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Eastern Presence:
Metropolitan responses to the Indian Army, 1914-15

Ph.D Thesis

by

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Eastern Presence:
Metropolitan responses to the Indian Army, 1914-15

Abstract

The mobilisation of the British empire during the First World War created new spaces for encounter between British and Indian society. Between August 1914 and December 1915, the Indian army dispatched over 100,000 Indian servicemen to the Western Front as part of Indian Expeditionary Force A. The thesis's objective is to improve understanding of how Western and, more specifically, British society responded to the presence of these Indian servicemen. It reconsiders British perspectives of the Indian solider, reflects upon how these perspectives impacted the discourse which surrounded the sepoys, and the effect it had on the Indian army's colonial hierarchy. As a result, 'Eastern Presence' furthers understanding of British conceptions of racial identity and colonialism within the context of the First World War and demonstrates the impact that these conceptions had on the Indian army's hierarchical structure. To achieve this goal, the thesis uses the geographical and locational settings experienced by Indian servicemen during their stay in Western Europe to analyse their interactions with various parts of British and Western society. Through its analysis of these interactions, 'Eastern Presence' challenges much of the existing historiography by arguing that variances in conceptions of race can be identified, depending on the part of British society which experienced the encounter. It consequently concludes that British society demonstrated varying degrees of knowledge, empathy, and perception towards the colonial 'other' in its midst.

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List of Abbreviations

ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BL	British Library
CUM	Cambridge University Manuscripts
CWGCA	Commonwealth and War Graves Commission Archive
GHQ	General Headquarters
IEFA	Indian Expeditionary Force A
IMS	Indian Medical Service
IO	India Office
ISF	Indian Soldiers Fund
IWM	Imperial War Museum
LRO	Leicestershire Record Office
NA	National Archives
NAI	National Archives of India
NAM	National Army Museum
RA	Royal Archives
RAHQ	Royal Artillery Headquarters
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RPMBH	Royal Pavilion and Museums Brighton and Hove
RWFA	Royal Welch Fusiliers Archive
TWI	*The War Illustrated*
UB	University of Birmingham
WO	War Office

Introduction

Reconsidering British perspectives of the Indian solider

In the recently released war film, *1917*, the film's protagonist, William Schofield, finds himself sat opposite a Sikh soldier, sepoy Jondalar, in an army transport lorry. Schofield, who is attempting to cross enemy lines to reach a cut-off infantry brigade, tells his fellow passengers of his task and is looked upon with fatalistic bemusement by most of the British soldiers who believe he has little chance of success. Despite their pessimism Schofield departs to continue his mission with encouragement from Jondalar who leaves him with the simple parting remark of, "I hope you make it."[1]

Although short, the scene highlights some of the stereotypes which have found their way into the contemporary discourse that has surrounded Indian soldiers during their stay in France, demonstrating how historic tropes continue to frame much of the small but growing amount of popular culture references to the sepoys who fought in the service of Britain and its empire. The most apparent of these tropes is the depiction of the Indian soldier as a Sikh. Jondalar's departing line of, "I hope you make it," was another. It referenced a popular wartime narrative of a united imperial war effort which stood behind the mother country's endeavour to defeat Germany, as well as a trope that the Sikhs were amongst the most loyal of the ethnic and caste groups (commonly referred to as 'classes' in period literature) recruited by the Indian army.

Such wartime encounters with Indian servicemen raise questions of British self-identity and perception in relation to race and empire. Seated amongst British soldiers, the film implies that Jondalar was part of a British unit and his interaction with Schofield at the very least suggests a level of integration. But how accurate were these subtexts? The thesis will provide insight into such matters by using spaces of Anglo-Indian interaction, such as the brief one portrayed in *1917*, to reveal how various sections of British society responded to the presence of Indian servicemen in the West. Although Indian responses are recorded within these interactions, the thesis's primary objective is to reveal British perspectives of race, empire, and colonialism within the context of the Indian Army's deployment to the Western Front during 1914-15. Did those sections of British society who encountered Indian servicemen see the sepoys as colonial 'others' to be controlled and treated as inferiors or novelties? Or, as Jondalar was depicted in Mendes's film, were the sepoys regarded as equals and perhaps even assimilated into British perceptions of identity through their shared wartime experiences? The thesis will argue that the intertwined concepts of race and colonialism played a more prominent part in British perceptions than they did in the short scene in *1917*; but it will also show

[1] Sam Mendes, *1917*, (London: Entertainment One, 2019).

how the multiple types of encounter (both direct and indirect) gave rise to a range of responses which were complex and sometimes capable of contradiction.

The historiographical context of the Indian Army during the First World War

Although, by the year 1917, the Indian infantry regiments no longer served in France, the film's brief footnote to the sepoys makes a long overdue popular cultural reference by illuminating the presence of the tens of thousands of Asian servicemen and labourers who were enlisted and deployed by the British Empire during the First World War. Over 1.4 million Indians were sent to foreign lands by the close of the war – a higher figure than the combined numbers from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and Canada.[2] In August 1914, with Germany enjoying military success on the Western Front, it quickly became apparent to the British government that the Indian Army could provide a bulwark to help stem the German advance. As a result, over 100,000 Indian servicemen were dispatched to France between August 1914 and December 1915 with Indian Expeditionary Force A (IEFA).[3] By the departure of the infantry units of the Indian Army Corps (which was IEFA's the largest contingent), in December 1915, 21,445 Indian casualties had been suffered, of which a minimum of 2,454 were fatal.[4] This temporary reverse in the human flow of British colonialism supplied material aid to the overstretched British Expeditionary Force (BEF), but it also had significant cultural ramifications. It led to a remarkable level of interest amongst British society towards Indian soldiers; provided unique points of cultural interaction between Briton and Indian; and challenged the racial hierarchies of the British controlled Indian Army – all factors which the thesis will explore.

Despite the significance of India's contribution to the British empire's war effort, Indian participation in the conflict subsequently received a relative paucity of attention within the historiography of the First World War. What has been written correlates to a large extent to Jay Winter's analysis of the historiography of the conflict which he groups into three configurations.[5] The first configuration

[2] This figure amounted to 1,096,000 Indian combatants, alongside an additional 474,000 non-combatants. *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920*, ed. War Office (London: HMSO, 1922). p.756 In addition to the Indian Army's presence on the Western Front, six other Indian expeditionary forces, as well as a number of independent brigades, were sent overseas during the conflict, to theatres including Mesopotamia, Egypt, Gallipoli, Palestine, and East Africa.
[3] Ibid. p.777
[4] Ibid. p.246. The official figure of 2,454 deaths is an under-estimation as it included many servicemen who were listed as missing but subsequently found to have been killed. Corrigan gives the figure of 3,247 listed as missing, many of which would have been fatalities. Gordon Corrigan, *Sepoys in the trenches: the Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914-1915* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2006). P.246
[5] J. M. Winter and Antoine Prost, 'The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present,' in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, ed. J. M. Winter and Antoine Prost (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) pp.6-33

identified by Winter was made up of military and diplomatic histories written in the immediate aftermath of the conflict by elites such as politicians, military officers, and diplomats.[6] Similarly, early histories written about the Indian Army's experiences were mainly official studies or accounts produced by British officers who focused their efforts on presenting campaign histories of the Indian Army's deployment overseas, and in doing so they often sought to justify their own actions.[7] When social or cultural aspects of the conflict were described within these texts they were done from a perspective which sought to rationalise the Indian Army's colonial hierarchy, rather than objectively assess the impact it had on the organisation's performance.

The Indian Army's institutional discrimination against Indian officers also limited the possibilities of equivalent first-hand South Asian campaign histories.[8] As Santanu Das has indicated, the situation faired little better for accounts that detailed the wartime experiences of the ordinary sepoy, due to the high proportion of Indian Army recruits who came from rural non-literate or semi-literate backgrounds.[9] The few South Asian authored accounts of frontline experiences that do exist are limited to a selected censor's record of letters sent from Western Europe, three privately published memoirs which record the day-to-day lives of the Indian officers who wrote them, and a collection of letters sent from Captain Dr Kalyan Kumar Mukherj, a military doctor appointed to the Indian Army's Mesopotamian expedition.[10] With regards to literary accounts of the Indian frontline experience, there is only Mulk Raj Anand's fictional account, *Across the Black Waters*, published in 1940, which has attempted to provide the ordinary sepoy with a voice.[11]

From 1940 to 1960, histories of the First World War experienced their lowest output.[12] Within this wider context, the trickle of published work about the Indian Army almost completely dried up for

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[6] Ibid. p.7

[7] For examples of campaign histories please see, John Walter Beresford Merewether and Frederick Edwin Smith Earl of Birkenhead, *The Indian corps in France* (London: John Murray, 1918); James Willcocks, *With the Indians in France* (London: Constable and Company, Ltd, 1920); Edmund Candler, *The long road to Baghdad* (London: Cassell, 1919). Official histories which document India during the First world War include, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920*, ed. War Office (London: HMSO, 1922). *India's contribution to the Great War*, (Calcutta: Government of India, 1923).

[8] A King's commissioned officer (KCO) was the standard commission for a British officer. However, with the exception of all but a handful of South Asian officers, Indians were restricted to a Viceroy's commission (VCO). VCOs only had authority over Indian troops and were subordinate to all KCOs.

[9] Santanu Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.7

[10] For censored letters see BL/IOR/FO 383/288. See 'Indians at home, Mesopotamia ad France, 1914-1918: towards an Intimate History' *pp 70-89*, Race, Empire and First World War writing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Das presents an analysis of three Indian wartime accounts: Mokkhada Devi, *Kalyan-Pradeep: The Life of Captain Kalyan Kumar Mukhopadhyay* (Kolkata: privately printed, 1928).; Diaries of Major General Amar Singh Amar Singh, 'Diaries of Major General Amar Singh,' (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library); Sisir Prasad Sarbadhikari, *Ahhi Le Baghdad* (Kolkata: privately published, 1957).

[11] Mulk Raj Anand, *Across the Black Waters. A novel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940).

[12] Winter and Prost, 'The Great War in History.' p.17

several decades after 1945. The editors of *The World in World Wars* have argued that the initial inter-war display of metropolitan acknowledgement of 'non-white' colonial participation disintegrated with the collapse of the British and French empires post 1945, due to the initial interest in colonial participation in both World Wars being rendered obsolete by decolonisation.[13] Thereafter, few political pressures prevented historians of metropolitan nation states from assuming a more radically Eurocentric stance than their imperialist predecessors. The postcolonial historian, Bill Schwarz, has commented that in Britain in the mid-1950s the values of empire could still be justified by national figures in public life without qualification, embarrassment, or anxiety. Yet just ten years later, after decolonisation had gathered pace, British society had undergone such a transformation that odes to empire were harder to tell.[14]

At the same time as Western historians turned away from studying the colonial context of the First World War on colonial societies, the emerging historiography of post-colonial nation states tended to emphasise traditions of anti-colonial struggle, rather than involvements of colonised peoples with coloniser war efforts and other imperial projects.[15] The timing of this trend could not have been worse for the remembrance and discussion of colonial involvement in the war; for it was only in the 1960s that the second configuration of social histories gathered pace.[16] Under the guidance of Marxist historians such as E.P. Thompson, the protagonists of historiographical study became social classes as elements of the profession began to move away from the traditional habitats of statecraft and military strategy.[17] In other words, just at the point when the academic field began to try to uncover the experiences of ordinary people, the subject of empire became a topic to be quietly locked away. This meant little research into colonial societies' involvement in the First World War took place between the 1940s and early 1970s, with only a slow trickle of research thereafter in the run up to the millennium.

Though colonial histories were few and far between in the 1970s and 1980s, a few of the third generation of First World War historians did begin to readdress the subject of colonial involvement in the war. DeWitt Ellinwood and S. Pradhan examined the impact of the war on Indian society whilst several histories started to research the experiences of the Indian Army during the conflict and the racial profiling used by the British to recruit Asian servicemen.[18] Jeffrey Greenhut undertook several

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[13] Heike Liebau, *et al*, ed. *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). p.4
[14] Bill Schwarz, *The White Man's World: Memories of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.6-7.
[15] Ibid. p.4
[16] Winter and Prost, 'The Great War in History.' pp.15-25
[17] Ibid.
[18] DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan, *India and World War I* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1978); DeWitt C. Ellinwood, 'Ethnic Aspects of the Indian Army in World War I,' *Proceedings of the Indian History*

studies which examined the social history of the Indian Army's service on the Western Front.[19] He generally took a critical view of it arguing that its men were inadequately trained and equipped. The Indian soldier was also not immune to criticism, as Greenhut described the sepoys as illiterate peasants who were psychologically ill-equipped to face the onslaught of industrialised warfare.[20] Greenhut's analysis of the Indian Army's preparedness has stood up better to subsequent scrutiny than his analysis of the sepoys themselves which was subject to robust critique around the turn of the millennium in histories written by Gordon Corrigan and George Moreton-Jack. These histories adopted a blend of campaign and social military history with assessments of combat effectiveness, popularised by the works of John Keegan.[21]

The revisionist histories of Morton-Jack and Corrigan also helped to uncover the critical part that the Indian Army played in Britain's initial engagements on the Western Front, and in doing so they have helped to produce a more thorough record of its military service. Likewise, a small handful of historians have produced research which includes Indian service outside of the Western Front.[22] Moreton-Jack has also written more extensively about the Indian Army's colonial framework. In 2006 he published a paper based on the theory of 'collaboration' expounded by the imperial historian Ronald Robinson, using it to explain how the unprecedented challenges faced during the First World War undermined the pre-war contracts and understandings that existed between Indian soldiers and their British employers.[23]

Congress Volume 39, no. 2 (1978): 823-31. Shyam Narain Saxena, *Role of Indian Army in the First World War* (Delhi: Bhavna Prakashan, 1987). Gregory Martin, 'The Influence of Racial Attitudes on British Policy Towards India during the First World War,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, no. 2 (1985): 91-114.

[19] Jeffrey Greenhut, 'Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship Between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army,' *Military Affairs* 48, no. 1 (1984): 15-18; 'The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914–15,' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 1 (1983): 54-73; J. Greenhut, 'Race, Sex and War: the impact of race and sex on morale and health services for the Indian Corps on the Western front, 1914,' *Military Affairs : Journal of the American Military Institute* 45 (1981): 71.

[20] Greenhut, 'The Imperial Reserve.' p.69

[21] Keegan, John, *The Face of Battle*, (London: Allen Lane, 1976); *The First World War*, (London: Hutchinson, 1998). For critical responses to Greenhut's analysis see Corrigan, *Sepoys in the trenches*. George Morton-Jack, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[22] See: Nikolas Gardner, *The Siege of Kut-al-Amara: at war in Mesopotamia, 1915-1916* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014); 'Charles Townshend's Advance on Baghdad: The British Offensive in Mesopotamia, September-November 1915,' *War in History* 20, no. 2 (2013): 182-200; "British Prestige and the Mesopotamia Campaign, 1914–1916," *Historian* 77, no. 2 (2015): 269-89. Kaushik Roy, 'From Defeat to Victory: Logistics of the Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914–1918,' *First World War Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 35-55; Charles Townshend, *When God Made Hell: the British invasion of Mesopotamia and the creation of Iraq, 1914-1921* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010); Kristian Ulrichsen, 'The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914-1922,' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 349-77.

[23] George Morton-Jack, 'The Indian Army on the Western Front, 1914-1915: A Portrait of Collaboration,' *War in History* 13, no. 3 (2006): 329-62. The seminal research which inspired Morton-Jack's study was, R. Robinson, *Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a theory of collaboration*, ed. Roger Owen and Robert B. Sutcliffe, Studies in the theory of imperialism (London: Longman, 1972).

As interest gathered in uncovering the social history of the Indian Army, it was inevitable that a growing trend in post-colonial theory would influence the field.[24] The first significant postcolonial social study of the Indian Army was David Omissi's, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, *1860-1940*.[25] Published in 1994, Omissi's work studied the power relations within the post-1857 rebellion Indian Army, encompassing a wide array of subjects to understand the organisation's colonialist structure. This ranged from its recruitment policies to examples of Indian dissent. *The Sepoy and the Raj* was an important forerunner to a lineage of post-colonial social histories which are still being written about the Indian Army, and which 'Eastern Presence' considers itself part of.[26]

Within the wider field of First World War research, the historiography of the conflict also increasingly focused on the third and currently preeminent paradigm of cultural history where the representations, feelings, and emotions of men and women became an increasingly popular framework of analysis for historical works. Winter wrote, 'cultural history is a history of the intimate, the most moving experiences within a national community. It is a history of signifying practice.'[27] As this trend gathered pace it has increasingly sought to give voice to the subalterns of colonial societies – the colonised men and women who were subjugated by the socio-economic confines of imperialism.

Incorporation of their histories has also taken place within the context of First World War studies.[28] Omissi once again led the way in relation to the Indian Army by publishing an edited collection of

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[24] As a summary of post-colonial approach to historical studies, the cultural theorist Stuart Hall has stated that the power of cultural discourse justified and reinforced Western dominance of the non-Western world through the application of European cultural categories, languages, and ideas to represent the non-European 'other'. Stuart. Hall, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in *Race and Racialization: Essential Readings*, ed. T. et al (eds) Das Gupta (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2007). Early studies which influenced the field include E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Antonio Gramsci, Q. Hoare, and G. N. Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (N.Y.: International Pubs., 1971); Frantz Fanon and Richard Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1961). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the history of an idea, in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

[25] David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: the Indian Army, 1860-1940* (Macmillan: London, 1994).

[26] Recent published histories which follow the *Sepoy and Raj*'s lineage by studying the social history of Indian Army include, Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and power in the British Indian Army* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019). Radhika Singha, *The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict, 1914–1921* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2020). Other studies by Singha of Indian non-combatants during the First World War include, 'Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq: The Jail Porter and Labor Corps, 1916-1920,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 2 (2007): 412-45; 'The Recruiter's Eye on 'The Primitive': To France - and Back - in the Indian Labour Corps, 1917-18,' ed. Alisa Miller, Laura Rowe, and James E. Kitchen, *Other Combatants, Other Fronts: competing histories of the First World War* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011); 'Front Lines and Status Lines: Sepoy and 'Menial' in The Great War 1916-1920',' in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia*, ed. Heike Liebau, *et al* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 55-106.

[27] Winter and Prost, 'The Great War in History.' p.27

[28] Notable histories which have sought to uncover the experiences of subalterns or colonial servicemen during the conflict include, Richard Standish Fogarty, *Race and War in France: colonial subjects in the French army,*

letters taken from the correspondence of Indian servicemen in *Indian Voices of the Great War.*[29] The letters had been transcribed by a censor's office established by the India Corps in France to help assess Indian morale and alert authorities of sedition.[30] Although the transcripts which formed the basis of the book's content only represent a fraction of the material available to historians studying British soldiers during the First World War, they are the only substantial source derived from sepoys and shed light as to how this overlooked group experienced the conflict. Their historical significance is illustrated by the number of subsequent studies of Indian servicemen's reactions to the First World War which have examined them in detail.[31] 'Eastern Presence' makes use of the letters as a source to reference Indian responses to interactions with Western society and the impact of administrative polices upon their stay in Europe.

The publication of the letters also helped to spark historiographical interest in cultural studies of the Indian soldier that sought to use other fragments of evidence left by sepoys to make sense of their

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1914-1918 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Panikos Panayi, ed. *Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia during the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1993); 'Dominant Societies and Minorities in the Two World Wars,' in *Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia during the Two World Wars*, ed. Panikos Panayi (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 1993); Stephen October author Bourne, *Black Poppies : Britain's black community and the Great War*; Dick van Galen Last, Ralf Futselaar, and Marjolijn De Jager, *Black shame: African soldiers in Europe, 1914-1922* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Glenford D. Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism : a social history of West Indians in the First World War* (Oxford : James Currey, 2002); Timothy L. Schroer, *Racial Mixing of Prisoners of War in the First World War*, ed. Alisa Miller, Laura Rowe, and James E. Kitchen, Other Combatants, Other Fronts : competing histories of the First World War (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011); Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: race, masculinity and the development of national consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Heather Jones, 'Imperial Captivities: Colonial prisoners of war in Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918,' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Timothy C. Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Chad Louis Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American soldiers in World War I era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Guoqi Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front : Chinese workers in the Great War* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2011); Dominiek Dendooven, 'Living Apart Together: Belgian Civilians and Non-White Troops and Workers in Wartime Flanders,' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 143-57; Tim Grady, & Hannah Ewence, ed. *Minorities and the First World War: from war to peace* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Tim Grady, 'Selective Remembering: Minorities and the Remembrance of the First World War in Britain and Germany,' in *Minorities and the First World War: from war to peace*, ed. Tim Grady, & Hannah Ewence (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Hannah Ewence, 'Bridging the Gap Between "War" and "Peace": The Case of Belgian Refugees in Britain,' ibid. Tim Grady, *A Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

[29] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914-18* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999).

