have been made in a cause connected with the Peshwa's interests and Elphinstone had scarcely hoped the British could demand his punishment as a man. The Supreme Government agreed that, apart from justice, political interests involving the stability and efficient operation of the alliance made it necessary to separate Trimbakji's cause from his master's, so as to avert the consequences of his influence in the state and to secure the Company's interests. At this stage, the British chose to perpetuate the old fiction that the king could do no wrong;

2. Elphinstone to G.G., 16 Aug 1815, ibid., p.386.
3. Adam to Elphinstone, 10 Sep 1815, ibid., p.429.
for, if they admitted the truth of accusations of wrong doing, logically speaking the king would have to be deposed.

Trimbakji's influence upon the Peshwa has been emphasised, particularly by Malcolm, who does nevertheless admit that Baji Rao had entertained hostile designs since 1803. However, there were other reasons, besides the influence of bad advisers, which account for Baji Rao's becoming more antagonistic towards the Company. His rupture with the British can, in part, be attributed to his added strength and his confidence in the possibility of reviving his ancient authority.

It had been said, by Sir Thomas Munro among others, that a subsidiary alliance weakened the government it came in contact with, encouraged bad government, and, unless the ruler had ability, the country would "soon bear the marks of it in decaying villages and decreasing population." Although Munro cited Baji Rao's dominions as an example, Elphinstone had found that, initially anyway, the effects of the alliance upon Poona were the reverse. Protected from external attack, contests over the masnad, and serious internal rebellion, the Peshwa's dominions experienced a tranquillity which Close

1. Edwardes, Glorious Sahibs, pp.133-134; Grant Duff, II, pp.426-429.
4. Elphinstone to Villiers, 5 Aug 1832, F.P. 1831-1832, XIV, pp.155-156.
stated they had not known for an age.\textsuperscript{1} Despite the system of farming revenue the country had recovered, owing to British protection, and the Peshwa had been able to accumulate treasure.\textsuperscript{2} His authority, previously scarcely acknowledged beyond the environs of Poona, became respected through his dominions.\textsuperscript{3} That the Peshwa's authority was respected, and the country protected, was largely due to the presence of the subsidiary force. Although it may not have been used to uphold the Peshwa, Close had considered its presence had prevented the jagirdars breaking out in 1805,\textsuperscript{4} while Elphinstone guessed that the Peshwa probably made use of the dread of the Company's power anyway.\textsuperscript{5}

Thus strengthened, Baji Rao had entertained hopes of reviving his authority and of using British support to establish his claims. However, the gradual disappointment of these hopes by the British, whose reluctance to assist him became apparent, must have led to a cumulative disillusionment on the part of Baji Rao regarding the value of the alliance.

2. Elphinstone, substance of a Proclamation issued for the settlement of territories conquered from the Peshwa, 11 Feb 1818, \textit{P.R.C.}, XIII, p.300. This was, incidentally, a piece of propaganda, which can be modified in the light of Grant Duff's statement that the famine and wars of 1803-1804 had exhausted the people and the country, provided employment and contributed to tranquillity. In normal times, he thought, it would have taken all the British force to keep Baji Rao on the \underline{mough}. Grant Duff, II, p.412.
5. Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 4 Aug 1811, \textit{ibid.}, p.55.
There is a consensus of opinion that, in the first few years of the alliance, Baji Rao was well disposed towards the British, to whom he owed his position. However after he had settled his own "country" he looked to combinations "abroad". As far as the British were concerned, during the period of non-intervention under Cornwallis and Barlow they had not demolished Baji Rao's hopes of assistance, even by conspicuously demonstrating their reluctance so to assist. But during Lord Minto's term of office, and the early days of the Marquis of Hastings, it had become apparent that the British did not intend to support all the Peshwa's claims unreservedly – for example in Hindustan – but would countenance demands upon Baji Rao himself, for example those of the Gaekwad and the jagirdars. The Peshwa had reduced his army and paid off his sibandī, probably with the intention of relying upon the subsidiary force. However, Elphinstone had maintained the line established by the Treaty of Bassein, that the force was not to be used on trifling occasions. In fact, Choksey can find only one instance of the subsidiary force being used to assist the Peshwa. Even before Trimbakji had

1. Arthur Wellesley to G.G., 4 Jun 1803, Gurwood, I, p.615; Gupta, Baji Rao II and the East India Company, p.82.
2. Elphinstone to Sir Thomas Hislop, Commander of the army in the Deccan, 28 Jun 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.206.
3. Elphinstone to Vice President, 3 Oct 1811, P.R.C., XII, pp. 75, 76. Sibandī irregular troops, used for policing the Peshwa's dominions.
4. Elphinstone to Vice President, 3 Oct 1811, ibid., pp.75 - 76.
5. Choksey, British Diplomacy of the Court of the Peshwa, p.318. The one instance was against Appa Saheb Fatwardhan in 1810.
gained influence over Baji Rao, the latter had declared to Elphinstone that he was now convinced he would have to rely on himself, for he had looked to the British for eight years in the hope that they would help him realise his claims.  

The Peshwa did not display the lethargy sometimes attributed to allied princes. He began to increase his army and to improve his military establishments. The most conspicuous addition was a detachment officered by the British but under the Peshwa's own authority, a detachment which, even the British conceded, was well paid, supplied and disciplined.  

The immediate cause of this activity was the sense of insecurity created in Baji Rao's mind by the arrangement of Pandharpur with the jagirdars, whom he regarded as a threat to his security. However if necessary the force could possibly be used against the British. Shortly after this, during the Nepal war (which did little to enhance the reputation of British arms), further indications of the Peshwa's discontent became manifest. He became involved in a conspiracy against the British to confederate against further encroachments by the Company, or to act against it if the Nepal war proved a failure for the British.  

The Peshwa's growing opposition demonstrates the failure

1. Elphinstone to G.C., 10 Feb 1812, P.R.C., XII, p.141.  
2. Elphinstone to Vice President, 28 Apr 1815, ibid., p.366; Elphinstone to Strachey, 12 Jul 1813, Colebrooke, I, p.253.  
5. Grant Duff, II, pp.432-433.
of the subsidiary alliance as a method of informal rule by "subordinate co-operation", when the British reputation was low and when the "allied" power saw an opportunity of asserting its autonomy. At Poona, the British do not appear to have been able to supplement force by any other strong controlling influence. They could not control the state by gaining the support of an all powerful minister as they had at Hyderabad, neither did they have a financial hold upon the Poona state as they did upon Baroda, where the British guaranteed the Gaekwad's debts. Baji Rao was jealous of others exercising his authority, while many testify to his thrift and honesty in pecuniary matters. He was careful not to run himself into debt by assigning his revenues to gain present supplies.

In 1817 Elphinstone had written

there is no party in the state particularly attached to our interests; on the other hand independent of the Peshwa's enmity, we have no party decidedly hostile to us, and no part of the people feels that rancorous ill-will towards us which is or was at one time common about Mohammedan capitals.

