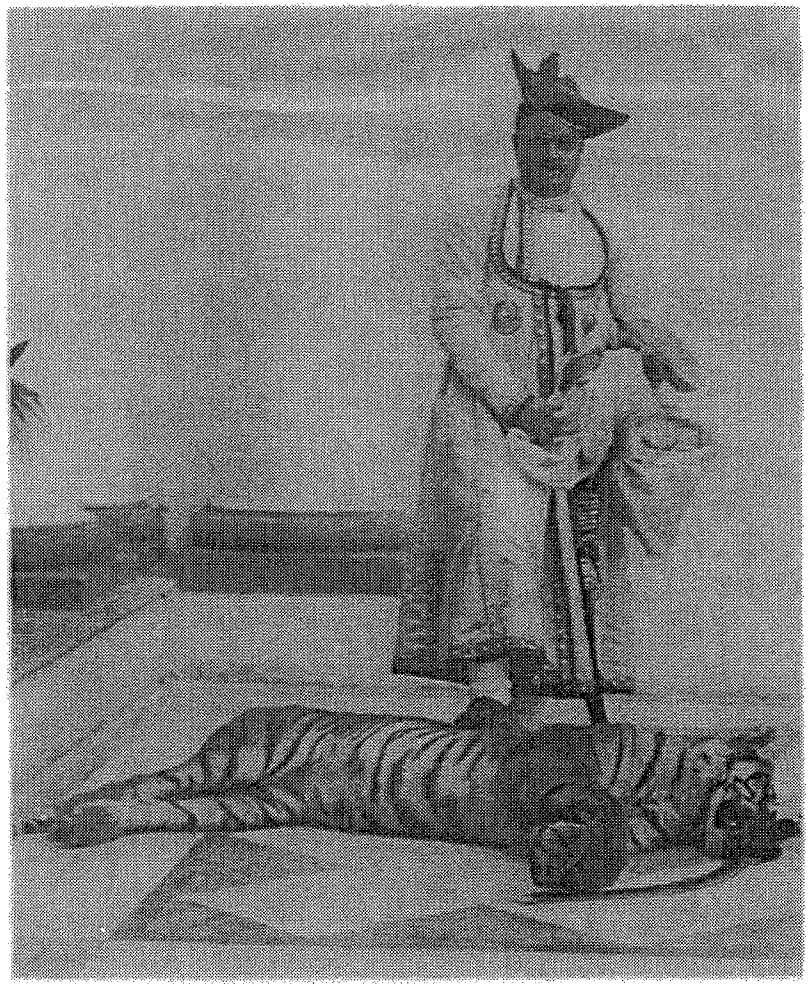
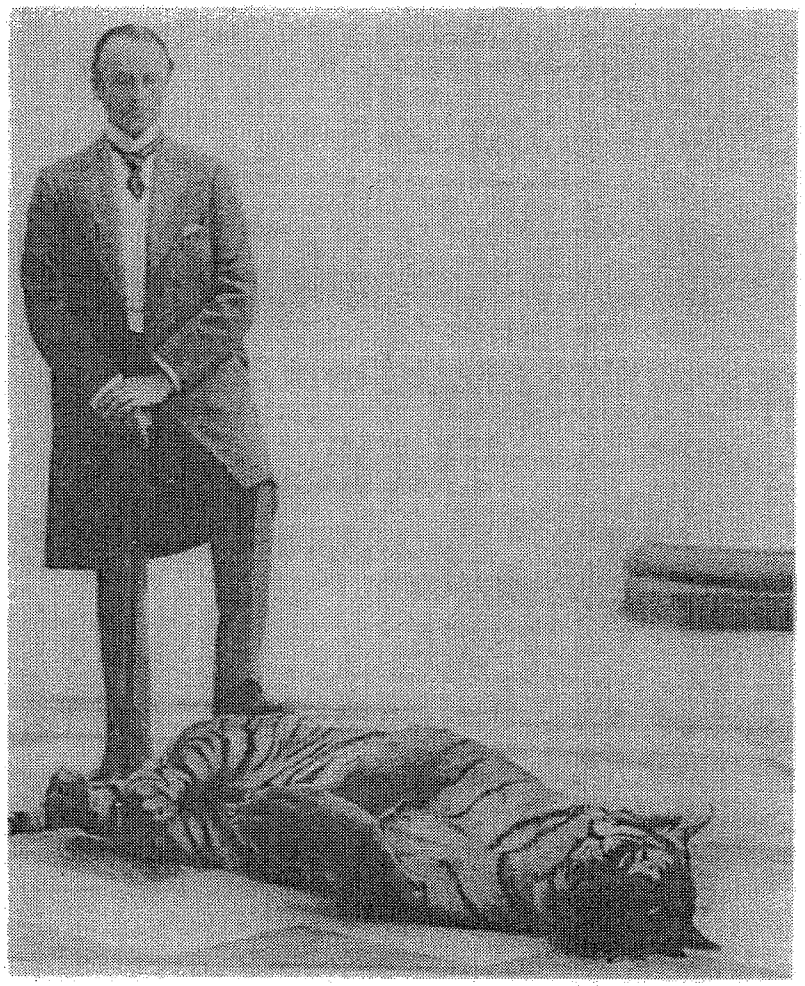
DAVID CANNADINE



Ornamentalism

How the British Saw Their Empire



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I

Prologue

Nations, it has recently become commonplace to observe, are in part imagined communities, depending for their credibility and identity both on the legitimacy of government and the apparatus of the state, and on invented traditions, manufactured myths, and shared perceptions of the social order that are never more than crude categories and oversimplified stereotypes.[1] If this has been true (as indeed it has) of a relatively compact and contained country like Britain, then how much more true must this have been of the empire that the British conquered and peopled, administered and ruled? At its territorial zenith, shortly after the end of the First World War, it consisted of naval stations and military bases extending from Gibraltar to Hong Kong, the four great dominions of settlement, the Indian Empire that occupied an entire subcontinent, the crown colonies in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and the League of Nations Mandates, especially in the Middle East.[2] But, as with all such transoceanic realms, the British Empire was not only a geopolitical entity: it was also a culturally created and imaginatively constructed artifact. How, then, in the heyday of its existence, did Britons imagine and envisage their unprecedentedly vast and varied imperium, not so much geographically as sociologically? How did they try to organize and to arrange their heterogeneous imperial society, as they settled and conquered, governed and ruled it, and what did they think the resulting social order looked like?[3]

To the extent that they tried to conceive of these diverse colonies and varied populations beyond the seas as 'an entire interactive system, one vast interconnected world', most Britons followed the standard

pattern of human behaviour when contemplating and comprehending the unfamiliar. Their 'inner predisposition' was to begin with what they knew – or what they thought they knew – namely, the social structure of their own home country.[4] But what sort of a starting point was this, and what were the implications and consequences of British perceptions of their domestic social order for British perceptions of their imperial social order? From Hegel to Marx, and from Engels to Said, it has been commonplace to suggest that Britons saw their own society (and, by extension, that of what became their settler dominions) as dynamic, individualistic, egalitarian, modernizing – and thus superior. By comparison with such a positive and progressive metropolitan perception, this argument continues, Britons saw society in their 'tropical' and 'oriental' colonies as enervated, hierarchical, corporatist, backward – and thus inferior.[5] But among its many flaws, this appealingly simplistic (and highly influential) contrast is based on a mistaken premise, in that it fundamentally misunderstands most Britons' perceptions of their domestic social world when their nation was at its zenith as an imperial power.

Far from seeing themselves as atomized individuals with no rooted sense of identity, or as collective classes coming into being and struggling with each other, or as equal citizens whose modernity engendered an unrivalled sense of progressive superiority, Britons generally conceived of themselves as belonging to an unequal society characterized by a seamless web of layered gradations, which were hallowed by time and precedent, which were sanctioned by tradition and religion, and which extended in a great chain of being from the monarch at the top to the humblest subject at the bottom.[6] That was how they saw themselves, and it was from that starting point that they contemplated and tried to comprehend the distant realms and diverse society of their empire. This in turn meant that for the British, their overseas realms were at least as much about sameness as they were about difference. For insofar as they regarded their empire as 'one vast interconnected world', they did not necessarily do so in disadvantaged or critical contrast to the way they perceived their own metropolitan society. Rather, they were at least as likely to envisage the social structure of their empire – as their predecessors had done before them – by analogy

to what they knew of 'home', or in replication of it, or in parallel to it, or in extension of it, or (sometimes) in idealization of it, or (even, and increasingly) in nostalgia for it.[7]

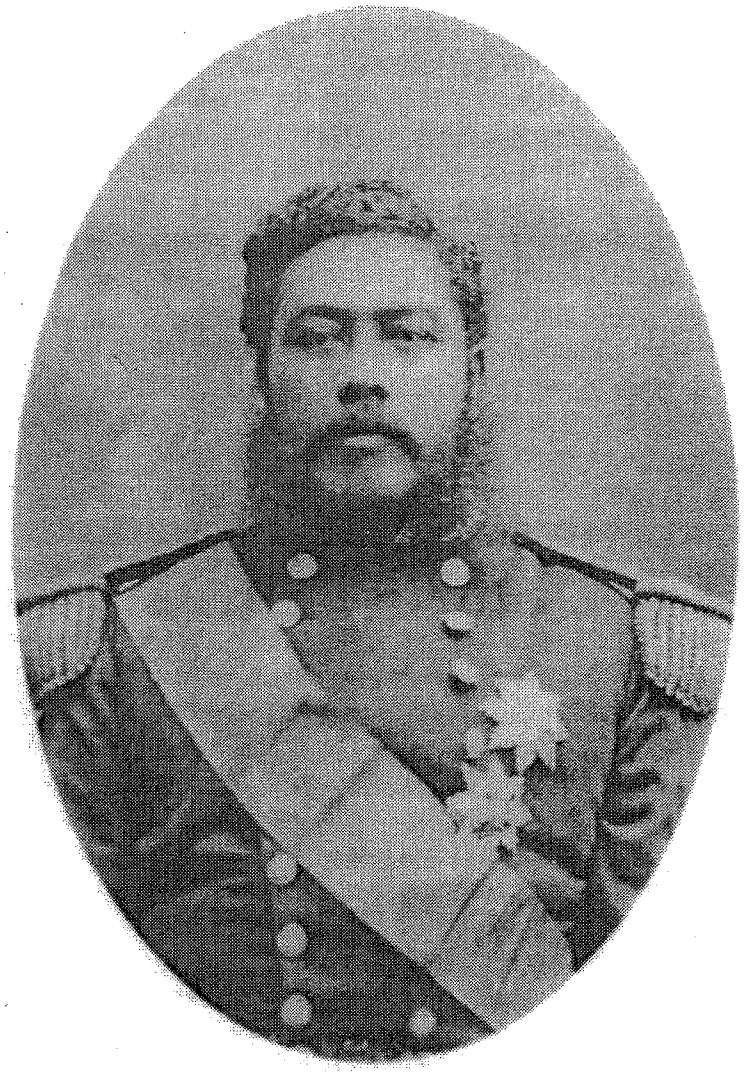
This means that we need to be much more attentive to the varied – sometimes, even, contradictory – ways in which the British understood, visualized and imagined their empire hierarchically. To be sure, *one* of the ways in which they did so was in racial terms of superiority and inferiority. Like all post-Enlightenment imperial powers, only more so, Britons saw themselves as the lords of all the world and thus of humankind. They placed themselves at the top of the scale of civilization and achievement, they ranked all other races in descending order beneath them, according to their relative merits (and de-merits), and during the period 1780 to 1830 they increasingly embodied these views in imperial institutions and codes.[8] And when it came to the systematic settlement of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, they did not hesitate to banish the indigenous peoples to the margins of the new, imperial society. By the end of the nineteenth century these notions of racial hierarchy, supremacy and stereotyping had become more fully developed, and stridently hardened, as exemplified in Cecil Rhodes's remark that 'the British are the finest race in the world, and the more of the world they inhabit, the better it will be for mankind', or in Lord Cromer's belief that the world was divided between those who were British and those who were merely 'subject races'.[9]

In short, and as Peter Marshall has observed, 'Empire reinforced a hierarchical view of the world, in which the British occupied a pre-eminent place among the colonial powers, while those subjected to colonial rule were ranged below them, in varying degrees of supposed inferiority.'[10] These facts are familiar and incontrovertible. But this mode of imperial ranking and imaging was not just based on the Enlightenment view of the intrinsic inferiority of dark-skinned peoples: it was also based on notions of metropolitan–peripheral analogy and sameness. For as the British contemplated the unprecedented numbers massed together in their new industrial cities, they tended to compare these great towns at home with the 'dark continents' overseas, and thus equate the workers in factories with coloured peoples abroad. The 'shock cities' of the 1830s and 1840s were seen as resembling

'darkest Africa' in their distant, unknown and unfathomable menaces; and during the third quarter of the nineteenth century London's newly discovered 'residuum' and 'dangerous classes' were likened – in their character and their conduct – to the 'negroes' of empire. And these domestic–imperial analogies were worked and extended in the opposite direction as well: one additional reason why 'natives' in the empire were regarded as collectively inferior was that they were seen as the overseas equivalent of the 'undeserving poor' in Britain.[11]

To some degree, then, these analogies and comparisons that Britons drew and made between domestic and overseas societies, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, served to reinforce the prevailing Enlightenment notions of racial superiority and inferiority. And it is from this premise that the British Empire has been viewed by contemporaries and by historians as an enterprise that was built and maintained on the basis of the collective, institutionalized and politicized ranking of races. But, as these analogies and comparisons also suggest, this was not the only way in which Britons envisioned their empire, and its imperial society, as an essentially hierarchical organism. For there was another vantage-point from which they regarded the inhabitants of their far-flung realms, which was also built around notions of superiority and inferiority, but which frequently cut across, and sometimes overturned and undermined, the notion that the British Empire was based solely and completely on a hierarchy of race. This alternative approach was, indeed, the conventional way in which the English (and latterly the British) had regarded the inhabitants of other, alien worlds, for it was a perspective that long antedated the Enlightenment.

It has certainly been traced back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for when the English first encountered the native peoples of North America, they did not see them collectively as a race of inferior savages; on the contrary, they viewed them individually as fellow human beings. It was from this pre-Enlightenment perspective that the English concluded that North American society closely resembled their own: a carefully graded hierarchy of status, extending in a seamless web from chiefs and princes at the top to less worthy figures at the bottom. Moreover, these two essentially hierarchical societies were



1. King Kalakaua of Hawaii, *c.* 1881.

seen as coexisting, not in a relationship of (English) superiority and (North American) inferiority, but in a relationship of equivalence and similarity: princes in one society were the analogues to princes in another, and so on and so on, all the way down these two parallel social ladders. In short, when the English initially contemplated native Americans, they saw them as social equals rather than as social inferiors, and when they came to apply their conventionally hierarchical tools of observation, their prime grid of analysis was individual status rather than collective race.[12]

It is the argument of this book that these attitudes, whereby social ranking was as important as (perhaps more important than?) colour of skin in contemplating the extra-metropolitan world, remained important for the English and, latterly, for the British long after it has been generally supposed they ceased to matter. To be sure, the Enlightenment brought about a new, collective way of looking at peoples, races and colours, based on distance and separation and otherness. But it did not subvert the earlier, individualistic, analogical way of thinking, based on the observation of status similarities and the cultivation of affinities, that projected domestically originated perceptions of the social order overseas.[13] On the contrary, this essentially pre-racial way of seeing things lasted for as long as the British Empire lasted. Here is one example. In the summer of 1881 King Kalakaua of Hawaii was visiting England and, in the course of an extensive round of social engagements, he found himself the guest at a party given by Lady Spencer. Also attending were the prince of Wales, who would eventually become King Edward VII, and the German crown prince, who was his brother-in-law and the future kaiser. The prince of Wales insisted that the king should take precedence over the crown prince, and when his brother-in-law objected, he offered the following pithy and trenchant justification: 'Either the brute is a king, or he's a common or garden nigger; and if the latter, what's he doing here?'[14]

Read one way, this is, to our modern sensibilities, a deeply insensitive and offensively racist observation; read from another viewpoint, this was, by the conventions of its own time, a very *un*racist remark. The traditional, pre-Enlightenment freemasonry based on the shared recognition of high social rank – a freemasonry to which Martin Malia

has suggestively given the name 'aristocratic internationalism' – both trumped and transcended the alternative and more recent freemasonry based on the unifying characteristic of shared skin colour. From *this* perspective, the hierarchical principle that underlay Britons' perceptions of their empire was not exclusively based on the collective, colour-coded ranking of social groups, but depended as much on the more venerable colour-blind ranking of individual social prestige.[15] This means there were at least two visions of empire that were essentially (and elaborately) hierarchical: one centred on colour, the other on class. So, in the *Raj Quartet*, Major Ronald Merrick, whose social background was relatively lowly, believed that 'the English were superior to all other races, especially black'. But the Cambridge-educated Guy Perron feels a greater affinity with the Indian Hari Kumar, who went to the same public school as he did, than he does with Merrick, who is very much his social inferior.[16]

The British Empire has been extensively studied as a complex *racial* hierarchy (and also as a less complex *gender* hierarchy); but it has received far less attention as an equally complex *social* hierarchy or, indeed, as a social organism, or construct, of any kind. This constant (and largely unquestioned) privileging of colour over class, of race over rank, of collectivities over individualities, in the scholarly literature has opened up many important new lines of inquiry. But it has also meant that scarcely any attention has been paid to empire as a functioning social structure and as an imagined social entity, in which, as Karen Ordahl Kupperman puts it, 'status is fundamental to all other categories'.[17] Yet throughout its history, the views expressed by the prince of Wales reflected generally held opinions about the social arrangements existing in the empire. These attitudes and perceptions were certainly still in existence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[18] But they were no less important between the 1850s and the 1950s, when the ideal of social hierarchy was seen as the model towards which the great dominions should approximate, when it formed the basis of the fully elaborated Raj in India, when it provided the key to the doctrine of 'indirect rule' in Africa, when it formed the template for the new nations created in the British Middle East, when it was codified and rationalized by the imperial honours system, and

when it was legitimated and unified by the imperial monarchy. In all these ways, the theory and the practice of social hierarchy served to eradicate the differences, and to homogenize the heterogeneities, of empire.

Of course, even in the heyday of empire these hierarchical structures and constructs, impulses and images, imaginings and ideologies, based on status rather than race, were never wholly pervasive or persuasive. And they were often founded on serious misunderstandings (sometimes deliberate, sometimes inadvertent) of imperial society, whether in the metropolis or on the periphery. But they *were* the conventional wisdom of the official mind in the metropolis, and of their collaborators on the peripheries, and of many people in Britain and the empire who also envisaged this 'vast interconnected world' in traditional, Burkeian terms. The rest of this book will sketch out, in a necessarily abridged and schematic form, an account of the British Empire in which the concept of hierarchy as social prestige is brought more closely to the centre of things than historians have generally allowed. As such, it urges the importance of seeing and understanding the British Empire as a mechanism for the export, projection and analogization of domestic social structures and social perceptions. For most of its history, the British visualized and understood their empire *on their own terms*, and we need to know more about what they were, and about how they did so. We should never forget that the British Empire was first and foremost a class act, where individual social ordering often took precedence over collective racial othering.

2

Precursors

In governing themselves and much of the rest of the world, the English (and subsequently the British) adhered to a limited number of principles, practices and perceptions that were long-standing and deeply rooted. From the time of the Tudors, English local government was usually undertaken by those with the highest social prestige. This meant that it was in the hands of traditional authorities, the great grandees and the lesser gentry, that it was relatively inexpensive, and that it was amateur. When Wales, Scotland and Ireland were subsequently brought into a greater British realm, they too were administered through the social leaders of their respective communities, from whom power and authority descended, and who were in contact and alliance with Westminster and Whitehall. This was 'indirect rule' before its imperial time had come: the way the English, and subsequently the British, visualized themselves – and governed themselves on the basis of this visualization. England and Britain were hierarchical societies, and those at the top of the social hierarchy were also those who wielded power.[1] And when Britons turned their attention to those wider worlds that they colonized and conquered, it was with these views of how society was, and of how it should be administered, very firmly embedded in their minds.

The first British Empire consisted primarily of a western Atlantic dominion extending from Canada, via the thirteen American colonies, to the Caribbean, and reached its peak in the brief years between 1763 and 1776.[2] Out of its post-Yorktown wreckage was born its successor, which was a much more far-flung and varied realm. The Caribbean

colonies were retained and augmented, and those of French and English Canada were restructured and reformed by the legislation of 1791. But as a consequence of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the primary drive towards empire was diverted to the east: large tracts of South Asia were conquered and subdued, and new colonies were acquired from the Cape of Good Hope to Singapore. The result, it has often been argued, was an empire that would not only expand still further in Asia and in Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century, but also an empire with two very different traditions of politics and government. In what would become the great dominions of settlement, there would be a gradual but inexorable move to representative and responsible government, to nationhood and dominion status. But in the colonies of conquest, there would be authoritarian administrations, which would eventually be abruptly terminated by nationalist agitation and independence.[3]

There is much truth and insight in this picture. But, while the politics, government and constitutional evolution of these two realms of empire may have been different, their societies were believed to have more in common than is sometimes supposed. In the great dominions of settlement, there were two alternative models of the social world that the emigrants were creating. One was that, in revolt against the rigid hierarchies of Britain, and assisted by the seemingly limitless supplies of land, the new colonies would be founded on the basis of freedom, independence and equality. But the other was that, instead of rejecting the hierarchies of the imperial metropolis, the chief ambition of many settlers was to replicate them and nurture them – an ambition generally shared by the policy-makers in the metropolis itself.[4] In India and the crown colonies of conquest, there were also two discrepant views of the societies and polities thus acquired. The first was that the native regimes and hierarchies were backward, inefficient, despotic and corrupt, and had to be overthrown and reconstructed according to the more advanced model of western society and politics. The second was that they were traditional and organic, an authentic world of ordered, harmonious, time-hallowed social relations of the kind that the Industrial Revolution was threatening (or destroying) in Britain, and that therefore had to be cherished, preserved and nurtured overseas as a

more wholesome version of society than could now be found in the metropolis.[5]

In other words, and notwithstanding their many differences of politics, government and constitutional evolution, the emigrant societies established in the colonies of settlement, and the indigenous societies discovered in the colonies of conquest, were both regarded from perspectives that might be anti-hierarchical (reject the British system, overthrow the native system) or, alternatively, from perspectives that might be pro-hierarchical (transplant the British system, preserve the native system). In short-term episodes of rejection and reform, when titles were scorned in the colonies, and when native rulers were deposed in India or Africa, the anti-hierarchical impulses were certainly in evidence. And in the long run they eventually won out, both in the former dominions of settlement, which came to pride themselves on being more egalitarian than the old mother country, and in the colonies of rule, which with independence became republics and abolished the structures and trappings of imperial hierarchy. But in the medium term – a period that encompasses most of its centuries-long existence – the British Empire, in both its settlement dominions and colonies of conquest, was generally built around the principles of replicating and supporting a hierarchical social structure modelled on, or likened to, and tied in with, that which it was thought existed (or had once existed) in Britain itself. These impulses and perceptions reached their fullest and widest extent in the heyday of empire, from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries. But there were ample precedents in the earlier phases of imperial expansion and settlement, especially during the era of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and it is worth glancing briefly at that period to set the scene for later developments.