[30] '9.12.14., letter from the Boulogne office's chief censor explaining the purpose of censoring Indian hospital correspondence.,' 1914, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/235-237

[31] For examples of published research which make extensive use of the transcripts please see, Gajendra Singh, *The testimonies of Indian soldiers and the two World Wars: between self and sepoy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Andrew Tait-Jarboe, 'Soldiers of Empire: Indian Sepoys in and Beyond the Imperial Metropole During the First World War, 1914-1919,' (Boston: Northeastern University, 2013); David Omissi, 'Europe Through Indian Eyes: Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France, 1914-1918,' *The English Historical Review* 122, no. 496 (2007): 371-96

experiences.[32] Shrabani Basu made use of narratives buried in villages in Pakistan, as well as British archives, to recreate the First World War through the eyes of Indians.[33] Suzanne Bardgett wrote an excellent article for *History Today* which explored reactions to Indian personnel sent to the hospitals in Brighton that were established in the opening months of the war to care for the Indian sick and wounded.[34] Many of the collection of articles published in Santanu Das's edited *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* sought to shed light on the Indian soldier and in particular the colonial context of his service in the Indian Army.[35] Das's more recently published works have also made use of meticulously collected fragments of evidence – including photography, artwork, post-war interviews, oral history, as well as traditional written sources – to examine Indian perspectives of the conflict.[36] Likewise, in his recently published book, *The Indian Empire At War*, Moreton-Jack explores the cultural variances which existed within the Indian Army to understand how the war meant different things for soldiers from different places, by making use of a series of underutilised interviews conducted with Indian veterans in the 1970s and 1980s to shed new light on their experiences.[37]

Such cultural studies of the servicemen of the Indian Army have often fed back into social histories. For example, cultural studies of the sepoys have enabled historians to better understand how the British recruited and organised the Indian Army through an ideology known as martial race theory. By 1914, British recruitment for the Indian army was concentrated in the Punjab, Nepal, and Afghanistan with whole castes and ethnic groups within wider Indian society deemed unsuited to soldiering because of a series of racial stereotypes propagated by the colonial ideology. Thomas Metcalf wrote of the subject, 'whether defined by race, climate, or personality, martial races were those who most closely resembled what the British imagined themselves to be... they were what the Bengali was not.'[38] The ideology became embedded within the thinking of the Indian army's British officer cadre, and it fitted neatly within a wider world view of British imperialism that glorified a sense of national superiority through patriotic, martial, and racial ideas.[39] As the First World War approached, a variety

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[32] Santanu Das, 'Indians at Home, Mesopotamia and France 1914-18: towards an intimate history,' in ed. Santanu Das*, Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.72
[33] Shrabani Basu, *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front 1914-18* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).
[34] Suzanne Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian Wounded Locked Up? Race, fear and officialdom in Sussex, 1915,' *History Today,* Volume 65, Issue 3, March 2015.
[35] Santanu Das, ed. *Race, Empire and First World War Writing.*
[36] Santanu Das, *1914-1918 Indian Troops in Europe* (Mapin, 2015); *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[37] George Moreton-Jack, *The Indian Empire at War: From Jihad to Victory, the Untold Story of the Indian Army in the First World War* (Hachette: Little Brown, 2018). pp.25,27
[38] Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). p.127
[39] Mackenzie did not specifically discuss martial race theory, rather he is a proponent that imperialist discourse became embedded in late Victorian and early twentieth century British culture. John Mackenzie, *Propaganda*

of literature – ranging from Indian Army recruitment handbooks to anthropological style examinations of the Indian Army's 'classes' – presented the hierarchies and stereotypes of martial race theory as indisputable truths of ethnic character and determinations of an ethnic group's suitability for military service.[40] Significantly, for the structure of the Indian army, it was used to define which groups were recruited and the roles they were allowed to undertake. Despite the preference given to certain classes, martial race theorists did not propose that those recruited were equal to the British. The thesis will demonstrate how during 1914-15 the ideology's racist discourse was vigorously utilised and applied by the Indian army's British officers to the battlefields of Flanders to contend that Indians inherently lacked leadership qualities. In this manner, martial race theory enabled British officers to resist calls during 1914-15 to open King's Commissions to Asian servicemen which, if granted, would have given them equal status.[41] The prevalence of martial race theory also led to one of Britain's most significant Indian communities to be discriminated against soon after war commenced. This group was the growing population of Indian students studying in British universities.[42] Many of these students volunteered for frontline duties at the outbreak of war, but they were rejected by the authorities due to a belief that as a group they had nationalist political leanings, as well as a common belief amongst martial race theorists that the students' predominantly urban, middle class backgrounds made them too effete for frontline service – a belief which they did not apply to middle class British recruits.[43]

Despite the rejection of the students and the immutable terms used by martial race advocates prior to and during the First World War, a number of recent studies have concluded that over time the

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and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). p.254

[40]Heather Streets, *Martial Races: the military, race and masculinity in British imperial culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*; George Fletcher MacMunn, Alfred Crowdy Lovett, and Frederick Sleigh Roberts Earl Roberts, *The Armies of India* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1911).

[41] Until 1917, Indian officers were barred from applying for King's Commissions which all commissioned British officers received. Instead, Indian commissioned Indian officers were limited to Viceroy Commissions which did not give them any authority over British servicemen, no matter how junior the British serviceman's rank. Further research which addresses a wider timeframe of the Indianisation of the officer commissions see, Chandar S. author Sundaram, *Indianization, the Officer Corps, and the Indian Army: the forgotten debate, 1817-1917*; Anirudh Deshpande, 'Contested Identities and Military Indianisation in Colonial India (1900-39),' in *War and society in colonial India, 1807-1945*, ed. Kaushik Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 190-224.

[42] By 1907-08 London alone likely had a population of 700-800 Indian university students. Andrew S. Thompson*, The Empire Strikes Back? The impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century*, (Harlow: Longman, 2005), p.190

[43] Ibid, p.191. Asians from the Indian subcontinent have formed communities in Britain from the seventeenth century onwards. Before 1914, earlier groups included servants, ayahs and sailors. They were later joined by students, princes, soldiers, professionals and entrepreneurs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For histories of Asian communities in Great Britain see, Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002); Thompson*, The Empire Strikes Back?*; Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000); Panoikos Panayi, *An immigration history of Britain: Multicultural racism since 1800* (Harlow: Pearson, 2010).

British military authorities in India had altered the application of the ideology to suit political needs. Omissi's *The Sepoy and the Raj* was an early proponent of this argument, demonstrating how the Indian Army radically shifted its recruitment base between 1857 and 1914, from Bengal and lower India to the Punjab and Nepal. [44] Likewise, Heather Streets has argued that this dramatic shift in the Indian army's recruitment base was increasingly justified in racial terms, despite its underlying political strategy.[45] In 'In Front Lines and Status Lines,' Radihka Singha draws a similar conclusion within the context of the Indian Labour and Porter Corps. Singha demonstrates how the pressures that the Great War exerted on the labour market forced the authorities to narrow the disparity in the terms of service offered to combatants and non-combatants, as well as widen the range of 'menial' tasks carried out by 'martial' sepoys, which had previously been performed by lower caste Indians.[46] The thesis will build on this model of research by demonstrating how during 1914-15 forces unleashed by the new conflict impacted the cultural and social dynamics of the Indian Army, on a number of occasions necessitating that concessions be made to enable the Indian army to operate under the stresses created by the First World War. It will argue, that in making these forced concessions the social forces unleashed by the First World War chipped away at the Indian army's racial hierarchy.

The thesis will also show that martial race theory was publicly propagated in the media in 1914-15, but, despite its prominence, only a limited amount of research has been conducted into public portrayals of Indian servicemen. Streets's, *Martial Races*, examined metropolitan discourse during a slightly earlier period by highlighting how Victorian and Edwardian literature often grouped together Scottish Highlander, Gurkha, and Sikh regiments as ideals of martial masculinity. However, her research ends with the outbreak of the Great War.[47] Andrew Tait-Jarboe's doctoral thesis, 'Soldiers of Empire,' examined the wider cultural impact of the Indian Army Corps on British, Indian, and German society during the First World War.[48] However, his broad spectrum of subject matter limited how

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[44] Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*. p.19 Omissi showed that there was only a limited number of the 30,000 troops employed by the British in 1857 who originated from ethnic backgrounds later deemed to be 'martial race.' However, this figure had drastically changed by 1914, with a startling three-quarters of the Indian Army deemed to be of 'martial race' descent by the outbreak of war.

[45] Streets, *Martial Races*.

[46] Radhika Singha, *The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict, 1914–1921*, (London: Hurst Publishers, 2018); Radhika Singha, 'Front Lines and Status Lines: Sepoy and 'Menial' in The Great War 1916-1920,' in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia.* ed. Heike Liebau, *et al* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 55-106. For other studies of Indian Army recruitment practices also see, *The Recruiter's Eye on 'The Primitive': To France - and Back - in the Indian Labour Corps, 1917-18*, ed. Alisa Miller, Laura Rowe, and James E. Kitchen, *Other Combatants, Other Fronts : competing histories of the First World War* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011); Singha, 'Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq.' Kaushik Roy, 'Race and Recruitment in the Indian Army: 1880-1918,' *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2013): 1310-47.

[47] Streets, *Martial races*. pp.117-122 For further research into relationships between the press and the military also see Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985). pp.137, 276

[48] Andrew Tait-Jarboe, 'Soldiers of Empire.'

much detail could be allocated to British cultural reactions, whilst the printed media used was also almost entirely composed of articles published in *The Times*.

Gendered dynamics also often played a part in the application of martial race theory, and one aspect of the thesis will be to show how part of the concessions forced upon the organisation's administrators related to a chipping away at their attempt to segregate Asian servicemen from white European women. This entanglement of gender and race was played out in the Indian hospital system and behind the frontline where civilian communities and British medical staff encountered Indian personnel. Anne Stoller has concluded within a wider cultural study of colonialism that in colonial society, 'gender-specific sexual sanctions and prohibitions were used to demarcate positions of power and prescribe personal and public boundaries of race.'[49] 'Eastern Presence' will show how the point of this demarcation became a contentious debate between 1914-15, building on the work of academics such as Alison Fell, who have examined white nurses' interactions with Asian and African patients during the conflict.[50]

Fell's thematic use of location to study examples of 'colonial encounter' is a method used by Heather Jones's 'Imperial Captivities,' which uses German and Ottoman prisoner of war camps to explain how German and Ottoman perceptions and categorisations of 'race' differed from one another, as well as how the standard of treatment of non-white prisoners was dependent on political circumstance and timeframe.[51] Jones also explores how prisoner of war camps often brought European and colonial troops into close proximity of one another. She concludes that European understandings of 'race' changed during the war, and that Europeans often demonstrated confused and plural understandings of the term, through amalgamations of 'biology, ethnicity, and nationality.'[52]

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[49] Laura Ann Stoler, 'Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: race and the intimate in colonial rule, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002).

[50] Fell concluded, 'anxieties surrounding white femininity in a colonial climate reappeared with a vengeance,' as British and French authorities sought to limit contact between white European nurses and non-white colonial soldiers.' Alison Fell, 'Nursing the Other: the representation of colonial troops in French and British First World War nursing memoirs,' in ed. Santanu Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). p.158 For other studies of colonial policy and dissent in the Indian military hospital setting see, Samuel Hyson and Alan Lester, 'British India on trial: Brighton Military Hospitals and the politics of empire in World War I,' *Journal of Historical Geography* 38, no. 1 (2012): 18; Mark Harrison, "Disease, discipline and dissent: the Indian Army in France and England, 1914-1915," *Medicine and Modern Warfare* 55 (1999): 185-99.

[51] Jones, 'Imperial Captivities.' This method of the use of location to survey cultural encounters was popularised by *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, a two volume seminal work which utilised its urban settings to explore and compare an assortment of cultural and social subjects such as labour, demography, notions of identity, and popular culture, J. M. Winter, ed. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jay Murray Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds., *Capital cities at war: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919: A cultural history*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2008).

[52] Jones, 'Imperial Captivities.'

Similar to Fell, but in another context, Australian historian, Peter Stanley, uses the accounts of Australian and New Zealand servicemen to examine ANZAC attitudes towards Indian troops at Gallipoli and during their deployment and travels outside of Australasia and Europe.[53] Stanley's research indicates that reactions from Australian troops towards African or Asian civilians of military personnel could differ, depending on the context of the encounter. Similarly, Anna Maguire has compared the experiences and reactions of West Indian, South African, New Zealand servicemen in various colonial settings.[54] However, relatively little attention has been directed towards research which examines British perspectives of the Asian personnel of the Indian Army that were developed through civilian and servicemen interactions with the sepoys.[55] This is a topic which be explored by 'Eastern Presence,' along with reactions from wider elements of British and Western society that encountered the sepoys during 1914-15. Through the thesis's research of this understudied subject, the complexity of identities associated with race and colonialism that existed within British society in 1914-15 will be explored.

Thesis scope and methodology

The thesis's objective is to improve understanding of how Western and, more specifically, British society responded to the presence of Indian servicemen between 1914-15. Although a growing body of recent research has been undertaken to understand the role that the Indian Army Corps played on the Western Front, as well as Indian cultural responses to West, little work has been conducted into uncovering British cultural responses which were elicited through the arrival of tens of thousands of Indian servicemen to northern France, Marseilles, and the south coast of England. Therefore, the thesis is able to make an original contribution to the academy by reconsidering British perspectives of the Indian solider during 1914-15, and reflects upon how these perspectives impacted the discourse which surrounded the sepoys, and their impact on the Indian army's colonial hierarchy. 'Eastern

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[53] Peter Stanley, *Die in battle, do not despair: the Indians on Gallipoli, 1915* (Solihull: Helion & Co Ltd, 2015); "'He was black, he was a white man, and a dinkum Aussie": race and empire in revisiting the Anzac legend," in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 213-30.

[54] Anna Mary Maguire, 'Colonial Encounters During the First World War: The experience of troops from New Zealand, South Africa and the West Indies' (King's College London, 2017).

[55] Examples of research which have sought to uncover British responses and representations of Indian servicemen include Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up;' Christian Koller, 'Representing Otherness: African, Indian and European soldiers' Letters and Memoirs,' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 127-42; Fell, 'Nursing the Other;' "Beyond the Bonhomme Banania: Lucie Custurier's Encounters with West African Soldiers during the First World War," in *Other Combatants, Other Fronts: Competing Histories of the First World War*, ed. Alisa Miller, Laura Rowe, and James E. Kitchen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011)

Presence' furthers understanding of British conceptions of racial identity and colonialism within the context of the First World War, and the impact that these conceptions had on the Indian army's racially based hierarchy. To achieve this goal, the thesis uses the geographical and locational settings experienced by Indian servicemen during their stay in Western Europe to analyse their interactions with various parts of British and Western society. It considers the responses that these encounters elicited, and the reaction of administrators to Indian interaction with Western society. Through its analysis of these interactions, 'Eastern Presence' challenges much of the existing historiography by arguing that variances in conceptions of race can be identified, depending on the part of British society which experienced the encounter. It consequently concludes that British society demonstrated varying degrees of knowledge, empathy, and perception towards the colonial 'other' in its midst.

To understand the various reactions which were elicited, the study uses a mix of sources. These include official documents written by elites within the War Office, Indian Office, Indian Army, British Army, and Indian military hospital system that help to reveal the policies implemented by the authorities in response to the arrival of Indian soldiers in the West, as well as official and unofficial correspondence between members of these organisations and relevant individuals which reveal the mindset of elites with authority over the Indian Army and its servicemen. Unofficial correspondence, interviews, artwork, photography, and publications produced by civilians, soldiers, and lower ranking army officers also form important components of the evidence used to understand how wider elements of British and Western society responded to the sepoys.

In particular, this evidence is used to reveal how individuals with prior exposure to life in colonial societies such as India were far more inclined to display a binary response to Indian servicemen which was grounded in a fixed racial language, than those who had no or little experience of colonial society. For the latter group, although race still played a significant role in defining how wider sections of society interacted with Indian personnel, personal papers and interviews reveal that race was often treated in practice as a more malleable concept. Finally, press articles and propaganda imagery (in the form of artwork and photography) are used to help understand how the Indian solider was presented to the wider British public. Collectively, they help to reveal how the presence of Indian servicemen in the West was initially used to symbolise a successful and liberal form of British imperialism which, according to the most common narrative presented in the press, contrasted starkly with a despotic and militarist German version. However, despite the initial notions of egalitarianism, public imagery and published material increasingly came to present the Indian soldier within the Indian Army's racialised and hierarchical cultural confines, fitting in neatly with the martial race discourse prevalent amongst the Indian Army's cadre of British officers.

Although the thesis focuses on British reactions to the presence of Indian servicemen, where relevant it incorporates responses from wider sections of Western society, including French civilians and white Dominion servicemen. This is done to give context to British responses. For example, to understand how the British military authorities reacted to Indian fraternisation with French female civilians it is necessary to understand what sort of interactions took place between the two groups. Furthermore, to help make comparisons and contrasts between the different British social groups who served in the British and Indian armies, it is useful to compare the experiences of British soldiers who had experienced extensive service in colonial India with their counterparts in Dominion armed forces, whose interactions with the African and Asian communities they encountered during the First World War were impacted by their previous encounters with indigenous 'non-white' populations in the societies they came from.[56]

To help inform the thesis's methodology, Maguire, Stanley, and Fell's studies are of particular interest as they examined Western metropolitan responses to encounters with colonial servicemen within specific locales and settings.[57] For Fell it is the military hospital, for Stanley the Gallipoli battlefield, and for Maguire various colonial cities of the British empire. In doing so they reveal an array of Western cultural introspections in relation to race and colonialism, and the impact that conflict had on them. The thesis will adopt a similar methodology by using the frontline, military hospital, and settings behind the frontline (in the form of encampments, and locations of Indian army military facilities), to reveal the various responses of metropolitan society to the sepoys. Although other theatres are referenced, the Indian army's presence on the Western Front and its various support networks in Britain and France forms the focus of the research due to the cultural impact they provoked through their proximity.

Analysis of British conceptions of race and colonialism are integral to the thesis's research, enabling it to ask whether British society produced a monolithic response to Indian Army servicemen, or demonstrated varying degrees of knowledge, empathy, and conception. 'Eastern Presence' argues the latter through its investigation of the cultural artefacts that were displayed by British and Western interactions with the men of IEFA. To understand how cultural responses varied to the presence of Indian servicemen between 1914-15, the thesis examines how the backgrounds of the individuals who interacted with the sepoys impacted their responses. These include servicemen and civilians who lived or worked close to Indian Army facilities but who had never experienced colonial Indian society,

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[56] See, Stanley, 'He was black, he was a white man, and a dinkum Aussie;' pp.223-4; Morton-Jack, *The Indian Empire at War.* p.337

[57] Fell, 'Nursing the Other;' Maguire, 'Colonial Encounters during the First World War;' Stanley, 'He was black, he was a White man, and a dinkum Aussie.'

journalists who wrote about the Indian Army, servicemen who had prior colonial service, and administrators who encountered (directly or indirectly) Indian soldiers during the Indian Army Corps' stay in Europe. The thesis reveals how the First World War presented unique opportunities for encounter for these groups that were removed from the theatre of colonial India, as well as how perceptions of racial identity were impacted by the conflict.

Previously, little research has been conducted into discovering how different sections of British society responded to India's entry into the war and the subsequent arrival of tens of thousands of Indian servicemen. 'Eastern Presence' addresses this gap and argues that those who had not been exposed to life in a colonial society still used race as a framework to conceptualise the sepoys they encountered. But, unlike the British officers of the Indian army, its administrators, or professional British servicemen who had conducted tours of duty in India, most Britons maintained a more flexible conception of race which was capable of adaptation through the encounters they experienced.

The thesis also addresses the shortfall of research into the narratives used by the media to describe India's entry into the conflict and interpret its servicemen to the British public during 1914-15. As part of this analysis, it will show how the discourse which discussed Indian participation in the war conflicted with the internal anxieties found in Whitehall and the Indian army's British officer class about the exposure of Asian servicemen to the empire' metropole. This created a façade which at times promoted the idea of a racially egalitarian British empire, but at others maintained the Indian army's dogmatic adherence to martial race ideology in its characterisation of Indian servicemen. However, despite the publicity that martial race theory received, the thesis argues that the ideology's validity was partially undermined by the exposure of British service personnel, who had no prior experience of colonial society, to their Indian counterparts. This group of servicemen often unknowingly came to conclusions about the sepoys they encountered which conflicted with the assessments conducted by the martial race theorists of the Indian army.

It is here that the thesis takes inspiration from the historiographical debate around the cultural impact of imperialism upon British society. Two of the most prominent historians in this field, John MacKenzie and Bernard Porter, have clashed over the subject with Porter contending that it had little effect on ordinary people in the United Kingdom, while MacKenzie has argued that imperialism dominated British popular culture for much of the period.[58] Giving greater prominence to the subject of race than

[58] Significant studies of the cultural impact of imperialism on British society include, John MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); *Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*; *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: empire, society and culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Porter or MacKenzie did (both were more concerned with public shows of support, or lack of, for Britain's imperial enterprise), the thesis examines the prevalence of racial and colonial discourse in British society during 1914-15 in respect of the Indian army. It concludes that whilst both race and colonialism played a prominent role in responses, the inclination of civilian populations in places such as Brighton and Marseilles to fraternise with the sepoys left many of the Indian Army's administrators alarmed. In particular, the prevention of intimate relations between Asian personnel and white women became an internal cause célèbre for colonialist administrators who sought to segregate Indian servicemen from local communities in Marseilles and the English south coast through the confinement of Asian servicemen to their facilities.

Analysis of these policies, and others which exposed the attitudes of British administrators and army officers, demonstrate that at times the political and social pressures unleashed by the First World War meant that compromises had to be reached which inevitably undermined the Indian army's racial hierarchy. However, it is also clear that such negotiations were always fought against by adherents to the Indian army's old colonial order, and in return they enacted a series of draconian policies which sought to control Indian contact with the West. Indeed, it is the analysis of these policies which helps to expose the contrasting attitudes towards race and colonialism that existed between the Indian army's colonial administrators and officers, and those of wider British society. Finally, the thesis concludes that the restrictions of freedom brought about through these policies damaged Indian morale, which was already suffering from the strains of the Western Front, and contributed to the decision to withdraw the Indian Army Corps (IEFA's infantry units) from Europe at the end of 1915.

Thesis chapters

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first uses the timeframe between the declaration of war on 4th August 1914 to the reporting of the disembarkation of Indian troops at Marseilles in early October to reveal the anxieties unleashed within the corridors of power about their deployment to France. The chapter will also highlight the resolve shown by many of the British officer class to successfully resist a lapse in colonial doctrine even as IEFA voyaged to Europe. Whilst discussions of the controversial issues that surrounded the use of Indian troops were kept private, the chapter will demonstrate how a positive public discourse was quickly constructed around the active participation of India in the war. Enthusiasm for the deployment of Indian servicemen to Europe was promoted through a propaganda campaign that was encouraged by the War Office and India Office and disseminated by a supportive British press. The thesis will demonstrate how public discourse presented by the British media during the first few months of the conflict upheld the *Raj's* war effort

as a form of imperial patriotism based on an Indian rapture with the imperial figurehead, George V, and hazily defined shared cultural values which presented Britain, India, and the British empire as defenders of liberty and egalitarianism against a militarist and despotic Germany.