4. Elphinstone to Sir Thomas M'Cleop, 28 Jun 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.210. The cordiality of the common people about Poona towards the British has been partly ascribed to Dr Coats' medical work in the area. Russell to Edmonstone, 9 Aug 1810, P.R.C., VII, p.481. Dr Coats was chiefly concerned with vaccination against smallpox, but he also rendered gratuitous medical aid. He was at Poona in Close's time and was still there in 1817, when the Peshwa ordered that he and Major Ford, who officered the Peshwa's detachment, should be protected in the coming attack on the British. Grant Duff, II, p.474 note.
Although there may not have been an anti-British "party" at Poona, the Peshwa's enmity led him to appoint ministers who were generally unfavourably disposed towards the British. The ministers' dispositions varied. Unfortunately for the British, the only one who ever possessed the Peshwa's confidence was Trimbakji,¹ who had done so through "his suppleness in adopting his Highness's views, and his boldness in attempting to carry them into execution."² Moro Dixit was attached to the Peshwa but thought that his master's interests lay with the British.³ Sadashiv Manekeshvar worked against British influence but bowed before expediency and tried, before the final rupture with the British, to persuade Baji Rao that the course he planned was futile.⁴ Bapu Gokhale, who had helped Arthur Wellesley and who professed to be well disposed towards the British, actually led those who wanted war against the Company; a course of action no doubt influenced by his position as commander-in-chief. Elphinstone was aware that Baji Rao relied on Gokhale, but he found it difficult to predict whether the latter would adhere to his interests with the Company or intrigue with his master for wealth and influence.⁵ Elphinstone respected

2. Elphinstone to G.G., undated Nov 1815, ibid., p.293.
3. Elphinstone to Sir Thomas Hislop, 28 Jun 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.208; Gupta, Baji Rao II and the East India Company, p.173.
5. Elphinstone to G.G., 26 Mar 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.409; Elphinstone to Sir Thomas Hislop, 28 Jun 1817, ibid., p.209. This would seem to contradict P.C. Gupta's assertion that in calculating the Peshwa would not go to war Elphinstone did not sufficiently consider Gokhale's influence. Baji Rao II and the East India Company, p.177.
Gokhale, who considered Elphinstone his friend and opposed Baji Rao's schemes to assassinate the Resident.¹

Although the official relationship between Baji Rao and Elphinstone was not positively unharmonious - while one dissimulated the other conciliated - there was between the voluptuary and the ascetic a fundamental conflict of personality. Elphinstone, who neither liked nor respected the Peshwa and his minister, tried to conceal his emotions.² Baji Rao for his part complained to Captain Ford that his affairs had not gone well since Elphinstone had taken over the Residency. Ford replied, with truth, that Elphinstone wished to conciliate the Peshwa, but owing to the nature of affairs had often been obliged to oppose Baji Rao's wishes.³ Later Baji Rao himself admitted that he would have had the same differences with any other officer.⁴

* * *

As even the pretence of co-operation between the British and Baji Rao had virtually ceased to exist, with the latter's countenancing of Trimbakji's insurrection, the British, considering that the Treaty of Bassein inadequately controlled the Peshwa, imposed the restrictions known as the Treaty of Poona upon him in June 1817. But they did not immediately depose him or annex his dominions.

3. Elphinstone to G.C., 23 Aug 1815, F.R.C., XII, p.408.
4. Elphinstone to G.C., 10 Sep 1815, ibid., p.426.
Before the Treaty of Poona was concluded Elphinstone had written in his journal "with all his crimes and with all his perfidy I shall be sorry if Bajee Rao throws away his sovereignty." Edwardes dismisses this as "only the expression of a private nostalgia, a moment perhaps of Romantic weakness", when everyone wanted to be on the march. However although Elphinstone did, on one occasion, confess that he considered a quarrel with the Peshwa desirable, this may be attributed rather to his emotions - he would have enjoyed an active campaign than to his reason. For his policies suggest that he did not want Baji Rao to throw away his sovereignty. Before Hastings' decision regarding the future of the Peshwa reached Poona, Elphinstone had assured Baji Rao that, if he complied with the preliminary requirements, whatever the Governor-General's demands, they would not affect his continued possession of the masnad. However, Elphinstone did consider that the Peshwa's ability to harm the British must be curtailed, for he wrote that "it appears beyond doubt that we never can again trust the Paishwa", and that "we

2. Edwardes, Glorious Sahibs, p.140.
5. Elphinstone's use of the word sovereignty is ambiguous. As the entry in his journal occurs at the time when it had been decided to bring things to an issue with Baji Rao, he could have meant the Peshwa's authority as limited by the Treaty of Bassein, or even his retention of the masnad on any conditions. "We must now have a new era, or a repetition of the same course, ending in the Peshwa's ruin." Elphinstone, Journal, 9 May 1817, Ibid., p.360.
must depend on stronger feelings than those of gratitude and on ties more cogent than those of honour. In this long despatch to Hastings, discussing the future role of the British at Poona, Elphinstone proceeded to outline alternative modes of controlling the Poona state. The Peshwa's effective power could be transferred to a minister possessing the Company's confidence; Baji Rao himself, or one of his brothers, could be maintained subject to certain limitations; the Raja of Satara could be restored; or the country could be reduced to a British province.

Firsep stated that Elphinstone did not state a preference in the matter but left the choice to the Governor-General. However, Elphinstone did make objections to his own suggestions. To rule through a minister would be impossible owing to Baji Rao's intriguing disposition. To restore the Raja of Satara, a Maratha by caste, would alienate the Brahmins, while a direct and vigorous British rule would be unpopular. He thus virtually excluded these possibilities while pointing out the advantages of concluding a treaty maintaining but limiting the powers of Baji Rao's house, namely the advantage of keeping up the old form of government and providing employment for Maratha officers.

The stipulations of the Treaty of Poona were based on the

2. Ibid., pp.98-100.
suggestions made by Elphinstone in his despatch of 21 March 1817. As the British found that other members of the confederacy had, when it suited them, a tendency to defer to the Peshwa as the head of their ancient "constitution", and that a revival of the confederacy was a part of every project against them, it was no longer expedient to let the extinction of the Peshwa's connection with the other Maratha states "rest on a general understanding" as before. In respect to the other Maratha states the Treaty of Poona, in fact, follows on from the Treaty of Bassein. To prevent further intrigues, or at least a cover for them, no vakils from foreign powers were to be maintained at Poona and Baji Rao engaged to hold no communication with other powers except through the Company's representative at Poona. He was also to recognise "the dissolution in form and substance of the Maratta confederacy" and renounce all connections with the other Maratha powers. On his own initiative Elphinstone added a clause guaranteeing the Peshwa's rights over what the British regarded as his own immediate territories, although to a great part of these he had no claim except as head of the empire, and the villages were actually held by other authorities.

2. Adam to Elphinstone, 7 Apr 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p. 135.
who were kept out by the superior force of the Peshwa. 1

As far as the internal affairs of the Poona state were concerned the Company's demands were designed for the more efficient operation of the alliance. Trimbakji was, of course, to be surrendered. To transform the Peshwa into a more useful military ally, as well as to prevent future attacks upon the British, his force was to be reduced and placed under the command of British officers, with sufficient funds for its maintenance. This demand reflects various altercations Elphinstone had with Baji Rao over the type of force he should employ - infantry or cavalry. In future such disagreements would be avoided as the force would be independent of the Peshwa's control.

In his original suggestions Elphinstone proposed that the British insist on advising the Peshwa on his internal administration. 2 The suggestion was retained by the treaty in relation to the southern jagirdars. The Supreme Government had decided not to separate the jagirdars from the Poona state, for, if such a separation were added to the other demands, the Peshwa would be reduced to insignificance, a condition inconsistent with the Company's desire to maintain a subservient state. 3 Adam thought the jagirdars' separate interests, in

1. Elphinstone to Adam, 4 Jun 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.179. Most of these authorities were hereditary lieutenants of the Raja of Satara. The Peshwa's own lieutenants also held lands in the Marathi homeland, for example, the Peshwa continued to grant Sindia villages around Poona after 1803. Grant Duff, II, p.409 note.
3. Adam to Elphinstone, 17 May 1817, ibid., p.171.
regard to each other and the Peshwa, would prevent them threatening British interests. This looks suspiciously like a policy of divide and rule. However, it is in fact an expression of the feeling that a coalition of the jagirdars against the British was unlikely, rather than a possible line of action against a probable danger. Also, owing to the habits and the terms of tenure of the jagirdars, it was decided that a more intimate connection between the British and these people would not be of advantage to either party, or increase mutual goodwill. That this course was adopted was probably the result of Elphinstone's advice that, if a closer connection existed, more favourable terms would have to be offered to the jagirdars, who would expect them to be strictly adhered to. The British, therefore, continued to guarantee the relations of the jagirdars and the Peshwa, and the arrangement of Pandharpur, concluded under Elphinstone's supervision in 1812, was confirmed for the first time by the application of Baji Rao's signature.