In the British colonies on the eastern seaboard of America, these hierarchical attitudes and traditional preferences, both ethnic and social, were strongly in evidence from the beginning. There was the contemptible dismissal of indigenous non-white races, native peoples and African Americans as inferior beings, classically illustrated by the opinions of Edmund Burke. For him, 'negro slaves' were 'fierce and cruel tribes of savages, in whom the vestiges of human nature are

nearly effaced by ignorance and barbarity'; and the Indians were merely 'several gangs of banditti', of 'the most cruel and atrocious kind'.[6] Now and then, in the manner of their Tudor and Stuart predecessors, the British would recognize native chiefs as superior figures in a social hierarchy that could be compared to their own (as on the occasion of the visit of four supposed Iroquois kings to London in 1710 or six Cherokee chiefs in 1730), or seek military alliances with them (as in the 1760s and 1770s). But these were the exceptions that proved the rule.[7] It was the same in the West Indies, where slavery – and the trade in human cargo from West Africa across the Atlantic – was taken for granted as part of the immutable order of things. Even its abolition was intended to reinforce, rather than overturn, a hierarchical view of society, on the presumption that although slaves should become free, they would still remain dignified and obedient at the bottom of the social order: liberty, yes; but subordination also. Thereafter, there was a general hardening of British attitudes to colonial indigenes – a view that would subsequently be replicated by British settlers in nineteenth-century Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.[8]

But on top of these marginalized and exploited native populations, many British settlers overseas sought to create a full-scale replica of the elaborately graded social hierarchy they had left behind at home. From this perspective, empire was about the replication of rank, not the rejection of it. Accordingly, in the thirteen American colonies, by the mid-eighteenth century, the countryside seemed increasingly settled and ordered on the English pattern, with great estates, elegant mansions, resident gentry, and all the accoutrements of traditional society: fox hunts, coats of arms, swords and periwigs. Titles such as Esquire, Gent, Master and Honourable were used to show who was who; church pews were assigned on the basis of social position; and there were even requests to establish a colonial peerage. In such a layered, aspiring, established society, it was generally believed that everyone had 'their appointed offices, places and station'; that 'God hath ordained different degrees and orders of men'; and that there was 'a beauty of order in society, as when the different members . . . have all their appointed offices, place and situation'. Thus regarded, colonial America was indeed a very hierarchical society, a title-conscious place,

with a prestige order that corresponded roughly with economic rank order. Hence, for those opposed to British government, the need to abolish titles in America after the revolution of 1776.[9]

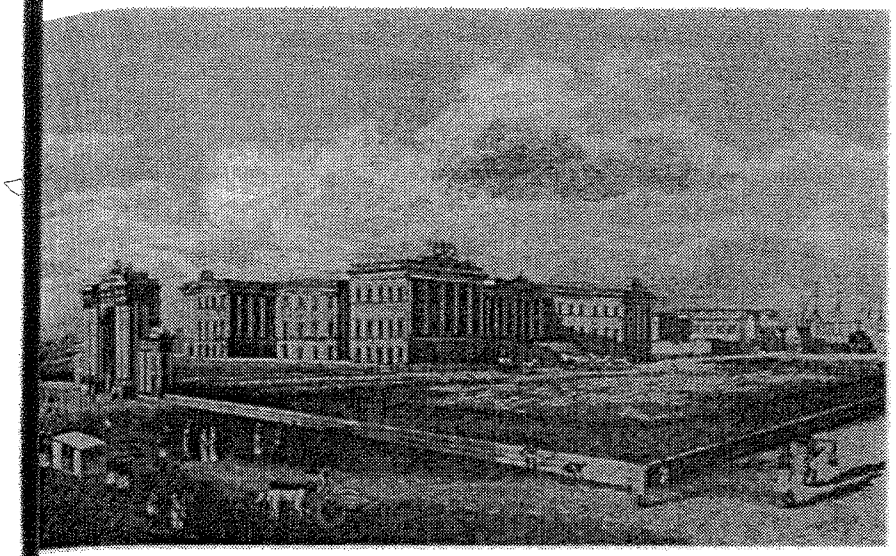
Eventually, in the newly formed United States, these anti-hierarchical impulses won out, and the country was launched on a non-British, non-imperial trajectory of republican constitutionalism and egalitarian social perceptions. Thereafter, the British vowed that this should never happen again in their empire, which meant that elsewhere in their colonies hierarchy was nurtured and supported, and social revolution thwarted. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries 'elsewhere' meant, essentially, Ireland, Canada and India. The Act of Union of 1800 brought together Great Britain and Ireland in a new, imperial-cum-metropolitan unity. Although it was now, legally, part of the imperial metropolis, the regime established in Dublin provided the proconsular prototype for what would later evolve on the imperial periphery, in India, in the dominions of settlement, and eventually in the dependent empire. The monarch was represented by a viceroy, who resided, in appropriately royal style, in Dublin Castle, and who was invariably a high-ranking aristocrat. Among the earliest occupants of the post were the Dukes of Richmond, Bedford and Northumberland, and the Marquess Wellesley. The viceroy was the cynosure and apex of a hierarchical vision of Irish society, which was regularly proclaimed by the courtly ceremonial of state entries, audiences, investitures, levees, parades and entertainments, by the courtly retinue of chamberlains, comptrollers, heralds and pursuivants, and by the chapters and installations of the Order of St Patrick (of which the viceroy was grand master), which had been founded in 1783.[10]

These developments in Ireland, towards proconsular splendour as a reassertion of hierarchy, were also being paralleled and replicated in Canada. As it happened, French society in Quebec was pre-1789 in its seigneurial structure and veneration for monarchy, and in this regard it had much in common with the British society being established in neighbouring Ontario, where most of the immigrants were conservative refugees fleeing from the thirteen colonies, and eager to proclaim their continuing loyalty to Britain's throne and rigid social order. Moreover, in 1791 the younger Pitt planned to provide an hereditary

upper house in anxious but determined response to the mistaken egalitarianism of the French (and American) Revolutions. By all these means, the principal aim was 'to avoid a replica of democratic New England', and to inculcate 'a due deference and homage for superiors' and a degree of 'subordination necessary to civilized society'.[11] And during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the full panoply of proconsular aggrandizement and mimetic monarchy was unfurled, with elaborate pageantry and ceremonial, orchestrated by such patrician governors as Lord Dorchester in Quebec, Lord Dalhousie in Canada and John Wentworth in Nova Scotia (and also, half a world away, by Lord Charles Somerset at the recently acquired Cape of Good Hope).[12] Here were precedents aplenty for later imperial developments in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

It was not the same – and yet in other ways it was very much the same – in South Asia, where the late-eighteenth-century British appeared as conquerors and traders rather than as settlers and immigrants. It was not the same because one of the predominant themes during the first phase of conquest and expansion was that caste-based, indigenous Indian society was ordered, traditional and layered hierarchically, and should be nurtured and appreciated in the same way that the similar society in Britain was.[13] This accounts for Burke's hostility to Warren Hastings, whom he saw as a tyrant overturning and extinguishing the time-sanctioned social order of the subcontinent – a much more sympathetic view of native peoples from that which he had taken of them on the far side of the Atlantic, where they seemed merely rootless, savage and unsettled. For Burke, as for many Britons, the social arrangements in South Asia seemed easily recognizable and comfortingly familiar. As Thomas Munro explained in 1805, 'the want due to due gradation of ranks in Society in this country is more imaginary than real, for what is effected by establishing such a gradation by property in other parts of the world is accomplished here by the distinction of casts [*sic*] and the manners of the people'.[14]

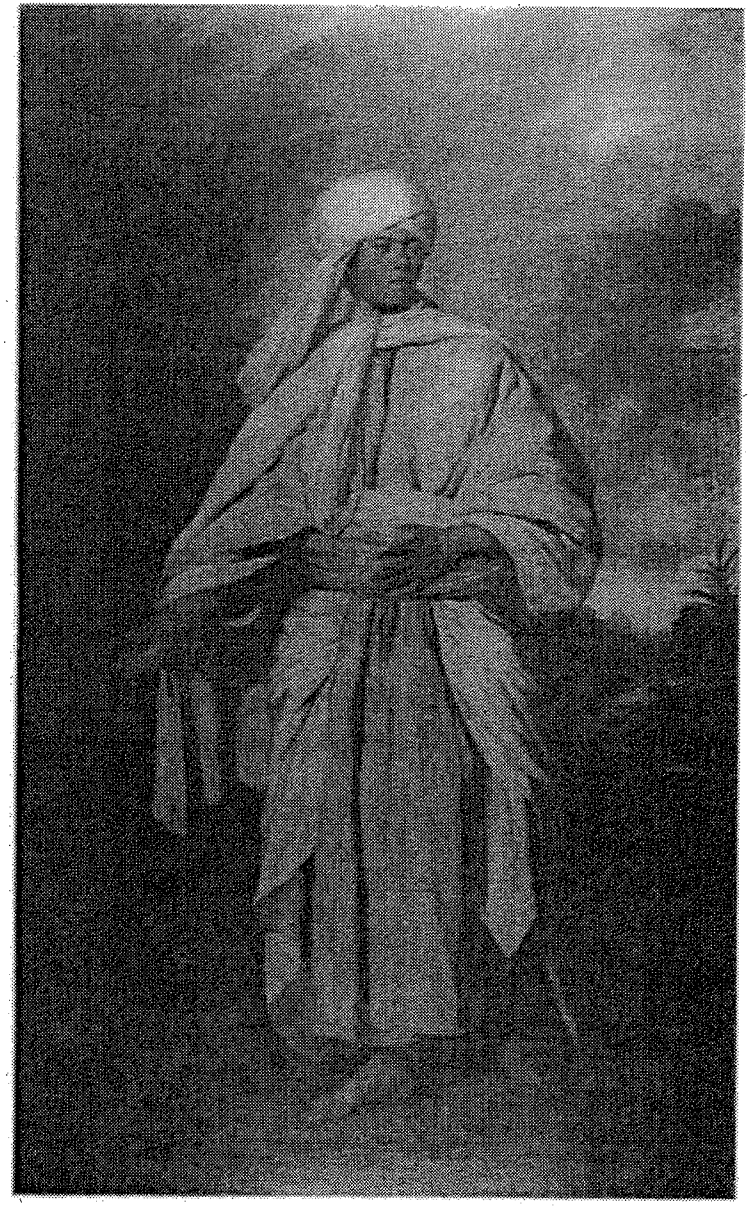
From these social analogies and sociological perceptions, various further consequences followed and flowed. The British became very interested in the theory and practice of caste, and in the ways in which they thought Indian society resembled their own; and many books



2. Government House, Calcutta, built by the Marquess Wellesley.

were written on the subject at this time. They also believed that the standing and status of the native princes at (as they saw it) the top of this layered hierarchy should be strengthened and supported, and that they should be treated as social equals. As Sir John Lindsay (himself the younger son of a peer) had observed, writing from Madras in 1771, 'it is by no means good policy to diminish the consequences of our friends. On the contrary, by exalting their dignity, we raise our own, and bind them to our interests'.[15] This in turn implied – and here was the similarity with the settlement colonies – that the British proconsular regime should also be of unprecedented grandeur, in its spectacle and its buildings, partly to match the pomp and circumstance of the princely states, but also to project an image of order and authority, as in the days of the Marquess Wellesley. India, he observed, 'is a country of splendour, of extravagance, of outward appearances'. As such, it must 'be ruled from a palace, not from a counting house; with the ideas of a prince, not those of a retail dealer in muslins and indigo'.[16] Thus rationalized and justified, imperial hierarchy and its ceremonial projection reached their zenith in the British Raj, initially in the early nineteenth century, and again and more lastingly in the early twentieth.

But they would also provide the models for those crown colonies that would later be acquired elsewhere in Asia and Africa, both in terms of governmental structure and social organization. Before the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Britain only teetered on the edge of Africa, and had very limited political or commercial relations – though Theophilus Shepstone is credited with pioneering a certain type of indirect rule via native Zulu chiefs in Natal in the 1840s.[17] And there were already other indications as to what future attitudes towards them might be. Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Omai, a young South Sea islander who had visited London in the early 1770s and been lionized in polite society, depicted him with the flowing robes, assured standing and patrician gestures of a confident, traditional native chief. Omai was also the subject of a play by John O'Keefe, the finale of which saw him enthroned as king of Tahiti.[18] Seventy years later Sir David Wilkie's portrait of Mehemet Ali, the Egyptian pasha, was to convey very similar images: a vigorous personality and strong character, a great and powerful ruler, who sat on a throne wearing traditional



3. Omai, by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

4. Mehemet Ali, by Sir David Wilkie.

(and forbidden) Egyptian dress, and who sought independence from the Turks and recognition for his country. And two generations on, this same view was again articulated by Sir Richard Burton, whose visits to West Africa in the 1860s and 1880s meant he was fascinated by what he regarded as the 'barbaric splendours' of the Dahomean king and his court – splendours that would captivate many subsequent colonial administrators.[19]

These were essentially unifying and hierarchical views of empire, or of those societies still beyond empire. This was how the British saw their own society, and preferred it to be. So it is scarcely surprising that this was how they saw other societies too – as approximating more or less to what they knew (or thought they knew) of home. But there were also important ways in which, from within the metropolis itself, this layered vision of the empire was encouraged, unified and promoted, so as to make it more coherent and convincing. One such means was by the codification and extension of the honours system into something that was a more British, and more imperial, structure of titles and rewards. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the expansion of the (English) Order of the Garter and the (Scottish) Order of the Thistle, and the establishment of the (Irish) Order of St Patrick. The Order of the Bath, founded in 1725 to recognize military prowess at home and abroad, had initially consisted of only thirty-six knights; it was extended and remodelled in 1815, with three carefully ranked grades of honour. The Order of St Michael and St George was set up by Sir Thomas Maitland in 1818 to massage the self-esteem of the island gentry of Malta. And there were unprecedented creations of peerages, as Scottish and Irish nobles were given United Kingdom titles, and as politicians, proconsuls and military men were lavished with baronies, viscountcies, earldoms, marquessates and dukedoms.[20]

The result was the consolidation of a pan-British, pan-imperial elite that conquered and governed, unified and ordered, the empire for the first time. Nor was it coincidence that this period also witnessed a growing association between crown and empire. By definition, the British Empire 'was underpinned by the cult of monarchy'.[21] The sovereign was head of the imperial state and of imperial society;

governors ruled and viceroys governed in the monarch's name; and life in the empire, as in the metropolis, was suffused with the substance and symbolism of royalty. Before they turned against George III, the American colonies had been very loyal and royal, marking monarchs' birthdays, accessions and coronations in appropriately festive style from Massachusetts to the Carolinas.[22] And as the empire expanded again in the aftermath of Yorktown, the position of the sovereign as its political flywheel, social apex and ceremonial cynosure was further enhanced. Throughout the 1790s there were royal firework displays in the West Indies, and patriotic medals were struck with the king's head on it; there were mass petitions of loyalty from the burghers of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras; and in Nova Scotia the proconsular regime of Governor John Wentworth was embellished by the presence of the duke of Kent and the duke of Clarence. The domestic hierarchy of the British nation, and the overseas hierarchy of the British Empire, connected and converged on the person of the sovereign, who completed them and gave them their meaning, coherence and legitimacy.[23]

But however plausible it may have seemed to many Britons at home and overseas, this unified, interconnected, hierarchical picture of their empire was never more than a partial image of how things were, even at the zenith of this first great imperial impulse in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the American colonies, some lamented that the British social structure had not been fully replicated, and that there was no 'native aristocracy', while others insisted that the cult of freedom and independence meant the colonists were 'adverse to subordination' in any outmoded old-world hierarchy – the view that finally prevailed after 1776. In India, zealots like Bentinck, Macaulay and Dalhousie, inspired by a confident mixture of Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism, thought native rulers corrupt and native customs barbaric, and sought to supersede them with western-style law, governance and education, which would be efficient rather than ornamental.[24] And when they turned their attention elsewhere, there were those like Raffles (and Palmerston) who thought oriental rule was 'despotic' and needed overturning, and that the governing elites in Africa were 'recalcitrant' and needed reforming.[25]

Not surprisingly, then, the metropolitan efforts to complete this

British imperial hierarchy at the centre and to export it abroad, so as to forge 'an entire interactive system', were never a complete success. The American colonists eventually rejected the whole thing outright; attempts to create a peerage and orders of knighthood to tie the Canadians closer to the British did not come off; the governor of Quebec, Guy Carleton, later Lord Dorchester, opined that it was 'impossible for the dignity of the throne or peerage to be represented in the American [i.e. Canadian] forests'; and the national and imperial apotheosis of George III was scarcely replicated by his two scandal-ridden successors.[26] Moreover, although this hierarchical world-view that was extended across the British Empire was conservative in its ideology, and stressed the importance of tradition and unchangingness, it was often very innovative and inventive in its practices. The elaborate, layered social ordering of the American colonies was, at the mid eighteenth century, a relatively recent development. The caste system in South Asia was constantly evolving and mutating, and many of the ruling princes of India were upstarts rather than the representatives of an unchanging hierarchical order.[27] The honours that were given out in unprecedented numbers to Britons at home and abroad stressed chivalry and history, but many of them were novel creations. And the ceremonial surrounding proconsuls overseas and the monarch in Britain was at least as new as it was old.

Nevertheless, it bears repeating that throughout the period of the first and second British Empires, and culminating in the years from the 1790s to the 1820s, there was a powerful and unifying sense of the empire as the extension overseas, or the discovery overseas, of societies resembling that which existed, or had existed, in Britain. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, this vast, interconnected, hierarchical world was especially associated with such men as Pitt, Dundas, Wellesley and Macartney. And it provided the precedents and models for another such high-imperial cabal a century later, in the persons of Disraeli, Curzon, Milner, Lugard and Churchill, when the British Empire reached its peak as an ordered construct and 'traditional' creation.[28] To be sure, there was something of a lull in the period in between. In a *Punch* sketch of 1850, entitled 'Waiting at the Station',

Thackeray pictures some Britons emigrating to Australia, and assumes they will find an undifferentiated community that will contrast strongly with the old England, 'that Gothic society with its ranks and hierarchies, its cumbrous ceremonies, its glittering antique paraphernalia'. Perhaps they did.[29] But for the best part of another hundred years, from the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to Indian independence ninety years later, the rulers and leaders of the British Empire tried to make that hierarchical structure happen, and that hierarchical vision convince. It is time to see how and where they set about it.

PART TWO

LOCALITIES

3
Dominions

Between the mid nineteenth and the mid twentieth centuries, the four great dominions of settlement offered the most substantial scope, either for the repudiation or for the replication of the domestic British social hierarchy across the seas into the empire. Indeed, it would be more accurate to express this proposition not as 'either . . . or', but rather as 'both . . . and'. For these were not so much irreconcilable opposites, between which a stark choice had to be made, but alternative possibilities, which could in practice be embraced simultaneously. On the one hand, it is widely recognized that the dominions, especially Australia and New Zealand, developed political cultures that were democratic and liberal, out of which autonomous, post-imperial, multicultural nations would eventually evolve. But meanwhile they did so in the context of social and ceremonial cultures that were much more conservative and inegalitarian, and that thus fitted comfortably for the time being into the broader world of the British Empire, a traditional, monarchical, realm.[1] And like the thirteen American colonies before them, the dominions were hierarchical in more senses than one: there was a hierarchy of race and colour (with which we are by now very familiar); and, superimposed on top of it, a hierarchy of social status and prestige (about which we know rather less).

Following the precedent set by the colonial Americans, the four settlement dominions were established as essentially 'white men's countries', which meant the enforced disregard and sustained undermining of the 'inferior' indigenous races: the Indians and Inuit in Canada, the Maoris and Aborigines in Australasia, and the 'Hottentots' in South Africa, whose lands were taken, numbers reduced and position

marginalized.[2] In Canada the native peoples had lost most of their lands east of the Great Lakes by the late 1830s, and across the southern prairies native title was extinguished in the 1870s. In Australia it was an unquestioned assumption that the British enjoyed the sole right to own and occupy the island continent, embodied in the colonists' doctrine of *terra nullius*; and by the late nineteenth century the 'white Australia' policy was fully in place. In New Zealand, after annexation in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi ostensibly guaranteed the native chiefs' rights, powers, land and authority; but this was disregarded, as the Maori were systematically dispossessed of their land, sometimes by military force, between the 1840s and the 1860s.[3] And in British South Africa, the Xhosa were ejected from their lands in the Cape, and the Zulu from Natal, while after the Boer War, one of the principles on which the new Union was established was that of the 'abandonment of the black races'.[4]

On the basis of this rigorously enforced racial hierarchy, where chiefs and tribes were shown far less respect than would be the case elsewhere in the empire, many white British settlers were increasingly concerned to replicate the layered, ordered, hierarchical society they believed they had left behind at home. Populations in these 'new' colonies were generally sparse and scattered, and their economies were primarily agricultural; this provided substantial scope for the re-creation of metropolitan landed society overseas. For much of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when British agriculture was generally depressed, and when the pickings from 'Old Corruption' were dwindling, sprigs of nobility and distant cousins set off for Canada, New Zealand and Australia, in the hope they might establish and enjoy the sort of genteel life there on which they could no longer count in Britain.[5] So in New South Wales, figures such as the Irby brothers, nephews of Lord Boston, and William Charles Wentworth, a distant relative of Earl Fitzwilliam, established themselves in the 'First Rank of Society'. They built country houses, became justices of the peace, founded the Australia Club in Sydney, and were much concerned with the trappings of tradition – duelling, coats of arms, genealogy and pedigrees.[6]

It was the same elsewhere in the Antipodes, where British models of

gentility and hierarchy were energetically replicated and enthusiastically reproduced. In Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, successful early settlers purchased and extended large estates in the mid-Victorian period, and the resulting new gentry elites were consolidated by intermarriage and shared ways of life. In the towns, they provided the social leadership in Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart; and in the country, parks and mansions called Panshanger and Clarendon boasted deer and pheasant and salmon, which provided ample scope for hunting, shooting and fishing. Observers marvelled at 'well-ordered neighbourhoods', where 'the natural subordinations of society are maintained'. As Trollope noted approvingly in 1873, 'I imagine the life of a Victorian landowner is very much as was that of the English country gentleman a century or a century and a half ago'; they were, he felt sure, 'an established aristocracy with very conservative feelings'.[7] The same was true in New Zealand, where the great landowners held estates of well above 5,000 acres, engaged in conspicuous leisure and consumption, cultivated modes of paternalistic behaviour, controlled the leading recreational and cultural institutions, and constituted what one historian has described as a quasi-feudal '*ancien régime*'.[8]

Across the world in Canada, where hostility to the revolution of 1776 had been intensified by the war of 1812, the desire to replicate and defend a traditional British social structure against the egalitarian, democratic and republican ethos of the United States remained strong. Like pre-1789 Quebec, pre-1776 Upper Canada was an extremely retrograde society, controlled by a small clique known as the 'family compact', whose members were bound together by 'education, social distinction and conservative tendencies'. They dominated everything, they delighted in defending the king and the constitution, they gloried in their imperial ties and connections, and they possessed an exaggerated regard for British traditions.[9] Unlike America, they saw *their* society as layered, established and stable, and they were preoccupied with notions of rank and ideas of respectability. Indeed, the more in practice their society came to resemble that of the neighbouring United States, the more the Canadians insisted on seeing it as different, by stressing what they believed to be its defining characteristics of hierarchy and order. It was the same in nearby Newfoundland, where the

second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of a vivid and vigorous colonial culture, centred on pageants, processions and ostentatious displays of 'dutiful obedience and veneration of the sovereign'.[10]

Underpinning all these mid-century settler regimes, with their traditional, transoceanic loyalties and their 'imported social hierarchies', was the view, originally pioneered by some American colonists and carried over into the nineteenth century by many people in Britain and the empire, that a mature settler society was necessarily a graded, layered society. That, in essence, was what they were seeking to establish in these new, far-distant realms: in part by the export of authentic British aristocrats overseas, who would set the social tone and the social standard; in part by the emulative creation of their own indigenous landed gentry. This was why Edward Gibbon Wakefield urged the transplanting of a complete cross-section of British society in his *Letter from Sydney* (1829), and again in *A View of the Art of Colonization* (1849). This was why the Hon. Arthur Hamilton Gordon, himself a younger son of Lord Aberdeen, urged that 'If a good number of younger sons who vegetate in England were to go out there [i.e. Canada] it might be useful as forming a sort of aristocracy which is so much wanted there.'[11] And that was why, in his novel *The Caxtons* (1849), Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton expressed the hope that an aristocracy would develop in Australia. Far from wishing to reject the stratified society of the mother country, these pundits and politicians strenuously recommended its replication in the colonies.