The disembarkation of IEFA at Marseilles at the end of September 1914 (but only reported by the press in early October due to censorship) was the pinnacle of this narrative, whereafter the media gradually became more accustomed to utilising the tropes and ambivalence of martial race ideology in its reportage of the Indian Army and its servicemen. Collectively, the first chapter's analysis asserts that even by the arrival of Indian Expeditionary Force A in late September 1914 the positive public narratives which surrounded India's participation in the conflict and the deployment of Indian troops to Europe were tangled with conflicting private attitudes within the India Office and War Office.

The second chapter adopts a locational perspective by following the Indian Army Corps to the trenches of Flanders. The chapter looks closely at the encounters and relationships which took place on the frontline to analyse how British servicemen perceived and interacted with their Indian counterparts. It demonstrates how British officers serving in Indian regiments sought to maintain the racial boundaries which defined the organisation's hierarchy. As part of this examination the chapter will show how many British officers determinedly resisted proposed reforms which would have weakened their own monopolisation of power, but also would have improved the Indian Army's ability to meet the demands placed on it by the industrialised warfare of the Western Front.

The chapter will also explore how martial race theory manifested itself in frontline discourse, defining the views of many British officers towards the men that they commanded as well as how its tenants became the basis for numerous newspaper articles which sought to report the wartime experiences of the Indian Army Corps. In doing so the media promoted many of the tropes and racialised hierarchies used within the organisation to define Indian servicemen and their relationship with their British commanders, reinforcing the public legitimacy of British colonial rule in the process. However, the chapter will also demonstrate how the interactions of British servicemen with no prior experience of colonial service often contradicted the colonialist discourse of martial race theory. Through this evidence the chapter will demonstrate how the First World War could at times be used to reinforce tenants of British colonialism, but at others undermine it through new opportunities of encounter.

The third chapter will reveal how the Indian military hospitals used to tend the tens of thousands of sick or wounded Indian servicemen provided the principal opportunity for Indian soldiers to experience Britain. With such a strong presence of Indians in Brighton and the surrounding south coast counties, great efforts were made by the War Office to use these establishments for propaganda purposes, so as to portray a diligent and caring imperial mother country. However, although the

chapter will demonstrate that an excellent standard of medical care was implemented, once again the media's public projection of a caring and egalitarian form of British colonialism contrasted with the private anxieties of authority figures within the Indian Army, War Office, and India Office.

Away from the public eye, anxieties once again surfaced privately about the challenges presented to the colonialist hierarchy implemented by Indian military hospitals as new groups such as middle class Indian students and Indian urban poor, who were deemed to be unsuited for frontline duties, were employed by the medical system in order to satisfy political and manpower pressures. In response the chapter will demonstrate how administrators sought to enforce control through a series of polices that restricted the freedoms of Indian servicemen and their opportunities for their unregulated contact with Western society. The resulting curtailment of Indian freedoms and restrictions placed on female nurses and visitors to the Indian hospitals will highlight a gendered aspect to the Indian Army's racial hierarchy as well as articulate the fears that many administrators had about the potential for Indian dissent. Rather than curtail Indian discord, evidence suggests that the draconian measures adopted by the War Office escalated tensions as they were a visible sign of a disparity of treatment between British and Indian personnel.

In the fourth and final chapter the thesis will examine how contact behind the frontline between European civilians and British servicemen with Indian troops created greater opportunities for interaction than could normally be achieved in the trenches. These encounters – which took place in villages, towns, cities, encampments, billets, and depots where Indian army facilities were located – revealed how conceptions of race could inform individuals' perspectives of Indian servicemen, but how first-hand experiences often contradicted narratives of colonial discourse popularised by the media. The chapter will demonstrate that the British and French publics for the most part showed enthusiasm for fraternisation with the sepoys they met, but that their more liberal attitudes towards interaction conflicted with the authorities who sought to control contact between the two communities. Through its analysis the chapter will argue that race still played an important role in conceptions of a colonial 'other,' but it will also argue that more pluralistic conceptions of racial identity and less adherence towards colonial taboos existed outside of colonialist sections of British society.

However, despite the predominantly harmonious relations that existed between these elements of Western and Asian society, the chapter will also show how once again the authorities' fears of uncontrolled interaction between East and West threatened the Indian Army's racial hierarchy. At the large encampments in and around Marseilles these anxieties combined with an increasing threat of Indian dissent and possible rebellion, to provoke further draconian responses from the military

authorities. Concerned by numerous incidents which had taken place in Indian military bases overseas in India and other parts of Asia, the War Office and India Office came to the conclusion that the Marseilles bases threatened the stability of the entire Indian expedition to France and even Britain's political authority on the subcontinent. As the Indian Army Corps was struggling to replenish its resources, trust in the facilities' stability collapsed in July 1915. As a result, a decision which originated in the India Office led to the decision to stage-manage the withdrawal of the Indian Army Corps from the Western Front in December of the same year, bringing to a close what had been seen as a significant gamble on the part of the British government and the removal of Indian infantry units from Western Europe.

Chapter 1.

Absent Imaginations: private fears and public enthusiasm for Indian participation in the new conflict, August – September 1914

Introduction

O England! in thine hour of need.
When faith's reward and Valour's need,
Is death or glory,
When fate indites, with biting brand,
Clasped in each warrior's stiff'ning hand,
A nation's story –
They whom thy love has guarded long,
They whom thy care hath rendered strong,
In love and faith,
Their heart-strings round thy heart entwine,
They are, they ever will be thine
In life – in death. [1]

The poem, '*O England!*', was written shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, but it was not written by a British poet, or its subject even about British soldiers. Instead, it was written by an Indian, Nazimut Jung, about Indian soldiers and Indian devotion to Great Britain and the British Empire. Published in the first volume of the popular wartime periodical, *The War Illustrated* (*TWI*), *'O England!'* was used to open a chapter of articles about the British Empire's response to the outbreak of the First World War. Its message of Indian allegiance to the imperial mother country was reciprocated with a large illustration just below the text of the British monarch, George V, dressed in the turban and uniform of a Punjabi Cavalry Regiment, the 18th King George's Own Lancers. Together, they implied that Britain and India enjoyed a shared sense of purpose based on a shared allegiance to George V, common ideological values, and an historical relationship based on British guidance.

The poem's subject, Indian soldiers fighting for the British Empire, would have struck a chord with the magazine's readers. With Britain's own initial contribution to the Western Front limited to the six divisions of the BEF, by the end of 1914 the Indian army's contingent of two infantry divisions and two

[1] J.A. Hammerton, ed. *The War Illustrated Album Deluxe: Volume I* (London: The Amalgamated Press Ltd., 1915). p.55

cavalry divisions were a significant part of the British Empire's presence in France and Belgium. Lyrically, the ode also captured several of the most prominent tropes that featured in the abundance of printed articles concerned with the entry of India into the war. Rather than a result of colonialist domination which gave Indians little say in the colony's foreign policy, Indian participation in the conflict was reasoned to have resulted from a sense of imperial loyalty that had been imbued by a just and benevolent British rule which had guided India to a position of maturity and resulted in shared cultural and political values. For Jung, Britain's cause was also India's.

In the days and weeks that followed 4th August 1914, the number of articles dedicated to the entrance of India into the war indicated the significance of the act. As much as the material significance, the British media was keener to focus on its symbolic importance. Never had Britain brought colonial troops to the continent to fight a rival European nation. Rather than portray the Indian Expeditionary Force's presence as a practical remedy to an unfolding crisis, the press, led by the public statements of British politicians, depicted it as a symbol of the British Empire's unity. This formed part of a wider propaganda effort that emphasised that the war would be a joint imperial effort, sweeping up the white Dominions, India, and the dependent territories into a crusade for freedom.[2]

Notwithstanding the public display of enthusiasm mounted to greet the arrival of Indian combatants in Europe, the decision to deploy Indian soldiers to France also contrasted with the position adopted at the turn of the century when, during the Boer War, 'non-white' servicemen were barred from combat roles. The decision to reverse this policy little over a decade later disrupted the traditional discourse of colonialism which upheld a 'colour bar principle' that looked dimly upon European powers fielding colonial troops against one another as part of an effort to maintain the prestige of European colonialism.[3] Such a disruption required a new common narrative. With Germany already villainised, British media outlets, when referencing India, presented Germany and its soldiers as barbarous and a threat to civilisation, whilst India and its servicemen were posed as enlightened defenders of a modern Western order which they had grown to cherish under the guidance of the *Raj*.

The chapter will argue that this public show of support for direct Indian involvement was necessary to ensure backing for the use of Asian combatants on the Western Front, but it will also argue that the narrative was at odds with the authorities' internal fears about the transfer of Indian soldiers from their traditional colonial theatres of operation to a European battlefield to fight a white European foe for the first time.

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[2] John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*. p.35; Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).
[3] Morton-Jack, *The Indian Empire at War*. p.53

India enters the war: a wave of passionate loyalty?

As August 1914 approached few, if any, of the British officers serving with the Indian Army foresaw the outbreak of war. As late as 29th July, Donald Weir, a captain serving with the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment of the 7th (Meerut) Division in India, wrote to his mother looking forward to a return home on an extended break of between nine months to a year.[4] However, Weir's plans were quickly disrupted by international events and within a week he wrote again, this time with the expectation of war. Weir had not heard the news of Britain's entry into the conflict, and told his mother on the 4th August, 'as far as we can see from over here, Great Britain cannot help but declaring war.'[5]

However, even in the advent of war, Weir was disheartened at the prospect of missing out on the coming conflict, which he believed would be 'the last of any size for years to come.' This, he regretted, would be because his battalion and others stationed on the subcontinent would have, 'the dirty work in India to do.' The dirty work being the suppression of civil disturbances or incursions from Afghan tribesmen on the North West Frontier. When referencing the unsettled political climate in northern India, where Weir was stationed, the officer noted, 'for the unrest is very noticeable out here at present, and the departure of about 36,000 British and native troops from India would probably be the signal for internal trouble.'[6] Weir's letter divulged his misgivings about the strength of Britain's political authority on the subcontinent, which he believed demanded the maintenance of a strong military presence.

This contrasts much academic literature which proposes that on declaration of war the population of India displayed a general enthusiasm of support for Great Britain.[7] According to this view it was only Turkey's declaration of war on 28 October 1914, and subsequent call to *jihad* against Britain, France, and Russia in Constantinople, by the Sheikh-ul-Islam on 14 November 1914, that the first serious misgivings were heard about the loyalty of Muslim Indians and threat to the *Raj's* political stability.[8] However, in reality, significant apprehension existed in India from the outset. Indeed, Weir's understanding of the unstable political situation in India at the outbreak of war was not a unique one. It was shared by members of the Indian civil service who enjoyed a wider view of the political and social situation on the subcontinent. Harcourt Butler, who was a member of the Viceroy's

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[4] 'Letter from Weir to mother, sent from India,' dated 29 July 1914, LRO/DE 2913/2/3/1
[5] 'Letter from Weir to mother, sent from India,' dated 4 August 1914, LRO/DE 2913/2/3/2
[6] Ibid.
[7] Pati, Budheswar. *India and the First World War, 1914-1918*, (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1996), p.27; Santanu Das, 'Responses to the War (India),' in *1914-1918-Online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War Studies*, ed. Peter Gatrell Ute Daniel, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (Berlin: issued online by Freie Universität Berlin, 8 October 2014, 2014). https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/responses_to_the_war_india . Accessed 1 January 2017 p.4
[8] Ibid.

Executive Council, wrote to Kitchener towards the end of June 1914, to inform him that large parts of northern India were under strain. Referring to a recently uncovered conspiracy Butler painted a pessimistic picture, writing, 'here things go from bad to worse… I don't know really, now racial feeling is as it is, where sympathy with the conspirators ends. Racial feeling gets worse. Every European in India notices it.'[9]

Weir and Butler's correspondence bore witness to the fact that as international events rapidly and unexpectedly thrust India into a global conflict, strains on the sub-continent between coloniser and colonised were visible as the British administration feared the prospect of civil discontent and sedition. Yet as news was announced of Britain's declaration of war on the 4th August – which automatically brought India into the conflict – a very different public picture was presented of the attitude of Indians to the war and loyalty to the *Raj*. Instead of negative images ofdiscontent, India was portrayed by British newspapers as a nation swept up by a sense of 'imperial patriotism.' On 14th August, *The Daily Mirror* ran a Reuters story headlined, 'Indian Princes Rally to Britain.'[10] Underneath the newspaper reported, 'practically every Indian ruling chief has offered his entire military and financial resources for the service of the Empire.' On the same day, the *Manchester Guardian* ran an editorial which praised, 'the long procession of gifts or offers of service from feudatory princes and from bodies which can speak for native India as a whole.'[11] Even the socialist *Daily Herald*, a publication which was highly critical of British colonial rule, commented that despite suffering a, 'record of government by oppression…[India had responded with] a generosity unsurpassed in the annals of mankind.'[12]

The repeated accounts of Indian loyalty printed in the British press originated from telegrams written by the British Indian government sent to the India Office or Reuters which focused almost entirely on public statements or acts of loyalty from a relatively small section of Indian society.[13] Newspapers were also asked to overlook reports which conflicted with this view, such as on 1 September when, at the India Office's bequest, the newly estblished Press Bureau circulated a memorandum to newspaper editors requesting, 'that the press be restrained from mentioning house searches in Calcutta.'[14] The picture of Indian loyalty and devotion was so prevalent that advertisements appearing in newspapers even sought to take advantage. One advertisement for

[9] 'Letter, dated 25 June 1914, from Harcourt Butler to Kitchener,' NA/PRO 30/57/70/37
[10] 'Indian Princes Rally to Britain,' *The Daily Mirror*, 14 August 1914.
[11] Ibid.
[12] 'The Debt to India,' *The Daily Herald*, 12 September 1914.
[13] Crewe I 18/2
[14] Press Bureau minutes, 'requests that the press be restrained from mentioning house searches in Calcutta,' NA/HO 139/18/76

'Pure Indian Tea' declared, 'India's magnificent loyalty in the Empire's hour of need has stirred the admiration of the world. Indian princes and Indian peasants, Indian troops and Indian treasure – all being placed at Britain's service with touching devotion.' In return, the advert coaxed the newspaper's readership that they, 'could do India a small service in return, [by using] Pure Indian Tea at home.'[15]

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Figure 1. 'India's Magnificent Loyalty' was an advertisement placed in the 24 September 1914 edition of *The Daily Mirror*

Indeed, the satisfaction shown by the British press towards India's reaction to the war could point to real examples of Indian generosity and public statements of support from sections of Indian society. A multitude of declarations were made by Indian princes, politicians, and newspapers with Indian middle-class readerships. On top of the verbal and written statements favouring war, many private material and financial donations also came from these groups.[17] Towards the end of August, the Indian Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, reported to the Royal Household that he had been, 'bombarded with telegrams and letters containing offers of personal service and material assistance from ruling chiefs, societies, religious communities and private individuals.' As a result, Hardinge concluded, 'a wave of

[15] Advertisement, 'India's Magnificent Loyalty,' *The Daily Mirror*, 24 September 1914.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Numerous examples of donations along with public statements of support from private individuals, political party, and the Indian press are given in Pati, *India and the First World War*. pp.8-27 Examples included the Indian branch of the St. John Ambulance Association raising nearly £36,000 in donations by the end of September, and the Mayurbhanji state of Orissa contributing Rs. 27,000 for an aeroplane and Rs. 12,000 for a motor ambulance

loyalty has been spreading throughout the land, and everybody is vying with each other to do something to help England in this emergency.'[18]

These messages formed the basis of the propaganda relayed by the Indian government to the India Office, and onto the British public via the press which utilised the telegrams received from the India Office as well as political speeches that addressed the entrance of India into the war. On the 28th August, the Secretary of State for India, the Marquess of Crewe, taking his lead from telegrams sent by the viceroy, announced that donations of between £300,000-£400,000 had been made by various Indian princes.[19] Crewe referenced the receipt of hundreds of telegrams and letters from individuals and associations that expressed loyalty to the *Raj*, such as, the All India Moslem League, Bohar Land Owners Association, and the Trustees of the Aligarh College. He was also keen to emphasise that it was not just Indian elites who supported the war, reporting to the House of Lords, 'the same spirit has prevailed throughout India.'[20] Crewe also spoke of how many Indian students studying in Britain, who were traditionally treated with suspicion due to their nationalist tendencies, had already volunteered to help form the Indian Ambulance Service which provided orderlies for the Indian military hospitals that were soon to be opened in Hampshire and Sussex. With such an array of examples of Indian support to hand, Crewe concluded, 'I feel confident that the House and the country will feel deep appreciation of this magnificent demonstration of the loyalty with which the princes and peoples of India have identified themselves with the cause of the empire.'[21]

However, the claims made by Crewe and the press reports that ensued, focused on the responses from the relatively small aristocratic and middle-class sections of Indian society. At the same time, the reports also sought to narrow an array of Indian motives for supporting entry into the war to one of subservient loyalty to Britain, George V, and an appreciation of the egalitarian values which most of the British press sought to associate with the British Empire. By contrast, civil servants and politicians connected to India were aware that the circumstances behind Indian responses to the war were more complex and varied. Examples of apprehension and ignorance about the new conflict amongst poorer sections of Indian society were completely ignored, despite their prevalence. Wild rumours circulated amongst certain sections of Indian society about what the country's involvement in the conflict would entail. An Indian government report noted that amongst the most bizarre were claims that children of the Dom caste were being kidnapped by the authorities to have oil extracted for the lubrication of

[18] 'letter from the Indian viceroy, Lord Hardinge, to the George V,' RA/PS/PSO/GV/P/522/58
[19] 'House of Lords address by Lord Crewe, HL Deb 28 August 1914 vol 17 cc549-51549,' http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1914/aug/28/the-war#column_549
[20] 'House of Lords address by Lord Crewe, HL Deb 28 August 1914 vol 17 cc549-51549,' http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1914/aug/28/the-war#column_549
[21] http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1914/sep/09/princes-and-native-troops

engines.[22] A degree of anxiety was also present. There was even a run on savings banks as customers sought to withdraw money they fought could be lost due to the outbreak of war.[23] On 10th August, the viceroy wrote to the governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, agreeing with a decision that he had made to return promptly to the city after war had been declared. Hardinge commented, 'Your city is not the only one that showed panic, as Calcutta was very bad, and I am sure that people there are still somewhat panicky.'[24]

It was not just urban areas which showed signs of panic. In the Indian countryside, due to low literacy rates and inadequate communication networks the tens of millions of poor illiterate Indians, who predominantly worked the land and made up most of the sub-continent's population, were largely ignorant of the circumstances and details of the outbreak of war. A circular from the Indian government written in mid-October 1914 recognised this, reporting, 'in view of the ignorance which prevails in many quarters regarding the causes of the present war and the conditions in which it is being waged, it is considered that it would be advantageous if public lectures could be organised in rural areas.'[25] According to reports circulated back to the India Office, far from showing support for going to war the situation initially created a sense of anxiety amongst the Indian peasantry. James Meston, the lieutenant-governor of the United Provinces, reported to Thomas Holderness at the India Office, 'there was undoubtedly much uneasy speculation among the rural folk.'[26] Holderness himself wrote to Austen Chamberlain in 1915, shortly after Chamberlain took over Crewe's post as Secretary of State for India, summarising his view of the response from poorer parts of Indian society to the outbreak of war:

> In the early months of the war the mass of the Indian people had the vaguest ideas as to what was happening. They were aware that troops were being hurried off beyond seas, that the British *Raj* was in peril, that money-lenders and produce-dealers refused to deal or make prices, that money was scarce and being hoarded… At first there was everywhere a good deal of alarm. The dread of the unknown was aggravated by various economic troubles, such as high prices of wheat and other food grains, and the absence of buyers of jute or cotton.[27]

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[22] 'Fortnightly Reports on the internal political situation in special reference to the war for the First Fortnight of October 1914,' National Archives of India/ PR_000003000591, p.21.
[23] Ibid
[24] 'Willingdon Papers, correspondence, chiefly with the Viceroy, 9 Aug – 18 Oct 1914,' BL/Mss Eur F93.1
[25] 'Circular from the Educational Department, Bombay Castle, dated 13 October 1914, written be J.L Rieu,' BL/IOR/R/2/674/B/93/39
[26] Thomas Holderness, 'Memorandum on the internal situation of India consequent on the War ' UB/AC/21/6/3
[27] Ibid.

Holderness's report demonstrated that, despite public pronouncements to the contrary, the British authorities recognised from the outset that for most Indians the war did not conjure up sentiments of imperial patriotism or loyalty to Great Britain. Instead, for the majority the realities of war caused alarm, their apprehension aggravated by the immediate economic impact and pessimistic rumours of what the conflict might entail. However, this was not the disposition reported by the British press of the great mass of the Indian populace. Instead, with an inability to publicly articulate their position, the Indian peasantry and urban poor remained overlooked by news reports, and a picture of universal enthusiasm and loyalty was relayed through the media to the British public.