The rights of arbitration exercised by the British under the Treaty of Bassein had been used to confine the Peshwa to certain territorial limits and to prevent his interference beyond them. The Treaty of Poona continued this tidying policy. The Peshwa was further confined by the cession of Khandesh and

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
4. Elphinstone to Adam, 4 Jun 1817, ibid., p.183.
the Konkan, which cut him off from Hindustan and the sea respectively. For strategic reasons the British also demanded the fortress of Ahmednagar, which was vital to their communications and which had been occupied by their troops since 1803. The Peshwa was also deprived of all excuses to interfere outside his own "country". He was obliged to renounce all his claims and pretensions in Bundelkhand, Hindustan and Gujerat. The revenue farm of Ahmedabad, which had been a great bone of contention between the Peshwa and the Gaekwad, was granted to the latter in perpetuity together with the tribute of Kathiawar. But, because of the Peshwa's financial losses in other spheres, Elphinstone saw to it that the Gaekwad would still pay four and a half lakhs of rupees annually to the Peshwa for Ahmedabad.3

"For the purpose of rendering the boundary line a good and well defined one" the Peshwa agreed to exchange various lands and claims.4 This was particularly necessary in Gujerat and also in Bundelkhand, where forty villages which jutted into the Company's frontier were subsequently ceded to the British.5 In the southern part of Baji Rao's dominions, after the British had annexed them, Elphinstone was to adopt a policy of

2. Adam to Elphinstone, 7 Apr 1817, ibid., p.135; Grant Duff, II, p.339.
3. Article 15, Treaty of Poona, Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties ..., VIII, pp.66-67; Elphinstone to Adam, 4 Jun 1817, P.R.C., XIII, pp.179-180, 182.
5. Hastings to Court of Directors, 4 Sep 1817, P.R., 1817, XI, p.223.
consolidating the jagirdars' lands similar to that used in relation to foreign states.  

He proposed to add to the jagirdars' possessions those contiguous villages belonging to the Peshwa, which had formerly been interspersed through the jagirs according to Maratha practice.

It has been maintained that the terms of the Treaty of Poona were the terms of war, terms which displayed "an indifference to the sensitivities of Indian rulers which was all too characteristic of the times", and that the Peshwa was bound to try to recover a medium of dignity. It is unfair to say the British were indifferent to Baji Rao's feelings, for they were quite aware that he would find it difficult to reconcile himself to the treaty. Also the limitations had not been imposed hastily upon the Peshwa; Elphinstone had given him sufficient time to capture Trimbakji and regain favour with the British. The British had tried to govern by influence since the Treaty of Bassein; but this treaty, as Sardesai states, was "now found to be unworkable". Now something stronger was required. The Treaty of Poona stated bluntly what the Treaty of Bassein implied; it secured with one ruthless stroke objects which for years the British had tried to achieve by more subtle means of arbitration and advice.

2. Ibid., pp.399-400.
5. Grant Duff, II, p.446.
The Treaty of Poona achieved "not a re-establishment of friendship but a temporary postponement of hostilities." It was, in fact, a contributory cause of the British war with the Peshwa, who had said that the treaty "exposed him to future perils by marking out so narrow a path for him that it was scarcely possible for him to keep to it without swerving." In other words, Baji Rao was now so hedged in by restrictions that almost any activity could be opposed by the British. He had, indeed, lost power, the most important attribute of a prince and had little left to sacrifice in running the risk of losing a war against the British, in which he might possibly recover his losses. On the general principle that as long as the Indian rulers possessed any high-minded independence they would oppose subsidiary treaties, Munro predicted that Baji Rao would react against the Treaty of Poona and his power would be further reduced. The prediction proved correct for, owing to the outbreak of war between Baji Rao and the Company, the treaty's practicability in terms of ordinary political relations was, in fact, never really tested.

Malcolm had exaggerated when he stated that the Treaty of Poona should be considered only as a measure the Company had to adopt in order to avert local danger and to deprive the Peshwa of power to endanger British operations. For the

4. Munro to G.C., 12 Aug 1817, Gleig, Life of Munro, I, p.464.
treaty was also the logical conclusion to the Treaty of Bassein and yet another experiment in informal rule. However, Malcolm's statement does place the treaty in the wider context of the Indian political scene. At this point the Governor-General's movements against the Pindaris acted as a catalyst in provoking another crisis at Poona. Elphinstone had been involved only on the periphery of the campaign against the freebooters. He thought he would have to stay and "watch stale conspiracies" at Poona. But he found himself involved in the climax of his career, "the great hour that was to satiate Elphinstone's greed for activity and distinction". This "great hour" occurred when the British troops at Poona were moved north to join operations and the Peshwa took advantage of the defenceless state of the Residency to attack and burn it. This "profligate breach of the law of nations," as Hastings self-righteously put it, induced the British to eliminate the Peshwa's power and to annex his dominions.

From the time Baji Rao had refused to surrender Trimbakji Elphinstone had considered the possibility of his attacking the British if their forces were moved north of the Narbada river. After the Treaty of Poona this became more likely, for the Peshwa had an additional grievance. Elphinstone

2. Choksey, British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas, p.387.
3. Hastings to Court of Directors, 19 May 1818, P.R.C., XIII, p.382.
4. Elphinstone to C.C., 21 Mar 1817, ibid., pp.96-97.
therefore disagreed with Malcolm's decision to move the troops and wrote "I think we risk a good deal by sending all the troops out of this country after encouraging the Peshwa to put himself into a situation to profit by the absence of our troops". However, Malcolm thought that Baji Rao would try to gain his ends by confederating with the British and Elphinstone did not obstruct Malcolm's plans.

Events proved Elphinstone right. The Peshwa's attack would probably never have eventuated if the troops had been present near Poona, for Baji Rao was himself of a divided mind. He had to weigh his fears against his ambitions and wavered between the advice of Gokhale and the "violent party" and that of Moro Dixit and those recommending accommodation, opposed counsels symbolising the conflict within the Peshwa's own mind.

Baji Rao's attack was also due to the fact that he acted under two major misapprehensions. His mistakes were to overestimate his own strength and to "misconceive the motives by which the British had all along been actuated." When on the occasion of his surrender, Baji Rao said to Malcolm that he was involved in a war which he never intended, he was truthful as well as sorry. He had placed his faith in the

5. Ibid.
6. Malcolm to Adam, 3 Jun 1818, P.R.C., XIII, p.369.
success of traditional Maratha warfare of hill forts and plundering bands and had hoped that other members of the confederacy would join him. In the latter case he had some grounds for hope, for when he attacked the Poona Residency there was an almost simultaneous storming of the British outpost at Nagpur. Many inhabitants of his dominions also counted on the British being driven out; Baji Rao was still a powerful rallying point, for it was difficult for people to forget the impressions of a hundred years and he was able to pay his followers. Much of this support was, however, of recent origin and arose out of "pity for his [The Peshwa's] losses and ... some hope of the restoration of Mahratta greatness".

The other mistake Baji Rao made was to misconstrue the moderation of the British, and their desire to keep on good terms. He did not realise that he acted with so much at stake. He was "still under the impression of the high importance of his alliance to the British government" and to its system and hoped the Resident would have to make concessions. Elphinstone, writing to the Marquis of Hastings, said that

those about the Peshwa thought the British would submit to anything rather than proceed to extremities. For Baji Rao's advisers who "allow none of our political mistakes, however old, to be forgotten" held out examples of those princes who had acted against the British with impunity in the 1803-1804 war. One may suppose, too, that the Treaty of Poona itself, though not a conciliatory measure, also tended to give the Peshwa a false sense of his position, for it seemed to indicate that the British were still not prepared to resort to arms. The impression would be confirmed by the efforts, that Malcolm said, the British made to satisfy Baji Rao that they would confer on him the benefits of a valuable ally, whom they had been reluctantly forced to regard as an enemy.