Their social hopes and hierarchical predictions were in significant measure fulfilled. Some emigrants, leaving Britain, wanted to re-establish the domestic social hierarchy they regretted they were leaving behind, and set out to improve their own place within it (*vide* Dickens's Mr Micawber); others, on arrival, wanted to distance themselves from those fellow travellers whom they considered, in every sense, beneath them. Hence the verdict of Sir Henry Huntley, governor of Prince Edward Island, who claimed that 'an aristocratic instinct' prevailed among the people of all the provinces of Canada. Hence these words of Sir Roger Therry, who in the 1860s noted that 'the various observances of precedence in New South Wales, as in most colonial societies,

are attended to with great, sometimes ludicrous, precision'. 'Social distinction is everywhere desired,' agreed the *Sydney Morning Herald*. All these colonial settlers – determined to replicate what they believed to be the British social order – shared what Geoffrey Bolton has called 'an Anglican and hierarchical view of society', which in its ideal form was 'one of village communities, in which an obedient and industrious tenantry enjoyed the public libraries and mechanics institutes, the ploughing matches and hospitable sporting events, organized and controlled by the landed gentry'.[12]

This 'aristocratic thread', which ran through Britain's new settler colonies, also meant a widespread eagerness for honours and hereditary distinctions: the coping stone, as Burke had long ago remarked, of any established, hierarchical society. In 1853 William Charles Wentworth proposed hereditary, titled legislative councillors in New South Wales, based on the Canadian model of 1791, and following a similar scheme put forward in South Australia four years previously. They 'would lay the foundations of an aristocracy' in the colony by encouraging and rewarding the leading local notables and would 'necessarily form one of the strongest inducements' to British aristocrats to send their relatives overseas.[13] There were also many who shared the view of Sir Charles Fitzroy that colonial orders of knighthood would 'strengthen their connections with the mother country, by holding up legitimate objects of ambition to public officers and resident gentry'. As colonial secretary, Lord Bathurst had considered the creation of a separate Order for Canada in the 1820s, and his successor, Lord Stanley, took up the idea again in 1844. At the time of Confederation, Lord Monck, then governor-general, urged the giving of titles for life to members of the new upper house and the creation of an Order of St Lawrence; and in 1881 Lord Lorne once more suggested the establishment of a Canadian order to the colonial secretary. In short, during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the idea that 'the aristocratic element should form a wide ingredient' in colonial government and society was broadly held.[14]

Appropriately enough, these very status-conscious societies were presided over by governors who were by occupation mimetic monarchs and by standing men of high status, like Lord Elgin in Canada, and the

Fitzroy brothers in New Zealand and New South Wales, who were grandsons of the duke of Grafton. Governors were not only powerful politically: as the direct, personal representative of the sovereign, they were at the apex of the colonial social hierarchy, they legitimated and completed it, and they linked it directly and personally to the monarch and the mother country. In more senses than one, they literally ordered society. As the colonial novelist and pundit 'Sam Slick' explained, the governor was 'the fountain of honour and the distributor of patronage and rank', by determining who should (and should not) be invited to Government House.[15] And they were the centre of attention at those ceremonials when society put itself on show. Their arrivals, departures and openings of colonial legislatures were marked with uniforms, parades, processions, salutes, at which the settler community displayed itself in ordered, layered procession. And they presided over local celebrations (or observances) to mark royal birthdays, coronations, jubilees and funerals. The result, Mark Francis notes, was 'an official hierarchical society', in which orders of precedence encompassed everyone, 'from colonial viceroy almost down to a wood-chopper', just as they did in an English county, from the lord-lieutenant to the agricultural labourers.[16]

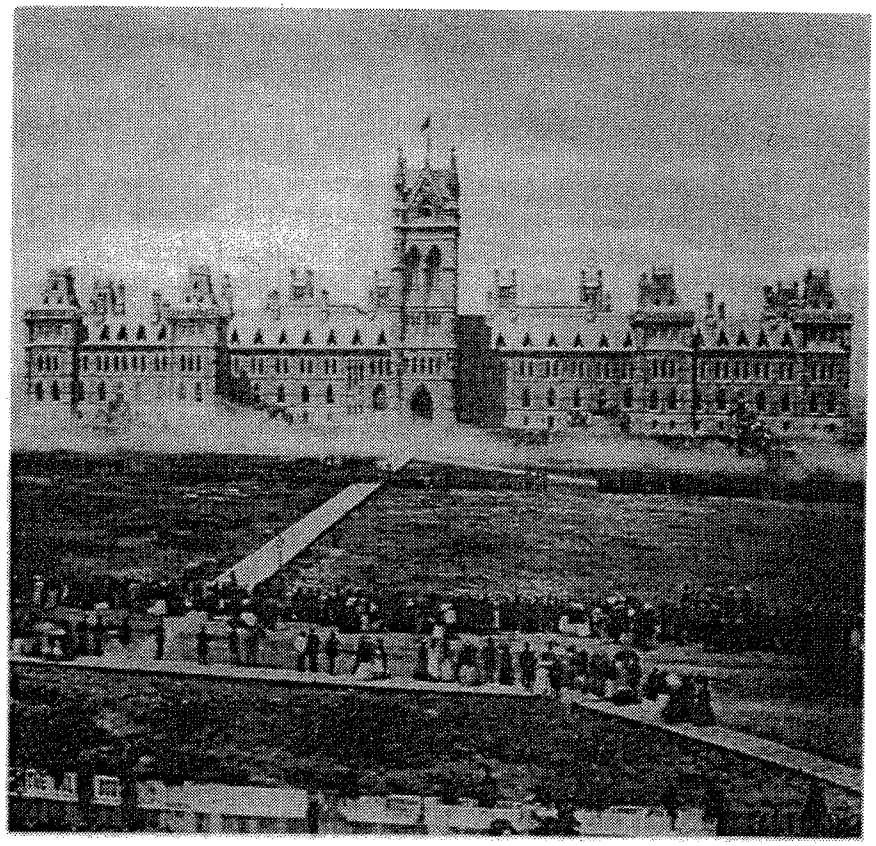
During the last quarter of the nineteenth century these layered settler societies became – as their supporters in Britain and overseas had hoped – more mature, more differentiated and more elaborate. In Western Australia the speaker of the legislature from 1886 to 1903 was James Lee Steers. His father was a fox-hunting backbench British Tory, who traced his ancestry back to the eleventh century, and he himself maintained impeccable traditions of decorum and gentility strongly (and self-consciously) suggestive of his English country background. In Melbourne, in 1885, J. A. Froude found to his delight a full-blown country house in the Scottish Baronial style, set in its own park, with two real English lords in it, and a son of the house who had a 'face that might have belonged to Sir Launcelot'.[17] It was the same in rural Ontario, where 'the local tradespeople and farmers deferred dutifully to the leadership of a better educated squirearchy, whose mansions, sometimes with ballrooms and chapels of their own, domi-

5. Evening reception at Government House, New South Wales, *c.* 1888.

nated the district'. And these domestic developments towards a more layered and established colonial society were reinforced by the arrival of a new generation of 'gentleman emigrants' from Britain, who were leaving behind another agricultural depression. In Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, Edward George Everard ffoulkes, the Hon. F. C. Lascelles and the Hon. Coutts Marjoribanks set themselves up as farmers and ranchers, with all the accoutrements of gentility: fox-hunting, garden parties, cricket and tennis, country houses and family silver and scores of servants.[18]

Froude's reassuring conclusion from visiting Australia was that there was now ample room in the colonies of settlement 'for all sorts and conditions of men', from the top of the British social hierarchy to the bottom, and the result was 'English life all over again: nothing strange, nothing exotic, nothing new or original'.[19] And as these societies became more elaborately differentiated, they also became increasingly articulated and codified. From Melbourne to Toronto, Sydney to Cape Town, gentlemen's clubs, grand hotels, railway stations, public schools, new universities, provincial legislatures and Anglican cathedrals proliferated during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many of them constructed in Scottish Baronial or Gothic Revival style redolent of history, antiquity, hierarchy and tradition: precisely the things that Thackeray had hoped would exist but had feared did not.[20] On one side of the world this was well illustrated in the Melbourne of the 1890s: where the Victoria gentry still held sway, where social attitudes were class conscious and hierarchical, and where the young Robert Gordon Menzies (of whom more later) was growing up. And the same was true across the Pacific in Vancouver, where a highly Anglophile and self-consciously stratified society developed in the thirty years before the First World War, centring on the exclusive Vancouver Club and the *Social Register*.[21]

This stratification and Gothicization of the dominions was evident in other ways, as essential works of social reference and prestige ranking extended their coverage from the metropolis to the periphery. In 1832 John Burke had produced the fourth edition of his *Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire*, which had begun with the appropriately hierarchical sentiment



6. The State Opening of Government Buildings, Ottawa, 1868.

that 'the aristocracy of the British Empire, like its other inimitable institutions, exists but as a link in the great chain which connects the community at large'. Yet for all its mention of 'the British Empire', Burke was merely following contemporary usage and referring to the 'four kingdoms' of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. By the late nineteenth century, however, this was all to change, as 'the British Empire' came to mean transoceanic dominions, and it was towards these that genealogists now directed their attention. Between 1891 and 1895 Sir Bernard Burke produced two large, ornate volumes, modelled on the British *Peerage* and the *Landed Gentry*, which described and codified the *Colonial Gentry*. The aim was to 'preserve in a convenient and permanent manner the records of the leading families in the Colonies' and 'to show to those at home and abroad the close bonds of kinship that unite the sister colonies to one another and the mother country'.[22]

In these spacious and expensive pages, which yielded nothing in pretence to the metropolitan *Peerage* and the *Landed Gentry*, Burke listed 535 such families. He gave details of their pedigrees, coats of arms and places of residence; and provided the dates and circumstances of their arrival in the colony. Among them were Charles Edward Herbert Orpen of the Cape of Good Hope, whose family 'claims great antiquity'; Sir James George Lee Steers of Jayes, Blackwood, Western Australia, whose ancestry could be traced 'without interruption since the conquest'; Fitzwilliam Wentworth of Vaucluse near Sydney, whose family 'is said by genealogists to have derived its designation in Saxon times'; Richmond Beetham of Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand, who claimed descent from King Edward the Elder; and Richard Tyrwhitt of Nantyr, West Gwillimbury, Canada, whose forebears had 'been seated for several centuries in the north of England'. Here was the ultimate reference book for the hierarchical settler society that the British dominions had become: some sprigs of British nobility, others self-established. Most of those included were self-selected, like the family of Lee Steers, 'because they felt they were entitled to be considered in some way superior in birth or breeding to the majority of their contemporaries'.[23]

It was scarcely coincidence that, from the last quarter of the nine-

7. Lord Bledisloe, governor-general of New Zealand, with his wife and staff, 1931.

teenth century, these more differentiated, elaborate and ostentatious colonial hierarchies were completed and perfected by viceregal regimes that were not only of unprecedented splendour and magnificence, but that also thereby mimicked and reflected the unprecedented splendour and magnificence of the newly refurbished British monarchy, as well as the Indian viceroyalty.[24] Canada was confederated in 1867, Australia became a federation in 1900, New Zealand was declared a dominion in 1907, and the Union of South Africa was created in 1910. These new nations were still overwhelmingly British in their social aspirations and cultural values, and they were presided over by governors-general who were more lordly, courtly and aristocratic than anything that had been seen in the empire since the 1800s.[25] The British believed that the 'colonies were not content unless a person of high rank and remarkable distinction was appointed': 'English gentlemen in the fullest sense of the word,' who stood for 'all that is august, stable and sedate in the country'. And there was clearly substantial support for this view overseas. As Sir William McMillan, a well-known Australian conservative, put it in 1902: 'Brilliant young men, belonging to the upper classes in England and, as a rule, taken from the House of Lords', were now being appointed to these posts 'because their position as the apex of our political and social system will be beyond cavil.'[26]

The result was an unprecedented efflorescence of peers as proconsuls: Devonshire and Lansdowne in Canada, Dudley and Denman in Australia, Ranfurly and Bledisloe in New Zealand, Gladstone and Clarendon in South Africa, as well as a host of lesser lords in the Australian states, such as Normanby, Brassey and Hopetoun in Victoria. Marvellously arrayed with plumed hats, ceremonial swords, ribbons and stars, and transported in ostentatious luxury in special trains, they toured their dominions, entertained grandly, made speeches and laid foundation stones. As representatives of the queen–empress and king–emperors, as members of the House of Lords, as landowners in their own right, and as the product of the traditional social order of the British countryside, they were veritable icons of hierarchy: 'high-minded Christian gentlemen' with the 'charm of a typical aristocrat of the old country'.[27] And they lived an appropriately lordly and viceregal style. 'Everything is done,' observed a visitor to Lord Carrington when

he was merely governor of New South Wales, 'just as it would be in a great country house in England so that it is impossible to realize one is not in England.' And that was precisely the point. In their rank, their titles and their social lustre, these plumaged figures sent out from the imperial metropolis served to incorporate individual colonial hierarchies into the collective hierarchy of empire. As Edward Hamilton observed, 'big colonies . . . like English noblemen . . . [they] have rather snob-like tendencies'.[28]

Meanwhile, the gentlemen emigrants continued to emigrate, especially after the First World War, which witnessed the unprecedented slaughter of older and younger sons, and also the avalanche of estate sales that followed.[29] The result was that during the 1920s and 1930s a new generation of disaffected patricians, who were further alienated from the mass urban democracy of Britain, sought to re-create their leisured, landed, privileged lives in the White Highlands of Kenya, just as their predecessors had done in Australia and Canada. Men like Lords Delamere, Cranworth and Erroll, Lord Francis Scott, Sir Ferdinand Cavendish-Bentinck and Sir Jock Delves Broughton acquired large holdings of land, built great houses, installed the family paintings and silver, and treated their coloured labourers in the same way that their forebears had treated their servants back home. As Lord Delamere's biographer notes, 'the feudal system was in his bones and blood, and he believed all his life in its fundamental rightness'; and it was this system that he and others sought to perpetuate and preserve in the empire. Appropriately enough, they found their celebrant and apologist in the young Evelyn Waugh, who acclaimed their efforts 'to transplant and perpetuate a habit of life traditional to themselves which England has ceased to accommodate – the traditional life of the English squirearchy'.[30]

In 1873 Anthony Trollope had contrasted the social structure of Britain, which he thought to be traditional-hierarchical, with that of the United States, which he considered democratic-egalitarian. And from this starting point, he concluded (with relief) that 'the colonies are rather a repetition of England than an imitation of America'.[31] In this he was generally correct, and the observation continued to hold

good for the next half century and more, even beyond the inter-war years. Gentlemen emigrants, combined with colonial aspirants, and topped off with proconsular regimes of signal grandeur, meant that the dominions of settlement (and settlers' Kenya) were far more traditionalist in their attitudes than were the United States of America. *They* had had their anti-royal, anti-title, anti-hierarchy revolution in 1776; the dominions desired no such rupture. They might be moving towards greater democracy and political freedom, but socially, culturally and, significantly, economically, they remained in thrall to a certain vision of the mother country: to what Geoffrey Bolton has called 'the titles, the veneration of landed estates, the hierarchical attitudes, the myth of gracious living'. They did not want to be egalitarian-American; they preferred 'imitation and deference', and were proud and happy to keep their social distinctions, their viceregal courts, and thus to remain part of traditional, Greater Britain.[32]

4
India

In social terms, the British colonies of settlement were about the export of hierarchy; India, by contrast, was much more about the analogues of hierarchy. Or, rather, it *became* increasingly about them in the second half of the nineteenth century. After the Mutiny of 1857, the Bentinck–Macaulay–Dalhousie policy (and stereotype) of overturning the corrupt, despotic, ruling regimes that they had believed India to be was largely given up. This was replaced by the alternative policy (and the alternative stereotype) that regarded the established order much more favourably, and as something that ought to be promoted and preserved. 'Traditional', 'timeless' and 'unchanging' South Asia now became an object to cherish rather than to criticize: 'once the target of reformers, India had now become the hope of reactionaries'.[1] But India was a large and complex country – an entire subcontinent populated by teeming millions embracing two powerful and competing religions. There were territories directly administered by the British, which were ruled from Calcutta (and later from New Delhi), and there were between five and six hundred autonomous princely states, which constituted roughly one third of the subcontinent. How, in the decades after the Mutiny, did the British re-envisage (and re-establish) this most resonant and romantic part of their empire, 'ordering into a single hierarchy all its subjects, Indian and British alike'?[2]

One way in which they did so was by giving more attention to the concepts and categories of caste. During the closing decades of the rule of the East India Company, the Brahmanic theory of caste had become more rigidified, and its influence spread into areas ranging from the

ritual practices of South Indian temples to the honours system of Indian princes. As such, and further instrumentalized by the courts, caste penetrated deep into South Asian society, restructuring the relations of public worship, physical mobility, marriage and inheritance. The result was an immobile, status-bound, increasingly inclusive vision of the Indian social order, which in the second half of the nineteenth century became even more attractive to the British than in the years of the Company. Beginning with 'their own forms of knowledge and thinking', they came to look upon caste as 'the essential feature of the Indian social system', as the analogue to their own carefully ranked domestic status hierarchy, which seemed to make Indian society familiar. By 1901 caste was used in the Indian census as the equivalent to the social categories used in Britain.[3] Thus regarded, India seemed to the British to be an integrated and coherent hierarchy, with an 'accepted order of social precedence' that they could grasp and understand. 'Under British rule,' Susan Bayly notes, 'more of the subcontinent's peoples than ever before found themselves drawn or coerced into the schemes of ritualized social hierarchy which are now regarded as key characteristics of caste society.'[4]

Caste, and the censuses making caste 'official', gave the British an aggregative overview of Indian society as layered and traditional. But the particular, localized form that this society took was the 'village community'. In tandem with the rise of caste, the cult of the country settlement was developing during the last decades of the East India Company, and it too reached its climax during the second half of the nineteenth century, when writers such as Sir Henry Maine, Sir William Wilson Hunter and Sir Alfred Lyall, taking up and embellishing the commonplace view, praised the Indian village as 'ancient', 'organic', 'complex' and built on unwritten custom. These 'healthy agricultural communities' were the essence of 'the existing social and economic order', and as such they constituted the primordial unit of 'real', 'traditional' and 'timeless' India.[5] As a microcosm of Indian society, they were by definition hierarchical: 'in every village', Philip Mason recalls, 'there would be people who owed someone else allegiance . . . everyone you spoke to in a village fitted somewhere into this pattern'. This vision – the very image of India that Kipling and other writers

evoked, celebrated and popularized – was not only intrinsically appealing to the British and a key component of their views of Indian society; its era of greatest popularity occurred at exactly the same time as the growing cult of the village in the imperial metropolis came to embody the very essence of 'Englishness'. This was not coincidence: once again, it was analogical sociology at work.[6]

It was atop this layered, Burkeian, agrarian image of Indian society that the British constructed a system of government that was simultaneously direct and indirect, authoritarian and collaborationist, but that always took for granted the reinforcement and preservation of tradition and hierarchy. The imperial presence, in the two thirds of the country directly ruled, took the form of a fixed official order. As Kipling himself once observed, mules, horses and elephants obeyed their drivers, who in turn obeyed their sergeants, who obeyed their lieutenants, who obeyed their captains, who obeyed their majors, who obeyed their colonels, who obeyed their brigadiers, who obeyed their generals, who obeyed their viceroy. And what was true of the military was no less true of civilians. They were in a parallel chain that tied together the Indian Civil Service, and that extended from the district officer of the village, to the governor of the province, and finally to the viceroy of all India. Throughout the Raj, protocol was strictly governed by the 'warrant of precedence', which in 1881 consisted of seventy-seven ranks, and which gave essential advice as to whether the government astronomer in Madras was of higher standing than the superintendent of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Calcutta. Everywhere in British India, social rank depended on official position. These were, as one of Paul Scott's characters observes, the 'rigid levels of hierarchy' for which the Raj was renowned. 'British India,' Philip Mason rightly recalls, 'was as much infected by caste as Indian India.'[7]

When it came to the implementation of justice and the collection of revenue, the Raj needed dependable allies, and they were chosen on the assumption that the preferred model of metropolitan society could be applied to India and analogized back. For just as British local government had always depended on the resident aristocracy and gentry, so their chosen partners in South Asia were the 'natural leaders': large landowners, men of 'property and rank', of 'power and

importance', who 'exercised great influence' in rural society. As the British saw them, Indian landlords were to fulfil the assigned role of English notables, because they possessed traditional status and authority in the localities that made their participation in the imperial enterprise both valuable and reliable.[8] The Talukdars in the United Provinces, with their landed estates, or the Pirs of Sind, wielding religious, social and economic influence, were significant examples – the sort of people Philip Mason revealingly calls 'landowners *because that is the nearest English equivalent*'. And this was the abiding British image of South Asia until the end: gentry leaders of a caste-bound society. When governor of the United Provinces in the late 1920s, Sir Malcolm Hailey likened the zemindars to the British aristocracy and supported them on this basis, hoping that each might 'create for himself the position which was once occupied by the old-fashioned squire in English village life'.[9]