In place of the anxieties displayed by the Indian peasantry and working classes, news reports focused on the public displays of loyalty shown by Indian princes and, to a more limited extent, the Indian middle classes. The Indian aristocracy had long co-operated with the British *Raj* due to its ability to help secure their own positions of power and wealth.[28] Given their longstanding collaboration, it is little surprise that a great deal of public support was voiced by the Indian princes and other members of the aristocracy. However, when dealing with Indian middle-class views, British press reports tended to simplify Indian responses, overlooking motivations that undermined descriptions of loyalty to the British crown. Such overlooked motivations included a desire to gain further political freedoms, improve India's standing within the British Empire, set right historic racial slurs, and obtain further rights for the people of India.[29]

One of Bengal's most popular newspapers, the *Bengalee*, offered some qualification to its support of Britain in its 5th August edition. In several instances the publication called for readers, 'to sink our differences with the government.'[30] In recognition that differences existed the newspaper tempered its support for the war with a request for further moves towards Indian autonomy, summarising, 'ours is a loyalty which has its roots deep in our hearts; but it is a reasoned loyalty, which recognises that with the stability and the greatness of the Empire is associated the fruition of our ideal of self-government.'[31] A year later, former Indian Army officer and scholar, George MacMunn, republished an extract from the *Bengalee's* article in his book, *India and the War*, but MacMunn chose to avoid the article's references to self-government.[32] Akin to the British media's tendency to overlook the

[28]Tahir Mahmood, 'Collaboration and British Military Recruitment: Fresh perspectives from colonial Punjab, 1914–1918,' *Modern Asian Studies, 50*(5), 1474-1500. p.1475; Santanu Das, 'Ardour and Anxiety: Politics and Literature in the Indian Homefront,' in *The World in World Wars: experiences, perceptions and perspectives from Africa and Asia*, ed. Heike Liebau, *et al* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 340-67. p.348

[29] For examples of such motives see, Santanu Das, *Indians at Home, Mesopotamia and France*. pp.72-75; and, 'Responses to the War (India).'

[30] "Ready to Fight for the Empire," *Bengalee*, 4 August 1914. Republished in "The Bengali Press And the War," *Auckland Star*, 24 September 1914.

[31] Ibid.

[32] George Fletcher MacMunn, *India and the War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915). p.56

apprehension which predominated amongst the Indian poor, *The Bengalee's* desire to see a 'fruition of self-government' was also left unreported by most British media outlets in 1914, with coverage of Indian political reform limited to a few anti-imperialist publications, such as the *Daily Herald*, which called upon the British government to repay India's commitment with greater autonomy.[33]

Despite the public depiction of Anglo-Indian enthusiasm for Indian participation, figures in the India Office privately acknowledged that Indian entry into the war posed a challenge to British hegemony on the subcontinent. According to the civil servant, Harcourt Butler, there was even a desire amongst educated Indians to see Britain humiliated, if not completely defeated. Butler told his uncle, 'quite a lot of the loyalty is genuine, but amongst the educated classes there is, so many of them tell me, real pleasure at a German victory. They do not want to see the Germans here… but they do want to see us humbled. It is I suppose a natural feeling for a race subject to alien rule.'[34] Thomas Holderness, who was a civil servant in the India Office, noted that although rural India acquiesced, he did not judge that the same could be said of urban areas, writing, 'with some of the townspeople, a section of the forward party among the Hindu, and many of the windy Mahomedan politicians, the story is different. But that is another matter. It touches on the heavy time that is coming upon us after peace is signed.'[35]

The 'heavy time' indicated an expectation that by committing to war many Indians, particularly from the middle classes, anticipated that longstanding calls for self-government and further rights would be respected by the British government. Private accounts from men such as Holderness and Butler highlighted that the India Office was aware that Indians' willingness to contribute to the war effort was based on a complex array of motives; and for poorer sections of society apprehension and acquiescence were the predominant responses, rather than enthusiasm. However, during August and September, as India dispatched the first of its soldiers overseas, few articles published in the British press referenced the wider political and social situation, or how participation in the war was likely to create further demands for greater Indian autonomy. Instead the media largely relied on transmitting responses from the Indian nobility which distorted Indian society as universally loyal to Britain and enthusiastically committed to the war out of a sense of gratitude and shared purpose.

The failure to present a more accurate picture of the social, economic, and political consequences in India of the First World War's advent highlighted an underlying fear on the part of the political establishment that rather than bringing India into an ever closer union with Great Britain and the British Empire, the conditions that were stimulated by the First World War represented a threat to

[33] 'The Debt to India,' *The Daily Herald*, 12 September 1914.
[34]Quote printed in, Bal Ram Nanda, *Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj* (India: Princeton University Press, 1977). p.448
[35] UB/AC/21/6/3.

British authority and undermined colonialist accounts of a grateful and subservient people. Hiding these anxieties from public view, the private fears brought to the fore in the minds of British civil servants, army officers, and politicians were left unaddressed.

'The rally of the empire': British enthusiasm for India's entry into the war

With expressions of Indian loyalty published in the British press in the immediate aftermath of nation's entry into the war, in early September 1914 the British prime minister, Herbert Asquith, gave a pro-empire speech to the London Guildhall that sought to situate India's response as part of a wider imperial one that was based on a set of shared values and interests. Like other national papers, the *Daily Mail* printed the oration verbatim under the headline, 'Call of Duty.'[36] During the speech Asquith eulogised Britain's 'brotherhood… [with the] self-governing Dominions,' but he also praised India's commitment, presenting its entry into the war as a popular decision which had the wide backing of its population. 'Every class and creed,' asserted Asquith, 'British and native, princes and people, Hindoos and Mohammedans [sic], vie with one another in a noble and emulous rivalry.'[37]

Without the shared ethnic and familial heritages which were often depicted as the basis of a bond between the white settler societies and the mother country, in the case of India, Asquith emphasised a common set of political values and a shared figurehead, in the guise of George V, as the *raison d'être* for the *Raj* joining Britain and the dominions in going to war. In doing so, the British prime minister framed the conflict as an ideological struggle of empires. Asquith cast the British Empire as an egalitarian entity that enjoyed unity and shared purpose no matter the ethnic background of its subjects. He proffered to his audience, 'we welcome… [India's] aid [to] an Empire which knows no distinction of race or caste, where all alike, as subjects of the King-Emperor, are joint and equal custodians of our common interests and fortunes.'[38] This, he claimed, was further evidenced by India's recent dispatch of troops, who would stand 'shoulder-to-shoulder' with their British and dominion counterparts once they arrived on the battlefield.[39] Through his characterisation of the British Empire as an institution united not merely by British authority but by shared cultural values and political interests, Asquith transplanted ideas of a national 'self,' to a wider one which encompassed Britain, India, and the rest of the British Empire. In such moments, the tension and divides between coloniser and colonised, which were starkly referenced by Weir and Butler, were ignored.

[36] 'Call of Duty,' *Daily Mail*, September 05 1914.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Asquith was not the only British political figure to reference India's response to the war as an illustration of a bond between Britain and India. In early September, the Secretary of State for India, the Marquess of Crewe, gave another statement to the House of Lords that began by relaying a message from the King-Emperor, George V, to India. Illustrative of the stage management of India's entry into the conflict, George's statement was in fact written by the India Office, who then used the Colonial Office to disseminate the message, alongside a summary of support from the Indian princes, to other parts of the British Empire for public consumption. Crewe's private papers make clear that this was done for political advantage, the aim being to present a unified empire and allay public fears or suspicion of Indian troops. [40]

When Crewe gave his statement to the House of Lords he followed the plan, beginning with the King's message – which spoke of an 'unparalleled assault on civilisation,' followed by an account of Indian devotion to the throne and 'indissolubly linked destinies' between Britain and its prized colonial possession. The speech concluded with a presentation of examples of Indian support which had been telegraphed to Crewe by Hardinge.[41] Of note were the military contingents from twelve semi-independent Indian states and examples of personal military service volunteered by members of the Indian aristocracy.[42] Many of these men joined the IEFA in France, and although their accompaniment was of no military consequence, their presence was of propaganda value as it represented a physical assurance that India's upper classes supported the commitment of Indian troops to the war effort.[43]

Over the course of the following days the efforts made by Crewe and the India Office proved fruitful as Britain's national and regional newspapers printed news of the messages from the Indian viceroy and king-emperor. *The Daily Telegraph* praised the *Raj's* administration and the devotion that it had supposedly inspired amongst Indians, asserting, 'nothing in our imperial annals is more striking than the great tide of enthusiasm and sacrifice which passed through the millions of India, at the first tidings of the grave danger to the European race whose rule they have learned to value and respect.'[44] The British provincial press also widely printed the king's message after its distribution by the Press

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[40] 'King Emperor's message to the princes and peoples of India and connected papers,' 1914, CUM/Crewe/I/18 (12).

[41]The Lord Privy Seal and Secretary of State For India (The Marquess of Crewe), 'The War - India's Support,' in *Secondary The War - India's Support*, ed. Secondary, Tertiary The War - India's Support (Online:: Hansard, , 09 September 1914), vol.17, 573-81, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1914/sep/09/the-war-indias-support.

[42] 'Princes and native troops, HC Deb 09 September 1914 vol 66 cc574-8 574,' http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1914/sep/09/princes-and-native-troops

[43] '25 January 1915, letter from Locke Elliot of General Headquarters, France, to Kitchener,' 1915, NA/PRO30/57/52/14-15 Locke Elliott informed Kitchener that the 'Indian chiefs' accompanying the Indians Army Corps were a 'nuisance.'

[44] 'The Unity of Empire,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1914. p.10

Bureau, which was established to censor news and telegraphic reports from the British Army and to issue information to the press waiting in London and throughout the world.[45]. Akin to the national media, regional newspapers used the message and the viceroy's reply to portray India as a nation that had been taken hold of by a sense of imperial patriotism and devotion to the king-emperor. *The Burnley News* placed the story next to photographs of a Burnley v Everton football match, under the title, 'India's Devotion.'[46] *The Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser* reported India's 'desire to be foremost in the conflict.'[47] Whilst the *Dundee Evening Telegraph and Post* subtitled the message from George V as, 'India's Devotion to the Throne.'[48] The Press Bureau and Colonial Office's distribution of the telegrams from the king and viceroy demonstrated how the India Office utilised modern communication networks to carefully develop and coordinate a succinct message to the British public of Indian loyalty and a shared imperial bond that crossed racial boundaries.

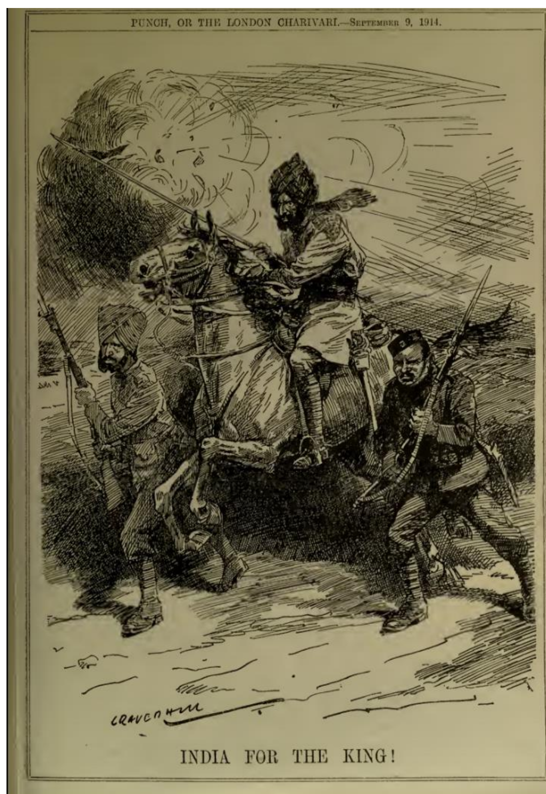

Figure 2. Some of the more famed 'classes' of Indian sepoy published by *Punch*. Figure 3. George V, presented in *TWI* beneath the poem *O'England* wearing the headdress of the 18th King George's Own Lancers.[49]

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[45] Martin J. Farrar, *News from the Front: War Correspondents on the Western Front, 1914-18* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998). p.5

[46] 'India's Devotion,' *The Burnley News*, 12 September 1914. p.5

[47] 'The Devotion of India,' *Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser*, 16 September 1914. p.5

[48] 'Liberty of Empire and Mankind,' *Dundee Evening Telegraph and Post* 09 September 1914. p.3

[49] Cravenhill, 'India For the King!' in *Punch Almanack*: Vol. CXLVI. 1914 (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co. Ltd., 1915). And *The War Illustrated Album Deluxe: Volume I*. p.55

This narrative was to repeat itself in numerous press articles over the course of the coming months. In its first almanac, *TWI* placed the themes of racial unity, Indian devotion, and a shared imperial purpose at the centre of a chapter titled, 'The Rally of Empire' 'The compilation's lead review concluded, 'it will be found that there is only one race throughout the present British Empire.'[50] Gilbert's contribution was an example of a narrative that presented the British Empire not as an entity of coloniser and colonised societies, but as a federation of unified peoples that would fight Germany as a collective, with India playing the role of protagonist for the non-white colonialised communities of the British Empire.

Imagery also came to provide an important element of this theme, with George V often transposed as the unifying figurehead of imperial iconography who crossed boundaries of race. In September 1914, *Punch* printed an illustration of three 'classes' of Indian army sepoy striding forward through the battlefield. Underneath the text made clear to the viewer why they were fighting, 'India for the King!' exclaimed *Punch* (see figure 2).[51] In a similar notion of shared imperial loyalties, Beneath Nazimut Jung's poem, '*O England*,' George V was presented in the turban of a Punjabi cavalry regiment, the 18th King George's Own Lancers (see figure 3).[52] The narrative presented by the illustrations engaged with the idea of an imperial patriotism, with the British empire presented as a racially unified entity. In early 1915, *TW*I used one of its front covers to restate this message, with an illustration of three soldiers stood alert in front of the Egyptian pyramids – one African, one white British or Dominion, and one Indian – positioned side-by-side with rifles presented to arms (see figure 4). The caption underneath reinforced the picture's message of imperial unity: 'The modern empire rallies in the shadow of the ancient Sphinx.'[53]

This repeated narrative shared common ground with the image of an empire of 'common interests and fortunes' that Asquith had painted in his Guildhall speech. These examples, together with many other instances published by the British media in the second half of 1914, intimated that the British empire stood with Britain, and Indian soldiers were not to be feared or shunned but welcomed as the comrades-in-arms of white British and Dominion troops. The real threat to civilisation not being posed by the colonised African and Asian societies administered by Britain, but the threatening spectre of a cruel and intolerant form of German imperialism.

[50] Gilbert Parker, 'The Rally of Empire,' in *The War Illustrated Album Deluxe: Volume I*, ed. J. A. Hammerton (London: The Amalgamated Press Ltd., 1915). p.57
[51] 'India For the King!,' in *Punch.*
[52] 'The Rally of Empire,' in *The War Illustrated.*
[53] 'The Modern Empire Rallies in the Shadow of the Ancient Sphinx,' *The War Illustrated*, 30 January 1915.

Figure 4. The front cover of the 30 January 1915 edition of *TWI* depicted the British empire's war effort as a racially unified endeavour.[54]

This form of imperial patriotism often sought to utilise an adversarial narrative by contrasting the British empire against a negative form of German 'blood and iron' militarism.[55] An important part of this narrative was to present Indian military involvement as a symbol of loyalty stimulated by a supposedly enlightened form of British colonialism. When *The Manchester Guardian* published a reverential description of British colonisation in an article called, 'The Empire's Devotion,' it contrasted an unwelcomed reception of German troops in Alsace Lorraine with what it argued was Indian admiration for Britain's colonial rule. The article concluded, 'can we doubt that French Canadians and Boers and Indian dependent princes have grown swiftly into the British Empire and become flesh of its flesh because it was not so timid as merely to terrorise.'[56] The *Daily Mail* similarly wrote that German foreign policy strengthened Indian sympathy for Britain and would, 'weld the races of the Empire by that sense of unity and reciprocal affection which comes with common effort and sacrifice.'[57] However, as will be shown in the next section, the public image of a racially egalitarian

[54] J.A. Hammerton, ed. *The War Illustrated,* 30 January 1915, (London: The Amalgamated Press Ltd., 1915).
[55] Monger. pp.113-139 Utilises Monger's argument of 'adversarial patriotism' as a means of creating a negative difference between Britain and Germany.
[56] 'The Empire's Devotion,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 August 1914.
[57] 'Our Indian Army in France,' *Daily Mail*, 2 October 1914.

empire bared little resemblance to the internal debates that took place amongst those parts of British officialdom concerned with the use of Asian servicemen.

Sepoys and the European war: a challenge to colonialism

When Donal Weir's unit, 2nd battalion Leicestershire Regiment, departed India Weir was unsure of his destination speculating it could either be Marseilles or Egypt. 'Well we got our orders to mobilize on Sunday [9th August 1914],' he wrote to his mother, 'and the proud 17th Leicestershire Regt leave here early tomorrow for a destination unknown but probably Marseilles, tho' perhaps only Egypt.'[58] It was not merely due to the War Office's wish to maintain secrecy about the movement of troops that prevented Weir from knowing his journey's end. At this preliminary stage in the war although the decision had been made to send an Indian expeditionary force westward, its final destination was still being deliberated by the British government and War Office. This was partly due to the fluctuating state of the Western Front in August and September, but it was also due to the controversy that surrounded the deployment of the Indian combatants to Europe to fight a white European enemy.

The controversial nature of the matter was highlighted by the British government's policy fifteen years earlier when it came to an agreement with the Boer government not to use colonial troops in a combatant capacity during the Boer War; with one member of parliament even claiming that, 'to use coloured troops would be a monstrous and indefensible action… [that] would outrage the conscience of the whole civilised world.'[59] In 1914, despite the lack of coverage of the subject in the British media, the British government's internal deliberations about the deployment of South Asian combatants against European soldiers (which took place just before the Germans managed to force the BEF into a retreat after the Battle of Mons in late August 1914), demonstrated that the matter remained a contentious issue in 1914, with considerations about how the arrival of Indian combatants could undermine the racial hierarchy of colonial rule and its political side effects in India being particularly provocative.

Almost as soon as war had been declared the India Office produced a memorandum on the subject. The report, written by the recently retired governor of Bombay, Lord Sydenham, stated two objectives should dictate policy towards the deployment of Indian troops. The first was, 'not to give the slightest impression of dependence on the Indian Army.' The second was, 'not to denude India of necessary

[58] 'Letter from Donald Weir to mother, sent from India,' date 11 August 1914, LRO/DE 2913/2/3/2.
[59] Hansard: George Dillon, 'Army (Supplementary) Estimates, 1899–1900,' volume 179, column 467, 19 February 1900.

military force.'[60] With regards to the maintenance of 'necessary military force,' Sydenham wrote that the removal of two of India's seven infantry divisions for use on the Western Front would leave the Indian Army overstretched, should a conflict break out on the North West Frontier. If such a scenario occurred, Sydenham concluded, 'this temptation offered to the disloyal elements [in India] would be very great, and even if no active hostility were shown, this apparent exhibition of weakness would never be forgotten and would serve to stimulate the ambitions of the dangerous classes.'[61] Sydenham, fearing the political situation in the Punjab could boil over into civil unrest should the world's most prominent Muslim power, Turkey, join the war, also argued that no troops should be withdrawn from the Punjab or employed in 'any considerable number… in Egypt in any circumstance,' less it create religious grievances in the Punjab at the same time resources to suppress civil unrest were denuded.[62]

Sydenham's other objective, which sought to prevent any impression of 'dependence on the Indian Army,' revealed another underlying fear; this being that the deployment of Indian troops could challenge British hegemony by giving Indian politicians, 'an exaggerated sense of [India's] value.' The result, Sydenham argued, would create a foundation for future Indian claims for greater autonomy on the basis that it could be contended that, 'Indian troops and Indian resources saved the Empire.'[63] With these factors weighing upon Sydenham, the former governor concluded, 'for state reasons of the utmost importance, no Indian troops in such form as is contemplated should be brought into the European theatre of war.'[64]

Given the subsequent arrival of Indian troops on the Western Front, Sydenham's categorical argument against the deployment of Indian combatants to Europe is startling and was completely at odds with the press releases circulated by the India Office, as well as the general tone of the British media. By contrast, Sydenham's paper revealed that rather than the war acting as a stimulus to bring Britain and India into ever closer union, as proclamations from figures such as George V, Asquith, and Crewe claimed, members of the civil service were fearful that the war would weaken British authority on the subcontinent by revealing its illusion of strength.

Within two months of Sydenham completing his memorandum, the Indian Army Corps' disembarkation at Marseilles suggests that his view was an unpopular one. However, it nearly came to pass that Indian troops were not deployed in Europe. According to the official history of the corps,

[60] 'The Employment of Indian troops,' India Office memorandum written by Lord Sydenham, dated 10 August 1914,' Crewe I/18 (3).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

‘many high authorities felt grave doubts upon this question.’[65] As late as 25th August, a couple of weeks after IEFA had departed India by sea convoy, Crewe sent Hardinge a telegram, stating, ‘Army Council now inform me that it is not proposed at present to utilise Force A elsewhere than in Egypt, Mediterranean and possibly Soudan. No expeditions from Egypt contemplated, and force will be on defensive basis.’[66] Up to that point Hardinge had been led to believe that IEFA would be sent to France, so the change of plans infuriated the viceroy, who regarded the message as a demotion to garrison duty and a betrayal of Indian goodwill. He responded the next day, ‘it is difficult for me to express in words my disappointment at the contents of your official telegram of August 25th.’ Hardinge continued that it was of, ‘the utmost importance to us that at least one of the divisions for Egypt should play its part in Europe.’ Failure to do so would, he believed, cause considerable political damage:

> Should India see her splendid and complete divisions relegated to such duty while troops from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other colonies go to the front, there will be a revulsion of feeling which may have a serious political effect. It is well known in India that the French Algerian troops are fighting at the front, and if British Indian troops should be discarded in the present emergency it will be interpreted as an unmerited slur on their loyalty or efficiency.[67]

Defending the decision, Crewe wrote a response on the same day, ‘it is not accurate to describe service in Egypt as purely garrison duty or a secondary role. If Turkey joins Germany as is still not improbable we shall regard Egypt as a post of honour and danger.’[68] However, the Ottoman Army, having suffered a series of embarrassing defeats in recent years to a number of its former imperial possessions, was clearly a secondary threat when compared to its German counterpart.[69] Significantly though, deploying the IEFA in Egypt against a possible Ottoman threat, and using lesser trained British territorials in France, would have allowed the British government to avoid the international and internal controversy of fielding Asian servicemen against a European foe.