The Treaty of Poona was both too strict to conciliate the Peshwa and too moderate to frighten him; it merely clarified the ambiguous position in which the British and the Peshwa had existed since 1803. Although "defeat and deposition was neither planned nor desired in the beginning either by the Resident or by the Company", the British Government could no longer delay accepting responsibility for the influence it wished to exercise, if it wished the Marathas to appreciate fully the strength of its power. It had, in fact, to "show that it could itself occupy the guddee of Poona, and direct

1. Elphinstone to G.C., 26 Mar 1817, P.R.C., XIII, p.108.
2. Ibid.
its control of the chiefs of the Mahratta nation to the
maintenance of public tranquillity."  

Elphinstone's proposals of 21 March 1817, for limiting
rather than abolishing the Peshwa's authority, were consistent
with his acts and opinions subsequent to the Governor-General's
decision to annex the Peshwa's lands. His attitude in general
tends to contradict the theory that the "man on the spot" took
the initiative in expansion. Although Elphinstone believed
that the Peshwa could not be trusted to rule under existing
arrangements after early 1817, and although he advocated
limiting the Peshwa's powers, he did not hold with total annex-
ation, or direct rule, by the British.

The Marquis of Hastings wished to annex Baji Rao's
dominions to make an example of him to the other princes of
India. 2 It was not Elphinstone who took the initiative in
the imposition of direct rule which came in 1818. After the
Treaty of Poona he told Moro Dixit that the British wanted
nothing more of Baji Rao and only hoped he would not become
involved in scraps which would oblige the British to "crush
him or greatly reduce him". 3 Hastings reported to the Court
of Directors that after the battle of Kirkee 4 Elphinstone still

Guddes, used by Prinsep as a synonym for mansad. Prinsep
was Hastings' assistant secretary and accompanied him on
all his campaigns, his opinion may, therefore, be regarded
as evidence.
2. Ibid., p.174.
3. Elphinstone to Moro Dixit, 2 Nov 1817, H.M.G., 9th Report,
appx. p.208.
4. This battle followed the Peshwa's attack on the Poona
Residency on 5 Nov 1817.
expected the Governor-General to allow the restoration of Baji Rao under certain limitations. This expectation of Elphinstone's provides some indication of the lines along which he thought and of his opinion on what should be done in future. His military tactics also reflect his prejudices. At first Elphinstone had merely pursued the Peshwa's person to intimidate him and to prevent other chiefs following his example, but he did not attempt to conquer the country until he had received the Governor-General's orders to annex it. Fear of arousing to hostility the latent power of Indian society caused him to delay publishing Hastings' decision to annex until conditions were more settled.

To a certain extent Elphinstone was able to mitigate the dangers inherent in the conquest, and the evils of direct rule, by taking advantage of the latitude allowed him as Commissioner of the Deccan. In this capacity he was responsible for settling the territory conquered from Baji Rao, his work being mainly concerned with the establishment of a system of revenue collection and of law and order. However, one of his most significant acts was the creation of the princely state of Satara as a small sovereignty for the Raja.

3. Colebrooke, II, p.21; Elphinstone to Adam, 17 Jan 1818, P.R.C., XIII, p.289.
4. He was appointed 16 Dec 1817.
in preference to the other alternative offered to him by the Marquis of Hastings, that of relegating the Raja to the status of a jagirdar. Elphinstone's decision was founded on the necessity of providing for certain Maratha interests if the settlement was to be effective in every sense of the word. The Marathas had shown no tendency to abandon the Peshwa's standard, owing to their dread of losing national independence, subsistence and employment, rather than to any personal attachment to Baji Rao and his cause. This problem had not been so critical in "our former partial conquests," in which part of the old state remained, thus providing a retreat for those discontent with the Company's rule. In contrast total annexation left dissident elements within the British frontiers. These considerations, particularly Sir Thomas Munro's arguments for leaving the Peshwa's subjects in their accustomed employment, were responsible for Elphinstone's decision to create Satara. However, to preclude any attempt to revive national sentiment around the Raja, Elphinstone suggested that his total separation from all his former dependants should be declared. To promote this end he also intended that the jagirdars in the south should be under the collector of the Karnatak rather than the agent at Satara, as a precaution against their looking to Satara as their headquarters.

3. Ibid., p.403.
4. Ibid., p.397.
5. Ibid., pp.398-399.
6. Ibid., pp.410-411.
state of Satara had also been created to counter existing Brahmin influence; \(^1\) however Elphinstone also conciliated the Brahmins by preserving religious establishments. \(^2\) His conciliation of the Brahmins was also a continuation of his own attitude as Resident at Poona; for example, he had refrained from demanding south Konkan from the Peshwa, knowing that to do so would antagonise the Brahmins who hailed from the area. \(^3\)

It seems clear that fundamentally Elphinstone was afraid of over-expansion. This fear is reflected in his correspondence at the time. He wrote to Jenkins at Nagpur agreeing with the latter's decision to keep the Bhonsla in power, for Elphinstone thought that the problems of administering two conquered territories would be too great. \(^4\) Captain Close received a letter from him on similar lines: "there is something alarming in the great strides we are making towards universal dominion. We never before attempted the complete conquest of a country. Even Mysore was saved from that fate by the creation of a Raja." \(^5\) He feared that if there was a war the British empire in India would tumble down

like a house of cards. So far is this from seeming impossible, that if it should happen I am persuaded we shall wonder it did not

\(^1\) Hastings to Secret Committee, 21 Aug 1820, ibid., p.494.
\(^2\) Elphinstone to G.C., 18 Jun 1818, ibid., p.402. See below p.159.
\(^3\) Elphinstone to Adam, 4 Jun 1817, ibid., pp.180-181.
\(^4\) Elphinstone to Jenkins, 13 Apr 1818, Kaye, Lives of Indian Officers, I, p.396.
\(^5\) Elphinstone to Capt. Close, 16 Apr 1818, Colebrooke, II, pp.41-42.
happen before. In the meantime ... I shall contribute my mite to keep it off by great moderation in the settlement of this country. ¹

Grant Duff recalled that when the Marquis of Hastings initiated a series of inquiries into departments of state and into individuals, he "awakened a lively attention in the minds of the officers throughout the vast army of British India, and inspired them, by this obvious desire to ascertain merit, with the hope of honour and reward for both past and future exertions."² Although Elphinstone was not in the army he must have been affected by the general atmosphere, for in December 1817 he thought the approaching campaign held out "a pleasant prospect of exertion and a reasonable hope of success."³ However, after the Treaty of Poona he began to lose interest in his duties, regretted "that I have no future prospect of activity or distinction", ⁴ and continued to hope, without success, for employment in Hindustan.⁵

The main reason for his discontent was his supercession as the chief British agent in the Peshwa's dominions. At the beginning of the campaign against the Pindaris, Sir Thomas Hislop and Sir John Malcolm were appointed to direct the military and political aspects of the war respectively. Elphinstone admitted "I was annoyed that anyone should be over me, and still more that I had not the management of the Deccan

¹. Ibid., p.42.
in the approaching crisis" and complained that "neither Bisley nor Malcolm knows much of the state of this part of the country." From a more general point of view, of course, his annoyance represents the conflict between the "man on the spot", possessed of local knowledge, and the Supreme Government, or at least the agents of that government, for there were in fact three levels that had to be harmonised - the Governor-General, his agents who were responsible for overseeing operations, and the Residents themselves. The conflict is well illustrated by the disagreement between Elphinstone and Malcolm over whether British troops should be moved from Poona.