The remaining third of India consisted of the princely states, those 500-odd personal fiefdoms ruled over by rajas and maharajas, nawabs and nizams, which after 1857 were no longer reviled as alien and corrupt, but acclaimed as familiar and traditional. 'The policy of suppressing, or suffering to go to ruin, all the aristocracy and gentry of India, is a mistake,' opined Sir Charles Wood, the secretary of state for India in the aftermath of the Mutiny. During his period of office, it was put promptly into reverse, as criticism was replaced by celebration, disruption by preservation.[10] Hence Queen Victoria's proclamation of November 1858, which undertook on behalf of the imperial government to 'respect the rights, dignity and honour of native princes as our own', because they were the quintessential 'natural leaders' of South Asian society. They were to be attached directly to the British crown; there were to be no further annexations; and they were reassured that on the failure of natural heirs, the adoption of a successor would be recognized.[11] The result, as David Washbrook explains, was that 'in social terms' the British Raj was now 'happiest dealing with what it conceived to be a feudal social order . . . of inherited social hierarchy'.[12]

Put more positively, this meant the British resolved to rule one third of India indirectly through the princes, and through the 'deeply rooted hierarchical social structure' of which they were both the expression

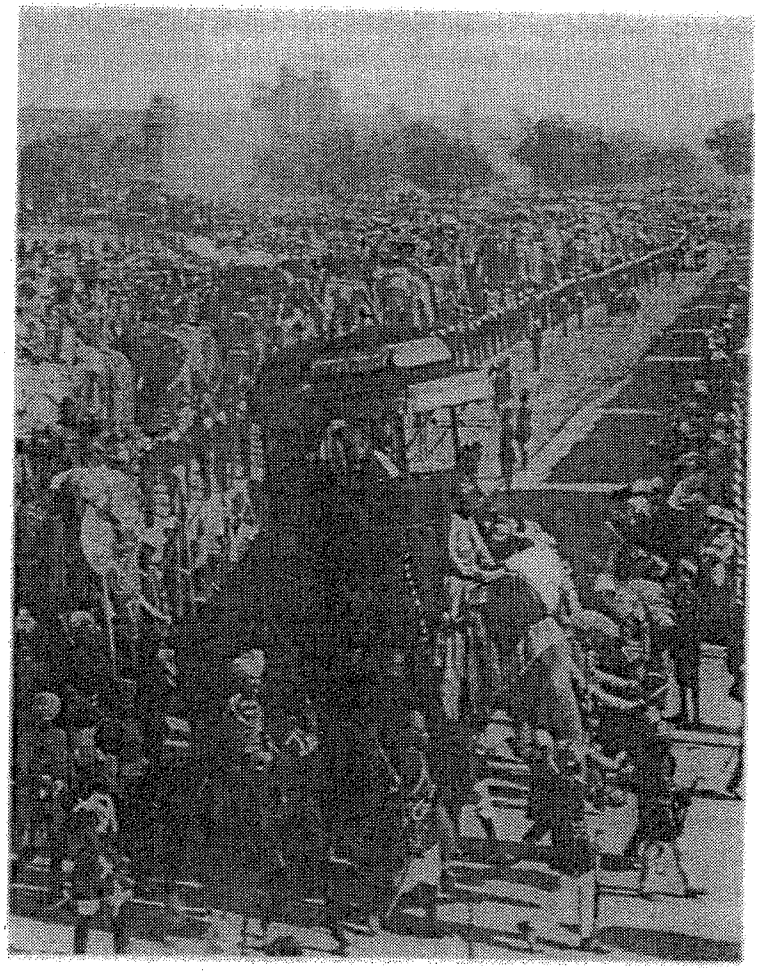
and the apogee.[13] As nominally autonomous 'native states', they administered themselves under British paramountcy, with residents from the Indian Political Service assigned to them as advisers. They were outside the government of India's tax base; their autocratic character insulated them from nationalist agitation; and they contributed substantially to the Indian Army. They were carefully ranked and ordered, they were obsessed with protocol and the number of guns they received in salute, and they delighted in 'flamboyant assertions of ritual sovereignty and extravagant contests for symbolic precedence'.[14] They seemed, then, just like the British aristocracy and gentry; and so it was scarcely surprising that in 1893 and 1900 Sir Roper Lethbridge published his two editions of *The Golden Book of India: A Genealogical and Biographical Dictionary of the Ruling Princes, Chiefs, Nobles and Other Personages, Titled or Decorated, of the Indian Empire*. Appropriately enough, the author was a Devon country gentleman, who had served in the Bengal Education Service earlier in his career and been Conservative MP for North Kensington between 1885 and 1892. He dedicated this work to 'Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, Queen Empress of India', and the result, according to *The Times*, was 'probably destined to take rank as the recognized *Peerage of India*'.[15]

This view of the 'basic structures of Indian society', as caste-ridden, village-living and princely-led, became the conventional British wisdom in the decades immediately after the Mutiny, and as the last quarter of the nineteenth century opened, it was more deliberately encouraged and energetically projected.[16] Here, as so often was the case with the hierarchical flowering and Gothic efflorescence of empire, Benjamin Disraeli was a crucial figure. For it was he who, as prime minister, passed the Imperial Titles Act in 1876, which declared Queen Victoria to be empress of India. This audacious appropriation consolidated and completed the British–Indian hierarchy, as the queen herself replaced the defunct Mughal emperor at the summit of the social order: she was now an eastern potentate as well as a western sovereign. As a result, and following the precedent and example of the Irish viceroyalty in Dublin, the position of her representative was ceremonially inflated and extravagantly enhanced. Thereafter, all Indian viceroys would be

peers, and their courtly regimes in Calcutta and at Simla, which in turn provided the models for the governors-general of the great dominions, would far surpass anything to be seen at Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle, where, as Lady Reading noted, things were 'simple in comparison' with all this 'show and glitter'.[17]

The first climax of what J. P. Waghorne calls this new 'culture of ornamentation' was the proclamation of the queen as empress of India by the viceroy, Lord Lytton, at the great durbar (or 'imperial assemblage') of 1877. As the son of the novelist who had Gothicized Knebworth House in Hertfordshire, Lytton was the ideal impresario for this Disraelian extravaganza. After much planning, he selected an historic site just outside Delhi, the old Mughal capital, constructed a temporary city of tents and canvas, and within a purpose-built amphitheatre, decorated with banners, coats of arms and 'bits of bunting', staged a spectacular display of pageantry, rulership and homage, which made 'manifest and compelling the sociology of India' and which was mimicked and replicated throughout the country. From one perspective, this represented the successful appropriation of the indigenous, South Asian symbolic form of the durbar, or ceremonial meeting between rulers and ruled, which articulated the traditional social order and legitimated the position of the queen–empress at the head of it. But it was also an improvised, pseudo-medieval spectacular of rank and inequality, which indicated that the British were developing in India 'a more closely defined honorific hierarchy' and increasingly projecting an image of their South Asian empire as a 'feudal order'. Appropriately enough, special emphasis was placed upon the role of the ruling princes, who were hailed and presented as the 'native aristocracy of the country', and 'whose sympathy and cordial allegiance' was regarded as 'no inconsiderable guarantee for the stability of the Indian Empire'.[18]

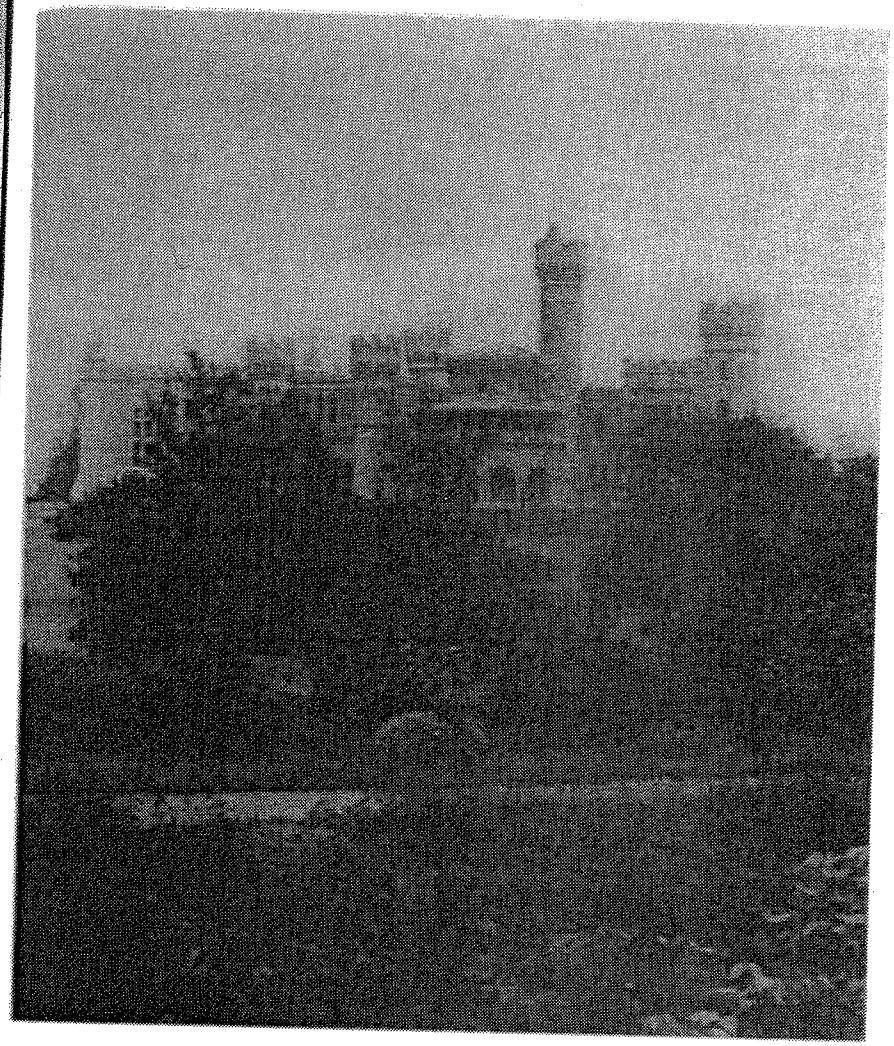
Thereafter, their cultivation as the most favoured (and most ornamental) side of the Raj continued apace, as the traditional rituals of princely installation, local durbars and municipal addresses, which were invariably attended by senior proconsuls and sometimes even by the viceroy himself, moved into much higher gear.[19] With their confidence (and their incomes) increased, many princes spent fortunes



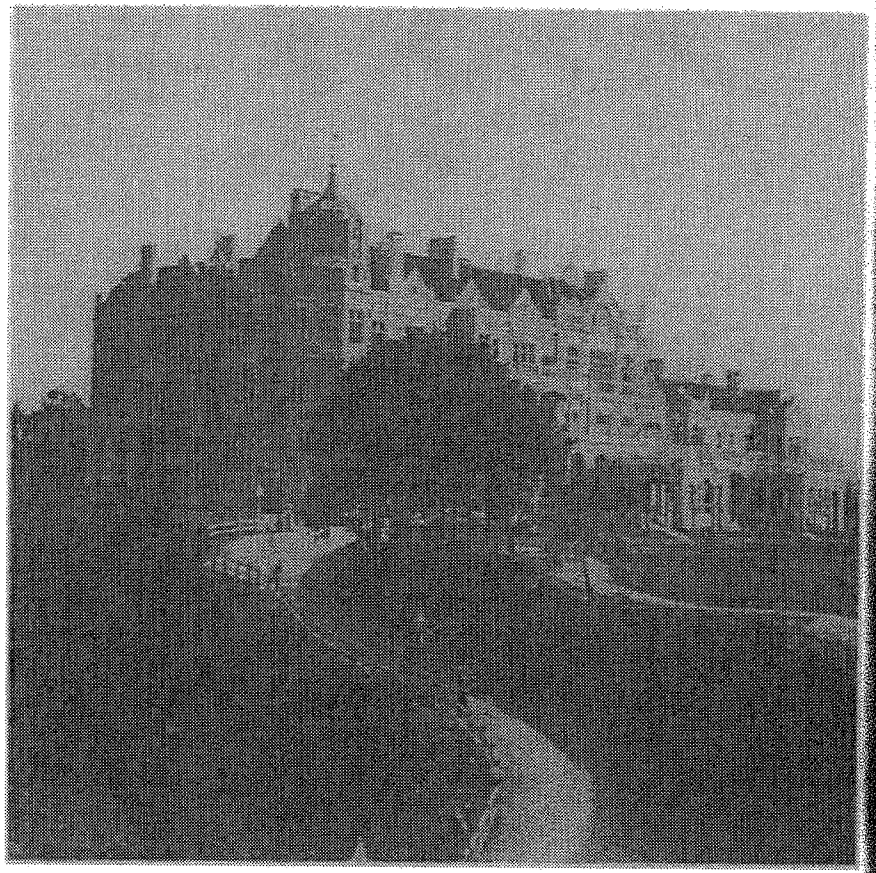
8. The Procession of the Princes at the 1903 Delhi Durbar.

building new–old palaces in 'Indo-Saracenic' style, such as Lakshmi Vilas Palace in Baroda, designed by Major Charles Mant and Robert Fellowes Chisholm, and the Lallgarh Palace at Bikaner, for which Samuel Swinton Jacob was the architect. These were flamboyant confections, with turrets, domes, pavilions and towers, atavistic in their cultural resonances, and redolent of continuity, order and tradition.[20] As a viceroy with a strong sense of history and hierarchy, Lord Curzon was especially well disposed to the ruling princes, those 'colleagues and partners' who, 'amid the levelling tendencies of the age', kept 'alive the traditions and customs, sustain[ed] the virility, and save[d] from extinction, the picturesqueness of ancient and noble races'. At his durbar of 1903, for the King–Emperor Edward VII, which far surpassed Lord Lytton's in splendour and magnificence, Curzon gave the princes a much more active role than they had enjoyed in 1877. As participants, paying homage to the king–emperor in an amphitheatre specially designed in the Indo-Saracenic style by Swinton Jacob, they were no longer merely 'architectural adornments of the imperial edifice', but were regarded by the viceroy as 'pillars that help to sustain the main roof'.[21]

This was an apt metaphor, for the British were as busy in their building at this time as the Indian princes. And in the main, they did so in the same style: Indo-Saracenic which, in its exuberant asymmetries and its aura of instant antiquity, was very much the spirit and values of the Gothic Revival transported to India. Just as the maharajas' palaces were orientalized versions of Eaton Hall or Cardiff or Arundel or Windsor Castles, so the Victoria Terminus at Bombay, the High Court at Hyderabad and the University at Madras were extravagant extensions or reworkings of similar buildings in London or Toronto or Melbourne.[22] In India, as elsewhere in the empire, private palaces and public buildings, however recently constructed, projected a similar vision of imperial society as unified, venerable, time-honoured and hierarchical. Sometimes this was literally so, as in the case of the Gothic clock tower of Bombay University, which housed twenty-four statues representing the castes of western India. And this common image was not only articulated by the same architecture, but also by the same architects: by men like Henry Irwin, who designed the Viceregal Lodge



9. The maharaja of Mysore's palace at Bangalore.

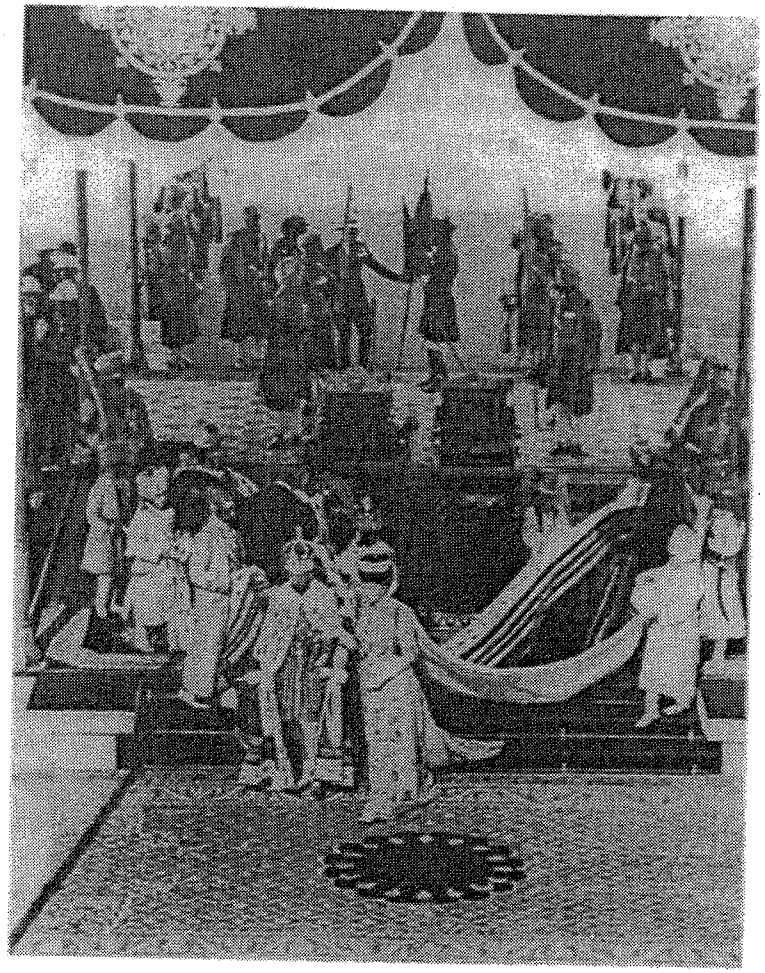


10. The Viceregal Lodge at Simla.

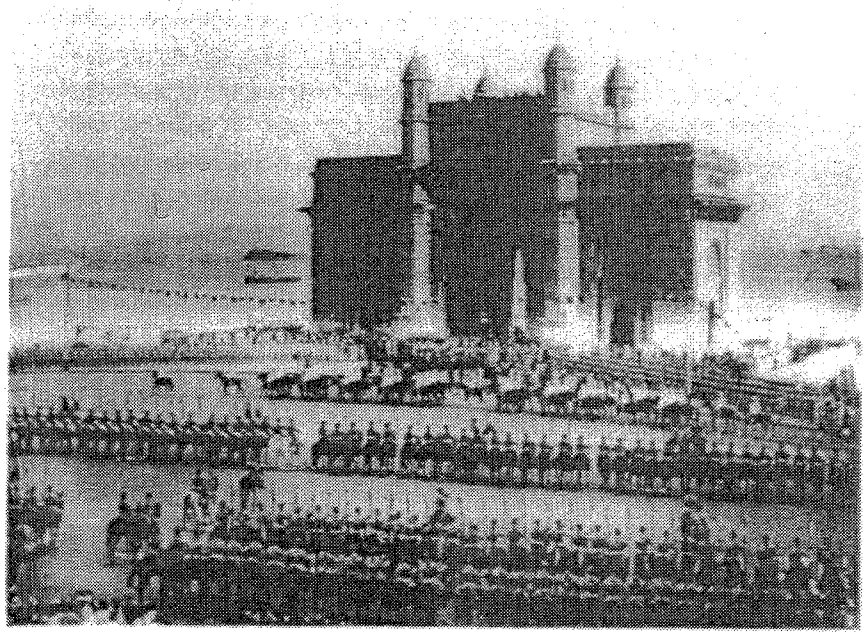
at Simla and the Madras Law Courts, and also the Amba Vilas Palace for the fabulously rich maharaja of Mysore.[23] Here was powerful visual evidence of the shared commitment of the Raj and the princes to hierarchy and order and antiquity and tradition, as well as of the former's inclination to treat the latter as social equals.

These cumulatively conservative developments – sociological, political, ceremonial and architectural – are well illustrated in the case of the maharajas of Jaipur, Ram Singh (1851–80) and Madho Singh (1880–1922), both rich and both regarded by the British as model princes. During the last two decades of his rule, Ram Singh established a college, a school of art, a public library, a hospital (named after Lord Mayo, the assassinated viceroy) and laid out a public garden. He also built a gasworks, provided piped water in the city, invested in irrigation and road-building projects, and initiated the washing of Jaipur's buildings, which gained it the title of the Pink City. But the centrepiece of these projects was a museum called the Albert Hall, in honour of the prince of Wales, which was constructed in elaborate Indo-Saracenic style from designs by Swinton Jacob. In the next generation Madho Singh was, like his predecessor, a Hindu and a conservative who prided himself on his loyalty to the British and on his reputation as a 'progressive' ruler. In order to accommodate his many visitors, he built a European guest house and a ceremonial reception hall in the outer courtyard of his city palace, both again designed by Swinton Jacob, who was employed in Jaipur for the best part of half a century.[24]

This image of India protected and projected by the Raj – glittering and ceremonial, layered and traditional, princely and rural, Gothic and Indo-Saracenic – reached what has rightly been called its 'elaborative zenith' at the Coronation Durbar of 1911 when, at his own insistence, the King–Emperor George V appeared in person with a newly made imperial crown, thereby surpassing even Curzon's extravaganza of 1903.[25] The planning was exceptionally elaborate and, as Kenneth Rose notes, 'students of the viceregal correspondence which passed between Calcutta and London throughout 1911 might suppose that the British Raj depended less on justice and good administration than on precedence, honours and minute distinctions of dress'. So they might: for so, in many ways, it did. The king and queen duly arrived



11. King George V and Queen Mary leaving the Durbar throne after their imperial coronation, 1911.



12. King George V and Queen Mary at the Gateway of India, 1911.

at Bombay in December, where their landing was commemorated by the Gateway of India, one of the last Indo-Saracenic creations of the Raj. They journeyed to Delhi, where a canvas city had been constructed, accommodating people in strict order of social precedence, along with pavilions, a reviewing ground and an amphitheatre; and there they resided, among princes, governors, heralds, troops and escorts, and two hundred thousand visitors. They made their formal state entry in a five-mile long procession, and they later appeared in full coronation finery to receive the homage of the princes. It was, the king recalled with rare effusiveness, 'the most beautiful and wonderful sight I ever saw'.[26]

Thus cultivated and encouraged, the nawabs and the maharajas gave generously to the imperial war effort in terms of money and men, and in 1918 they were probably at the peak of their power and prestige. The king–emperor reaffirmed the 'inviolate and inviolable' commitment of his grandmother, describing the ruling princes as those 'whose existence and security is so closely bound up with that of the British Empire'. In the same way, senior administrators, such as Sir Harcourt Butler and Sir Malcolm Hailey, acclaimed them as the embodiment of 'the sacred fires of an age-long tradition'.[27] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the British aimed to 'call in the old world to balance the new' by utilizing them as a counterpoise to the urban nationalists of the Congress Party. They were given their own separate chamber that was inaugurated (with appropriate pomp and ceremonial) in 1921, and they were offered a major part in the federal structure proposed under the Government of India Act of 1935. They had never been so rich, they spent fortunes on palaces and jewellery, and (in more enlightened cases) on their subjects' welfare: pearls and rubies from Cartier in Paris and London, and hospitals and universities in Hyderabad. Far from being the bearers and wearers of hollow crowns, they were still regarded by the British as 'the natural leaders of Indian society'.[28]