Despite having written the telegram events quickly changed the government’s plans and Crewe never sent the reply. Crewe’s original message, containing the modification of plans for the destination of IEFA, was sent just a day after the BEF had begun its rapid retreat after the Battle of Mons. The battle had made it clear to the BEF’s staff that the forces at their disposal were too few in number.[70] Although

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[65] Merewether, *The Indian Corps in France*. p.469
[66] 'Forces dispatched from India: telegram from Crewe to Hardinge, dated 25 August 1914,' CUM/Crewe I/18(3).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015). pp.14-28
[70] John Keegan, *The First World War,* (London: Hutchinson, 1998). pp.107-110

unaware of the dire situation on the Western Front, Hardinge's critical intervention, coinciding as it did with the BEF's retirement, ensured a quick change of plan on the part of the War Office and British government. The next day, on 27th August, Crewe telegrammed the viceroy to inform him, 'I am glad to tell you that cabinet yesterday decided in principle of sending Force A to theatre of action in Europe, so that War Office will divert whole of Force A.'[71] So desperate were the BEF for troops that he even asked for an Indian cavalry division to be sent to France, which Hardinge agreed to, it subsequently being designated the Indian Cavalry Corps. Despite, the destination of the Indian Army Corps being the same as Hardinge had been originally led to believe, the temporary change of plans illustrated that the British government and War Office were disinclined to use Indian troops and, had circumstances permitted them to do so, they would have shied away at this early stage in the war from committing Asian combatants to fight against Germany.

However, the wavering stance shown by the British government towards the deployment of the Indian Army bared little resemblance to the patriotic language of empire used publicly in Asquith's Guildhall speech, Crewe's addresses to the House of Lords, or George V's message to India. In fact it was not imperial sentiment that had provoked the about-turn, rather it was the gravity of the military situation on the Western Front and the potential political damage which could have been caused in India, had the IEFA been left in Egypt whilst the empire it served struggled for its very survival.

The internal government correspondence, which dealt with the use of Indian troops and IEFA's destination, only indirectly inferred the challenge that the deployment of Indian soldiers to Europe represented to the racial hierarchy of colonial rule. However, as Indian servicemen were voyaging west several contentious issues concerned with the use of Asian troops illustrated how the strains of conflict quickly fashioned scenarios that tested the racial hierarchies of the Indian Army and, due to their controversial nature, were partially or entirely vetoed by the India Office or the Indian government on these grounds, contradicting the public image presented in the British media of an egalitarian British administration of India.

Such an example came about when the Maharaja of Nepal offered to send 20,000 Nepalese troops to serve in Europe soon after war was declared. Unlike the Gurkhas employed directly by the Indian Army, the offer was made for troops who would remain under Nepalese sovereignty. The proposal initially received a positive response from Kitchener, who believed that lacking training and modern weaponry the Nepalese soldiers could be asked to remain on garrison duty in India to enable Indian Army units to serve overseas.[72] However, the India Office's military secretary, Edmund Barrow, and its

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[71] 'Telegram from Crewe to Hardinge, dated 28 August 1914,' CUM/Crewe I/18(3).
[72] Ibid.

political secretary, Arthur Hirztel, were against any idea of using Nepalese soldiers not under direct British command.

Hirztel contended that unlike the Nepalese troops employed by the Indian Army, 'only a comparatively small section [of Nepal's army] are drawn from fighting castes,' with the majority of its 40,000 soldiers being of 'no value' due to their ethnicity. With the Nepalese troops offered by the Maharaja lacking British officers, Hirztel conjured up images of George Dillon's remark to the House of Commons fifteen years earlier, when he maintained that Gurkhas without British stewardship, 'are barbarians – such barbarians… that to employ them in Europe would be an offence against civilisation.' After condemning the character of the Nepalese troops, Hirztel concluded, 'to invite the ruler of such a state to take a hand in a European war would, from an international point of view, be a grave political error.' Not only in Hirztel's opinion would permitting an independent Asian state to participate as a combatant on the Western Front be a cause of international controversy, but it would, he argued, also represent a direct challenge to the racial supremacy of British colonial rule as deploying independent Nepalese troops in battle would, 'give the Gurkhas such an opinion of themselves that we should never be able to control them again.'[73]

On this basis, the proposal was discarded by Hirztel, with the proposition of fielding Nepalese soldiers in battle that were not under direct European authority deemed untenable. The incident further demonstrated that although the British government had come to the decision to commit Asian combatants to the Western Front, it did not mean that the resistance shown by the government fifteen years earlier to committing Indian soldiers against an opponent of European descent had been completely reversed. Although a decade and a half later, the government was now willing to field Asian combatants against European soldiers, it had come to this position under duress, vacillating as it had until it became clear that the British Army faced the possibility of defeat if reinforcements were not forthcoming.

This wavering stance had shown that the decision challenged the boundaries of the government's understanding of a white colonialist world order. Although the deployment of Indian soldiers to France demonstrated that in 1914 Asian troops were now deemed eligible by the British government to take orders from their white officers to fight European troops, Asians were still not to be permitted to assume the authority of a sovereign power in such a scenario, or used on the battlefield without British leadership. Given these circumstances the idea of fielding an independent Asian army, staffed without British officers, against European troops was still considered too contentious to even consider a

[73] 'Forces dispatched from India,' India Office memorandum written by Arthur Hirztel, dated 28 August 1914, regarding the offer of Nepalese troops,' Crewe I/18 (3).

possibility, highlighting a racial boundary of colonial rule that was yet to be crossed.[74] In place of the original offer, Hardinge decided that he would accept the use of 5,000 Nepalese soldiers for possible duties in India. However, the Gurkhas were not to be stationed on British controlled territory, less it gave the impression that Britain's authority was in extremis.[75]

With India's internal military strength diminished as its expeditionary forces departed, the possibility of creating militia units from indigenous Indian civilian volunteers was also considered by the British Indian government. In August 1914, only Europeans and men of dual Eurasian descent were recruited into the *Raj's* volunteer militia, with Indians with no European ethnic heritage barred from service. Given the strained military resources at the viceroy's disposal, Hardinge suggested shortly after the outbreak of war that Indians should be enrolled to augment the garrisons of the various Indian ports, commenting, 'can we… deny to the Indian the right to defend his country – a right that is enjoyed by free citizens all over the world.'[76] Hardinge also argued that political advantage would be gained by enrolling Indian volunteers, arguing that they, 'would come sooner or later,' so better to concede the right, 'before we are forced by circumstances to do so.'[77] However, when he put the proposal to his Legislative Council, which was almost entirely composed of British civil servants, he received a dismissive response. Hardinge wrote to his friend Willingdon on 10th August, 'I found opposition of the whole of my Council, (except of course Ali Imam), too strong for me to tackle at a moment…These civilians see no further than the ends of their noses and are as narrow in their conceptions and ideas as possible. Many of them retain the ideas of the days following the Mutiny.'[78]

Despite the setback, Hardinge produced a memorandum on the subject which was circulated to George V along with a series of responses sent from high-ranking civil administrators and army officers. The former group were predominantly in favour, for political reasons, with the ban on Indian volunteers cited as a point of contention for many Indians. However, all the civil servants consulted recognised that reforming the volunteer system would be resented by the existing European and mixed-race volunteers as it would remove a racial barrier and undermine a strand of the racialised hierarchy of colonial India. Lord Carmichael, Governor of Bombay, noted, 'that the Viceroy will meet with strong opposition from European volunteers. The Eurasians will also oppose the idea of being associated with Indians.' Sir Reginald Craddock, Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, classed the

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[74] Ibid.

[75] 'Forces dispatched from India, telegram from Hardinge to Crewe, dated 30 August 1914, regarding the offer of Nepalese troops,' Crewe CUM/I/18 (3).

[76] 'Willingdon Papers, correspondence, chiefly with the Viceroy, 9 Aug – 18 Oct 1914, letter from Hardinge dated 10 August 1914,' BL/Mss Eur F93.1.

[77] Memorandum by Lord Hardinge, and appended responses, 'Creation of Indian Volunteer Units', 1915,' RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/70-71.

[78] Ibid.

idea as 'a sentimental one,' concluding that it created a danger for whites, 'we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the volunteers were originally created to protect the lives of Europeans from Indians and not against foreign invasion.'[79]

In a similar vein, the military authorities claimed that by admitting Indian volunteers, the Indian Army would have to increase its number of British troops to maintain a rule laid down regarding the ratio of armed Europeans to Indians. Like Craddock, the commander-in-chief, Beauchamp Duff, questioned the purpose of the volunteers, concluding they were only intended to assist with civil disturbances, and were not liable for service outside of their district. 'Their only duty is to defend their local civil power, that is probably having to shoot down their fellow countrymen... This might lead to sympathy of these same volunteers with the mob. In this case they would be worse than useless, they would be dangerous.' Beauchamp concluded, 'the whole demand for Indian volunteers is based on sentiment,' and that he would rather, 'leave sentiment unsatisfied than enter on a course which may limit the powers of future Viceroys of India.'[80]

Given the opposition to Hardinge's proposed reform, the volunteer system remained unchanged. Beyond the immediate restraint it placed on the expansion of the Indian armed forces, the resistance Hardinge experienced also exemplified wider cultural attitudes on the part of India's British colonisers towards indigenous groups. These attitudes contradicted the public image presented in the British media of a liberal and egalitarian administration and revealed the fallacy of Asquith's claim that British and Indian were 'joint and equal custodians.' Akin to many of the objections given to the use of the Nepalese Army, the affair illustrated the mistrust amongst British civil servants and army officers towards the peoples they governed. This mistrust was manifested in a desire to strictly control the parameters of the Asian participation in the war and a desire to see the Indian military's strict colonial hierarchy adhered to, despite it limiting the number of personnel at its disposal amidst the gravest military crisis faced by the British Empire since the Napoleonic Wars.

Had volunteer reforms taken place in 1914 or 1915, it was argued that objections would have come from the existing European and Eurasian volunteers – a demonstration of the racial stratification of the Indian colonial society. However, their objections were never deemed likely to have resulted in anything more than begrudging protest. Reforms to the volunteer system could have been pushed through had it been adequately supported by the high-ranking military officers and civil servants consulted by Hardinge; but, with the Indian rebellion of 1857 still within living memory, their hostility

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

towards the idea of recruiting Indian volunteers into the militia illustrated a deep-seated fear of arming Indian civilians under the command of Indian officers.

Less than two months into the conflict, the British government's procrastination over the use of Indian combatants in France; its refusal to deploy independent Nepalese troops overseas (or even station them on British Indian territory); and the rejection of Indian volunteers signified how the demands placed on India by the war threatened to disrupt the racial hierarchy of the Indian army and British colonial rule in the subcontinent. These cases also demonstrated how many British figures who enjoyed power and influence over the Indian army vehemently sought to resist change, even if change would have enabled India to better satisfy the demands placed on its stretched resources. However, as the next section will demonstrate, when the Indian Army Corps arrived at Marseilles on 26th September (with publication of British newspaper reports of its disembarkation delayed until 2nd October), none of the controversaries that surrounded the deployment of Asian troops to Europe, or the debated means of expanding the number of servicemen available to the Indian Army, were discussed by the media. Instead the sepoys' arrival was held up with great acclaim and fanfare, with few if any dissenting voices visible in the British media.

IEFA's arrival at Marseilles: 'A scene of festival and wonderment'

Shortly after 2nd battalion Leicestershire Regiment disembarked in Egypt after completing the first leg of its voyage from Bombay to Marseilles, Weir wrote again to his mother telling her of his excitement at his chance to take part in the coming conflict. 'Of course you will hear of nothing but the native troops in the papers. They will become the popular heroes. Let's hope they will accomplish all that is expected of them.'[81] Weir was correct, when the British press publicised IEFA's arrival in France the national and regional press were filled with tales and photographs of the Corps' Asian troops, with only passing comment made of its British soldiers.

After weeks at sea, and a brief respite in Egypt, IEFA – which was given the title of the Indian Army Corps mid voyage – disembarked at Marseilles from 24-26th September 1914. Their popularity with the locals was beyond dispute, Walter Bagot-Chester, an officer in the 2/3rd Gurkha Rifles noted, 'all the troops got a tremendous reception.'[82] Herbert Alexander, an officer serving in the Indian Mule Corps recorded, 'from docks to camp [we] passed through streets lined with the good folk of

[81] Donald Weir, '10 September 1914, letter from Weir to mother, written during temporary stop in Egypt,' LRO/DE 2913/3/4/2.

[82] Walter Bagot-Chester, 'Diary of Captain Walter Bagot-Chester covering the period 12 August 1914 to 24 September 1915 in France,' 1915, NAM.1960-12-337-2-1.

Marseilles, who clapped their hands, cheering vociferously and shouting… At some places we had almost to force our way through the cheering crowds.'[83] The British national press had been informed beforehand of the Indians' imminent arrival, and journalists from several national newspapers were dispatched to record what quickly became a well-publicised propaganda coup, describing in detail the magnitude and significance of the event to their readers. Reports were delayed for publication by the censor but started to appear from 2nd October onwards. The *Daily Mirror's* coverage painted a similar picture to Alexander, '30,000 warriors [were received] amid scenes of wild enthusiasm… Presents of fruit, biscuits, and cigarettes, were literally showered on them… never have troops had a more hearty welcome in a foreign city than the Indians received.'[84]

The material consequence of a fresh army corps was of importance, but perhaps more so to the representatives from the press was its cultural significance, with it being the first occasion that Britain had fielded non-white colonial troops on European soil against a European foe. Douglas Crawford, a *Daily Mail* journalist, referenced the precedent, writing, 'the Indian soldier for the first time stands shoulder to shoulder with his British comrade on a European battlefield.'[85] His account went on to conjure up Asquith's sentiment of a common imperial bond when he wrote that the deployment of an expeditionary force from 'Orient to Occident… [represented] a making of history and the welding together of the British Empire in closer bonds of loyalty and brotherhood.'[86]

The front page of *The Daily Mirror's* 2nd October, 1914 edition, which announced the landing of the Indians at Marseilles, portrayed the Indian troops as welcomed and trusted allies. The accompanying editorial adopted a pro-imperialist narrative. It rejected any sort of notion colonial combatants would be an unwelcome addition to the battlefield and took an adversarial tone that divorced a supposedly liberal form of British imperialism from a 'tyrannous' German type. Beneath the headline, photographs showed sepoys marching through Marseilles, a caption underneath reasoned that these smartly dressed soldiers had joined the fight against Germany because, 'enjoying liberty under Britain's enlightened rule, these men have no cause to … Germany or her tyrannous system of government, and they themselves have asked to be allowed to take their share in the fight for freedom' (see figure 6).[87] Thus it was intimated that the service of Indian soldiers in Europe did not represent an outrage, but a momentous occasion that signified the success of Britain's colonial policy which had not only resulted in a coming of age for India and the Indian Army, but also a shared political

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[83] Hebert Alexander, *On Two Fronts: being the adventures of an Indian Mule Corps in France and Gallipoli* (London: William Heinemann, 1917). pp.27-29
[84] 'Indian Troops All Smiles In France,' *The Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914.
[85] Douglas Crawford, 'Our Indian Army in France.' *Daily Mail*, 2 October 1914.
[86] ibid.
[87] Ibid.

cause against an enemy who adhered to a system of government that Briton and Indian alike deemed abhorrent.

When *The Times* reported the arrival of the Indian Army Corps and its rapturous march through Marseilles the newspaper adopted a similar sentiment. 'Tomorrow, side by side, Briton and Indian will go out, heads high and hearts beating to one true King-Emperor and one Empire, to battle with one common enemy, the enemy of civilisation itself.'[88] This sentence managed to cram in many of the tropes used to describe Indian soldiers as they landed in Europe – it defined the sepoy as a close comrade of his British counterpart, and it identified him as a loyal subject of the King-Emperor and an empire which embraced all of its citizens in its defence of civilisation. The Press Bureau distributed the article to the provincial press by telegram and it appeared verbatim in newspapers the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.[89] Its opening lines also impressed upon readers where the loyalties and motivations of the Indian Army Corps lay, 'thousands of Indian soldiers, princes and men alike [are] fired all with the ardour of the East and determined to help win their Emperor's battles or die.'[90]

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Nottingham Evening Post

7

Complete New Story By Mrs. C. N. Williamson in this week's Weekly Guardian

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VON KLUCK'S DESPAIRING EFFORT.

"THE DEBACLE IS NEAR."

GERMAN APPREHENSION.

THE PERIL OF ENVELOPMENT.

THE EAST COMES TO AID THE WEST IN EUROPE.

It is now officially announced that Indian troops have landed in France, and the photograph shows a splendid contingent on the march.

WITHERING BELGIAN FIRE.

GERMANS RETREAT IN DISORDER.

LANDING OF THE INDIAN TROOPS.

TUMULTUOUS WELCOME IN FRANCE.

MESSAGE FROM THE KING.

MARCHING ON THE PAVEMENT.

THE KING AND HIS INDIAN TROOPS.

MESSAGE OF GREETING.

Figure 5. *The Times*'s telegram describing the Indian Corps' arrival in Marseilles and its loyalty to the King-Emperor formed a lead story for the *Nottingham Evening Post*'s 2 October 1914 edition. An example followed by many other major provincial newspapers.[91]

[88] 'The Indian Troops at Marseilles,' *The Times*, 02 October 1914. p.9

[89] Examples include, 'The Indian Troops,' *Western Express*, 02 October 1914; 'Indian Troops in France,' *The Birmingham Mail*, 02 October 1914; 'The Indians at Marseilles,' *The Newcastle Daily Journal*, 02 October 1914; 'Arrival of Our Native Troops,' *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 02 October 1914; 'The Troops from India,' *The Belfast News-Letter*, 02 October 1914.

[90] 'The Troops from India,' *The Belfast News-Letter*, 02 October 1914. p.2; 'Arrival of Our Native Troops,' *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 02 October 1914. p.2; 'The Indians at Marseilles,' *The Newcastle Daily Journal*, 02 October 1914. p.2; 'The Indian Troops,' *Western Express*, 02 October 1914. p.2

[91] 'Landing of the Indian Troops,' *Nottingham Evening Post*, 02 October 1914. p.1

On the same day that the telegram from *The Times* appeared throughout the provincial press, another national reprint, this time sourced from *The Daily Telegraph*, reinforced the message of an unbreakable bond between the King-Emperor and his Indian troops.[92] The message came from George V himself, and it was addressed to the men of Indian Expeditionary Force A. In it he asked the soldiers of the Indian Corps to 'fulfil this sacred trust on the field of battle, shoulder to shoulder with their comrades from all parts of the Empire.'[93] Thus on the same day that a multitude of newspapers printed a story which depicted a contingent of Indian soldiers marching to war 'in order to win their Emperor's battles or die,' the King-Emperor himself provided confirmation of an unyielding bond between Indian soldier and monarch.[94]

The prominence given to *The Times's* and *The Daily Telegraph's* telegrams in the regional press illustrates how imperialist narratives, orchestrated by the India Office, dominated the public discourse which surrounded India's mobilisation for war. The prevalence of reprinted articles, which were distributed by the Press Bureau, and the presence in Marseilles of a handful of designated war correspondents who worked for the large national dailies, allowed for the construction and distribution of choregraphed narratives that appeared throughout Britain's national and regional press. When originally published by a reputable national, such as *The Times*, these stories were usually reprinted verbatim by the provincial press. On other occasions, when the stories originated as Press Bureau press releases, they were often edited or reworked into other news reports.

The amount of coverage dedicated to the disembarkation at a critical stage in the war, when the British and French armies were still to halt the German advance, demonstrated the magnitude of its timely arrival. Images of the event were also distributed and formed a large part of the media's coverage of the arrival of the Indian Army Corps. The *Nottingham Evening Post* printed both *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* articles on its frontpage, alongside a photograph of Indian soldiers marching through the streets of Marseilles (see figure 5).[95] The *Daily Express* dedicated the entire front page of its 2nd October edition to photographs of the Indians' parade through the city, whilst *The Daily Mirror* went even further by dedicating the entirety of two consecutive frontpages, and a double page spread in

[92] 'King-Emperor and His Indian Troops,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 October 1914. 'Indian Troops in France,' *The Birmingham Mail*, 02 October 1914. p.2

[93] 'The Troops from India.' p.2; 'Arrival of Our Native Troops.' p.2; 'The Indians at Marseilles.' p.2; 'The Indian Troops.' p.2; 'Landing of the Indian Troops.' p.1

[94] 'Win their Emperor's battles or die' quote originally printed in 'The Indian Troops at Marseilles,' *The Times*, 02 October 1914. p.9. 'Sacred trust' quote was a part of a translation of King George V's telegram to the Indian Corps, which was originally published in 'King-Emperor and His Indian Troops,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 October 1914. p.7. Both reports are credited to the Press Association, who widely circulated them to the provincial press.

[95] 'Landing of the Indian Troops,' *Nottingham Evening Post*, 02 October 1914.

its 2nd October edition to photographs to the Indian Army Corps' parade through Marseilles and the quickly constructed encampments established on the outskirts of the city (see figure 6).

The images that appeared in *The Daily Mirror* contained four themes, the first was the excitement and hospitability with which the locals received the sepoys as they paraded through the city to their camps.[96] The second portrayed a well-equipped and disciplined corps, illustrated by photographs of smartly dressed sepoys on parade, often standing to attention in front of British or French officers. A third showed aspects of the Indian camps that emphasised the differences between everyday Indian and British ways of life. The fourth area of focus were images of interactions between the Indian troops and French civilians. One caption beneath a photograph of a crowd of children following a Sikh commented, 'the small boys of France… were enormously interested in their Eastern allies, and the giant warriors smiled down good naturedly.'[97] The theme continued in the next edition, as the newspaper's frontpage headline read, 'French children make many new friends among the Eastern warriors.' Beneath the title a photograph recorded a young boy shaking hands with resting sepoys.[98]

THE DAILY MIRROR, Friday, October 2, 1914.

ARRIVAL OF INDIAN TROOPS IN FRANCE: PICTURES.

The Daily Mirror

LATEST CERTIFIED CIRCULATION MORE THAN 1,000,000 COPIES PER DAY

No. 3,414. FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1914 One Halfpenny.

INDIA FLINGS THE KAISER'S LIE BACK IN HIS TEETH AND SENDS HER SOLDIERS TO HELP TO CRUSH HIM.