Elphinstone did not, however, consider taking advantage of the inflammable situation at Poona to create for himself an heroic or conspicuous role. For example, when communications with Calcutta were cut off, and the Governor-General's orders regarding the Treaty of Poona failed to arrive, Elphinstone, while not remaining diplomatically inactive, did not do anything to commit the Supreme Government, but left the way open for Hastings' decision. He also deliberately refrained from anticipating Baji Rao's attack and tried to delay the

2. Elphinstone to Adam, 15 Nov 1817, Colebrooke, II, p.5.
3. If the war of 1803-1804 can be taken as a precedent, Elphinstone should not have been disappointed at his supercession, for in that war the Governor-General's powers were delegated to Arthur Wellesley, who superceded local men such as Colonel Cloze, for the purpose of co-ordinating British operations in general.
rupture as long as possible, in order to avoid precipitating a conflict which would prejudice British operations in Hindustan. ¹

Elphinstone's self-effacement was rewarded when the Peshwa's attack suddenly thrust the Resident into a "star" role, in one of the more spectacular incidents of the Marquis of Hastings' 1817 drama. His career in Britain's Residencies in India ended as it began, with the flight from a Residency.²

The most conspicuous difference between the two escapes was Elphinstone's own place in the later proceedings and the public recognition of his place.

Mr. Elphinstone (a name distinguished in the literature as well as in the politics of the East) exhibited on that trying occasion, military courage and skill which, though valuable accessories to diplomatic talents, we are not entitled to require as necessary qualifications for civil employment.³

2. The other incident was his flight from the Benares Residency in 1799 before Vizier Ali the ex-Nawab of Oude.
**EPILLOGUE AND CONCLUSION**

It is ironical that Elphinstone's most important and permanent work should have been the product of what may be regarded as the dénouement of his career, following its climax in 1817. For this climax so completely satisfied his ambitions that any subsequent success meant little to him in terms of personal fulfilment. It was without enthusiasm that he left the Deccan, and postponed his return to Europe, to take up office as Governor of Bombay in 1819. "I leave a new, interesting, active office, for an old-established and regulated appointment; and I quit the field of expectation and popularity for the difficulties of performance and the envy of possession."¹ That the pursuit of official success no longer held any delight for him, and that he was aware of his own physical and intellectual limitations, was made quite apparent by the fact that, during his retirement in England, he did not stand for Parliament and refused the positions of Permanent Under Secretary to the Board of Control and of special commissioner to Canada, as well as the Governor-Generalship of India twice.²

His most enduring achievements, it would appear, were the

---

² He declined these offers during the years 1834-1835, partly for reasons of health and, in the case of Canada, because he did not think his experience relevant. Colebrooke, II, pp.333-338.
result of his activities as Commissioner of the Deccan during 1813-1819 and as Governor of Bombay from 1819 to 1827. Although the work, being largely administrative, was different from anything he had done before, the influence of his experience as a political agent is, perhaps, perceptible in his untheoretical and pragmatic approach to the administration of the lands recently acquired by the British. Elphinstone's fundamental principle was "to leave everything as I found it, and make no innovation until I saw how the land lay". The settlement, which was to influence the future society of western India, was based upon the preservation of existing classes and institutions.

As Governor of the Bombay Presidency, which inherited the Peshwa's dominions, Elphinstone continued his "commitment to innovation tempered with a sense of continuity". His judicial work, which culminated in the Elphinstone Code of 1827, and the educational policies he encouraged, were landmarks in the evolution of British attitudes towards the administration of India. The judicial policy Elphinstone pursued was designed to maintain Hindu law, local custom, and the traditional organs of administering justice, while at the same time establishing some sort of consistency by codifying the law and superimposing the Company's courts over local

1. Elphinstone to Strachey, 28 Feb 1819, ibid., p.53.
2. Ravinder Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, p.32.
3. Like Napoleon, Elphinstone did not compile the Code himself but appointed the Committee and initiated the policy which were responsible for the Code.
tribunals. However, it was in his particularly advanced educational policy that Elphinstone displayed the most originality. "Such extensive governmental activity to promote education was unprecedented either in the Company's territories or in Britain." The central idea of this policy was to encourage indigenous education, for Elphinstone felt that the introduction of European, or more specifically Christian, education would arouse antagonism. Also, he was alarmed at the disappearance of learning in India and was of the opinion that indigenous education was better than none at all. It would prevent the people being victimised and would provide a means through which the British could remove superstition and prejudice. Ultimately this policy, Elphinstone was aware, must lead to the employment of Indians as officials and administrators and eventually even to their admission to Council.

The most desirable course for events in that country /India/ to take is that European opinions and knowledge should spread until the nation becomes capable of founding a government of its own, on principles of which Europe has long had the exclusive possession.

Elphinstone's educational policy was important in winning over the Brahmans of Maharashtra to western ideas and values without alienating them from their own community or weakening the fabric of society. The same could not be said of his

3. Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, pp.83, 322-323.
attempt to preserve the traditional institutions of society. The authority of hereditary district officers was reduced and the new concepts of legality and responsibility, which inspired Elphinstone's system, undermined the "chain of society" which had previously united rulers and ruled. ¹

The unifying theme behind Elphinstone's policies and attitudes was an intense awareness of the strength of Indian tradition. The Chinese hatred of their Tartar government, he thought, provided a lesson for the British in India.

It shows how the most systematic endeavour to amalgamate two races has failed after a trial of near two centuries, how little internal tranquillity and material prosperity have sufficed to reconcile the conquered nation to its foreign rulers, and how little reliance can be placed on apparent attachment to a Government ... It also shows how little foreigners can judge the real character of a nation. ²

Ainslie Embree has asserted that it was this belief in the impossibility of changing Indian society that differentiated the earlier administrators from their successors, and not a "kindlier view of the people and their culture" on the part of the first generation. ³ On the other hand the understanding and respect which Elphinstone and his contemporaries had for India has been emphasized. ⁴ The most significant thing to

¹ Ibid.; Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change, pp. 118-123.
² Elphinstone to Colebrooke, 3 Jan 1854, Colebrooke, II, pp. 397-398.
³ Embree, Charles Grant and British Rule in India, p. 156.
⁴ Thompson and Garrett, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule, p. 242.
note is, however, the dichotomy which existed in their attitude to India. Elphinstone's generation stood between the "nabobs" and the "sahibs", and manifested all the contradiction in outlook of a period of rapid transition. Kumar has pointed out the contradictions of Elphinstone's official policies in this respect. This dichotomy was also manifested on a more personal level. Elphinstone had enjoyed nautching and Holy and could recall with pleasure his entertainment at Indian homes, yet he could also write "the society of natives can never be in itself agreeable". On another occasion he advised a young officer not to "go native" because he would forfeit the respect of Europeans. He wrote that it is so very important to get acquainted with the natives and to know their manners and character, ... but I caution you against going too far .... I hope you will like the natives and acquire their language, but do not sink to their level.

As far as his attitude to official policy was concerned Elphinstone professed himself "strongly opposed to the maxim now in favour, of 'India for the English.'" He felt that "the fault of our younger politicians - who have never seen the Indian states in the days of their power - is a contempt

1. For the transition from "nabob" to "sahib" see Eric Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India, p.xiii.
2. Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, pp.47-48.
5. Elphinstone to a young officer, 1 Jun 1824, Colebrooke, II, p.164.
for the natives, and an inclination to carry everything with a high hand. 1

The record of British expansion in India has been described as

but a comment on the theme, later to be popularised by the Americans, of the 'manifest destiny' that draws on those who stand by a moving frontier - in the Indian case a frontier not of settlement but of government, of the Raj extending ... the zone of law and order. 2

At first sight Elphinstone's writings provide ample evidence of this theme. In his History of India, he envisaged the British as heirs to the Mughal Empire, 3 and on another occasion remarked: "we are charged with the maintenance of the peace of all India." 4 For strategic reasons he thought that "sooner or later it is probably desirable that we should have all the country" because war would be less likely "when there are no heads to those who would wish to oppose us." 5 But the extent to which Elphinstone's ideas were illustrative of the theme of manifest destiny needs to be more specifically defined. He thought that the British should limit themselves strictly to India, to what Prinsep later called "the natural barriers of India", 6 beyond which Elphinstone thought it was dangerous to

1. Elphinstone to Malcolm, 24 May 1819, ibid., p.66.
5. Ibid.
6. They were "the sea, the Himalayas, and the sandy deserts of the Indus." Prinsep, Political and Military Transactions, II, p.420. Elphinstone evolved no equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine so far as his attitude to areas beyond India was concerned.
Elphinstone's conception of the British destiny in India was a distinctly qualified one; he did not "dream of perpetual possession". Although he thought British influence should be paramount in India, he also felt that the exercise of this paramountcy should be strictly limited. He interpreted the subsidiary alliances, as they existed in the time of the Marquis of Hastings, in the light of these opinions, and explained that the object of the alliances was to secure the political supremacy of the British Government, not to assist its feudal sovereignty, and to obtain the subordinate co-operation of the native prince as an ally, not his subjection as a vassal. The British Government was to be supreme in all transactions with foreign States; but all internal affairs were to be regulated as before by the law and usage of the territory, free from any interference of the British Government.