Consider, in this regard (as Paul Scott might have said), Mysore, which the British looked on as one of the 'model states' of princely India, responsibly run on progressive lines. By the inter-war years, the maharajas of Mysore were second only to the nizams of Hyderabad in

terms of wealth, with an income in excess of two million pounds a year, some of which was spent on the construction of the Lalit Mahal Palace, an extraordinary architectural fantasy just outside Mysore city, modelled on St Paul's Cathedral in London. But the maharajas were also generous to their subjects, founding and funding hospitals, schools, medical colleges and universities, and vigorously promoting the beautification of Mysore and Bangalore cities. They pioneered the provision of electricity (Bangalore was thus illuminated before Calcutta and Bombay) and promoted representative assemblies.[29] At the same time, they continued to function as the centre and cynosure of the ceremonial life of their state. Every year, during the Dasara Durbar, the city of Mysore put itself on show, with a formal gathering and homage at the Amba Vilas Palace, followed by a magnificent procession, complete with flags, arches, bands, troops, standards, palanquins and caparisoned elephants, with the maharaja and his family clad in their most gorgeous costumes, and with the British residents keeping a discreet distance. Between 1934 and 1945 these proceedings were vividly preserved in a series of murals in Amba Vilas Palace, and the rituals they recorded continued beyond the Second World War.[30]

Meanwhile, the Raj continued no less ostentatiously ornamental. As so often in India, it was the British buildings that sent out this message most clearly, especially the newly created capital of New Delhi, the construction of which George V had announced and authorized at the 1911 durbar. For, as conceived by Baker and Lutyens, it embodied the British sociology of India and its obsession with what Philip Davies calls 'hierarchy, status and rank' as accurately as, and more permanently than, the ordered and ritualized choreography of the three great durbars. The Viceroy's House was a ducal domain-cum-country house-cum-princely palace, measuring six hundred feet from end to end, and one hundred and eighty feet to the top of the dome of the Durbar Hall.[31] There were great residences for the ruling princes that mimicked Mayfair and Park Lane and Piccadilly, just as their Indo-Saracenic palaces in the countryside mimicked Whig mansions. And the houses of the British officials were clustered in 'physical and spatial forms' that reflected and reinforced the 'deferential social hierarchy' of the Raj: a bungalow for a gazetted officer being altogether superior in

size and location to that of a Class I Married European Clerk. Truly, New Delhi was a city for the Raj: much liked by its greatest supporters, the civil service and the princes. Not for nothing was Lutyens married to Lord Lytton's daughter; and in synthesizing the architectural styles of east and west in a post Indo-Saracenic mode, he produced a monument to imperial hierarchy and social order that was, in Robert Byron's phrase, 'a slap in the face of the modern average man'.[32]

Of course, inter-war India was in some ways a changing place, as political reforms brought the 'Indianization' of the civil service and the beginnings of democracy, and as society became more secular and the towns more industrial. But for the British, modernized India never attained the allure of the traditional India of the maharajas and the Raj, of what Bernard S. Cohn called 'order, deference and hierarchy'. This, for the British, remained the real, unchanging, timeless India. So, when Lord Halifax paid viceregal visits to ruling princes, he yielded nothing in magnificence to Lord Curzon, travelling in a special white official train of twelve coaches that was more splendid than that of the emperor of Russia, and with a guard of honour standing stiffly to attention all along the line.[33] In the hands of such prestige-conscious viceroys as Lords Willingdon and Linlithgow, New Delhi was the setting for the grandest living on earth, with more bowing and curtseying, more precedence and protocol, than anywhere else in the empire, London included. At its peak in the 1930s Viceroy's House employed a staff of six thousand servants, and they were as carefully graded and ranked below stairs as the officialdom and princes of the Raj were above. And this ordered and ornamented regime was still mimicked (and competed with) throughout both princely and official India. The future King Edward VIII once remarked that he had never known what authentic regal pomp really meant until he had stayed with Lord Lloyd. And Lloyd was not the viceroy but merely the governor of Bombay![34]

For the British in India, and for their friends, allies and collaborators, hierarchy was indeed 'the axis around which everything turned'. The same could, of course, be said of Britain, and this was scarcely coincidence. Perhaps that was why India exercised such an appeal for so long

to the romantic, Disraelian side of the British imagination. As the late nineteenth century drew on into the early twentieth, and again in the unstable inter-war years, India's was a hierarchy that became the more alluring because it seemed to represent an ordering of society – based on what Lord Lytton called 'birth, rank and hereditary influence' – that perpetuated overseas something important that was increasingly under threat in Britain. As Francis Hutchins observes, 'India seemed to offer the prospect of aristocratic security at a time when England [*sic*] itself was falling prey to democratic vulgarity.'[35] As such, this contemporary vision of 'timeless' India also represented Britain's better (but vanishing) past to itself, and seemed to hold out the prospect that this treasured yet threatened society still had a future overseas. 'The India of the Raj', Thomas Metcalf notes, 'stood forth as a model, not only for the empire, but for Britain itself.' The interests of those within metropolitan society who were dissatisfied with their own industrial-urban-democratic order were better served by what they regarded as the splendid, traditional hierarchies that still flourished east of Suez.[36]

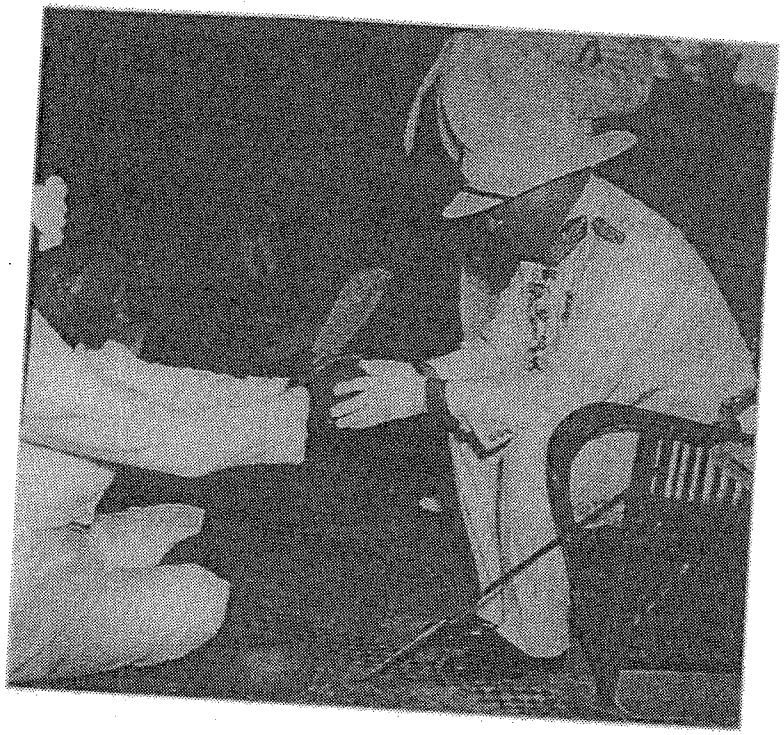
5
Colonies

By the time the British came to annex large parts of Africa and of Asia beyond India during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and to administer them in the years down to the Second World War, the impulses towards an integrated, hierarchical empire were everywhere at their zenith, surpassing in their range and their reach the many precedents set in the era of Pitt and Wellesley a century before. In some ways that were different, but in others that were similar, the dominions of settlement and the Indian Empire were seen as replicating and reinforcing the layered, time-hallowed social order of the metropolis. Proconsuls like Lansdowne, Dufferin and Minto moved back and forth from Canada to India, taking their plumes and their feathers with them; young Indian princes were sent to British public schools, and their parents fêted by British aristocrats; and colonial gentry in the settler dominions sent their sons to Oxford and Cambridge, and were themselves presented at court.[1] In the dominions and in India, proconsular splendour and layered societies were the conventional Burkeian wisdoms and customary conservative modes; and as the 'Scramble for Africa' (and parts of Asia) began, there were soon signs they would be followed and replicated in the new tropical empire that was rapidly being acquired.

Since the British would govern these colonies but (in the main) not settle them, the princely states of the Indian Empire provided a more immediately applicable model than the great dominions, both in terms of how these native societies were regarded, and in terms of how they should be administered. Collaboration, rather than marginalization,

was to be the prevailing mode of management. Respect for traditional tribal structures and support for those rulers who headed them were early on established as the ways to appreciate and to govern this new imperium. One indication of this was in Malaya, where the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 was the first in a series negotiated by the British in the years before 1914. In each case, the sultans of the protected Malay states accepted British residents, or advisers, on the Indian pattern. These agreements confirmed the sovereignty of the Malay rulers and stressed the monarchical nature of their regimes, while obliging them to follow the advice of the British residents in all matters save religion and custom. The residents helped the sultans improve their finances and elevated their authority over lesser chiefs. These arrangements (which were extended to Brunei in 1905 to 1906) remained essentially unaltered until the Japanese invasion in 1941.[2]

In the same year that the Malay rulers accepted British residents, the British annexed Fiji, and the Hon. Arthur Hamilton Gordon was installed as governor. He negotiated a treaty with King Cakobau, which protected Fijian lands from the sort of dispossession that had taken place in Australia and New Zealand, and which codified chiefly authority and entrenched aristocracy as the established order through which the British would govern indirectly. Gordon was the younger son of the earl of Aberdeen (we have already met him urging the need to replicate the full British social order in Canada), and he had no doubt that he was dealing with people of his own social level. He learned Fijian so he could address the chiefs in their own language, and he regarded the purpose of British control as one of safeguarding the traditional social order and preserving the traditional way of life.[3] Gordon's wife was of the same opinion. She thought the native, high-ranking Fijians 'such an undoubted aristocracy'. 'Their manners,' she continued, 'are so perfectly easy and well bred . . . Nurse can't understand it at all, she looks down on them as an inferior race. I don't like to tell her that these ladies are my equals, which she is not!'[4] Later in his career, Gordon became governor of Ceylon, where he carried out the same policies, treating the high-born members of the island's Goyigma caste as 'traditional' aristocracy, whom he vested with power as paramount chiefs. Again, he sought 'to preserve, as long as possible,



13. King Cakobau III doing homage to the governor of Fiji, 1953.

a system which enlists all natural local influences in support of authority'.[4]

As the pace of the scramble for Africa accelerated, this mode of administration, relying on indigenous hierarchies, and cultivating and supporting the native rulers at the top of them, became the obvious way for the British to govern the vast new areas of land they were suddenly acquiring – in a fit of absence of resources, if not necessarily of absence of mind. In West Africa, Sir George Goldie believed that 'the general policy of ruling through native rulers on African principles must be followed'. 'A great chief,' as Claude Macdonald, the governor of Lagos, put it in 1904, 'is a very valuable possession; his authority is an instrument of the greatest public utility, which it is most desirable to retain in full force.'[5] In the Sudan, the Anglo-Egyptian administration established after 1898 looked to the Indian princely states and the Malayan residents system for precedents, and soon began 'to support the sultans and sheikhs in their dealings with their own subjects'. In Kenya, local government through the chiefs was established between 1901 and 1912, especially among the Kikuyu. In Uganda, the chiefs and regents of Buganda continued to govern, subject to their traditional sovereign, the kabaka, and the British ruled through him and through them. And a similar system operated in southern Africa, where Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland were governed indirectly by the British through kings, chiefs and tribes.[6]

If Joseph Chamberlain had had his way during his years as colonial secretary (1895–1903), the traditional policies that had emerged in Malaya and Fiji, and that were now being replicated across British Africa, would have been put abruptly into reverse. He might now be the Unionist colleague of Salisbury and Balfour, but in some ways Chamberlain remained the radical hater of hierarchy he had been as Birmingham's mayor and a Liberal MP. Like an earlier generation of reformers in India, he wanted to intervene aggressively in the new colonies that were his responsibility, and to overthrow the indigenous rulers because they were unequal to the tasks of modernization and development that he wished to carry out.[7] But this policy was neither popular nor permanent. There was African resistance to such disruptive intervention, as with the Sierra Leone rebellion of 1897 to 1898. In an

era when revelations of malpractices in the Belgian Congo were raising humanitarian consciousness, there was also public disquiet. And there was resistance to such radical interventions on the part of the Colonial Office staff. Accordingly, Chamberlain's policy was put into reverse, and the colonial secretary recognized that 'the agency of the native chiefs' was to be relied upon in future: reform would be given up, discontent would be avoided, African consent would be secured, and government would be through indigenous hierarchies. 'No pains,' Chamberlain observed of the Malayan sultans in words that became equally applicable to African chiefs, 'should be spared to safeguard the position and dignity of Native Rulers.'[8]

It was in this context that the preservation of traditional local rulers and native society became accepted after 1900 as the preferred technique of management in Britain's new colonial empire. There was nothing original about it: but Lord Lugard's implementation of 'indirect rule' in Nigeria (which owed something to the Indian princely states, and something to the residential system in Malaya) was soon acknowledged as the most important and influential example in British Africa.[9] From 1900 to 1906 he was high commissioner of Northern Nigeria, a vast area that he had to administer with a small staff and a limited budget. But he was enthralled by the splendour of the Muslim ruling chiefs, and impressed by the order and efficiency of their administrations. So he resolved 'to retain the native authority and to work through and by the native emirs', with British residents duly installed to advise them. But he always insisted that 'native chiefs have clearly defined duties and an acknowledged status, *equally* with the British officials'. Lugard later returned to Nigeria as governor-general, and between 1912 and 1918 he oversaw the extension of indirect rule to the southern and western regions of the colony. The proconsul then turned propagandist, and *The Dual Mandate*, which he published in 1922, made the case that indirect rule was, according to Margery Perham, 'the most comprehensive, coherent and renowned system of administration' in British imperial history.[10]

In the inter-war years Lugard's model, or what was thought to be his model, came to be regarded as by 'far the most significant movement

14. The king of the Asante and the governor of the Gold Coast, 1935.

now proceeding in our colonial Empire'. It was adopted widely throughout colonial Africa: the cultivation of traditional societies 'whose hierarchies could be harnessed to serve British ends'. In the early 1920s a concerted effort was made in the Northern Sudan to establish rule through tribal chiefs, Arab sheikhs whom it was thought resembled those in Northern Nigeria. And at the end of the decade Sir John Maffey, who had previously served with the Government of India's Political Department, introduced it into parts of the Southern Sudan as well.[11] In the former German colony of Tanganyika, which Britain now held as a League of Nations Mandate, Lugard's protégé, Sir Donald Cameron, superseded the German system of direct rule by 'restoring the old tribal organization' that he supposed had previously existed, and that he also hoped would act as a countervailing force to the white settlers in Kenya.[12] In the Gold Coast, indirect rule was codified and extended during the inter-war years: the king of the Asante, whose forebear had been exiled by the British in 1896, was allowed home in 1924, and in 1935 his successor was installed as head of an extensive confederation. And in Northern Rhodesia, which was taken over from the British South Africa Company in 1924, the same system was subsequently implemented by Sir James Maxwell.[13]

What did the end result look like? The colonial empire never rivalled the dizzy, caparisoned splendours of the Raj, since Malayan sultans, Nigerian emirs and African kings rarely ruled over societies that were as venerable, as settled, as ornamental or as rich as the grandest princely states seemed to be. But traditional India remained the model, which meant that this new empire of indirect rule depended on the cooperation and support of kings who were presumed to be at the apex of 'a clearly defined hierarchical society'.[14] As a result, chiefs and emirs and sultans were treated with great shows of public respect by British officials, especially on such ceremonial occasions as installations, coronations, investitures, birthdays and jubilees. In Malaya, after federation, the ruling sultans held a durbar every two years, travelling in style by yacht or train or elephant, bringing with them large retinues and participating in grand ceremonials before large crowds. Across the Indian Ocean at Budo in Uganda, the British built a public school, just before the First World War, for the education of local rulers and

notables. They sited it on the Coronation Hill of the Bugandan kings, and thereafter coronation services took place in the college chapel, combining British and African ceremonial elements. At the school's golden jubilee festivities, pride of place was given to the 'four kings at high table'.[15]

As in India, indigenous royal splendour was matched by imported proconsular pomp. A British governor was the direct representative of the imperial sovereign, as well as the chief executive officer of the colony. As such, he was a potent and impressive figure, an image memorably captured and vividly conveyed in John Singer Sargent's swagger portrait of the Malayan proconsul, Sir Frank Swettenham. He might not aspire to the courtly grandeur and regal magnificence associated with the viceroys of India or the governors-general of the great dominions, but he was entitled to a salute of seventeen guns, and he lived in appropriate splendour at Government House, where protocol and precedence, bowing and curtseying, mattered a great deal, and where he was surrounded by entourages of ADCs and retinues of servants.[16] Margery Perham, who was a regular visitor to British Africa during the inter- and post-war years, and a punctilious observer of proconsular etiquette, loved all this 'pomp and imperial circumstance'. When staying in 1948 at the Palace, the official residence of the governor-general of the Sudan at Khartoum, she felt a sudden spasm of affection for 'the house, the servants, the troops, the ceremonial, the statues of Gordon and Kitchener'. Even in the 1950s British proconsuls remained impressive (sometimes, even, flamboyant) figures. Among them was Sir Edward Twining in Tanganyika: tall, fiercely royal and an ardent student (and inventor) of ceremonial, his biography was appropriately entitled *A Gust of Plumes*.[17]

These proconsuls were very grand: at the annual dinners in London of the Corona Club, founded in 1901 for high-ranking officers of the colonial service, governors and former governors occupied the top table 'in all their dazzling splendour', 'begartered and bemedalled' and 'festooned with colourful decorations'.[18] But they were also the apex of an elaborate local social hierarchy, which (as in India) reached upwards to the British monarch in London, and downwards to the smallest provincial village. It was a complex, many-layered structure,

as paramount kings were directly responsible to the governor-general, and beneath them were often many levels of subordinate chiefly authority. This almost Kiplingesque sense of the imperial chain of being is well caught in a contemporary account of the Pathfinder Scouts of Northern Rhodesia, who were all members of the Bantu tribe, and who were described as 'loyal to the King, to the King's representative in Northern Rhodesia, to his Chief, and Tribal Elders, to his officers, and those under him'. It was the same in Tanganyika after Cameron had done his work: 'the peasant', hitherto isolated, was 'now linked up to his Headman, the Headman to the Sub-Chief, the Sub-Chief to the Chief, and the Chief to the District Office'. And from there, the chain of connection was clear: the district officer was linked to the governor, and he was linked to the king.[19]

Of course, there were variations across the colonies in the exact mode and extent of indirect rule, and in the nature of the local hierarchies through which this rule was exercised. But the general picture is clear. Or at least it was clear to the members of the British Colonial Service. For, however different their social backgrounds, the governors, residents and district commissioners sent out from Britain shared a similar social vision of their homeland, which they thought they had found reproduced and confirmed in Africa. Their preferred society was paternalistic, hierarchical and rural, with individual layers and gradations of status, such as survived in Britain on great landed estates, although even there it was being eroded.[20] One of the greatest colonial governors, Sir Hugh Clifford, never forgot being taken, as a child in the late 1870s, around the farms and cottages of his cousin, Lord Clifford, at Ugbrooke Park in Devon: 'It seemed to me,' he recalled, 'as though I had suddenly become part of a great family and congregation.' He thought it was 'a nearly perfect social organization', and in his years of colonial service he hoped to identify and to nurture similar social structures abroad. There was about all this what has been called a 'fundamental Burkeian conservatism' – a sense of natural rightness and rootedness of traditional structures and slowly evolving institutions, and an 'easy understanding of the position of indigenous elites by analogy with their own'.[21]

But it was not just that societies found overseas seemed to resemble

society as it existed in Britain, as (in Clifford's case in Malaya) 'castle and cottage became court and *kampong*'.[22] For it seemed to the more romantic imperialists that society overseas was (like the Indian villages and princely states) actually *better* – purer, more stable, more paternal, less corrupted. As the metropolis became ever more urbanized, industrialized and democratized, and as its social fabric correspondingly decayed, these faraway societies, with their traditional hierarchies still intact, not only became more appealing, they also needed protecting from the very same forces of modernity that were destroying traditional Britain. Such were the views of Charles Temple, a resident in Northern Nigeria before the First World War, and the son of Sir Richard Temple, the governor of Bombay. He 'admired aristocracy, despised individualism, and regarded European industrial capitalism as a decadent form of society'. For him, 'the duty of colonial trusteeship lay . . . in protecting the virtues of northern aristocratic life and its communal economy from the "barbarizing" effects of European capitalism, democracy and individualism'.[23]

As in India, so in Africa: these opinions were widely shared among British politicians and administrators. From this perspective, indirect rule of dark-skinned races was about admiration rather than condescension: much more 'a recognition of indigenous genius' on the part of native peoples than it was 'a sentence of perpetual inferiority' for them, a genuine wish to hold back the corrupting forces of capitalism and exploitation, so as to let tradition thrive and hierarchy flourish. This was how the British saw things in their new, tropical empire, and it was (as usual) on the basis of how they saw things at home. Indirect rule, Margery Perham once revealingly admitted (and she was herself the product of 'an ordering of society based upon the existence of social class'), 'derives from our conservatism, with its sense of historical continuity and its aristocratic tradition'.[24] Time and again, the British viewed their dependent empire as like the Raj: the landed, layered order that they feared was being lost at home, but that they wanted to nurture and protect overseas. On the eve of independence, the indigenous elite of Ceylon was described by the young Patrick Gordon Walker as 'extremely rich landowners with local power and influence comparable to a Whig landlord's in George III's time'.[25]

15. The Banqueting Hall of Richmond Castle, Ceylon, 1916, the country seat of chief Wijayasinghe.

Here was a classic (and by now familiar) instance of visualizing the empire by analogy to the social structure as it had once existed in Britain. Nor should this continuing cult of connection and equivalence come as any surprise. For between 1919 and 1948 the person primarily responsible for recruitment to the British Colonial Service was Sir Ralph Furse, whose vision of British society, both domestic and imperial, was unashamedly rural, hierarchical and nostalgic. He was the scion of a county family in Devon; country life, country virtues and country people were his 'ultimate realities'; he possessed 'an unswervingly aristocratic bias in social and political arrangements'; and he saw colonial administration abroad as 'a crusading service', 'forming the natural counterpart to the obligations of squires to tenants in England'.[26] In selecting the young men who would go out and administer the empire, Furse did everything he could to ensure that they shared his vision. Ruling through 'traditional' authorities was how the English had always governed themselves; it was how they had come to govern Wales, Scotland and parts of Ireland; and now it was how they came to govern their overseas empire. As such, 'Merrie Africa' reflected, matched – and even in some ways surpassed – 'Merrie England'.[27]

And it lasted until the Second World War, when, like the princely rulers of the Indian states, the emirs and chiefs and sultans once again came to Britain's aid, supporting the supreme sovereign in his time of supreme need. Consider in this regard the career of the man who, in 1948, became King Lewanika III of Barotseland. He was born in 1888, and before assuming the kingship was chief of the district of Kuta at Mankoya. During the First World War he had led the Barotse War Carriers to the East African campaign, and between 1939 and 1945 he (in the words of his *Who's Who* entry) 'encouraged the war effort by the production of rubber and funds'.[28] In the same way, during 1939 and 1940 the rulers of the Federated Malay States provided the British government with gifts totalling £1.5 million, and the rulers of the Unfederated States were scarcely less generous. And in 1943 the colonial secretary, Oliver Stanley, visited Nigeria, where the emir of Bauchi declared: 'I and my brother Emirs, and all of our people, are continually praying that God will bless and prosper the armed forces of the Allied Nations and speed the day of victory.'[29]

It was these people – the 'chiefs, landowners, sultans or sheikhs' – on whom the British felt they could rely, and with whom (as with their counterparts in India) they were most comfortable.[30] Indeed, this policy and these perceptions were still in operation in some parts of the colonial empire towards the end. During the late 1950s, when convinced that they would remain a military and imperial power in the Indian Ocean, the British sought to secure the future of their naval base in Singapore – a large, bustling, cosmopolitan town, with a huge Chinese working class of disturbingly (and increasingly) Communist sympathies. The traditional and long-pondered solution was to merge the city into a larger Federation of Malaysia, where the rural and conservative cultures of Malaya (where the sultans remained dominant), of Sarawak (where the Brookes had been 'white rajas' between 1841 and 1941) and of North Borneo (where company rule had belatedly been replaced by indirect rule) would outweigh the urban radicals of Singapore. The federation duly came into being between 1961 and 1963 – almost the last such imperial impulse, and still using the old system nearly one hundred years from the signing of the Pankgor Treaty that had effectively initiated it.[31]

6

Mandates

On the eve of the First World War, and notwithstanding the participation of France, Germany and Belgium in the 'Scramble for Africa', the British Empire was still very much the greatest and the grandest in the world. Taken together, the dominions of settlement, the Indian Empire and the tropical colonies comprised an imperium that was without rival in terms of its territorial extent, its mixture of variety and coherence, and its unifying characteristics of hierarchy and tradition. By comparison, the German and Belgian Empires might also be royal, but they were rather small; the Portuguese and Spanish Empires were also royal, but demoralized; and the French Empire might be large, but it was republican. After the First World War the final extension of the British Empire took place in the Middle East, with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and the setting up of new kingdoms in the League of Nations Mandates in Jordan and Iraq. Not surprisingly, given what had happened in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1870s, these new–old kingdoms were explicitly conceived on the model of the Indian princely states. The First World War may (or may not) have made the world safe for democracy; for another generation, and in yet another part of the world, it certainly made the British Empire safe for hierarchy.