The first picture shows General Serviers (France), who is wearing dark uniform, inspecting the men in company with a British officer. It will be noticed that they are wearing shorts. The second picture is a study of one of these dusky warriors. All of them have perfect teeth.—(*Daily Mirror* photographs.)

An enormous crowd watched their arrival.—(*Daily Mirror* photograph.)

The French boys were greatly interested.—(*Daily Mirror* photograph.)

India could not have given a more crushing rejoinder to the German lie about her dis[illegible] than she has done by sending her splendid warriors to fight side by side with [illegible] Enjoying liberty under Britain's enlightened rule, these men have no cause [illegible] or her tyrannous system of government, and they themselves asked to be allowed to take their share in the fight for freedom. The small boys of France, after the manner of their kind, were enormously interested in their Eastern allies, and the giant warriors smiled down good naturedly on the youngsters, who in but few cases reached [illegible]

Figure 6. The Front page of the 2 October 1914 edition of *The Daily Mirror* was dedicated to the Indian Army Corps at Marseilles.[99]

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96 'India flings the Kaiser's lie back in his teeth and sends her soldiers to help to crush him,' *The Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914.

97 'India flings the Kaiser's lie back in his teeth and sends her soldiers to help to crush him,' *The Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914.

98 'The Arrival of the Indians,' *The Daily Mirror*, 3 October 1914.

99 'India Flings the Kaiser's Lie Back in His Teeth and Sends her Soldiers to Help Crush Him,' *The Daily Mirror.*

When placed within the context of this unprecedented event, the thematic emphasis of the images carried messages to *The Daily Mirror's* readership. The photographs showed a well-ordered corps capable of meeting the demands of a modern war and one which was happy to take orders from European commanders. Contrasting this, the pictures also highlighted the cultural differences that existed between European and Indian, often by focusing on Indian routines that harked back to what would have been pre-industrialised habits for most Western Europeans. To the uninitiated Western mind, many of these aspects may have seemed peculiar; whether it be photographs of handmade earthen tandoor ovens which the Indian cooks used to bake chapattis, or a sepoy using a twig with its bark scrapped off to brush his teeth. The mix of such images insinuated that although Indians could fight a modern war with European equipment and leadership, Indian society was still somewhat anachronistic.[100]

Perhaps most significantly of all though, the pages of photographs dedicated by *The Daily Mirror*, were eager to show Indian soldiers as friendly, loyal, and dutiful. This aspect of the photographs took on an important meaning at this early stage in the war as it had been publicised in Britain that the German press had reported that India was more likely to rebel than support the war effort. The headline of the 2nd October edition even referenced this point, claiming, 'India flings the Kaiser's lie back in his teeth and sends her soldiers to help to crush him.'[101] This denial of German suggestions of rebellion came after a memorandum had been distributed to newspaper editors, by the Press Bureau, less than a week earlier asking them to rebuke the claim.[102] The prominence of numerous images of Indians befriending French civilians carried a connected significance as it implied that Indian soldiers were welcomed and civilised allies who would remain loyal to the allies' cause. A postcard of a photograph of Sikh soldiers marching through the city adopted a similar narrative (see figure 7). At the bottom of the image, the French and English text reversed a traditional colonialist trope by depicting the smartly dressed Indians as enlightened warriors who fought for a just cause, whilst their German adversaries were presented as uncouth thugs. 'Gentlemen of India marching to chasten German hooligans,' read the English description.

[100] 'Indian Soldiers go into Camp in France And Prepare for the Day When they will Come Face to Face with the Enemy,' *The Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914.
[101] 'India flings the Kaiser's lie back in his teeth and sends her soldiers to help to crush him,' *The Daily Mirror.*
[102] Press Bureau minutes 'Refutation of German allegations of revolt and risings in India,' NA/HO 139/18/76

Figure 7. A postcard memento of the Indian Army Corps' parade through Marseilles.[103]

The French public's enthusiastic welcome was matched by the fervour on display in the news reports that appeared in the British press. Most, if not all, of these accounts, appeared to be genuine in their enthusiasm. However, given the ascendancy of the German army for much of August and September 1914, there was little alternative but to present an enthusiastic response. Had circumstances not been so pressing and the media adopted a more critical tone towards the war, then it is possible a greater diversity of response from the news reports would have appeared, but instead the positive coverage given to the Indians' arrival represented a propaganda coup which followed the pro-imperial and anti-German narrative set out by the India Office and Whitehall in the weeks preceding.

The disparity between the public enthusiasm displayed by the British media and the private misgivings in the corridors of power continued after the Indian Army Corps' landing at Marseilles. Following a couple of weeks of acclimatisation, the Corps' infantry divisions were sent by train to Northern France. Whilst in transit, from Marseilles to Orleans, a member of the 'Indian Revolutionary Party,' was arrested in Toulouse, and upon examination his pockets were found to be filled with seditious literature intended for dissemination amongst Indian soldiers. The event set the authorities upon their guard as they quickly decided that Indian soldiers' correspondence must be, 'subjected to systematic

[103] 'Gentlemen of India marching to chasten German hooligans,' published on 'https://www.sikhnet.com/news/100-year-anniversary-sikhs-ww1-part-2,' 10 October 2018

examination.'[104] To do so a censor's office was hastily established in Boulogne and started work on 3rd November 1914. The office's chief censor, Evelyn Howell, acknowledged that although established by the War Office (a military authority), its chief objective was political.[105] Akin to the private misgivings of the politicians, army officers, and civil servants connected to the Indian Army Corps, the work of the censor's office was intended to remain secret, but, as the thesis will demonstrate, it was the first of numerous policies that the authorities enacted to check the disruptive forces unleashed by the advent of war. The private mistrust signified by policies which affected the Indian army contradicted the enthusiasm staged in public by politicians and media for the participation of Indian soldiers on the Western Front. This contradiction left the sepoys of the Indian Army Corps in metaphorical limbo, perceived as they were both as a defender of the British Empire and a threat to its racial hierarchies.

Conclusion

It was contended that, 'a wave of loyalty' spread throughout India to help Britain in its emergency.[106] However, despite the enthusiastic Indian response depicted by the British media at the outset of the war, internal India Office and Indian government communications demonstrated that the British authorities were aware that Indians held a variety of attitudes towards the conflict, rather than the singular loyalist one espoused by members of the Indian aristocracy that was almost ubiquitously referenced by British politicians and newspapers. Publicly, the war was portrayed as an opportunity to bring Britain and India into closer union, united by a common set of values and the empire's figurehead, George V. However, the private deliberations of British civil servants, politicians, and military officers demonstrated that many regarded the new conflict as a threat to British authority.

The wavering stance shown by the British government towards the use of Indian combatants against European troops also demonstrated how the First World War quickly challenged the traditional racial hierarchies of colonial rule held by British political, civil service, and military elites. As recently as the Boer War they had shied away from using Asian troops against a foe of European descent. Indeed, the use in 1914 of Indian combatants on the Western Front was more down to political and military pressures than an underlying desire on the part of the British government to allow Indians to play a prominent role in the war. The need to deploy tens of thousands of Indian servicemen to Europe not only strained India's military resources and Britain's political authority on the subcontinent; it also

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[104] 'Report on Twelve Months Working of the Indian Mail Censorship,' Written by E.B. Howell, 7 November 1915, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/82
[105] 'Letter, written by the Boulogne Censors' Office's chief censor, Evelyn Howell, explaining the office's purpose,' dated 9.12.14, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/235
[106] RA/PS/PSO/GV/P/522/58

threatened racialised understandings of British colonialism. The rejection of the Nepalese offer of Gurkha troops and the admittance of Indians into the Indian militia, demonstrated that British civil servants and military leaders held deep seated anxieties about loosening British authority over the Asian soldiers in their service.

Despite the public show of enthusiasm for the arrival of Indian soldiers to fight in Flanders, privately British figures within the government and Indian Army fought vehemently to maintain the fundamental aspects of the pre-war racial stratification of the armed forces of British India. As will be demonstrated, the British media began increasingly to follow this narrative through displays of ambivalence towards the sepoys as they went into battle during the coming weeks and months. In September 1914, this representation was still to gather pace, and as Indian troops disembarked at Marseilles this sense of ambivalence was more often than not hidden from public discourse in favour of an account which portrayed the sepoys as members of an egalitarian British Empire which stood united in opposition against an antithetical form of German imperialism.

Chapter 2.

The sepoy and the frontline: contradictory perspectives of the Indian soldier

Introduction

Shortly before his departure to France in August 1914, Donald Weir, the Leicestershire Regiment subaltern officer serving with the 7th Meerut Division, recorded his views about the civilian Indian population that he encountered during his preceding years of service. At the time Weir had yet to be told of the departure of his battalion to Europe and, disconsolate at the idea of missing the war, he wrote to his mother back in England, 'we in India can take no part in it as we are compelled to remain out here and look after these dirty, lying, black, sooars (swine) whom one hates so much that one would revel in shooting them down by the hundred daily.'[1] The disgust and violent language that Weir directed towards the people he policed is shocking to modern eyes, but it also contained an element of nuance as the officer separated certain ethnic groups from northern parts of the subcontinent, from the majority of India's population. It was in these northern regions that the vast majority of the ranks of the Indian Army were recruited. Just before Weir disembarked at Marseilles with Indian Expeditionary Force A he recorded his admiration for the 'martial races' of the Punjab, Nepal and Afghanistan, writing that, 'there is no doubt, that the native troops we have got are fine fighters, Gurkhas, Sikhs, Pathans, Dogras etc.'[2]

Weir's assessment of Indian society was grounded in race and, more specifically, a hierarchy of race. The officer placed white colonisers at the top; the majority of the darker skinned Indian population at the bottom; and a select few ethnic groups from northern regions of the subcontinent between the two. For Weir, the Gurkhas of Nepal were held in particular esteem, but it was a reverence tinged by macabre ambivalence. He told his mother in one letter, 'I am longing to see these little Gurkhas with their kukris get into close touch with the Germans… They are spending their spare time putting the best edge possible on them.'[3]

Weir's letters home indicated that as Indian troops entered the trenches of the Western Front in the autumn of 1914 his perception was framed by a racial stratification which went further than making a simple split between European and Asian. It stratified Indian society between the majority which he denigrated as 'sooars,' and a minority he defined, if still ambivalently, as 'fine fighters.' It was also clear from Weir's letters that he believed that the coming war would challenge his racialised

[1] 'Letter from Donald Weir to mother, sent from India, 4 August 1914,' LRO/DE 2913/2/3/2
[2] 'Letter from Donald Weir to mother, written on transport ship, 14 September 1914,' LRO/DE 2913/3/2/1
[3] Ibid.

understanding of colonialism through the unprecedented act of a European belligerent fielding Asian servicemen on a European battlefield against a European foe. 'Fancy what an insult we should think of it if black troops were employed by a European nation against us?' Weir mused to his mother.[4]

The chapter will demonstrate that Donald Weir's understanding was a common viewpoint amongst the British officers of the Indian Army, whose racialised perspectives of Indian society and Indian soldiers were ideologically framed by martial race theory.[5] It will explore how Weir, and many other British servicemen who had experience of colonial India, used race and caste to determine the position of the ethnic groups they encountered within their hierarchical conceptions of Indian society, and how these constructs tended to become more nuanced for the British officers who commanded Indian units, rather than British ones. Their perception of Indian society was not unique, it stemmed from the racial discourse popularised in colonial India amongst the British ruling elites. A combination of social Darwinism, Indian social and caste distinctions, and martial race theory resulted in the ethnic characterisation of the various indigenous groups that constituted the Indian Army and it was used by the British to justify the racial hierarchy that they implemented within the organisation.[6]

A recent study of British attitudes towards Indian soldiers concluded that influential men, such as General Willcocks, were overwhelmingly positive about the Indian soldiers, despite being bound up in an 'imperial hierarchy.'[7] The conclusions drawn from the evidence presented in this chapter reach a different interpretation, and the chapter will show how the ideological nature of martial race theory pervaded understandings of Indian servicemen amongst this group and was used to negatively portray them in comparison to their British counterparts. It will demonstrate how negative racial stereotypes were employed to justify the bar against Indians applying for King's Commissions; and how, through the application of tropes associated with the various groups which composed the Indian Army, it was used to explain the nuances of Indian units' battlefield performance at the expense of tangible factors within the control of its leadership.

So pervasive were the racialised accounts of Indian soldiers given by British officers who adhered to the tropes of the martial race theorists that many found their way into histories written decades later. In the 1980s, Jeffrey Greenhut revisited the subject of the Indian soldier during the First World War, the first time it had been addressed as a history in a meaningful manner since the accounts written by army officers in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Greenhut, who focused his research on the

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[4] Letter from Donald Weir to mother, written on transport ship,' dated 11 October 1914, LRO/DE 2913/3/2/3
[5] Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*. p.13
[6] Santanu Das, *Indians at Home, Mesopotamia and France;* Streets, *Martial Races;* Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*.
[7] Karen Leenders, 'A Hazardous Experiment: The First World War and changing British civilian and military attitudes to the people of India' (University of Sussex, 2018). p.167

Western Front, wrote a number of critical papers attacking the performance of the Indian regiments, believing them suited to little more than the border skirmishes along the North West Frontier.[8] Greenhut argued that the sepoys, 'were a poor choice to fight a modern war,' contending that they were ill-educated peasants without the experience to expand their horizons beyond their rural backgrounds. He concluded, 'what destroyed the Indians in France was the most severe imaginable form of culture shock.'[9]

More recent histories have rebutted many of Greenhut's appraisals about the character of the sepoys; but it should be recognised that his critique expanded upon longstanding disparagements of Indian troops found in the writings of British officers of the period who often regarded the Indian sepoy as inherently inferior to the British 'Tommy.'[10] The chapter will also demonstrate how the Indian Army's British officer class used the battlefield experiences of Indian officers to accuse them of being inherently incapable of offering the same levels of leadership as white British officers. However, as part of an examination of the relationship that existed between British and Indian officers, the chapter will also show how Indians were intentionally unprepared by the British to take over the command of units. The chapter will conclude that it was such intentionally programmed inadequacies which destined Indian officers to flounder in the quagmire of the Western Front, rather than inherent defects proposed by many British officers at the time.

The chapter will also investigate how martial race ideology was given a public face through the British media's reportage of the Indian Army Corps frontline service. Led by official communications from the War Office's newly established Press Bureau and reports from servicemen returning from the trenches, coverage of Indian soldiers' frontline service was often fanciful in its nature and was even criticised by the Indian Army Corps' commander, James Willcocks, for creating unrealistic expectations of Indian soldiers.[11] However, despite Willcocks's criticisms, much of the racial stereotyping found in the imagery and writing presented in the media was based on tropes propagated by the martial race ideologists of the Indian Army. The news articles, photography, and illustrations which circulated in the printed media in 1914-15 were, therefore, a sensationalised public reflection of the colonialist ideology which dominated the attitude of British officers towards the Asian servicemen that they commanded, rather than an elaborate concoction of imagery created solely by the press.

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[8] Greenhut, 'Sahib and Sepoy.' p.70
[9] Greenhut, 'The Imperial Reserve.' p.69
[10] For rebuttals of Greenhut see Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches*. George Morton-Jack, 'A Portrait of Collaboration'; *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War*; *The Indian Empire At War: From Jihad to Victory, the Untold Story of the Indian Army in the First World War*.
[11] Willcocks. *With the Indians in France.* p.92

These subjects of analysis demonstrate the pervasiveness of martial race ideology within the Indian Army. However, the chapter will also show how frontline encounters between British and Indian servicemen could challenge some of the tenants of martial race ideology. Often this was undertaken by British personnel who encountered Indian troops for the first time whilst serving in France. Their experiences and the accounts often unknowingly contradicted many of the martial race theorists' assertions about Indian soldiers. In doing so, their records help to reveal the ideological status of martial race theory and demonstrate how through the transference of Indian soldiers to a European battlefield the conflict chipped away at a pillar of colonialist doctrine.

Martial warriors by classification: the sepoy in battle

The memoirs of Frank Richards, who served as an infantryman with the Royal Welch Fusiliers in India shortly before the First World War, recorded how new arrivals were proselytised into a violent racist outlook towards the indigenous population. Richards wrote, 'drafts were inculcated by the older soldiers in the way natives should be treated, and they in turn inculcated other drafts.'[12] For Richards this process began almost immediately. Two days after arriving on the sub-continent he witnessed an older solider, who had a long service in India, assault an Indian sweeper for asking to be allowed to complete his current chore before he started a new task. After committing the assault, the man informed Richards and his fellow new arrivals, 'you will soon find out that the more you are down on them [Indians] the better they will respect you... What was won by the sword must be kept by the sword.'[13] Richards took this lesson to heart and recorded the longer he spent in India the more he came to the same position as the veteran, detailing numerous graphic examples of violence meted out by himself or his comrades to Indians for the most minor of indiscretions.[14] Richards concluded that, 'they had to realise they were inferiors; and while they did so all was well with them, and with us.'[15]

Richards wrote little of Indian soldiers, but what he did write was ambivalent. He speculated that a company of Indian cadet lancers he watched on manoeuvres were cowardly in comparison to their British counterparts, but, akin to Donald Weir, he also noted his liking for Gurkhas who were the ethnic group most renowned for their martial prowess.[16] Like Weir, Richards professed a macabre

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[12] Frank Richards, *Old soldier Sahib: Private Frank Richards D.C.M.,M. late of the second battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers* (Llandysul: Library of Wales, 2016, first published 1936). p.106
[13] Ibid. p.54
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid. p.67

fascination with the Gurkhas' use of the kukri in hand-to-hand combat, and also noted that they were, 'the only native troops with whom British soldiers were friendly enough for joking and playing tricks.'[17] His identification of the Gurkhas as particularly fearsome soldiers demonstrates how a racial hierarchy was utilised by many British servicemen on colonial service to determine their opinion of the standing of the various ethnic groups that they came into contact with in India, with particular groups such as Gurkhas, deemed to possess greater martial ability than some of the Indian Army's less famed classes.

Weir and Richard's writings are examples of the indoctrination of the racial prejudice against the Indian population which was endemic in British battalions that served in India at the outset of the First World War, and how soldiers could readily turn to violence to maintain the hierarchy they were indoctrinated in whilst they were on their tours of colonial service. Their disdain for much of the population of India was usually a more extreme form of racism and less nuanced than what can be found in the writings of British officers who served in Indian regiments, but both groups of servicemen shared a common denomination of contempt for Indian ethnic groups deemed by martial race theorists to be unworthy of soldiering. One such advocate of martial race theory, who had a background serving in Indian regiments, was the famed Field-Marshall, Earl Roberts, who visited Indian troops in France in November 1914. Roberts, who contracted and died of pneumonia during his visit, had previously written about his perceptions of the population administered by the Raj:

> In the British Army the superiority of one regiment over another is mainly a matter of training; the same courage and military instinct are inherent in English, Scotch, and Irish alike, but no comparison can be made between the martial value of a regiment recruited amongst the Gurkhas of Nepal or the warlike races of northern India, and of one recruited from the effeminate peoples of the south.[18]

One of Roberts's contemporaries, George MacMunn, a former Lieutenant-General in the Indian Army, was of a similar mind. 'It is one of the essential differences between the East and the West, that in the East, with certain exceptions, only certain clans and classes can bear arms; .' MacMunn continued, 'the others have not the physical courage necessary for the warrior… It renders any form of levy *en masse* impossible.'[19] These statements demonstrated that on one level Richards, Roberts, Weir, and MacMunn all made simple delineations between those races that they deemed to be too effete to serve in the military, and those they considered to possess the necessary martial values to soldier. However, it is also clear from the writings of Indian Army officers that martial race theory went beyond

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[17] Ibid. pp.88-89
[18] Frederick Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1897). p.532
[19] Frederick Roberts, *The Armies of India*. pp.123-30.

a simple demarcation, as it was also used to categorise and define the 'classes' which constituted the Indian regiments and was a foundation of how the British officers of the Indian Army viewed the Asian troops under their charge.

Indeed, as the men of the Indian Army Corps neared their baptism of fire on the Western Front in October 1914 a telegram, titled, 'Soldiers of the Indian Army Corps,' was circulated amongst its units. The telegram came from the sepoys' commander-in-chief, George V, and amongst the talk of faith and devotion to the king emperor it stated that as, 'the first Indian soldiers of the King Emperor who will have the honour of showing in Europe that the sons of India have lost none of their ancient martial instincts.[20] The words referenced the belief that the sepoys were imbued with 'ancient martial instincts' acclaiming, 'You are the descendants of men who have been mighty rulers and great warriors for many centuries. You will never forget this! You will recall the glories of your race!'[21] The telegram was designed to build the sepoys' self-esteem and through its conjunction of race and military prowess it illustrated the reverence that the Indian Army's British command held martial race ideology.

When units of the Indian Army Corps started to enter the frontline they found that the fast-paced movement of the preceding months had been replaced by the bitterly contested trench warfare that the theatre soon became associated with. C. G. Tennant, who served as a second lieutenant with the 1/4th Seaforth Highlanders in the Dehra Dun Brigade, graphically depicted the type of crushing warfare endured, describing it as, 'a dirty, disgusting, murderous business.'[22] At the end of 1914 in his section of the line, which was between two Indian regiments, the opposing trenches were in some cases as close as 20 yards apart:

> There we sit facing each other and killing each other by every possible means: attacks on each other's trenches are as often as not absolutely useless. If we rush a German trench we lose an enormous lot of men in doing it, and those who do get there are promptly blown up by mines left there while the enemy retires to another line of trenches a few yards to the rear from which he makes the hardly-won trench untenable through enfilade fire.[23]

Although Tennant made no complaint of the Indian troops he fought alongside, occasionally they were to be heard. A British solider of a territorial battalion, brigaded with the Garwhal Brigade of the Meerut Division, wrote: 'They [the Indians] are a decent lot, the ones that are with us, but some regiments are not up to much – refuse to go over the top in a charge. The ones we have here are the Garwhalis and

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[20] 'Indian Army Corps War Diary 19 October - 14 November 1914,' 1914, NA/WO/95/1088/2
[21] Ibid.
[22] 'Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant C G Tennant, 1/4th Seaforth Highlanders,' IWM/DOCUMENTS/8046.
[23] Ibid.