To Elphinstone this was an ideal arrangement, for it avoided the dangers he most feared in India. The dangers were, first, over-expansion ("it is certainly a very bad plan to swallow more than we can digest"), and secondly, the provocation of an Indian reaction by the extension of the Company's direct rule. Therefore, he remained "partial to

2. Elphinstone to Colebrooke, 13 Feb 1850, ibid., p. 392.
3. Elphinstone to Malcolm, 11 Jul 1818, ibid., p. 44.
4. Elphinstone to Malcolm, 24 May 1819, ibid., pp. 66-67. This opinion was not universal; Metcalfe did not share the apprehensions of Malcolm and Elphinstone regarding the too rapid extension of the Company's rule, Metcalfe to Jenkins, 5 Jul 1820, Kaye, Life of Metcalfe, II, p. 477.
the subsidiary plan" which, he concluded, was "the only
effectual one", and he heartily approved "the policy of
supporting and prolonging the existence of the native states".

The states were to provide employment for those Indians
who could find no place in the British order of things; they
were to absorb disordered elements, to act as buffers, and to
provide a contrast to enhance the blessings of British rule in
the Company's provinces. Elphinstone, therefore, deplored
the policies followed by the next generation of administrators;
policies which entailed the annexation of as many states as
possible in the interests of consolidating territory and
simplifying administration. The satisfaction of one who has
been proved right may be detected in a comment Elphinstone
made after the 1857 mutiny. He expected that the ardour for
the new policy "which was lately so powerful, must have been a
good deal damped by recent events. Where should we have been
now if Sindia, the Muzam, ... etc. had been annexed ...?"
In 1857 Elphinstone's attitude was the same as it had been
forty years earlier, when he opted for the preservation of the
Raja of Satara. Both in theory and in practice he was opposed

68-69.
3. Elphinstone to Villiers, 5 Aug 1832, E.F., 1831-1832, XIV,
p.156; Elphinstone to Malcolm, 11 Jul 1848, Colebrooke, II,
p.44.
4. Elphinstone was particularly irate at the annexation of
his own creation, Satara, an act which he considered broke
the treaty concluded with that state. Elphinstone to Colebrooke, 13 May 1849, ibid., p.339.
5. Elphinstone to Colebrooke, 20 Dec 1857, ibid., p.400.
to outright annexation and favoured more subtle methods of rule.

The new alliances contracted by the Marquis of Hastings had, Elphinstone pointed out, altered the footing on which the contracting parties stood, "by the native state engaging to acknowledge the supremacy of the British Government". 1 Although Hastings deliberately asserted the paramountcy of the Company, basically he was opposed to annexation, and his treaties have been seen as a means of avoiding this contingency by preserving the states. 2 The indefinite position in which the states had been left by Wellesley's treaties was thus terminated. Hastings' alliances specifically stressed the "subordinate co-operation" and isolation of the states, whereas Lord Wellesley's had offered terms to the Indians, ostensibly as if to "independent and equal powers" and "the principle of subordinate isolation and co-operation was not unreservedly asserted." 3

The odds were against Lord Wellesley's middle course between annexation and non-intervention for two principal reasons; the alliances had never stipulated where ultimate authority lay and the reality of British authority created opposition. Because of a tension between de facto and de jure

2. Lee-Warner, The Native States, pp. 102, 122. The annexation of the Peshwas dominions was an exception. It was to provide an example to the other Indian states.
power neither the British nor their allies were sure of their true position. To the distrust created by an ambivalence of attitude on both sides may be ascribed, in part, the breakdown of the system, the success of which depended upon co-operation. While Elphinstone was at Poona the inadequacies of the existing form of the subsidiary alliances, as a means of informal rule, were made manifest and the necessity of the more precise arrangements eventually concluded by Hastings became apparent.

Basically a conflict existed between the traditional political framework of India and the new order established by the British in 1803-1805. As Edward Thompson has observed,

Wellesley ... misunderstood inquiries which the Marathas meant as merely requests for a friendly 'accommodation' during temporary embarrassment, as solemn applications for a position which he was only too eager to force upon them."

Thus, from the very beginning, there was a basis for misunderstanding. Each side interpreted the agreements of 1803-1805 according to its own interests and preconceptions: the British considered the confederacy had been dissolved by implication; the Peshwa attempted to perpetuate his authority and claims over its members; at Nagpur the Bhonsla and the British interpreted the application of the Treaty of Deogaon to Sambalpur and Patna in conflicting ways and the Bhonsla, at heart, was never convinced his claims had been annulled.

The establishment of British political influence, in the form of a Resident, at the various durbars was designed to separate the Marathas' political connections in a manner similar to the policy of limiting the states' territorial jurisdiction. The process of curtailing the Marathas' political spheres of influence was intended to be confined to regulating their external affairs, as the British had no desire to interfere in the states' internal concerns. Although eventual interference was considered inevitable, Elphinstone pointed out that, at Poona, the British had been able to adhere to their resolution with one important exception - the case of the southern jagirdars. At Nagpur the main instance of interference was concerned with the zamindars of Sambalpur and Patna. It must be remarked that in both these instances the cause of the British interposing their power between rulers and subjects originated before the treaties were concluded and was a result not of the treaties, but of the war which preceded them.

Choksey believes that the British policy was one of divide and rule. While this notion may be applied with some justice to the Company's policy towards the various states, as Thompson and Carratt have done, it does not explain the Company's attitude towards the jagirdars and the Peshwas, whom

1. Elphinstone to Villiers, 5 Aug 1832, P.P. 1831-1832, XIV, p.155.
2. Choksey, British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas, pp.344-345, 349.
the Residents tried to reconcile. Similarly, at Nagpur, the British tried to persuade the zamindars to submit peacefully to the Raja's authority or, failing that, to accept estates within British territory. Though Nagpur does not come within the province of Choksey's study, the situation which obtained there would appear to reinforce the view that the Company was not trying to base its security upon the internal dimensions of its neighbours. It was, in fact, trying to base British influence upon a broad foundation by conciliating as many interests as possible.

The opposition Elphinstone encountered at both Nagpur and Poona demonstrated the difficulty of maintaining a middle-of-the-road policy of informal control by influence, while the parties concerned had no common interest and while one power was not sufficiently overawed by the power of the other to refrain from efforts to overthrow it. Both these factors jeopardised the harmony of Anglo-Maratha relations. At Nagpur, during Elphinstone's Residency, the problem of how to influence the durbar, when necessary, was not great. Elphinstone was fortunate in that the ministers in power were pro-British and the Raja, like James I of England, knew how close he could sail to the rocks without peril; it was not till after his death that a crisis occurred in the relations of Nagpur and the Company. But, at Poona, the reverse was true, and the alliance broke down on account of the Anglophobes having the Peshwa's ear and giving him confidence to oppose the British.
The subsidiary alliance system operated during a period in which "the ascendancy of the British [was] only imperfectly established".\(^1\) Many Indians still believed that the power of traditional authorities, such as the Mughal and the Peshwa, was as great as that of the Company. Opposition was encouraged by such sentiments and also tended to rise in inverse proportion to any temporary decline in British success.