This last act of traditional-cum-imperial social engineering also needs to be set in the broader contexts of cultural attitudes and historical precedents. Before the late nineteenth century most well-born, well-read and well-travelled Britons, following the South Asian examples set by Bentinck and Dalhousie, had despised what they regarded as the despotic politics and squalid conditions of the orient. But, as with the

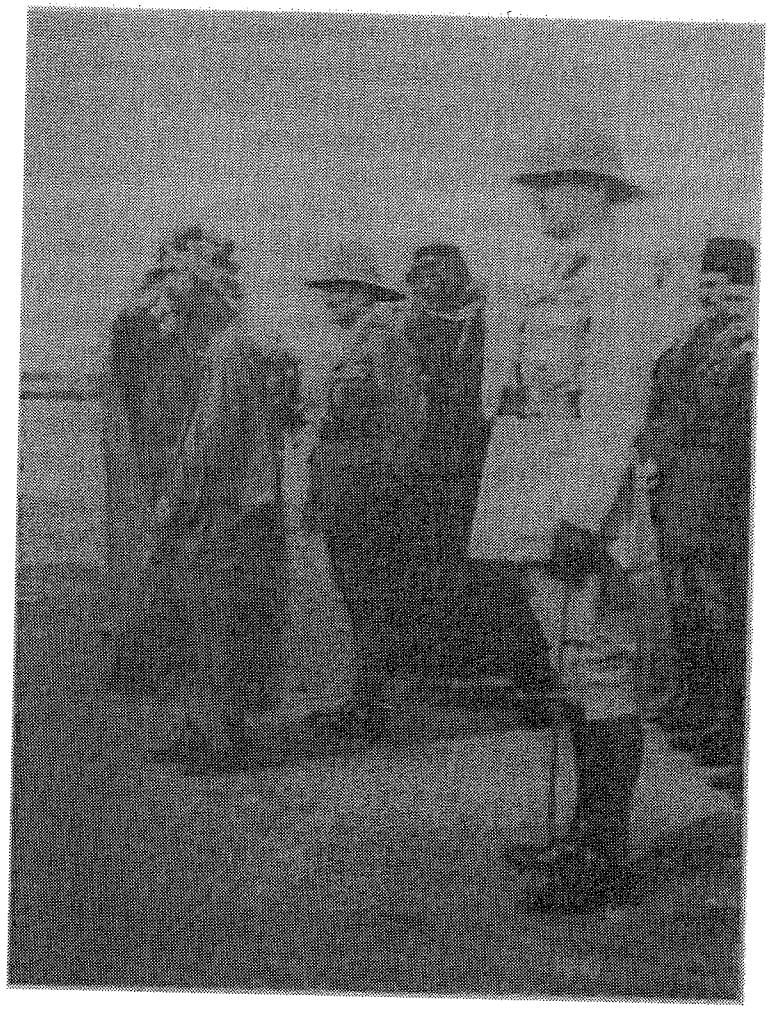
British in post-Mutiny India and post-Scramble Africa, their attitudes subsequently underwent a significant change. This was partly because of the more romantic image of the Arabs projected by writers such as Sir Richard Burton, which increasingly depicted them as English gentlemen 'translated into another idiom'; and partly as a consequence of their growing feelings of insecurity in what they regarded as an increasingly hostile domestic environment. When confronted by agricultural depression, mass politics in the cities, anti-landlord agitation in Ireland and attacks on the House of Lords itself, many anxious and disenchanted patricians came to admire (and to envy) the magnificent Bedouin chiefs and their remote, unspoilt deserts – where it seemed that established social order endured and traditional deference still prevailed, where the ancient values of chivalry and honour were preserved, and where there was 'a feeling of escape from the furies of modern life – disillusion, doubt, democracy'.[1]

Thus appreciatively regarded, the Arab emirs and sheikhs seemed like the Indian princes and Nigerian emirs, only more so: noble and superior leaders, the patrons and protectors of a traditional, ordered world, which had once existed in Britain, but which was now under serious threat. These opinions, which clearly had much in common with those of Harcourt Butler in India and Charles Temple in Africa, were shared by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. A Sussex squire who hated the middle classes, mass politics, 'selfish financiers' and 'greedy Jews', he travelled extensively in the Middle East and bought an estate near Cairo; he also spoke Arabic, bred Arab horses and wore local costume.[2] They were shared by Mark Sykes, who was the heir to a baronetcy and the Sledmere Estate in Yorkshire, disliked the French and the Industrial Revolutions, admired Arab society as layered, ordered, traditional and deferential, and regarded the great sheikhs and Kurdish chiefs as fellow aristocrats with whom he might talk on equal terms. And they were held by the Hon. Aubrey Herbert, the model for John Buchan's Sandy Arbuthnot, who 'rode through the Yemen, which no white man ever did before', hated politicians, the bourgeoisie and Lloyd George, and loved 'thrones, chieftains, bandits, dangerous territories and fierce loyalty'.[3]

This growing attachment to the Arab world, by turns patrician,

romantic and escapist, coincided with the gradual extension of British power into the Middle East – an extension that took for granted that these traditional rulers should be sustained and supported. When Egypt was invaded and occupied in 1882, Britain governed indirectly through the khedive (later sultan, and the direct descendant of the figure in Wilkie's painting), following the precedents and practice of the Indian princely states, and relying on their resident consul-general to ensure that order was preserved, that the national finances were restored, and that the Suez Canal was protected.[4] On the Arabian peninsular and in the Persian Gulf, the British made treaties with the sultan of Muscat, with the sheikhs of the Trucial Coast of Oman, with the ruler of Bahrain, with the sheikhs of Qatar and with the sheikh of Kuwait, which established them as the 'paramount power in much of the Arabian peninsular'. And when Britain went to war with the Ottoman Empire in 1914, it supported Sherif Hussein (the most prominent member of the Arabian nobility, the paramount chieftain in the area and the founder of the Hashemite dynasty) and his sons in their revolt against the Turks.[5] This policy was especially advocated by the Cairo-based Arab Bureau, with which Herbert and Sykes were both connected. The latter was especially influential in urging the need for Britain to create post-war Arab kingdoms, 'agrarian in nature and almost medieval in structure', where 'squires, lords and peasants might live in reconstituted amity', and all 'doing homage in their lives and thoughts to the divine eternal order of which their society on earth was but the mirror'.[6]

With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, this romantic, hierarchical impulse became the basis of Britain's post-war policy, and two people pursued it with particular vigour, determination and success. The first was T. E. Lawrence, himself a great admirer of Sherif Hussein and his sons, and a firm believer in the traditional order in Britain no less than in the Middle East. In seeking to establish a new Arab settlement, he was sure that Britain would have the edge over France because of its layered social structure culminating in the monarchy. 'Ancient and artificial societies like this of the Sherifs and feudal chieftains of Arabia,' he explained, 'found a sense of honourable security when dealing with



16. The Emir Abdullah of Transjordan with, among others, Lord Allenby and Colonel T. E. Lawrence, *c.* 1922.

us in such proof that the highest place in our state was not a prize for merit or ambition.'[7] In seeing himself as a king-maker, Lawrence was at one with the second influential Briton, Winston Churchill, who as colonial secretary in the Lloyd George coalition was responsible for putting these ideas into practice. In the aftermath of war, Churchill had evolved into a fully fledged social conservative, who was dismayed by the demise of the 'old world', with its 'princes and potentates', its secure ruling classes and its splendid social pageantry. He much regretted the disappearance of the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs, and the 'collapse of settled values and ancient institutions'. And, as colonial secretary, he was convinced that in the Middle East, as elsewhere in the empire, 'British interests were best served by friendship and co-operation with the party of monarchy and tradition'.[8]

At the Cairo Conference of March 1921, Lawrence and Churchill sought to implement their social-imperial ideas by establishing new royal regimes in the League of Nations Mandates that the British had been awarded in the Middle East. For Churchill, they had two special attractions: they would mean empire on the cheap at a time when public spending was under severe strain and scrutiny; and they would establish 'the very best structure', which would be 'analogous to princely states in India'.[9] In conformity with Britain's wartime policy (the so-called 'Sherifian solution'), the intention was that these new Arab nations would be ruled by sons of Sherif Hussein. In Transjordan, Hussein's second son, Abdullah, was installed as emir, supported by an indigenous administration under British supervision, headed by a resident, and with an Arab Legion officered and supplied by the British. In neighbouring Iraq (Mesopotamia), Abdullah's younger brother, Faisal, who had been ignominiously ejected by the French from the throne of Syria, was installed from the outset as king, once public support had been effectively mobilized (by the British) in his favour, and he reigned until his death in 1933.[10] As in Jordan, British influence over the king and his country was exercised by a high commissioner, who sought to control the rural tribes by increasing the powers of their head sheikhs. This mode of indirect rule continued essentially unaltered well after the mandate expired in 1932.[11]

Although the result of less premeditated and determined policy, two

17. King Fu'ad of Egypt with the prince of Wales, 1927.

additional new kings appeared in the British-controlled Middle East. On the outbreak of war, Egypt had been formally (and belatedly) annexed by Britain, but in 1922 the country was declared independent, and the sultan was elevated to royal status as King Fu'ad. Like his fellow monarchs in Jordan and Iraq, he was advised by a British high commissioner; and imperial communications, the defence of Egypt, the protection of foreign interests and the ostensibly 'Anglo-Egyptian' Sudan remained explicitly and exclusively under British control. Under these terms, Egypt was essentially 'a princely state on the Indian pattern'.[12] Across the Red Sea, on the Arabian peninsula, the British had initially backed Sherif Hussein, and had hoped that he might become king of Arabia as his sons eventually became rulers of Jordan and Iraq.[13] But Hussein fell out with his sons and with the British, and refused to accept the settlements of the Cairo Conference. He was deprived of British support as a result and forced to abdicate in 1924. Soon after, he was driven out of Arabia by his long-standing rival, Ibn Sa'ud, who thereupon established himself as king. In 1927 Ibn Sa'ud signed a treaty that effectively recognized Britain as the paramount power in the region. Ten years later, and using the Malay treaties as a model, Britain concluded negotiations with tribal rulers in the hinterland of the port of Aden, including Sultan Saleh of Mukalla and Sultan Ja'far of Seiyun. This completed and consolidated its inter-war dominions in the Arab world.[14]

So by this time the British Middle East was organized on the basis of what Gertrude Bell called 'creating kings', resulting in regimes that stressed 'solid magnificence' and 'ordered dignity'. There were proclamations and coronations for the new kings, and durbars at which 'big sheikhs and nobles', 'magnates of the wilderness' and 'great chiefs of the desert' pledged allegiance and paid homage, and the countryside, the cabinets and the legislatures of these new royal dominions were dominated by the sheikhly landowners. And the British residents and high commissioners behaved with appropriate proconsular pomp: Lord Lloyd in Egypt, with his cocked hat, orders, ribbons and Rolls-Royce, and Sir Percy Cox in Iraq, with his white uniform and gold lace, 'his air of fine and simple dignity'.[15] The result was a large new imperial dominion based on a romantic, admiring, escapist

view of Arab social structure, which closely resembled Rudolph Valentino's celebration of the Bedouin characteristics of 'nobility, dignity, manliness, gracefulness and virility' in his film *The Sheikh* (1921). Such perceptions persisted well on into the inter-war years, exemplified by the Hon. Wilfred Thesiger, nephew of Lord Chelmsford (viceroy of India, 1916–21), who was born in Abyssinia and spent the 1930s travelling in the Middle East. Like Blunt, Herbert and Sykes, he had 'a lifelong craving for barbaric splendour, for savagery and colour and the throb of drums', a 'lasting veneration for long-established customs and ritual', a 'deep-seated resentment of western innovations in other lands' and a 'distaste for the drab uniformity of the modern world'.[16]

Throughout the 1930s these 'traditionalist' views of Arab society, and especially of its leaders, remained the basis for British policy towards its mandates and territories in the Middle East – a structure of government that has been aptly described as having been 'born by the great war, out of the Indian Raj'. Like the princes of South Asia, the Hashemite rulers of Iraq and Jordan built palaces designed by British architects, employed British nannies, tutors and governesses, and sent their sons to public schools. In Iraq, Faisal ruled with Valentino-like demeanour: 'his voice seemed to breathe the perfume of frankincense and to suggest the presence of richly coloured divans, green turbans and the glitter of gold and jewels'.[17] And after his death, and the ending of the mandate, the climactic years of the monarchy were dominated by the regency of Crown Prince Abdulillah, who was devoted to such courtly pastimes as protocol and pedigree. It was the same in Jordan, where the Emir Abdullah's regime was no less regal, with his palace in Amman, his birds and his falcons, and with the British resident, Sir Alec Kilbride, in close and cordial attendance. As James Morris notes, relations between residents and monarchs genuinely seemed 'a meeting of equals'. The officials admired the Bedouin ethos and, as in the colonial service, 'most of the Britons were men of the rural gentry', who thus felt 'at ease and at home with Arab gentlemen'.[18]

During the Second World War, kingship and rural hierarchy remained the essential basis of the British perception of the Middle East, and of the imperial presence there, as they did in India and Africa. In Saudi

Arabia, Ibn Sa'ud was consistently loyal, playing up the 'Bedouin Arab conception of kingship'. When visiting him after the Yalta Conference, Winston Churchill felt 'deep admiration' for the 'warrior vigour' of this 'patriarchal king of the Arabian desert'. In Jordan, the Emir Abdullah (whom Churchill rightly described as 'one of my creations') matched the Indian princes and Malayan sultans in his 'loyal and unwavering co-operation', believing that 'with every addition to the number of enemies, his devotion to the allied cause increased, and that His Majesty's Government could depend upon him to work for the common good in all circumstances'. In Iraq, the army rebelled against the Regent Abdulillah in 1941, whereupon there was a counter-coup by the British in favour of the regent and his chief political ally, Nuri Pasha, after which they both gave long-standing support. And in Egypt, Farouk and his government led by Nahas Pasha collaborated with the British from February 1942 until the end of the war.[19] Indeed, by 1945 the British sphere in the Middle East was more extended (and more royal) than ever before, encompassing kingly regimes from Libya to Persia to Greece. The 'traditional' monarchies in Egypt, Jordan and Iraq, and the sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf and the hinterland of Aden, were the key to it. Here was the final extension of the Churchillian enterprise begun in Cairo in 1921.[20]

Thereafter, these kingly connections and hierarchical perceptions continued in essence unaltered. As foreign secretary in the post-war Labour government, Ernest Bevin aspired to be the reformist successor to Dalhousie, Bentinck and Chamberlain. He believed British imperial policy in the Middle East had hitherto 'rested on too narrow a footing, mainly on the personalities of kings, princes or pashas', and he wanted to give Britain's relations with these Arab kingdoms 'a new and more attractive look' by working with 'the peasants' against 'the pashas' – to develop these countries politically, economically, educationally and socially.[21] But in practice very little changed. In Egypt, the British continued to rely on King Farouk, whom they thought was popular and should not be antagonized. 'The monarchy has prestige and it has continuity,' one Foreign Office mandarin observed. 'Let us give it a run.' And so they did. It was the same in Transjordan, where the mandate ended in 1946, and where the British (following the Egyptian

precedent of 1922) showed their gratitude to the Emir Abdullah by creating him king. He was regarded, in sub-Churchillian terms, as belonging 'to a generation in which kings were hardy souls, capable of riding all day, fasting if need be, and feasting with zest whenever opportunity arose'. At the end of his highly theatrical coronation, he thanked the British 'for having raised them, within twenty-five years, from an unknown corner of the Ottoman Empire to the status of an independent kingdom'.[22]

It was still the same too in Iraq, where the British continued to rely on Nuri Pasha, the Regent Abdulillah, the young King Faisal II and the 'old gang' or 'old guard' of sheikhs and pashas, with whom, and despite Bevin's reformist intentions, they felt 'underlying sympathy'. It was generally believed, according to one diplomat, resorting to a familiar analogical trope, that the regent 'has a great admiration and liking for Britain and for British methods and persons. His cars, his aircraft, his clothes, his hunters, his foxhounds, even his swans, are British, and so are many of his closest friends.' He was, indeed, the very model of an English country gentleman, or perhaps, more appropriately, he resembled a young George III.[23] And it was the same in the Persian Gulf where, after Indian independence, the British residents who had advised the rulers continued their work. All that had changed was that whereas previously they had been recruited from the ICS and reported to New Delhi, they were now provided by the Foreign Office, answered to London, and received their instructions from the foreign secretary instead of the viceroy. Even in the early 1950s British advisers, both civilian and military, remained in post and in power across the Middle East, where (like Sir Michael Wright in Baghdad) they still adhered to a 'rigid style of pomp and imperial circumstance', and where the kings they had created still seemed the only dependable allies.[24]

As late as the 1950s and early 1960s the southern part of Arabia near Aden and the coastline of the Persian Gulf remained areas where traditional notions of empire and of imperial hierarchy survived and were even extended. In the Eastern and Western Aden Protectorates, indirect rule via the sultans and sheikhs had always been the British mode, and in 1959 these varied and assorted emirates were united in a

18. King Faisal II of Iraq, paying a state visit to London, 1956.

federation. Four years later they were merged in their turn with the port and colony of Aden so as to form the Federation of South Arabia. The aim was clear, and redolent of the India of the 1920s and 1930s: to use (in Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's words) 'the influence and power of the sultans' as a counterpoise to the urban world of radical, middle-class nationalism – not, this time, in regard to Calcutta (or Singapore) but to the cosmopolitan port city of Aden.[25] Further north, the Gulf sheikhdoms were still advised by a British resident in a time-warp version of indirect rule, unchanged in its essentials since the sultan of Muscat and Oman had sworn 'eternal devotion and fidelity' to Lord Curzon on his viceregal visitation in 1903. In the 1960s the sultan's descendant still lived in his palace, and the Union Jack still flew over the nearby residence of the British consul-general (as the resident was now more tactfully called). But by then the princely state of Oman was little more than a relic of the empire that had been.[26]

PART THREE

GENERALITIES

complete with coats of arms and mottoes, were hung in the chapels of their orders. They were concerned with religion because, with the exception of the Indian orders, all the orders of chivalry were Christian foundations. And they were concerned with monarchy because, as another authority on India observed, 'The Crown is the Fountain of Honour, and those who accept its decorations or privileges owe, and admit their liability for, something in return.'[30]

As this remark implies, the acceptance of an honour did not merely elevate someone in the social and imperial hierarchy; it also put them formally in a direct, and subordinate, relation to the monarch. For as the 'Fountain of Honour', British kings and queens were, among other things, sovereigns of all the orders of chivalry. As their day-to-day political involvement lessened in Britain, they became ever more interested in the creation, regulation, extension and distribution of these imperial honours. Victoria, Edward VII and George V were closely involved in designing and naming the new orders that were inaugurated during their reigns; George VI was most at ease at investitures, and revived the installation ceremonials associated with the Order of the Garter and the Royal Victorian Order; and all of them were preoccupied with uniforms, heraldry, precedence and genealogy, and with decisions concerning the award of British honours to foreign potentates.[31] During the inter-war years, successive sovereigns gave particular attention to deciding the location of the new chapel for the Order of the British Empire. It was eventually dedicated in St Paul's Cathedral, the 'parish church of the Empire', in 1960. It was just in time – or perhaps it was just too late?[32]

8

Monarchs

'Is the Queen of England,' inquired Lord Elgin while governor-general of Canada (1847–54), 'to be the sovereign of an Empire, growing, expanding, strengthening itself from age to age?' The answer soon became – and remained – unhesitatingly in the affirmative. From the mid nineteenth century, the political power of the British sovereign waned, while the territories of the British empire waxed. Here was a coincidence that was also an opportunity – to create a new function, purpose and justification for monarchy, at a time when it was in need of all these things, by connecting it with, and lending its historic lustre to, the recently and rapidly expanding empire. And so, thanks largely to Disraeli, the British monarchy was refurbished and reinvented as an imperial crown of unprecedented reach, importance and grandeur.[1] One indication of this was that from 1876, successive sovereigns were empresses or emperors of India as well as queens or kings of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and (Northern) Ireland. Another was that from King Edward VII onwards, all of them were additionally styled as ruler of the 'British Dominions beyond the Seas'. More substantively, this meant that from Victoria to George VI, British sovereigns unified an imperial dominion of ever greater dimensions, and ordered an imperial hierarchy of ever greater complexity.[2]

But this was not just a matter of titular elevation and stylistic innovation. For as British monarchs were themselves becoming much more imperial, so the British Empire was itself becoming much more royal. This two-way process, whereby an imperialized monarchy merged with and moulded a monarchicalized empire, was exceptionally complicated, and we still know (and care) strangely little about it.[3]