Gurkhas… As long as a white solider is going to be there, they fight like tigers.'[24] Frank Richards, who at the outbreak of the war enlisted with his old battalion, 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers, was of an even more severe opinion. Soon afterwards, Richards found his unit posted next to an Indian regiment during the First Battle of Ypres. Here the low opinion of Indians which he had formed during his service on the subcontinent was transferred to the Western Front. He complained that on one occasion, after losing all of its British officers in battle, the soldiers of a neighbouring Indian regiment refused to stick their heads above the parapet to fire on Germans advancing across no-man's land.[25] In response, according to Richards, every evening his battalion sent twelve men who had experienced Indian service over to their neighbour's section of the line. Once there the Fusiliers would proceed to curse the sepoys in Hindustani and, if that was to no avail, kick and hit them or threaten to shoot and bayonet them if they refused to put their heads over the top of trench to take aim and fire at the enemy. 'Native infantry were no good in France,' Richards concluded. 'Some writers in the papers wrote at the time that they couldn't stand the cold weather, but the truth was that they suffered from cold feet, and a few enemy shells exploding round their trenches were enough to demoralize the majority of them.'[26] Despite the conviction of his opinion, Richards's account was contradicted by his own battalion's war diary which contains nothing to support his views.[27] This contradictory official history indicates that Richards's account relied more on prejudice than it did on fact.

However, in 1914-15, it was also commonplace for Indian Army officers to base their judgements on the combat performance of Indian troops on the basis of their ethnicity, rather than other tangible factors which would have better determined their efficiency. When the commander of the Indian Army Corps, James Willcocks, wrote to Lord Kitchener on 10th November 1914 to provide a rudimentary report of the Indian Army Corps' first few weeks on the frontline he told his political master, 'the officers and men are fighting well… [and] morale has proved less difficult than I expected.' However, when he identified shortcomings in performances he did so on the basis of his soldiers' ethnicity. Willcocks requested that no more Brahmin units be sent to France, as they were, 'the only ones difficult to deal with.' He recommended that Hindu Jat regiments be kept in Egypt, where the fighting was less severe, and he also preferred that 'Mahommedans to be sent [to France] and Sikhs be kept in Egypt.'[28] Again in late January 1915, Locke Elliot, who was one of Willcocks's senior staff

[24] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.112, letter 167, 'From an English sergeant to a friend in London,' 1/3rd London Regiment [France?], 22nd October 1915.
[25] Frank Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die* (Uckfield: The Naval and Military Press Ltd, 2009, first published 1933). p.38
[26] Ibid. p.39
[27] Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches*. p.242
[28] 'Letter from Willcocks to Kitchener,' dated 10 November 1914. NA/PRO30/57/52/14.

officers, reiterated to Kitchener's office that, 'the one thing Willcocks asks is that no Brahmins be sent in reinforcements.'[29]

Willcocks's stance is reflected in the personal papers of lower ranked officers employed with the Indian Army during 1914-15. When Henry Keary was promoted to command the Lahore Division in January 1914, he recorded his views of the status and performance of the Indian regiments under his charge. In a letter to his brother, Keary commented, 'one in two [Indian regiments] are so demoralised as to be of no fighting value at all. These are regiments of not the best classes and should never have been sent out for work against a first-class European enemy.'[30] Akin to Willcocks, rather than attribute the poor performance of a unit to factors under the control of the Indian government or Indian Army such as logistics, equipment, training, or leadership, Keary condemned the poor performance of certain regiments on the basis of the ethnicity of the Indian soldiers that they were composed of, highlighting the hierarchy of ethnic groups that British officers perceived to exist within the Indian Army.

This explanation was also commonly adopted when assessing the performance of individual Indian soldiers. Charles Mosse, a lieutenant commanding a machine gun platoon of the 120th Rajputana Infantry, wrote to his father (himself a former Indian Army officer) to tell him of his experiences at the battle of Shaiba in Mesopotamia in April 1915. Mosse recounted the satisfaction he took from the performance of his men. During the course of one day his machine gun crews had emptied their water bottles into the barrel casings to keep the platoon's guns firing. 'It was intensely hot and we were almost dying of thirst,' recounted Mosse, 'so the action of the men who gave up their water was no mean one.'[31] Going into further detail, Mosse told how one man in particular stood out for his exceptional bravery as he brought up relays of ammunition throughout the battle whilst under fire from the enemy. When Mosse wrote again to his father and answered a question posed about the ammunition bearer's ethnic background, he recalled, 'the particular man I mentioned for gallantry was a Gijar [sic].' Unusually for the time Mosse's platoon was composed of a mix of classes and, with a mix of ethnic groups under his command, Mosse put the man's display of bravery down to his ethnicity and caste, stating, 'I think perhaps they are more fearless than the others.'[32]

[29] Letter from Locke Elliot of General Headquarters, France, to Kitchener,' dated 25 January 1915, NA/PRO30/57/52/15.
[30] Harold Keary, 'Private papers of Lieutenant General Sir Henry Keary,' dated 20 January 1915, IWM/Documents/2170.
[31] Charles Mosse, 'Letters from Charles Mosse, officer in the 120th Rajputana Infantry, describing his experiences in Mesopotamia,' 1915, NAM/1966/02/37/3.
[32] Ibid.

Figure 8. A photograph from Charles Mosse's collection showing his platoon firing at enemy positions under similar conditions to those he described in a letter to his father (January 1915).[33]

Likewise, the director of the Indian hospitals in France and Great Britain, Walter Lawrence, used ethnicity to describe how various classes had weathered the storm of industrialised warfare when he wrote to Kitchener at the end of 1915. Lawrence concluded that some classes had adjusted better than others to shell fire. Pathans, 'were least able to stand the strain of long and severe bombardment.' In his mind, 'the men who came best through the mental strain of bombardment were the Jats.'[34] Lawrence also referenced a criticism that Sikh sepoys had come in for, developing a reputation for brooding, attributed to them amongst others by Willcocks. However, in this instance, rather than crediting this manifestation to some sort of inherent character flaw, Lawrence believed the malaise hinged on what happened to the first three Sikh regiments which went into action:

> There is no doubt that the Indians who first went into action had the idea that they were unnecessarily sacrificed. I have frequently mentioned in my reports to you that the Sikhs a

[33] Charles Mosse photographic collection, January 1915, NAM.1966-02-97-31.
[34] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener by Walter Lawrence,' dated 27 December 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/37A.

year ago were very despondent and morose, and I think the word passed to other Sikhs that there was no hope for them and sooner or later they would all be killed off.[35]

Lawrence also noted that Sikh units tended to be amongst those which made the most vociferous calls for an improvement to their pay.[36] Yet, despite these concerns providing an explanation for a negative state of Sikh units' morale, when Willcocks wrote to Kitchener in November 1914, and again later in 1915 to the Royal Household, about the Indian Army Corps' service on the frontline, rather than identifying substantiated reasons to explain why the confidence of Sikh units was suffering, he gave no explanation. In the latter of the two letters Willcocks simply reported, 'the Sikhs began well but they are the most difficult troops to deal with now. They do well in mixed class corps, I do not think they should be formed in class regiments.'[37]

Whether or not the Indians who first went into action were unnecessarily sacrificed, the headquarters of the Indian Army Corps' own war diary acknowledged the daunting challenge faced by the Indian units during the first week that they were committed to battle from 23rd October 1914. The Lahore Division, which was the earliest division to reach the trenches, was dismembered as its battalions were used to plug gaps in the sectors of nearby British divisions.[38] The Indian Army Corps records showed that it suffered severely in the process, with two of the Jullundur Brigade's Sikh regiments decimated in the fighting. On 27th October, within three days of entering the frontline, the 47th Sikhs was down to only a single company in strength, whilst the other, the 15th Sikhs, suffered a hundred casualties on that day alone attacking a German position.[39]

The sacrifices made by the Lahore Division were vital to closing the gap in the British lines around Neuve Chapelle, and helped to save the BEF from defeat.[40] Willcocks himself asserted that the 47th Sikhs, who suffered perhaps most heavily of any Indian unit during these early days, had distinguished itself on 28th October, recording his verdict in a memorandum that he submitted to the Chief of General Staff in November.[41] Given the extraordinary casualty rate suffered by the 15th and 47th Sikhs, there is reason to believe Lawrence's assertion that their baptism of fire damaged Sikh units' morale and gave rise to the belief that Indian soldiers were being unnecessarily sacrificed. Yet Willocks, in his later criticism of Sikh troops, made no mention of the severe casualties suffered or how this could

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] 'Letter from James Willcocks to the Royal Household,' 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/C/Q/832/304.
[38] War Office: 'India Army Corps General Staff War Diary, September - December 1914,' NA/WO/95/1088/1.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches.* p.73
[41] War Office: 'Letter from Lt.General Willcocks, Indian Army Corps, to the Chief of General Staff, GHQ,' dated 15 November 1914, NA/WO/95/1088/2.

have damaged morale amongst other Sikh units and given rise to complaints about the pay received in relation to the level of danger faced – which far exceeded anything which could have been expected in ordinary service.

The dramatic increase in the risk of death or serious injury broke an unwritten contract between the Indian Army and its indigenous servicemen, who as mercenaries that were paid far less than their British counterparts, were always likely to call for improved pay and conditions as compensation.[42] In an early report to Kitchener, Lawrence had noted officers in the hospitals where wounded Sikhs were recovering had told him, 'they have come to the conclusion that the pay of an Indian sepoy is not sufficient renumeration for the work which they are being called upon to do in France.'[43] It was not only Sikh sepoys who complained over pay rates. At the convalescent depot at Milford-on-Sea Lawrence learnt that, 'for all classes, with the single exception of the Gurkhas … pay is the chief cause of discontent.' Lawrence calculated, 'that a sweeper gets a pay three times larger than that of a sepoy, and an Indian ward orderly gets more pay than a havildar.' Given this disparity Lawrence concluded, 'it is a very undesirable thing that a sepoy who has by chance been turned on to work as an orderly or as a cook, or as a waiter, should draw higher pay than a man at the front.'[44]

In addition to criticisms over pay, Walter Lawrence commented that the removal of any possibility of returning home on leave whilst serving overseas aggrieved many soldiers, particularly those who had been wounded. In a report written for Kitchener at the conclusion of the Indian Army's stay in France, the commissioner noted:

> There have been mistakes and misunderstandings… it was distinctly understood by the Indian sepoys and native officers that a promise was made to them that if they put up one more good fight, they would be allowed to go home in May last. However, before this could come into effect an order was issued that no wounded sepoy was to go back to the fighting line unless he volunteer in writing. Neither the alleged promise nor the orders regarding the wounded were carried out.[45]

As a result, noted Lawrence, some thousand wounded sepoys who had gone down to Marseilles in pursuance of the orders, were brought back to the front.[46] In previous conflicts it had been taken for

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[42] George Morton-Jack, 'A Portrait of Collaboration.' The seminal research which inspired Morton-Jack's study was, R. Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a theory of collaboration,' ed. Roger Owen and Robert B. Sutcliffe, *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1972).
[43] ' Letter from Walter Lawrence to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals,' dated 15 February 1915, NA/WO 32/5110.
[44] Ibid.
[45] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 27 December 1915,' NA/WO/32/5110/37A.
[46] Ibid.

granted that wounded sepoys had fulfilled their obligation and would be returned home. The change of policy was regarded by Lawrence as a break in the understanding between the sepoys and their employer which he recognised as a legitimate grievance. Lawrence continued, 'the sepoys therefore consider that full faith has not been kept with them; but in spite of their longing to get back home, and in spite of the misunderstandings… the great majority of the Indian infantry have shown the finest spirit.'[47] At the same time these grievances occurred, the angst suffered over broken promises made to wounded sepoys was exacerbated with news of famine and plague breaking out in the Punjab.[48]

Inadequacies of equipment and training is another factor overlooked in the correspondence of Willcocks which discussed the performance of his soldiers. Yet the Indian Army Corps own General Staff produced a report which addressed this issue shortly after its arrival on the Western Front. The report commented that Indian cavalry units were likely to go astray whilst on patrol, 'owing to the inability of the majority of the Indian Cavalry to read maps.'[49] Within the Indian army as a whole as the campaign progressed problems were only exacerbated as nothing was done to establish formal training procedures of new recruits who were quickly readied to send overseas, and as a result were usually ill prepared.[50] The system used to process new recruits also damaged morale within infantry and cavalry units, as those originally earmarked for one regiment were sent to others, in response to wherever the demand for reinforcements was greatest.[51] The inadequacies of the Indian Army's recruitment and training systems were laid bare after the conclusion of the Second Battle of Ypres in late May 1915. Henry Keary informed his brother, 'it has been recognised it can't go on as it is,' concluding, 'all the Indian regiments [are] a conglomeration of drafts of all sorts of other units; no regt. up to half its strength; no officers who know their men and vice versa; and generally no specialists (machine gun, signalling, and detachments) left.'[52]

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[47] Ibid.
[48] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 10 March 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/31B.
[49] War Office, 'India Army Corps General Staff War Diary, Appendix II Report on changes in Organization in the Indian Army since leaving India, and notes of points which may be assistance in sending further expeditions from India overseas,' 1914, NA/WO/95/1088/2.
[50] Daniel Marston, 'The Bedrock of the Raj: the Indian Army before 1939," in *The Indian Army and the End of the Raj*,' ed. Daniel Marston, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6-44. p.35
[51]Ibid.
[52] 'Private papers of Lieutenant General Sir Henry Keary,' letter dated 30 May 915, IWM/Documents/2170.

Shortfalls in specialist equipment were exposed at an even earlier stage. When compared to their British counterparts, the IAC's General Staff report noted, 'the deficiency of the S. and M. [sappers and miners] companies in the matter of bridging equipment, water supply stores, explosives and sandbags in comparison to the field companies of the R.E. [Royal Engineers] had to be made good in France under the orders of G.H.Q [General Headquarters].'[53] Indian infantry regiments also suffered from a shortfall in entrenching tools that were crucial to building effective defensive positions on the Western Front, with the report noting, 'judging by the standard of the War Establishments… the numbers allowed us do not amount to what we should have.'[54]

Figure 9. Indian infantry dig trenches at Fauquissart, France. Trenches became the defining physical feature of the warfare adopted on the Western Front, but by the Indian Army Corps Headquarters' own admission, the expeditionary force arrived ill-equipped to participate in such warfare.[55]

[53] NA/WO/95/1088/2.
[54] Ibid.
[55] 'Indian infantry digging trenches (Fauquissart, France). Photographer, H. D. Girdwood ', 1915, BL/VA/DEL Photo/24(299).

Perhaps most significant were the obsolete small arms that the Indian units brought with them from India, which resulted in a mix of inadequate training on newly issued weapons and ad-hoc modifications to elements which took longer to replace. The report noted that, 'the force had to be armed throughout with Mk.III rifle[s] as the rifles brought form India were incapable of being used with the Mk.VII ammunition.'[56] The issue of these updated models of the Lee-Enfield rifle at Marseilles only gave Indian troops arriving in September 1914 a matter of weeks to grow accustomed to their new firearms, but the solution implemented to adapt the Indian Army Corps' outdated machine guns to trench warfare was even more haphazard. The report claimed, 'the machine gun tripods as issued to the Army in India are quite unsuited to modern warfare.'[57] If left unmodified they were, 'higher above ground than is a field gun,' making their crews presentable targets and the guns ill-suited to being placed on the parapet of a trench. The report concluded, 'The above two points are an object lesson as to the desirability of keeping our armaments in India up to date with the changes introduced in the Home Army.'[58]

The evidence of the broken promises, as well as the poor pay, equipment and training, testifies to the difficulties that Indian troops faced. Yet few generals who served in the Indian Army gave priority to these factors in their reports of the Indians under their command. Charles Townshend admonished the Indian troops who served him during the siege of Kut in Mespotamia, which began on 7 December 1915. Townshend reported, 'Indian troops are not constituted by nature to stand misfortune and hardship with the same courage is Europeans.'[59] Yet it is clear to modern historians that the surrender of his division at Kut was principally due to strategic and logistical blunders, even negligence, rather than the 'constitution' of the troops under his command.[60]

Yet occasionally it was recognised by men from this group that Indian soldiers faced a range of grievances and shortcomings. John Nixon, the commander of the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia up until its disaster at Kut, wrote a private letter in March 1915 which damned the Indian Army's preparedness for war and the effects that the government of India's policies had on its morale:

> Between ourselves I cannot understand the government of India and wonder whether they are yet aware that the Empire is at war. The army is still deficient of things and still they cry out for economy and question every item of expenditure… Naturally some of the papers ask how India is helping in the war except by sending their men who get no extra pay and are not

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[56] NA/WO/95/1088/2.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*. p.117 quoting, BL/L/MIL/7/18848.
[60] Charles Townshend, *When God Made Hell*. p.521 *Despite sharing the same name as General Charles Townshend, the author *of When God Made Hell* is of no relation to the Indian Army officer.

> so keen on going… while the government saves money. Prices are very high for people, flour was lately six seers for the rupee, and families of men fighting for us in Europe, Egypt, Turkey, and Africa are put to it to keep living decently, and while food is at this famine price the Government of India save half a million on the military budget. It makes me sick.[61]

Yet despite these shortcomings, Willcocks and many other officers continued to ignore tangible factors in their correspondence which assessed the performance of the Indian Army, instead focusing their explanations on the race, caste, or religion of Indian soldiers in question. This was an illustration of the racialised understandings of Indian servicemen. Willcock's willingness to overlook factors under British control – such as leadership, training, supply, pay, and equipment, or the simple fact that Indian troops were essentially mercenaries fighting for a foreign power in a foreign land far from their homes – which might make for more tangible explanations for Indian units' performance, were not defined as critical factors. Instead, Willcocks habitually explained away flaws through a hierarchy of race, caste, and religion. With praise and criticism of varying gradients bestowed on the troops under his command, at the top of Willcocks's hierarchy were the British battalions, whom he argued that, 'to expect them [Indians] to do equally well as the British soldiers is to expect the impossible.'[62]

Willcocks's opinion of his Indian troops, framed as it was by race and ethnicity, was not exclusive to combat performance. It was also commonplace amongst British soldiers to reference Indian soldiers' abilities to withstand the winter months as a racially connected factor. Frederick Higgins, who served in the Lahore Division as an NCO in the 4th battalion, Royal Fusiliers regiment, commented on the reactions of his neighbouring Indian soldiers to the cold and wet winter months, 'coming from India and going into the trenches when the weather was cold, they had a really rough time. That's why I believe they wouldn't let them stop for the next one [winter 1915-16] and they were sent away to Mesopotamia.'[63] Some sepoys agreed with such assessments. One injured Indian soldier recovering in hospital from frostbite told Walter Lawrence, the commissioner of the Indian hospitals in England and France, 'we cannot stand this climate and conditions any better than young British soldiers could stand a campaign in the Punjab in May and June. The heat would dry up their life just as the cold in the trenches has dried up mine.'[64]

Undoubtedly the conditions faced by the Indian Army Corps in the winter 1914-15 were amongst the worst encountered during the war. Most trenches were still only in rudimentary form, making them particularly liable to flood. C.G. Tennant of the 7th (Meerut) Division recorded in a letter home sent in

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[61] 'Letter from John Nixon to Clive Wigram,' dated 9 March 15, RA/PS/PSO/GV/Q/832/305.
[62] 'Letter from James Willcocks to the Royal Household,' 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/C/Q/832/304.
[63] 'Higgins, Frederick Charles (oral history),' 1986, IWM/SOUND/9884.
[64] 'Letter from Walter Lawrence to Clive Wigram,' dated 19 July 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/Q/832/303.