The British were in a paradoxical situation: to make their influence effective they had to prove they could intervene and defeat their opponents, but, to resort to this expedient would be to end the very system of influence the Company was desirous of perpetuating. It was, therefore, necessary to preclude any attack upon the Company by taking timely measures,\(^2\) which were in themselves expensive. The attitude adopted was that of "a blow in time saves nine", which Philip Mason regards as the rule of thumb of later politicians in the Punjab.\(^3\) Such principles had provided the main arguments against the policy of non-intervention: "Peace is ... impossible, unless we prepare most vigorously for war. We should breathe the spirit of an insulted and mighty power."\(^4\)

Although the subsidiary alliances had sometimes been held responsible for weakening the allied states and thus necessitating British intervention, in Elphinstone’s experience

2. Jenkins to Minto, 30 Dec 1811, P.R.C., V, p.393; Elphinstone to Edmonstone, 22 May 1812, P.R.C., XIII, p.160.
this was not so; in fact, he thought the "protected" states were better off and more prosperous. However, once an alliance had been brought into being, Elphinstone was led to conclude the weaker state must succumb if differences arose. Admittedly, in some cases, the British connection was conducive to extreme lethargy and misgovernment within the allied state. However, in the case of Poona intervention was provoked by opposition and lack of co-operation rather than by incompetence. But, as Malcolm observed, both opposition and slothfulness on the part of the Indian rulers were a result of the progress of the Company's power, not of the alliances themselves, which he regarded as "the most moderate means by which we could regulate that march to conquest".

The subsidiary system has been described as "a temporary expedient, serviceable in a transitional period." But it was also more than this. Although the system had failed as a method of defence, it provided a valuable experiment in the exercise of influence, out of which grew the system of princely states by which the British ruled India. In this sense it was an experiment in informal empire. It can, therefore, be concluded that the period 1806-1848 was that of "the making of the Indian princes", princes who were not survivals from antiquity but creations of the British, who recognised the

1. Elphinstone to Villiers, 5 Aug 1832, P.P. 1831-1832, XIV pp.155-156.
2. Ibid.
princes' authority in return for their submission. However, the difficulty of deciding how far to intervene in the affairs of the Indian states remained as a legacy of the old system. The British had asserted their power but, as an Indian civil servant who was closely associated with the states has said, "paramountcy remained as vague and undefined as ever" and, when independence was in the offing, the question still remained of whether the Government of India should stand by treaty obligations or have general principles.¹

Sir William Lee-Warner has described how, from Lord Hastings' time onwards, the indefinite territories of the Indian rulers were defined and their relations with the British classified.² However, as the territorial arrangements of the subsidiary alliances show, and as Elphinstone's attempts to curtail the Peshwa's claims over the other members of the confederacy demonstrate, this tendency towards a definition of dominion had already begun before Hastings.

The general trend of the territorial arrangements had been to weaken the Indian powers collectively, by dividing them, but to strengthen them individually by consolidation. However, the attempt to create order by separating Indian states and by rationalising boundaries was negated by the "turbulent

frontier" in the form of the Pindaris.\textsuperscript{1} Just as the Maratha system of chauth undermined the Mughal administration, so the British subsidiary alliances undermined the chauth system. After the suppression of the Pindaris the policy of rationalising frontiers, although it had proved inadequate as a defensive measure, also contributed towards a more effective system of controlling the Indian princes, by confining them to specific territorial areas.

The main concern of this study has been with Elphinstone as a political, with his activities prior to his assumption of the positions of Commissioner for the Deccan and Governor of Bombay. So far as his early career is concerned, it must be said that his importance in the scheme of things has probably been exaggerated. Elphinstone has frequently been mentioned in conjunction with Sir Thomas Munro, Sir John Malcolm, and Sir Charles Metcalfe\textsuperscript{2} for the four displayed a unity of experience and of opinion upon the nature of British rule in India. Henry Lawrence, "one of the very few whose opinions are always evidence".\textsuperscript{3}

1. For example, although the British had tried to create a definite frontier between Nagpur and Hyderabad the measure was ineffectual and Hyderabad was invaded by Pindaris. The Bhonsla denied responsibility for the invasion, explaining that famine had killed off the tribes who guarded the passes between the two states. Elphinstone to G.G., 20 Dec 1804, E. Corres., p.134.


always looked upon Munro and Metcalfe as our best men. Perhaps I wrong Elphinstone, but I have never understood why he stands so high as he does, though, undoubtedly, he too is an able fellow. I hope you will turn out Malcolm a proper fellow, but I have been accustomed to consider him a clever, fortunate humbug.  

The reason for Elphinstone's inclusion in the"great quartet" may, perhaps, be ascribed in part to authors' love of alliteration - three M's and an M.E. have a unity of appearance. The fact that all four became governors in later life distinguishes them from other equally able politicians such as Richard Jenkins, David Ochterlony and Barry Close.  

Elphinstone also had the advantage of outliving his contemporaries, he lingered on after his age, like Sir Walter Raleigh, and died in 1859 having become the "Nestor of Indian statesmanship."  

Of the "quartet" Elphinstone does appear to be of somewhat smaller stature than the others. Considerable though his contribution was as Commissioner for the Deccan and as Governor of Bombay, it has to be admitted that his knowledge of revenue matters was not great. It did not equal that possessed by

1. Henry Lawrence to Kaye, undated 1854, quoted in Thompson, The Making of the Indian Princes, p.39. Lawrence was particularly associated with the Punjab and in 1849 was appointed President of the Board ruling that province. He believed in conciliating the local chiefs and refraining from interference in their affairs.

2. Elphinstone and Malcolm governed Bombay, 1819-1827, 1827-1830, respectively, Munro Madras, 1820-1827, and Metcalfe governed Agra and the North-west provinces, and was later acting Governor-General.


4. For Elphinstone and revenue administration see Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, pp.45, 58-59.
Sir Thomas Munro, after whom a whole system was named. As a
diplomat, in the earlier years with which we are particularly
concerned, he did not exercise the same influence over the
policy of the Supreme Government as Metcalfe, who helped form
the opinions of the Marquis of Hastings. Neither could
Elphinstone boast of the number and variety of treaties and
successful negotiations that Malcolm had to his credit.

It cannot be said that, during the years 1801-1817,
Elphinstone had any great influence upon events; he was a
necessary cog in the wheel of British diplomacy but did not
seriously alter its course. Of course, whether a political
agent made a positive personal contribution depended to some
extent upon luck and opportunity. For example, while
Elphinstone was on his abortive mission to Kabul, Metcalfe was
establishing his reputation on a similar mission to Ranjit
Singh, the Sikh leader, with whom he concluded an important
treaty. The difficulty of assessing the ability of a
diplomat arises from the ephemeral nature of his work, work
in which personality can play an important role in the
maintenance of amicable relations. It is often by what does
not occur, rather than by what actually happens, that a
diplomat's ability can be judged. Much was dependent upon
putting a good face upon matters: as Philip Mason has said
"India was held more by bluff than by force."\(^1\) Nevertheless
there was always a chance that one's bluff might be called;

therefore, force could never be threatened without the intention of using it. However, if the Resident could sufficiently impress the durbar at which he resided with a due sense of the dignity and power of his government, much could be done to forestall any conflict. In this sense, the Residents carried out British rule by reputation.

Thus, at Nagpur, Elphinstone was able to prevent any serious combination of the Raja's troops against the British. Of his Poona experience he wrote:

I am perhaps too much interested in the question to judge it impartially. It implies no small want of management to allow a man to go wrong for five or six years on end from mere impulse of terror, when he has no cause whatever for alarm, real or apparent.\(^1\)

However he did sufficiently gain the Peshwa's confidence, or at least his co-operation, to persuade the latter to modify his desire for revenge and to agree to an arrangement with the southern jagirdars — an arrangement which, it could be said, prevented civil war. During the final crisis with Baji Rao, merely by having the coolness of head to remain inactive Elphinstone was able to postpone the Peshwa's attack till the Residency was reinforced and the Peshwa had lost his opportunity.