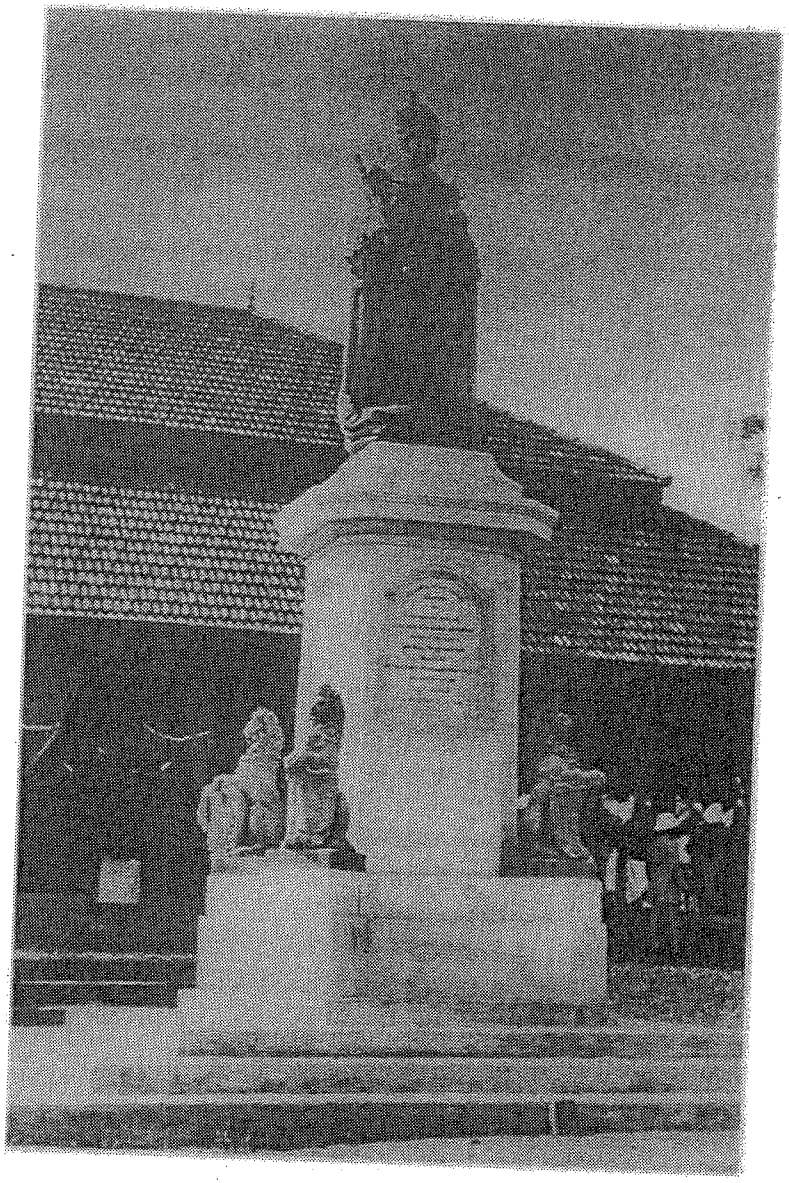
Indeed, from the generally egalitarian-cum-republican perspective of the early twenty-first century, it is easy to forget the extent to which, in its heyday, the British Empire was a *royal* empire, presided over and unified by a sovereign of global amplitude and semi-divine fullness, and suffused with the symbols and signifiers of kingship, which reinforced, legitimated, unified and completed the empire as a realm bound together by order, hierarchy, tradition and subordination. But it is already possible to sketch the outlines of the end result – the creation and projection of a transcendent vision of this right-royal realm, mimicking and mirroring in its earthly social order the divine ranks and celestial hierarchies of the heavens.[4]

One indication of this was that many places in the British Empire were named for and after British kings and queens. This was a sign both of possession and of commemoration, of acquisition and veneration, and no royal name was more widely or frequently bestowed in this way than that of Victoria. Her reign coincided with one of the greatest eras of geographical exploration and imperial expansion; and the ubiquity of her appellation across the globe and around the world merely accentuated the semi-divine status she acquired by the 1880s and 1890s, since to have so many parts of the world labelled for the queen–empress was itself a sort of geographical deification and earthly apotheosis. For her name was literally *everywhere*: there was the Victoria Nile in Uganda, the Victoria Colony in Australia and the Victoria Falls on the Zambezi; there were six Lake Victorias and two Cape Victorias; and around the world there were Victoria Range, Bay, Strait, Valley, Point, Park, Mine, Peak, Beach, Bridge, County, Cove, Downs, Land, Estate, Fjord, Gap, Harbour, Headland and Hill. By such means the queen–empress seemed to be omnipresent in her own empire; and, as James Morris has noted, this set 'such seal upon the world, in cartography as in command, as no monarch in the history of mankind had ever set before'.[5]

But in addition to being a period of unprecedented exploration and expansion, the Victorian era witnessed unprecedented urban growth. Many new towns were named, and old towns renamed, after the Gas-Lit Gloriana: in West Africa, Labuan, Guiana, Grenada, Hon-

duras, Newfoundland, Nigeria, and on Vancouver Island. And in these cities (and many others) the pervasive sense of royalty was further enhanced with the provision of permanent images and icons of monarchy. Statues of Victoria (especially), and also of Edward VII, George V and George VI, were prominently placed in city squares and in front of government houses. From Cairo to Canberra, Wellington to Johannesburg, Vancouver to Valetta, the image of the queen–empress appeared, often in canopied magnificence. She was commemorated almost everywhere in her lifetime. It was more usual for the king–emperors to be sculpted on horseback, and only after their deaths. There were also more specific constructions, many of them very extravagant, including the Victoria Terminus in Bombay (appropriately opened in 1887), Curzon's Victoria Memorial in Calcutta (which was not completed until twenty years after the queen's death), and the Royal York Hotel in Toronto (for long known as 'the largest hotel in the Empire').[6] More mundane, and yet more ubiquitous, were the roads, streets, drives, lanes, terraces, squares, crescents, ways and avenues named King or Emperor, or Queen or Empress, or Victoria or Edward, or George or Elizabeth, or Coronation or Jubilee, which could be found in villages, towns, suburbs and cities in every colony and every dominion.

This powerful and widespread sense of the royal presence throughout the empire was not just cartographical, sculptural, architectural or cadastral. For the imperial monarchy intruded itself into the individual lives and collective consciousnesses of imperial subjects in numerous ways and at many levels. The sovereign was head of the armed forces of the empire, from whom all officers held their commissions directly. The supreme reward for military valour was the Victoria Cross, while that for civilian courage was the George Cross. Throughout the empire, coins and stamps bore the image of the queen–empress or the king–emperor. All letter-boxes were dignified by the royal cypher; the post that was collected from them was called the royal mail; and official correspondence was sent in envelopes marked *On Her* or *On His Majesty's Service*. In Christian churches throughout the empire, the monarch was prayed for each Sunday. The national anthem of the empire was neither about nation nor empire, but was the martial,



22. Statue of King George V unveiled in 1916, Ceylon.

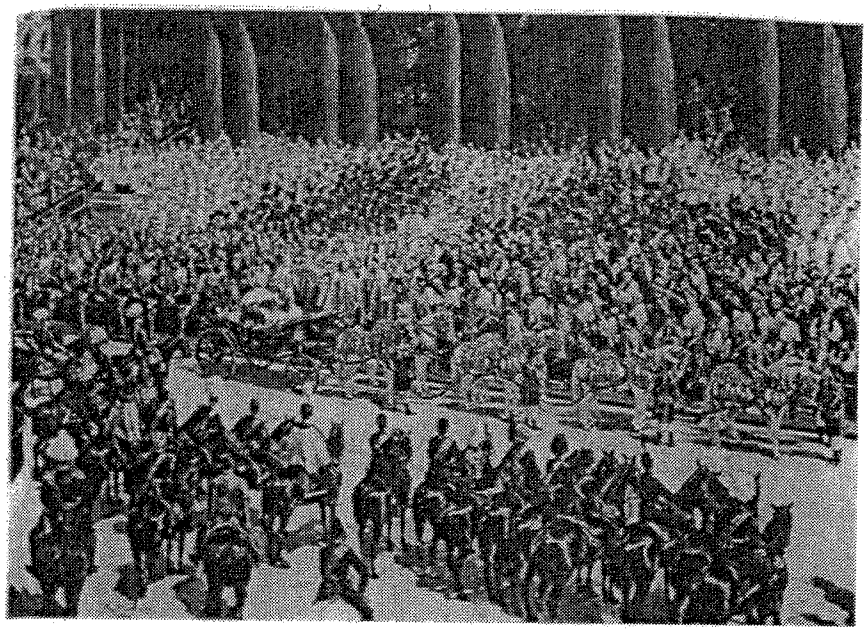
chivalric and hierarchical exhortation that 'God Save the King'.[7] Colonial law courts, dominion parliaments, regimental headquarters and government houses were decorated with royal portraits and coats of arms. The loyal toast was drunk at the end of all formal and many informal dinners. And schoolchildren were taught the history of their empire as the history of Britain's kings and queens – though Lord Lugard discouraged schools in Nigeria from teaching about the Stuarts, since this might 'foster disrespect for authority'.[8]

These were the day-to-day convergences between empire, monarchy and hierarchy: an amalgam of names, places, buildings, images, statues, rituals and observances that made it impossible for anyone to forget or ignore the fact that they were subjects of a sovereign rather than citizens of a republic. This, in turn, explains why governors were garlanded with ribbons and stars, why governors-general were bowed and curtseyed to, and why the viceroy of India was preceded by the playing of the national anthem when he entered the state dining room in New Delhi – not so much because these proconsuls were great men in their own right (although some undoubtedly were), but because they were the representative of the monarch, and as such enjoyed regal consequence, speaking for the sovereign almost as a priest might speak for God.[9] That was, in a sense, their most important public function: to show imperial subjects overseas that while imperial monarchs might live in London, they reigned over everyone in the empire, wherever they might be, and were to receive appropriate expressions of homage and fealty in return. As Lord Elgin explained when viceroy of India in the 1890s, the prime purpose of going on large tours was 'to afford opportunities to Her Majesty's subjects in the presence of Her Majesty's representative in India for manifestations of loyalty and affection for her throne and person'.[10]

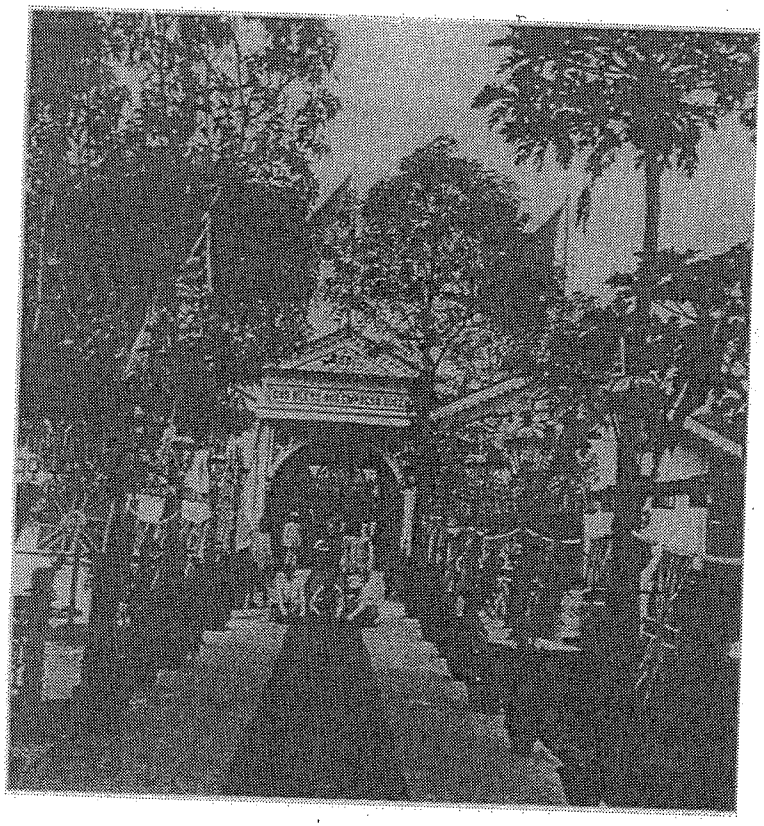
The British Empire as a royal empire was not only about maps and statues and coins and stamps and bending the knee to the sovereign's representative: it was also, as Lord Elgin's comments imply, about the creation and performance of public ceremonials that were, like the honours system, globally inclusive, elaborately graded and intrinsically royal. At the most routine level, grand receptions were held in

government houses throughout the empire on the official and unofficial birthdays of the monarch, and invitations to these occasions were eagerly sought. At a higher level of ceremonial intensity, the anniversary of Queen Victoria's birthday was (from 1904) observed as Empire Day in schools in villages, towns, cities and capitals around the globe. There were processions and parades, hymns were sung, and speeches were made by scoutmasters and schoolmasters, mayors and lord mayors, governors and viceroys, in which the ordered unity of the empire was extolled, and the sovereign was presented as 'all-knowing and all-caring'.[11] In addition to this shared annual festival, dominions and colonies evolved their own special fêtes of royalty, marking particular episodes and connections, such as King's Day in the Sudan, which throughout the inter-war years was observed as a way of commemorating the stop-off by George V and Queen Mary on their journey back from their durbar in India in January 1912.[12]

From this settled and secure base of regular and routine royal observances, a whole range of public ceremonials was evolved and elaborated, invented and inaugurated, to commemorate the rites of passage of imperial British monarchs in ways that were both far-reaching and of unprecedented extravagance. Of course, there had been local recognition of coronations, weddings, jubilees and funerals for as long as there had been a monarchy, and at the time of the Napoleonic Wars these festivities had been successfully extended to the colonies. But in the late nineteenth century they were propelled on to a much higher plane of efficiency, self-consciousness and ostentation, and as the empire expanded, they were taken and carried along with it. The result was that from Victoria's Golden Jubilee to George VI's coronation, these ceremonials were observed, not just in Glasgow and Birmingham, Cambridge and Bath, Leeds and Manchester, Norwich and York, but also in Hong Kong and Rangoon, Sydney and Lagos, Nairobi and Gibraltar, Montreal and Auckland, and in countless smaller towns and villages. These were shared imperial occasions, with a common style, involving banners and flags, speeches and street parties, military processions and religious services, the unveiling of statues or the opening of memorial halls. And they all stressed history and hierarchy, unity and order, crown and empire.[13]



23. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee – Thanksgiving Service at St Paul's Cathedral, 1897.



24. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee – decorations in Zanzibar.

These local festivities also provided the building blocks from which national and imperial spectaculars were developed and evolved. Once again, there were precedents in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, associated with the Golden Jubilee of George III and the pageants marking the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when local observances fed into London-based celebrations that complemented, completed and raised these provincial pageants to a higher level of national significance and theatrical splendour.[14] There was also the more immediate stimulus emanating from India, where the durbars of 1877, 1903 and 1911 served to nationalize a local ceremonial idiom by bringing together princely India and British India in week-long festivals of chivalric unity, feudal hierarchy and imperial subordination.[15] But it was not only east of Suez that what Lord Lytton called 'a bit of bunting' was being made to go a longer way than ever before. For in response to these Indian extravaganzas, a similar culture of ceremonial ostentation was developed in the imperial capital. From Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees, to the Silver Jubilee of George V and the coronation of George VI, every great *royal* event was also projected as an *imperial* event: marked in London by carefully orchestrated processions, with everyone in their properly assigned place. Thus was the British Empire presented as an ordered, unified hierarchy, with a semi-divine sovereign at its apex.[16]

In London, as elsewhere, the greatest of these occasions was Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, when the queen–empress processed through the crowded and decorated streets of London, escorted by fifty thousand troops drawn from all the colonies of the empire, to receive the homage and acclaim of her subjects, to attend a thanksgiving service held on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral, and to enjoy a supreme moment of earthly apotheosis. The poet laureate, Alfred Austin, wrote commemorative verse. A provincial composer named Edward Elgar produced an 'Imperial March', 'something broad, noble, chivalrous', which he later developed into the 'Pomp and Circumstance' Marches.[17] The prime minister of Canada, Wilfrid Laurier, was knighted on Jubilee morning. There was an Imperial Fête in Regent's Park, and an Imperial Ballet at Her Majesty's Theatre. Here was the empire – 'like a huge work of architecture . . . castellated against all comers,

25. Nigerian cloth commemorating the Silver Jubilee of King George V, 1935.

turreted for effect, audaciously buttressed, and crowned at the top, as other edifices might be completed with saint or angel, by the portly figure of Victoria the Queen Empress, holding an orb and sceptre, and already bathed in the refulgent light of legend' – putting itself on parade as never before. It was, wrote G. W. Stephens of the *Daily Mail*, 'a pageant which for splendour of appearance and especially for splendour of suggestion has never been paralleled in the history of the world'.[18]

In this era of heightened ostentation, Delhi and London became the twin exemplary centres of these new–old, royal-cum-imperial extravaganzas, which pulsed outwards towards the localities of the imperial periphery, where they further strengthened and reinforced the community-based festivities from which they simultaneously drew their own inspiration and legitimacy. By these interconnected pageants and mutually reinforcing ceremonials, the British Empire put itself on display, and represented itself to itself, more frequently, more splendidly, more ostentatiously and more globally than any other realm. The unrivalled extent of its dominions meant this was already true before 1914; and after the fall of the great monarchies in the First World War, the British Empire was a uniquely royal and ritualized realm. And this was no mere ephemeral ceremonial confection: the spectacular projection of the queen–empress and king–emperor was the essence and the heart of the matter.[19] For here was a transcendent vision of the earthly realm as a global hierarchy with the sovereign at its head, which mimicked the celestial realm, which was another hierarchy with another sovereign at its head. As the *Daily Mail* put it, on Jubilee Day 1897, it was fitting that the queen should have gone to pay homage to her God at St Paul's, for in all the world, He was the only 'One Being' who was 'More Majestic Than She'.[20]

These pageants also served another, and interrelated, royal purpose: for the British monarch was King of Kings in the empire, just as he was Lord of Lords in Britain. There might be only one sovereign above him; but there were plenty of them below, those agencies and beneficiaries of indirect rule who, once placed and ranked according to their standing and degree, acknowledged the supreme authority of the queen–empress

or king–emperor.[21] Accordingly, these great London ceremonials, centring on coronations, jubilees and funerals, were not just mass, spectacular parades of hierarchy extending outwards towards the periphery from the metropolis; they were also occasions when distant monarchs came to the imperial capital to pay tribute and pledge fealty. Adorned in costumes that yielded nothing in magnificence to western ceremonial dress, or clad in the sashes and stars, the collars and mantles, of the Indian orders, or the Order of St Michael and St George, or the Order of the British Empire, they made journeys to London that were widely reported in the local press and acclaimed by their subjects. For there was nothing more grand than going half a world away to do homage – a gesture of well-connected obeisance that merely increased prestige at home.

Nothing like this had happened much before Victoria's jubilees. But thereafter it became a well-rehearsed and well-repeated pattern, modelled on the homage done to the viceroy by Indian princes at the three great durbars, and providing *them* with the opportunity to pay tribute in London as well as in Delhi. These ceremonial visits were serious and elaborate enterprises: no elephants, but much trumpeting. The highly decorated maharaja of Jaipur travelled to London for King Edward VII's coronation 'with one hundred and twenty-five of his officers and attendants, a whole ship being chartered for the voyage'. Appropriately enough, the architect of these arrangements was Swinton Jacob, the maharaja's resident expert in the Indo-Saracenic style, who received the KCIE for his pains on this occasion, and who would later add to this a CVO in 1911 for his work on the Delhi Durbar.[22] The equally decorated sultan of Zanzibar, whom we have also already met, did even better, being present in London for the coronations of King George V, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II, and as a result he received three Coronation Medals to add to the three grand crosses he already held in three British orders of knighthood.

There were many other potentates who appeared in London to pay homage to their supreme sovereign. From Malaya came Sultan Idris of Perak to the coronation of Edward VII, and his party included two leading local chiefs, his son, his son-in-law and his 'bodyguard of Indian troopers'. When he was told of the king's illness and of the

postponement of the 'tremendous ceremony' that he had travelled across the world to see, the sultan went into retreat, spending two days in prayer for his sovereign's recovery.[23] From Barotseland came King Lewanika for the same coronation. He was enthusiastically welcomed by metropolitan society, he had royal carriages put at his disposal, the horses were taken out in a Dorset village where the locals pulled the king in triumph, and the visit was in all ways the climax of his career. 'When kings are seated together,' he observed, 'there is never a lack of things to discuss.' Lewanika's successor, Yeta III, achieved equal glory at the coronation of 1937, when he was received by King George VI, and an account of his visit was published by his secretary. This king had no doubt of the cosmic transcendence of the ceremonials he had witnessed: 'Nobody,' his secretary wrote, 'could think that he is really on earth when seeing the coronation procession, but that he is either dreaming or he is in paradise.'[24]

In between these ceremonial encounters, the ruling princes and subordinate royalties of India, Africa, Malaya and the Middle East made regular private visits to Windsor, Balmoral and Buckingham Palace, where they were greeted, honoured and entertained. As at coronations, they were viewed, from one perspective, as traditional feudatories in the imperial hierarchy visiting their supreme sovereign: so when in 1919 the paramount chief of Basutoland visited Britain for an audience with George V, he was refused permission to proceed to Rome, for fear that he 'might be unduly impressed by the pomp and state of reception at the Vatican, and might form the conclusion that the Pope was more important than the King'.[25] But they were also regarded as fellow sovereigns, as members of the imperial trades union of royalty that, after 1918, came to matter much more to the British crown than the (in every sense) much reduced European monarchies. Hence, in 1944 King George VI sent the already-much-decorated sultan of Zanzibar a message of congratulation on the bicentenary of his dynasty, paying tribute to 'the friendship and loyalty so generously extended to my Father and to myself throughout the thirty-three years of Your Highness's reign, and especially through two long and bitter wars'. Here, in more senses than one, was the British Empire as a royal empire – a point made, more brutally, by Sir William Slim to King

Farouk of Egypt, when, as chief of imperial general staff, he reminded him that there were 'no kings on the other side of the Iron Curtain'.[26]

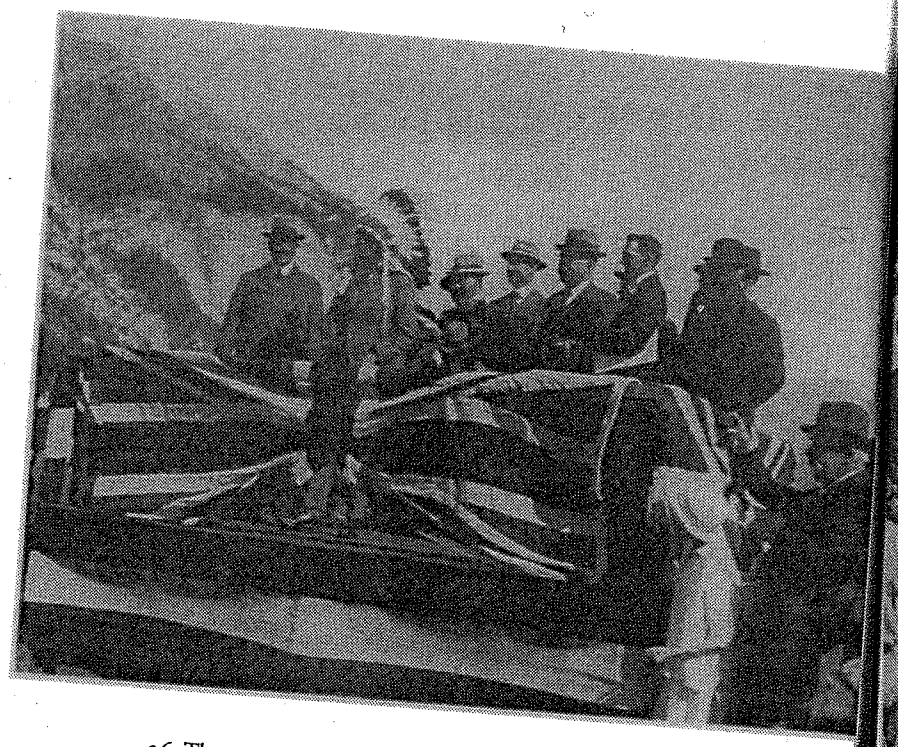
In this empire of kings, there was also reciprocation from the metropolis, as British royalty, and eventually the British monarchs themselves, journeyed out to the empire. During the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century, the most ardent loyalists in Canada and Australia had urged that Queen Victoria send out her younger children to found cadet branches of the British monarchy in the colonies. These schemes (which were supported by Anthony Trollope) came to nothing.[27] But they echoed down the decades until the Second World War, as alternative arrangements were evolved for associating the monarchy with the empire in a more personal way. One solution was to export close relatives of the sovereign as governors-general of the great dominions, thereby tying them in ever closer association to the crown, and placing the most illustrious possible representative of the king–emperor at the apex of the political and social hierarchy. The first such appointment, appropriately by Disraeli, was of the marquess of Lorne (husband of Princess Louise, and thus son-in-law of Queen Victoria) as governor-general of Canada from 1878 to 1883. Here was a 'new experiment in statecraft by which the Crown was employed as an instrument to proclaim the greatness and unity of the empire'. The colonials could scarcely contain their delight.[28]

Thereafter, this experiment was several times repeated, which meant the imperial monarchy was made a real presence and vital element in the empire. The duke of Connaught, Victoria's favourite son, was governor-general of Canada from 1911 to 1916 – the first proconsul of royal blood, who gave dominion life 'a focus of great dignity and prestige'.[29] In the inter-war years, royal attention turned to South Africa, where from 1920 to 1924 the governor-general was Prince Arthur of Connaught, whose father had been governor-general of Canada; and he was followed by the earl of Athlone, who was married to Princess Alice, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. There was also a scheme, widely canvassed at this time, to appoint George V's four sons simultaneously governors-general of all four dominions. It came to nothing, but the notion that the British Empire was a *royal* empire,

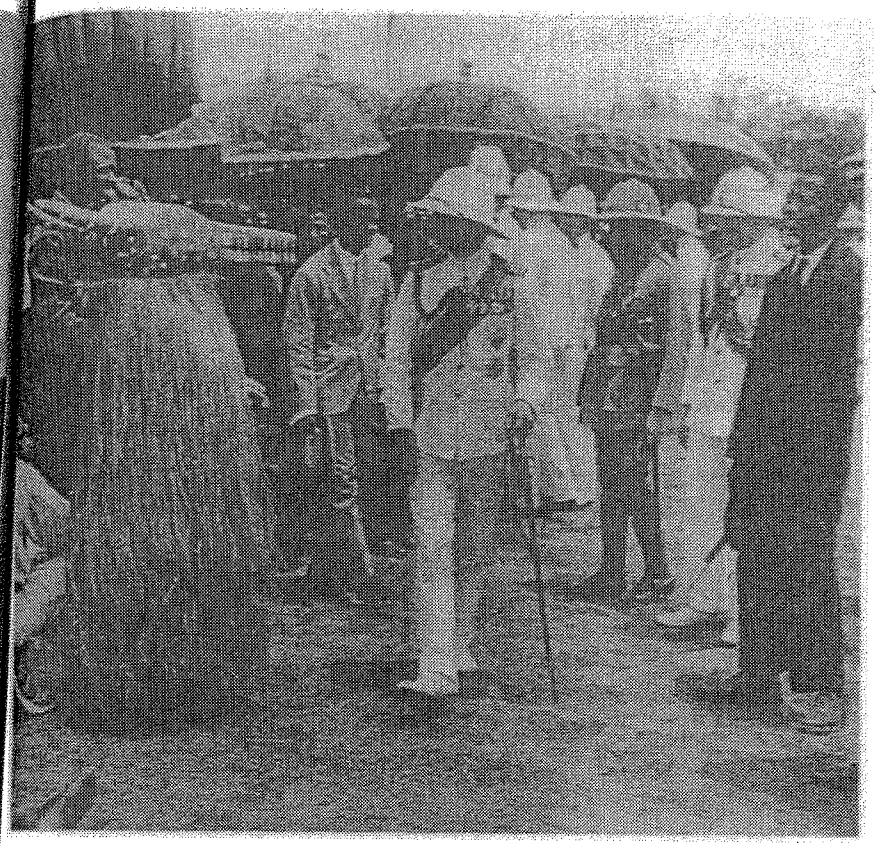
which should be governed and unified by royal proconsuls, reached its apogee during the Second World War: the earl of Athlone, who had already been governor-general of South Africa, was dispatched to Canada; the king's elder brother, the duke of Windsor, was sent to govern the Bahamas; and the king's younger brother, the duke of Gloucester, was installed in 1945 as governor-general of Australia.[30]

There was one yet more immediate way in which the crown was made truly imperial, and the empire authentically royal. That was by majestic journeys to the empire, which reciprocated and paralleled the pilgrimages made by potentates from the periphery to the imperial metropolis. These were grand progresses by land and sea, lasting for many months and covering many miles, involving countless receptions, dinners, parades and speeches, and all carried on before vast, delighted and admiring crowds. The prince of Wales made the first such visit to Canada in 1860, when he toured Quebec and Ontario, and crossed over into the United States. He was followed seven years later by his younger brother, the duke of Edinburgh, who made the first royal journey to the Australian colonies. But the tone and tenor of such tours was really established when, at Disraeli's urging, the prince of Wales went to India in 1876. He held receptions and durbars in Bombay and Calcutta; he met many Indian princes and expressed his strong support for them; he held a chapter of the Order of the Star of India; and he shot tigers for recreation.[31] Thereafter, his brother, the duke of Connaught (whom we have already met as governor-general of Canada), visited India as the king's representative at the durbar of 1903 (when he was rather upstaged by Curzon); and he returned in 1921 for the opening of the new legislatures in Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and New Delhi under the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms of 1919.[32]

These royal progresses within the empire moved into even higher gear during the next two generations, as kings and queens set out to present themselves in person to their far-off subjects. This meant that the arrangements became ever more elaborate, and the tours ever more novel, thrilling and spectacular, as the royal lineaments and sovereign symbols of empire were brought vividly and vitally alive. The future George V visited the Antipodes in 1901 to inaugurate the parliament of recently federated Australia; and he first went to India in 1905. He



26. The prince of Wales in Banff on his Canadian tour, 1919, wearing an Indian headdress.



27. The prince of Wales in Accra on his African tour, 1925.

returned there amidst unprecedented pomp in 1911 as the first reigning monarch to set foot in his overseas empire, and crowned himself as emperor.[33] Thereafter, he stayed determinedly at home, but his eldest son, the future Edward VIII, travelled to almost every part of the empire between 1919 and 1925; not just to each of the great dominions, but also to India (where there was a durbar held at the Red Fort in Delhi for the ruling princes), to much of British Africa and to the West Indies. And his younger brother was almost as well travelled, touring East Africa (1924–5) and Australia (1927) as duke of York, and Canada (1939) and South Africa (1947) as King George VI, when he became the first reigning sovereign to visit either dominion.[34]

Such majestic appearances made the faces on the stamps and coins, the celebration of Empire Day, the possession (or pursuit) of imperial honours and the invitations to Government House more real and meaningful than ever before. As such, they were the direct descendants of the great domestic progresses of Queen Elizabeth I, 'metaphysical road shows' in which the sovereign, or a near relative, symbolically marked out, took possession and beat the bounds of this greater royal realm.[35] Of course, these progresses meant slightly different things in different parts of the empire. In the old dominions, a royal visit was a visible reaffirmation of the continuing Britishness of the sovereign's overseas subjects, and of their place in that metropolitan social order. In South Asia, the monarch appeared as the successor to the Mughal emperor, gloriously ensconced at the apex of an indigenous hierarchy. And he went to the colonies, among the tribes and chiefs of Africa, to show that 'the King continues to watch over you with fatherly care'. But for all these local differences and particular meanings, there remained one overriding impression across the length and breadth of empire. As James Morris notes, 'to have met, or even to have seen, a King, a Queen or a Prince of Wales remained, for millions of the old imperial subjects, one of the great experiences of life'. 'You are the big potato,' Field Marshal Smuts once informed Queen Mary; 'the other queens are all small potatoes.'[36]

It is in this royal-imperial context that we may best understand these words of George VI after his coronation: 'I felt this morning that

28. Vast crowds in Martin Place, Sydney, during the visit of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, 1954.

the whole Empire was in very truth gathered within the walls of Westminster Abbey.' Virtually it was, and visually it was, with its whole diverse social hierarchy unified, ranked, ordered, layered and arranged.[37] And this symbiosis between crown and empire seemed set fair to continue into the next generation. When accompanying King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on their tour of South Africa, Princess Elizabeth took the occasion of her twenty-first birthday to pledge herself to the service of the great imperial family to which she belonged. Her own coronation in 1953 was another imperial spectacle, at which another monarch reigning under British protection, the much decorated Queen Salote of Tonga, almost stole the show by refusing to make any concessions to the inclement weather. And the queen's subsequent tour 'of a still-surviving Empire and of Dominions that fervently believed in their Britishness' was a sensational success, especially in Australia, where it was brilliantly organized by Robert Menzies, the obsequiously loyal federal prime minister. 'Perhaps,' he was later to speculate, in inadvertent corroboration of Edward Hamilton's words of half a century before, 'we are snobs, and love a hierarchical society?'[38]

9

Perspectives

What, then, in its heyday from the late 1850s to the early 1950s, did the British think the empire they had conquered and settled, governed and administered, gone along with and collaborated in, *actually looked like*? To be sure, it was a global phenomenon of unrivalled spaciousness and amplitude, which in its reach and range was both local and international, particular and general, and as such it undoubtedly formed one 'entire interactive system'. It was also as much a part of the 'tangible world' as it was of the intangible imagination, and in both these tangible and imaginative guises, it represented – as Peter Marshall has very properly observed – a deliberate, sustained and selfconscious attempt by the British to order, fashion and comprehend their imperial society overseas on the basis of what they believed to be the ordering of their metropolitan society at home.[1] And it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that *that* society, from which these powerful imperial impulses and imaginings originated and emanated, was deeply conservative in its social attitudes and in its political culture. The social structure was generally believed to be layered, individualistic, traditional, hierarchical and providentially sanctioned; and for all the advances towards a broader, more democratic electoral franchise, it was in practice a nation emphatically *not* dedicated to the proposition that all men (let alone women) were created equal.[2]

Thus, the imperial metropolis: and thus, unsurprisingly, the imperial periphery. To be sure, it was made up of varied dominions and diverse realms. But there was a homogenizing convergence about their social structures, and about perceptions of them, which was seen by turns as rural-aspirational (the dominions of settlement), caste-based and

princely (the Indian Empire), chiefly and traditional (the crown colonies of rule), and Bedouin and tribal (the Middle East). It was further tied together by a shared sense of Britishness, in which this sense of an ordered imperial society was graded, reinforced, generalized and proclaimed by an elaborate system of honours and titles, and by a pervasive cult of imperial royalty, which surged out from the metropolis to the periphery, and back again. And all this was brought alive, made real, and carried along from past to present to future by unrivalled and interlocking displays of regular ritual and occasional spectacle.[3] In these ways, and by these means, the British exported and projected vernacular sociological visions from the metropolis to the periphery, and they imported and analogized them from the empire back to Britain, thereby constructing comforting and familiar resemblance and equivalencies and affinities.

The result was, indeed, 'one vast interconnected world'; and the phrase that best describes this remarkable transoceanic construct of substance and sentiment is *imperialism as ornamentalism*. Drawing on precedents established during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the British created their imperial society, bound it together, comprehended it and imagined it from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth in an essentially ornamental mode. For ornamentalism was hierarchy made visible, immanent and actual. And since the British conceived and understood their metropolis hierarchically, it was scarcely surprising that they conceived and understood their periphery in the same way, and that chivalry and ceremony, monarchy and majesty, were the means by which this vast world was brought together, interconnected, unified and sacralized. As such, hierarchy was the conventional vehicle of organization and perception in both the metropolis and the periphery: it provided the prevailing ideology of empire, and it underpinned the prevailing spectacle of empire.[4] Thus envisaged, the British Empire was, like the British nation and the British people, a quintessentially Burkeian enterprise of 'faith . . . family . . . property . . . monarchy', organically evolving in its structure across the centuries, across the continents and across the seas, and with ample available plumage for showing it and for showing off.[5]

It bears repeating that one aspect of this hierarchical-cum-imperial mindset was indeed the cultivation and intensification of racial differences based on post-Enlightenment attitudes of white and western superiority and of coloured and colonial inferiority (along with the cultivation and intensification of gender differences based on attitudes of white and male superiority and white and female inferiority). When, as they sometimes did, Britons thought of the inhabitants of their empire (as they sometimes thought about the inhabitants of their metropolis) in *collective* rather than in individualistic categories, they were inclined to see them, literally, in terms of crude stereotypes of black and white, and no-less crude relationships of superiority and inferiority. So, when the House of Commons debated Britain's administration of Egypt in June 1910, even the high-minded Edward Wood, who later won fame as the first viceroy of India who would parley on equal terms with Mahatma Gandhi, spoke conventionally of 'the white man' ruling 'inferior races' of 'black people'. And when the Tory leader, Arthur Balfour, observed with characteristic scepticism that 'it is not a question of superiority or inferiority', the rest of the House did not seem to share his views.[6]

But in the broader perspective of imperial relationships, Balfour was not entirely wrong. For when, as they usually did, the British thought of the inhabitants of their empire (as they usually thought about the inhabitants of their metropolis) in *individual* terms rather than in collective categories, they were more likely to be concerned with rank than with race, and with the appreciation of status similarities based on perceptions of affinity. From one perspective, the British may indeed have seen the peoples of their empire as alien, as other, as beneath them – to be lorded over and condescended to.[7] But from another, they also saw them as similar, as analogous, as equal and sometimes even as *better* than they were themselves. 'He was,' the Viceroy Lord Willingdon observed on the death of the Indian prince (and cricketer) Ranjitsinhji, the maharaja jam saheb of Nawangar, 'an ambassador of co-operation, friendship and goodwill between the two races . . . a great ruler and a great gentleman.'[8] And this view was not just socially conservative, but politically conservative too. For as Lord Lugard once explained, anticipating Sir William Slim's later remark about the lack

of kings on the other side of the Iron Curtain, the whole purpose of the British Empire was 'to maintain traditional rulerships as a fortress of societal security in a changing world'. And in that enterprise, the colour of a person's skin was less significant than their position in the local social hierarchy: 'the really important category was status', and as such it was 'fundamental to all other categories'.[9]

That was certainly the case when it came to the realities of running the empire and making it work, rather than merely talking about how it was (or was not) working in terms of vague, abstract generalizations. Since most Britons came from what they believed to be a hierarchical society, it was natural for them, when doing business or negotiating power, to search for overseas collaborators from the top of the indigenous social spectrum, rather than from lower down, whom they supported, whose cooperation they needed and through whom they ruled.[10] The British chose the allies they did abroad because of the social conditioning and social perceptions they brought with them from home. Moreover, and in conformity with the historic traditions and practices of British local government, this also made financial sense. If the empire was to be run on the cheap (as with a low-taxing metropolis it had to be), there must be voluntary collaborators; and, as the history of Britain itself made plain, the best people to collaborate with were likely to be the rich, well-born and powerful. In short, these imperial peoples were no aggregated, collective mass, all regarded as inferior and potentially hostile: they were seen differentially and often individually.[11] Depending on context and circumstance, *both* white *and* dark-skinned peoples of empire were seen as superior; or, alternatively, as inferior.

This in turn helps to explain why it was that when the British contemplated and imagined their far-flung empire, and thought about and visualized those many diverse races who inhabited it, they were at least as likely to look down on whites as they were to look up to those with darker skins, to disparage those who resembled themselves, but to acclaim those who belonged to other races. It may have been true that the British overseas came from the same original racial stock as the British at home, but, for all their shared skin colour and racial kinship, the metropolitans never lost 'the basic sense of their superiority

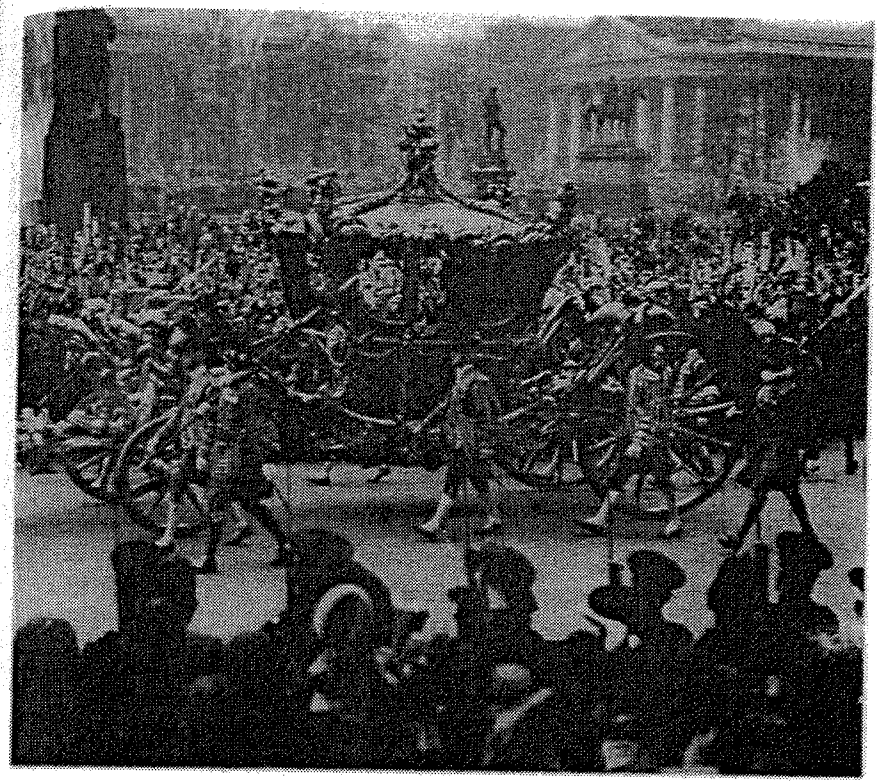
of rank and wisdom over mere colonials'. In the eighteenth century, Whig grandees and their clients looked down on returning nabobs as vulgar upstarts.[12] In the nineteenth century, Britons in Australia were dismissed for being Irish Catholic, or the descendants of convicts, or both. And in the twentieth century, visitors to Britain from the great dominions were often treated with extreme condescension, as in Noël Coward's 1938 play *Hands Across the Sea*. All of which is simply to observe that throughout its history, many metropolitan Britons saw their settlement empire, not as a great white hope, but as a sociological dumping ground for hicks and bumpkins and (even) criminals: as 'a last resort for people who have ruined themselves at home'.[13]

Thus regarded, the British Empire seemed to be full of the dross and detritus of the British metropolis: convicts and their progeny sent as far away from home as possible; poor rejects from the slums and the back streets of Birmingham and Glasgow; failed professionals in the law and the church and the military; and indebted and scandal-blighted aristocrats shipped off and out of the way. These were rootless, marginal people, unable to find or take or keep their place in the metropolitan social order, or cast out from it. They were the poor whites or the white trash of their time.[14] By contrast, the native princes, ruling chiefs, lordly emirs and exotic sheikhs seemed much more like black gold: better people, at the apex of a better world, which was ordered, traditional, settled, time-honoured, face-to-face, decent, wholesome and uncorrupt. In certain contexts and situations, the British *did* regard the dark-skinned members of their empire as more admirable, more important and more noble than white men. This is not the whole truth of things. But it is a substantial, a significant and a neglected truth. And to the extent that it is, we ourselves need to recognize that there were other ways of seeing the empire than in the oversimplified categories of black and white with which we are so preoccupied. It is time we reoriented orientalism.[15]

For we should not suppose that the only way to approach and recover the history of the British Empire is through the antagonistic, stereotypical and unequal collectivities of race (any more than we should suppose that the only ways to approach and recover the history of humankind or of production are through the antagonistic, stereo-

typical and unequal collectivities of men versus women or of middle-class bosses versus working-class labourers). That these were a part of imperial (as of gender and of economic) history it is no purpose of this book to deny. *But they were only a part.* For as well as collective conflicts, there was in the British Empire (as in interpersonal relationships and the productive process) much individual cooperation, based on a shared recognition of equal social status. And to the extent that such 'cultivation of affinities' transcended the boundaries and barriers of colour, they were, as Harry Liebersohn has observed, 'an antidote to racism'.[16] Indeed, it may be that hierarchical empires and societies, where inequality was the norm, were in this sense less racist than egalitarian societies, where there was (and is?) no alternative vision of the social order from that of collective, antagonistic and often racial identities. Such a conclusion – that past societies and empires, predicated on individual inequality, had ways of dealing with race that contemporary societies, dedicated to collective equality, do not – may not be comforting for us today. But that does not necessarily detract from its historical validity.[17]

Understood in this way, as a conservative, traditional, ordered phenomenon, the British Empire was not exclusively about race or colour, but was also about class and status. This in turn means that it was about antiquity and anachronism, tradition and honour, order and subordination; about glory and chivalry, horses and elephants, knights and peers, processions and ceremony, plumed hats and ermine robes; about chiefs and emirs, sultans and nawabs, viceroys and proconsuls; about thrones and crowns, dominion and hierarchy, ostentation and ornamentalism.[18] And that brings us back to Joseph Schumpeter's original insight, in *Imperialism and Social Classes*, where he argued that the creation and administration of nineteenth-century empires was the result of a shared sense of personal identity between the most atavistic social groups in Europe, seeking escape from the travails of industry, democracy and big cities, and those traditional tribes and rulers overseas whom they resembled and found most sympathetic.[19] From *this* perspective, the impulses to empire were ancient rather than modern, and there was a powerful, traditional social vision



29. King George VI's coronation, 1937.