One further comment must be made: it is, in fact, the sort of qualification that must frequently be provided when events are seen primarily from the point of view of one man.

\(^1\) Elphinstone to Malcolm, 29 Oct 1818, Colebrooke, II, p.50.
That Elphinstone was able to establish British authority in the Deccan with such ease was not entirely the result of his policies, wise though they were. Grant Duff's assessment of the importance of the 1803-1804 famine in facilitating the revival of the Peshwa's authority has already been mentioned.¹ In 1817-1818 during the quelling of the Pindaris and the Marathas there was also a severe famine, which Prinsep regarded as a principal instrument in British operations.² Concurrently, a severe outbreak of cholera swept the country,³ and almost killed Dr. Coats.⁴ Arguing by analogy with Grant Duff's report on post 1804 conditions one could suppose that the loss of population, resulting from the wars, famine and epidemic of 1817, could also have facilitated the settlement of the country, insofar as employment would have been available for disbanded soldiers and ex-Pindaris. The subsidiary alliances, and the political and territorial arrangements which were implemented under them, did not operate in a vacuum. The relation of social and economic changes to the political aspects of the period has been somewhat neglected by diplomatic historians. Nevertheless these conditions must indirectly have influenced the contemporary political environment and the success or failure of the measures adopted by individual politicals, such as Elphinstone, to establish the Company's rule.

¹. See above p.132 note 2.
². Prinsep, Political and Military Transactions, II, p.201.
³. Ibid., pp.258-259.
The main impression that emerges from investigating Elphinstone's conduct as a political is one of obedience and reliability. He could be counted upon to carry out instructions accurately, or to act in the spirit of the Governor-General's wishes if no orders arrived. His mistakes were so minor, and were really only matters of emphasis, that reproof scarcely interrupts the pervading tone of approbation which characterises the Supreme Government's replies to his despatches.

This is not to say that Elphinstone never acted except upon the instructions of the Supreme Government. In the situation that obtained in the early nineteenth century he often had to act on his own initiative. But always he acted strictly in what he considered to be the spirit of the government's policy. He never committed the Governor-General to a specific course of action in advance but always left open a means of retreat whereby the Calcutta authorities could undergo a change of mind. For example, before the arrival of Hastings' instructions regarding the Treaty of Poona in 1817 Elphinstone would not guarantee that the Peshwa's surrender of Trimbakji would ensure the complete re-establishment of old relations.

That Elphinstone's views never openly conflicted with those of the Supreme Government (as did for example Malcolm's over the cession of Gwalior by Sindia, Metcalfe's over the Nizam of Hyderabad's financial affairs and Mungo's in revenue matters) may be ascribed partly to Elphinstone's desire to keep his place, but also to his personal habits of moderation.
and self-effacement, to what Kaye describes revealingly as "a want of confidence in his own powers, and a sort of dislike to measure himself against others. He shrank from every kind of self-assertion, and avoided all personal and party conflicts." ¹

In the eyes of the Calcutta authorities, Elphinstone's obedience and reliability constituted one of his chief claims to recommendation and were probably partly responsible for his appointment, in 1819, as Governor of Bombay over Malcolm, who was his senior in years, experience and general importance. Malcolm, who was too closely associated with Lord Wellesley's policies, had a general ambition to fulfil his potential which sometimes led him to exceed instructions. Hastings had disapproved of Malcolm's precipitate conclusion of an agreement with the defeated Baji Rao, and of the amount of the pension he allotted to the ex-Peshwa. ² As Hastings was one of Elphinstone's chief supporters for the Bombay governorship,³ it is most likely that this support was based on the contrast between the conduct of Elphinstone, who had rejected the Peshwa's offers of surrender, and that of Malcolm.

In the last analysis it may be said that as a diplomat Elphinstone was a good servant whose conduct was representative of the discipline and esprit de corps that gave the British such

collective strength against the competing powers of India. His claim to fame is really based upon the more original and enduring work which he carried out after 1817. Elphinstone was not, as Lord Radcliffe extravagantly maintains, "a man who was accepted by his contemporaries as the most brilliant of a brilliant group of British administrators and diplomats." Elphinstone's own assessment of his position in the hierarchy of British politicos, written on the expectation of Malcolm's being appointed to Bombay, puts his position most clearly into focus. He wrote

I should be prevented by personal regard from any wish to interfere with him, even if his standing and services were not far superior to mine; but if he were provided for, I should hope to be considered. There are many Company's servants who have much greater claims from their own merits, but few that have so long held such important appointments, and none perhaps that have served so long an apprenticeship in the art of governing as I shall have done.

2. Elphinstone to Lord Keith, 3 Oct 1818, Colebrooke, II, p. 49.
GLOSSARY

amir  a Muslim of high rank.
chaouth lit. one fourth. The fourth part of the
revenue assessment exacted by the Marathas as
tribute.
durbar court or levee of a man of rank.
Holi the Hindu spring festival.
jagirdar holder of a jagir, an assignment of land and
its revenue with or without conditions of service.
khillat a dress of investiture.
lakh one hundred thousand.
maanad the cushion on which an Indian ruler sat, the
"throne".
nautch a dance.
nawab a prince, lord or governor.
pargana a district.
raja rule, regime.
raja a king or prince.
sanad a grant or charter bestowing privileges or rights.
sibandi irregular soldiers.
subhadar a governor of a Mughal province.
sirsubhadar a viceroy.
vakil an agent, hence ambassador, pleader or advocate.
zamindar a landholder.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

I. Parliamentary Papers.

1830-1831, XII.
Bengal Papers on the Maratha War, 1803; Bengal, Fort St. George and Bombay Papers, 1803.

1806, XIV.
Daulat Rao Sindia: Lord Lake's Reply to Lord Cornwallis, 6 October 1805.

1818, XI.
Hostilities with the Peshwa.

1813, XI.
Aggressions of the Pindaris and Measures adopted in consequence.

1812, XVIII.
Pindari and Maratha War.

1831-1832, VIII.

1831-1832, XIV.
Affairs of the East India Company, Minutes of Evidence, (Appx. VI, Political).

II. Poona Residency Correspondence.


VII. ed. C. S. Sardesai, Poona Affairs, Close's Embassy, 1801-1810, Bombay, 1940.


III. Non-official Collections of Papers.


Sinha, R.M., and Avasthi, A., Elphinstone Correspondence, 1804-08, Nagpur, 1964.

CONTemporary Materials

Broughton, Thomas Duer, Letters written in a Mahratta Camp during the year 1809, with an introduction by Sir M.E. Grant Duff, new edn., Westminster, 1892.
The History of India, the Hindu and Mahometan Periods, 5th edn., London 1866.
The Political History of India from 1784 to 1823, 2 vols., London, 1826.
Minto, Countess of, ed., Lord Minto in India, Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto, from 1807 to 1814 while Governor-General of India, London, 1880.
Valentia, George Viscount, Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt, 1802-1806, 3 vols., London, 1809.
OTHER WORKS

Aitchison, C.U., A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and the Neighbouring Countries, 14 vols., 5th edn., Calcutta and Delhi, 1929-1933.


Choksey, R.D., A History of British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas, 1786-1818, Poona, 1951.

Cotton, J.S., Mountstuart Elphinstone and the Making of South-Western India, Oxford, 1896.

Edwardes, Michael, Glorious Sahibs, the Romantic as Empire Builder, 1799-1838, London, 1968.


Ghoshal, U.N., A History of Indian Political Ideas, the ancient period and the period of transition to the Middle Ages, Oxford, 1966.


Kumar, Ravinder, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, a Study in the Social History of Maharashtra, London, 1968.


*The Main Currents of Maratha History*, Bombay, 1933.


*Twilight of the Moghuls, Studies in Late Moghul Delhi*, Cambridge, 1951.


SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE DOMINIONS OF THE RAJA OF BERAR AND THE SURROUNDING TERRITORIES.