January 1915, 'water is the great and pressing problem at present: the weather has been almost unprecedentedly wet, and the whole countryside is soaked in mud and like a sponge: owing to its flatness it is generally impossible to drain the trenches.' With the trenches regularly filling with mud and water, Tennant continued, 'every day of rain has made them more and more unpleasant until now the chief question is how to keep the men more or less out of the water. The wet weather became even more dangerous when hard frosts began to set in during the nights. 'Frost-bite sets in at once and the man is done for so far as his feet and legs are concerned. Our own British troops have stood it wonderfully well, but some of the Indian regiments have suffered pretty severely in this respect.'[65]

Akin to many other descriptions of Indian soldiers' ability to deal with the wet and cold, Tennant implied that race played a part in determining a soldier's ability to withstand the winter months, as he gave no further details as to why some Indian regiments succumbed more readily to frostbite than British units did. However, despite a common inclination amongst British servicemen to believe that Indian regiments were unable to withstand the wet and cold as well as themselves many Indian soldiers who fought in 1914-15 had served on the North-West Frontier during winter months and a significant proportion came from mountainous regions which often saw colder temperatures than those experienced on the Western Front. Furthermore, Indian soldiers only had a sickness record that was 2.5% higher than the British Army's, which indicates that their susceptibility to the cold seems, perhaps unintentionally in many instances, to have been exaggerated in relation to statistical evidence.[66] One senior medical officer who served with the Indian Army Corps believed this was the case when he recorded that, with the exception of trench foot, 'I am at a loss to account for the impression ... that the Indians were specially tried by the climate.'[67] Even the identification of trench foot as a particular problem for Indian troops could be explained by more rudimentary reasons than an inherent Indian susceptibility to the wet and cold. Joseph Price, a British NCO who served with the Middlesex Regiment, believed that the application of whale oil to soldiers' feet was necessary to keep incidents of trench foot to a minimum. However, he observed that, unlike British troops, the sepoys generally did not apply it due to a fear that that the lubricant contained pig or cow fats. As a result, Price discerned, they suffered higher instances of trench foot and frostbite.[68]

George Gwynn, a British auxiliary transport driver, commented on another problem when he identified the deficiencies of the winter clothing issued, or lack of, which was unable to keep soldiers warm and dry when trenches flooded in the winter months. Some years later he remembered one

[65] 'Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant C G Tennant' IWM/DOCUMENTS/8046.
[66] Greenhut, 'The Imperial Reserve.' p.63
[67] 'Henderson papers,' NAM DS/MISC/2/119.
[68] 'Price, Joseph (oral history),' 1975, IWM/SOUND/565/REEL 4.

encounter with Indian soldiers when he was sent to collect frostbitten sepoys coming out of the line. 'The poor devils I saw them wobbling down the road. They had torn their blankets up and tied them around their feet. They had frostbitten feet, as big as footballs, they were pleased to see the bus.'[69] Gwynn's observation that Indian troops lacked sufficient winter clothing is supported by records left by the Indian Soldiers' Fund (ISF), which was a committee established by The Order of St. John of Jerusalem in 1914 to provide clothing, comforts and medical provisions for the Indian soldiers who served on the Western Front. By 31st March 1915, in order to make up for the inadequate supplies from the War Office, the ISF had sent 49,113 pairs of socks, 9,581 shirts, 6,324 vests, 21,737 mufflers, 13,371 mittens, 5,500 waterproof pagris and 4,441 balaclavas, amongst numerous other items of winter clothing dispatched to Indian units serving in France.[70]

The ISF felt the need to send these garments because of a shortfall in what the War Office was able to issue. The same internal report which criticised aspects of the Indian Army Corps training and equipment upon its arrival in France also implied criticism of the winter attire issued to the Indian Army when they landed in Marseilles. The report detailed that each sepoy was limited to, 'one flannel shirt, one warm vest, one pair of warm drawers.'[71] This initial distribution would not have been sufficient for the rigours of a northern European winter but, despite the need for more warm clothing, James Willcocks attempted to intervene and stop deliveries of winter wear from the ISF a few months later. On 10th December 1914, the general wrote to the committee, 'the truth is that conditions have changed and Government is fast giving us more than enough clothing. It was different at the very beginning, but, since the real cold sort, it is a case of being over-clothed.'[72]

However, British officers who served on the frontline contradicted Willcocks's confident assessment in statements that they gave to members of the ISF committee when they visited France, still believing that in the middle of the 1914/15 winter the men under their command lacked the necessary protection from the weather. One of the committee members, Phyllis Sydenham, reported in December that a Colonel Tribe gave an account which conflicted with Willcocks's letter. Sydenham also reported a conversation he had with another Indian Army officer. 'A captain Sweter called at the warehouse yesterday in despair about his men… He says Willcocks is so far away from many of the Indian troops that they find it impossible with the poor transport they have to replenish themselves

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[69] 'Gwynn, George (oral history),' 1985, IWM/SOUND/9134.
[70] F. F. Perry, 'Reports of The Indian Soldiers' Fund (1914- 1919): Indian Soldiers' Fund, Report of the First Six Months' Work ' IWM/LBY/6339. p.8
[71] NA/WO/95/1088/2.
[72] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 16.12.1914),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1.

with clothes from him.'[73] Sweter's complaint referenced the dismemberment of the Indian infantry divisions for a large part of the winter of 1914-15, with individual regiments being used in an ad-hoc manner to fill gaps in the lines of the British divisions. Not only did this have damaging implications for morale, but it also created logistical problems with many brigades or battalions moved too far from their parent units to be adequately supplied.[74] Given this evidence, Willcocks's assurances were misplaced. It is apparent from these contradictory statements, as well as the ISF's own significant spending on winter attire for Indian troops, that the description provided by Gwynn of frostbitten Indian soldiers hobbling down a French road can be better explained by a lack of sufficient clothing and a resistance to the use of whale oil than an innate inability amongst Indian soldiers to cope with a cold and wet climate.

As the winter stalemate drew to a close assessments of the Indian Army Corps' morale indicate that its morale had suffered.[75] Yet it faced its most significant test yet as part of the British First Army's offensive at the Battle of Neuve Chappelle, in March 1915. Although a minor tactical victory, initial successes could not be exploited, and the Lahore and Meerut Divisions suffered over 4,000 casualties in the process.[76] Walter Lawrence commented in a press release of the casualties who came into his hospital, 'there is little doubt that the success of the Indians at Neuve Chapelle has had a great effect upon their spirits.'[77] However, this boost was short lived as like the other inadequacies under the control of the Indian Army's political masters, such tangible factors which could have accounted for deficiencies in the performance of Indian soldiers were almost habitually discounted by Willcocks and other senior Indian Army officers. Instead, their correspondence emphasised ethnicity, religion, and caste as the most important explanations of Indian soldiers' performance on the battlefield. James Willcocks illustrated this point through the emphasis he placed on ethnicity when he wrote to the Royal Household in June 1915 to review the performance of the soldiers under his command. After categorising the various classes under his command, Willcocks concluded his review with an ambivalent summary of the Indian troops that would have left the British monarch in no doubt as to which group of soldiers he deemed most praiseworthy and correspondingly at the pinnacle of the Indian Army's racial hierarchy, 'no troops ever did finer work than the six British battalions [of the

[73] Ibid. It should be noted that during most of the winter 1914-15 the Indian infantry divisions serving in France were dismembered, with battalions being used by British command in an adhoc manner to fill gaps in the British division's lines. Not only was this damaging factor on morale, it also created logistical problems which were referenced in statement given by Sweter to the ISF.

[74] Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches.* p.72

[75] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 27 December 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/37A.

[76] RA/PS/PSO/GV/Q/832/305.

[77] 'War Office press release, subject Indian Army hospitals situated in Brighton,' 1915, BL/Mss/Eur/F143/66/68.

Indian Army Corps] and no one better knows than the Indians… If Indian soldiers could do what British soldiers do, we should not be the rulers of Hindustan.'[78]

'My own condition is the same as yours': new frontline perspectives of the sepoys

Willcocks's racial categorisations reflected the ideological status of martial race theory within the Indian Army, and a belief that its Asian personnel were inherently inferior to their British counterparts. However, these views were often not reflected by the accounts of British soldiers who had not been indoctrinated by years of colonial service. British servicemen who had never served in India or previously encountered Indian troops often lacked the preconceived stereotypes of their professional counterparts who had spent time on military service on the subcontinent. For example, when Henry Williams, an inexperienced subaltern from the 1/4th Royal Fusiliers, was attached to a Sikh regiment at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 to help make up for its shortfall in British officers, Williams noted, 'the Sikhs were very good soldiers… They were very good to us, they educated us in the world, they were our men and they were willing to put over what was necessary.'[79] Frederick Higgins, who was also from the 1/4th Royal Fusiliers, and whose battalion held a section of the frontline next to an Indian one was of a similar opinion of the sepoys he encountered, stating, 'as troops they were wonderful.'[80] When a territorial officer reflected upon Gurkha orderlies joining his staff team when his battalion formed a brigade with Indian regiments, he reflected the Nepalese 'were very smart and intelligent,' unsuspectingly contradicting the denigrating remarks of martial race theorists who depicted them as childlike.[81] C.G. Tennant, the officer in the 1/4th Seaforth Highlanders (a battalion which came from Britain to join the Indian Army Corps), wrote extensively of his experiences in France in letters to friends and family. On the second day of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, he wrote about a Gurkha regiment stationed next to his battalion, 'they did not seem to need much support – they were very cheerful and firing steadily and methodically at the occasional grey figure in the shade of the wood.'[82] His experience contradicted that of Frank Richards who believed that without motivation or threats of violence from British soldiers or officers Indian troops cowered in battle.

[78] 'Letter from James Willcocks to the Royal Household,' 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/C/Q/832/304.
[79] 'Williams, Henry Jameson Middleton,' 1990, IWM/SOUND/11265.
[80] 'Higgins, Frederick Charles (oral history),' 1986, IWM/SOUND/9884.
[81] John More, *With Allenby's Crusaders,* (London: Heath Cranton Ltd, 1923). p.195
[82] 'Private Papers of 2nd Lieutenant C G Tennant,' IWM/DOCUMENTS/8046.

A moving scene between a young wounded British soldier and jemadar Hasan Shah of 9th Hodson's Horse, this time told from the Indian side, told of how shared life and battlefield experiences in France could also overcome cultural divides to create fleeting moments of compassion between the two groups. Shah came upon the wounded British solider on the battlefield and after giving him a drink of his water asked if anything else could be done. 'Nothing,' the solider replied, 'except that I shall not meet my sweetheart… four months ago she wrote to me and begged me to come to her soon.' To which Shah replied, 'may the All-Merciful God satisfy the desires of your heart and unite you with your beloved one.' The British solider answered, 'I am finished,' continuing, 'and when my end comes, my one regret will be that when my love called me I was unable to go to her.' 'My friend,' Shah said weeping, 'my own condition is the same as yours.' Soon after the young British soldier passed away as a sowar (Indian cavalryman) carried him to a field hospital.[83]

Figure 10. A Scottish Highlander and Indian Dogras sit in a trench at Fauquissart, France in 1915. Although the image was likely staged, it does illustrate how British and Indian infantry units of the Indian infantry brigades would literally 'rub shoulders' with one another where the units' respective sectors met of the frontline.[84]

[83] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.237, letter 405, 'Jemadar Hasan Shah (Punjabi Muslim, 33) to a lady addressed as 'Dearer than Life,' (c/o shopkeeper Ram Bheja Mul, Adowal, Jhelum District, Punjab),' 9th Hodson's Horse, France, [Urdu] 19th September, 1916.

[84] 'Highlanders and Dogras in a trench with dugouts (Fauquissart, France). Photographer: H. D. Girdwood. 1915,' BL/VA/DELPhoto/24/(294).

In other instances, Indian servicemen, who performed non-combatant roles, such as stretcher bearing or mule driving, were often held in high esteem by newly recruited British soldiers, despite the Indians who served in these roles often being excluded from combat duties due to their ethnicity or caste. Although barred from fighting, the destructive nature of the warfare encountered in 1914-15 often meant that non-combatants were subjected to the same shellfire that combatants were. The resolve of Indian non-combatants to perform their duties under these conditions frequently impressed British servicemen who observed their actions. John Hargrave, a member of the 32nd Field Ambulance which served at Sulva Bay on Gallipoli, recorded his experiences operating alongside Indians after he landed. The Indians that Hargrave met were mule drivers of the Indian Mule Corps who traversed the rocky hillsides of Gallipoli to supply the trenches and bring back the dead. Being drivers of the Indian Mule Corps these men would have been classified as 'Drabi' – a group who were mainly Punjabi Muslims recruited from a diverse range of caste backgrounds not deemed to possess the martial qualities required for combatant positions.[85] Despite their bar, the proximity of the fighting in the Dardanelles meant that when mule drivers traversed Sulva's pathways they did so under observation from Turkish positions and came under artillery fire, suffering heavy casualties in the process.

Such was the impact that the men of the Indian Mule Corps made on Hargrave that he used a silhouette he had drawn of an Indian mule train as the front cover of a memoir he wrote about his time in the Dardenelles. Hargrave also dedicated a chapter of his book to his encounters with the men of the corps. In one anecdote he recorded how he came across an Indian who had his left leg torn off by shrapnel. The man, Hargrave remembered, '[was] sitting on a rock smoking a cigarette with great tears rolling down his cheeks. But he said no word. Not a groan or a cry of pain.' Hargrave concluded, 'a beautifully calm race, the Hindus. They did wonderful work at Sulva Bay. Up and down, up and down, hour after hour they worked steadily on.'[86]

[85] Candler. p.208

[86] John Hargrave, *At Sulva Bay: Notes and Sketches* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917). pp. 128, 130

AT SUVLA BAY

By the blessing of Allah he's more than one wife ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"
He's forbidden the wine which encourages strife,
But you don't like the look of his dangerous knife ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"

The picturesque whallah is dusky and spare ;
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"
A turban he wears with magnificent air,
But he chucks down his pack when it's time for his prayer ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"

When his moment arrives he'll be dropped in a hole ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"
'Tis Kismet, he says, and beyond his control ;
But the dear little houris will comfort his soul ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"

The Indian whallahs go up to the hills ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"
They pass by the spot where the gun-cotton kills ;
But those who come down carry something that chills ;—
"Jhill-o ! Johnnie, Jhill-o !"

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Figure 11. A poem, written by John Hargrave, about the Indian mule drivers who served at Sulva Bay. The silhouette was used for the front cover of his book *At Sulva Bay*. See 'Behind the Lines' chapter for reference to the poem.[87]

Hargrave's admiration for this group of Indian servicemen is replicated by other descriptions of the fighting at Gallipoli. Another account written by an Australian medic, Joseph Beeston, whose Divisional ammunition column was composed of Sikh mule drivers, recorded:

> They were a brave body of men. It was their job to get the ammunition to the front line, so that they were always fair targets for the Turks… The train might number anything from 15 to 20 mules. All went along at a trot, constantly under fire. When a mule was hit he was unhitched, the boxes of ammunition were rolled off, and the train proceeded; nothing stopped them. It was the same if one of the men became a casualty; he was put on one side to await the stretcher-bearers – but almost always one of the other men appeared with a water bottle.[88]

[87] Ibid p.132

[88] Beeston, Joseph, *Five months at Anzac: a narrative of personal experiences of the officer commanding the 4th Field Ambulance, Australian Imperial Force*, (Sydney: W.C. Penfold & Co., 1916). pp.32-33

Like Hargrave, the Indians at Gallipoli left an impression with Beeston and he also dedicated a chapter of his short memoir of his experiences in the Dardanelles to the Indian servicemen he encountered. In another example an anonymous soldier serving in the Dardanelles wrote to *Punch* to record his impression of the Indian Mule Corps. Regaling an incident he told readers that when he passed the train its drivers were joking and seemed indifferent to the shells bursting around them, only on his return he found one of the drivers kneeling beside the body of his mule who had been killed by the nose cap of a shrapnel shell. 'The callous old fellow,' the correspondent recalled, 'was sobbing bitterly.' Like Hargrave and Beeston, the writer respected this group of Indian servicemen. 'I often watched them,' he remembered, 'both men and mules, with interest and curiosity. The men were wonderfully cool and their attitude in the face of death was extraordinary.'[89] All three accounts of the Indian Mule Corps at Gallipoli hold the mule drivers in a level of esteem that martial race theorists would have struggled to incorporate into their racialised conceptions of Indian servicemen prior to the war.

Figure 12. A driver of an Indian mule train passes New Zealand soldiers at Gallipoli. Due to the tight and mountainous terrain at Gallipoli drivers faced much of the same shell fire as frontline combatants did.[90]

[89] *A Way We Have in the Army*, Punch's Almanack for 1916 (Bradbury, Agnew & Co.: Punch, 1916). p.352
[90] 'Indian man with mule, Gallipoli, 1915. Photograph taken by Ernest Merrington,' NLN/ 1/2-077970-F, http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23152222

Similar sentiments of praise were bestowed by representatives of the Indian Soldiers' Fund upon Indian stretcher bearers deployed to the Western Front, after they visited France in June 1915 to assess medical arrangements:

> The Indian stretcher bearers have done most splendid work and their officers were full of their praise. Recruited from a class not eligible for army combatant service, they have proved themselves to be full of pluck and most willing and gallant workers under most dangerous conditions, moving freely up to and into the trenches to remove wounded and working over areas constantly subject to shell attack with the utmost nonchalance.[91]

These examples demonstrate that first-hand experience of warfare often contradicted the opinions of martial race theorists who deemed the classes that composed the mule drivers and stretcher bearers of the Indian Army to be unworthy of combatant roles. This is not to say that racist attitudes or negative opinions of sepoys or Indian non-combatants did not exist in the writings of British military personnel who had not encountered Indian soldiers before the war's outbreak. But it does illustrate the ideological nature of martial race theory and the institutionalised racism that existed within the Indian Army, which often resulted in whole ethnic groups being castigated or praised for their soldiering qualities on the basis of their ethnicity or caste. Personnel with no, or limited, prior exposure to this ideology often came to contradictory conclusions about the Asian soldiers they met with their records lacking the tropes which were evident in the writings of Willcocks, McMunn, Richards, and Roberts who had all spent years on Indian service and been inculcated by forms of martial race ideology.

[91] 'Report, dated 7 July 1915, received by the Indian Soldiers' Fund from Sir Tevredyn Wynne, Lord Norreys, and Mr C. C. McLeod after their visit to the front in France, 1915,' BL/IOR/Mss Eur/ F120/12.

Figure 13. Indian army stretcher-bearers bringing in a wounded officer.[92]

Unlike the Indian Army's officer class, the macabre nature of the industrialised warfare of the First World War lacked prejudice, maiming and killing regardless of caste or race. Its indiscriminate violence meant that Indians not deemed suitable for combat duty often found themselves coming under the same storm of fire as those which were. In the process the men of the Indian Mule Corps and field ambulances could provoke admiration from their British comrades, and even on occasion reassessments of the stereotypes attached to them by exponents of martial race theory. Edmund Candler, who was one such advocate, admitted as much when he devoted three chapters of his postwar account, *The Sepoy,* to the mule drivers, labourers, and other non-combatants of the Indian Army who would have made for unlikely subjects before the outbreak of the conflict.[93] 'The war,' Candler concluded, 'has proved that all men are brave, that the humblest follower is capable of sacrifice and devotion… This revelation has meant a general levelling in the Indian Army and the uplift of classes hitherto undeservedly obscure.'[94] However, this realisation seemed to have caused Candler a dilemma, as it was at odds with the credence of martial race theory to which he subscribed. He immediately counterbalanced the statement, noting, 'at the same time the reputation of the great fighting stocks has been splendidly maintained.'[95] The groups of sepoys which Candler identified as,

[92] Indian army stretcher-bearers bringing in a wounded officer. IWM/Photographs/Q1216.
[93] Candler, *The Sepoy*. pp.208-234
[94] Ibid. p.2
[95] Ibid. p.2

'hitherto undeservedly obscure,' largely continued to remain so in the public eye as the media focused its attention on the Indian Army's more acclaimed ethnic groups. Indeed, Candler's struggle to abandon the precepts of martial race ideology was reflected in the ongoing outlook of the Indian Army's British officer class who continued to maintain their long held racially informed opinions of the Indian soldier. At the conclusion of the war Willcocks wrote of his experiences on the Western Front. In his autobiography, the commander attributed some of the Indian Army Corp's difficulties to the pre-war policies of the Indian government and the tight budgets that it operated under.[96] However, he had made little mention of these factors, or others under the control of the War Office, Indian Army, or himself in the assessments he made in 1914-15. Instead, race and ethnicity were the defining factors. Their prominence in his writing represented a disconnect from reality which absolved himself and the Indian Army Corps' British leadership of responsibility for the shortcomings in the Corps' frontline performance.

Officers and sepoys: a monopolisation of authority

Willcocks did not just use martial race theory to explain the performance of soldiers under his command. In the final sentence of his memoir of his experiences in France, Willcocks concluded: 'No argument decked in rhetoric will alter the fact, that you can never replace the British officer in the Indian Army.'[97] The general's statement highlighted that martial race theory could also be used to rationalise and justify the apartheid of the Indian Army's commissioned ranks. For adherents to the ideology, race not only defined who was eligible to serve in the Indian Army, it also determined who was deemed suitable to provide its leadership on the battlefield. When the Indian Army went to war the British control of its leadership was secured through a monopolisation of the commissioned ranks. Indians were barred from attaining King's commissions and limited to Viceroy's commissions that gave them little authority in comparison to the former. In 1914 a Viceroy commission gave an Indian officer command over lower Indian ranks, but barred him from commanding British troops, and the highest rank that he could achieve was Subedar-Major, a position that even the most junior British subaltern outranked.[98]

This policy reflected the Indian Army's colonial origins through its preservation of a racial hierarchy that secured the supremacy of a few British officers over many Indian soldiers. The bar had though

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[96] Willcocks, *With the Indians in France*. pp.3-4
[97] Ibid. p.344
[98] David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*. p.155; Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: its contribution to the development of a nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.62-3

become a matter of controversy in India, particularly amongst sections of the Indian aristocracy who regarded the restrictions as a limitation to their sons' career prospects, who may otherwise have chosen to have served in the Indian Army.[99] The pressure exerted by this group led to the creation of the Imperial Cadet Corps in 1901, which was a military college established to provide young Indian aristocrats with a military education in preparation for a commission.[100]

Despite these aspirations, the college quickly proved to be incapable of providing effective graduates. In 1912 an officer called Robert Ricketts took charge of the Imperial Cadet Corps; but two years later, on the day before Britain declared war on Germany, Ricketts wrote to George V's assistant private secretary and equerry, Clive Wigram, with a less than satisfactory appraisal of the institution.[101] Ricketts damned both the standard of cadets and tuition, claiming that the handful of students who had graduated and gone on to attain commissions had proven to be 'disappointing,' and many of its students, 'were in no way fit for it educationally.'[102]

Ricketts told Wigram, 'personally I am entirely against giving them [King's commissions].' He even went as far as to suggest that the Imperial Cadet Corps might be allowed, 'to die so as to get rid of its attendant political problem.'[103] Ricketts's evaluation of the college and his proposed solution was illustrative of the widespread desire amongst the British officers who staffed the Indian Army in 1914-15 to maintain the segregation of its command. The college had been allowed, if not encouraged, to fail as the majority did not want to see an equality of leadership between Briton and Indian. This position was confirmed by Ricketts, who informed Wigram, 'there can be no doubt that there is a very strong feeling in the army against giving Indians real King's commissions.'[104]

James Willcocks was also of this opinion. On his arrival in France, the general recorded his annoyance at the continued calls for full Indian commissions, suggesting that Indian officers be granted ceremonial titles in return for dropping the question.[105] Willcocks's letter was written in response to a memorandum from the viceroy which advocated that Indians should be made eligible to apply for full commissions.[106] However, much to Hardinge's disgruntlement, other active or retired high ranking officers agreed with Willcocks. Lord Kitchener had commented in a discussion at Balmoral that, 'under no circumstances would he let the native officer command the British private soldier;' whilst

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[99] 'Letter from Robert Ricketts to Clive Wigram,' dated 3 August 1914 RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/59.
[100] David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*. pp.63-4
[101] RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/59.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] 'Appended response from James Willcocks to Memorandum: Admission of Indians to the higher ranks of the Army, 1914' RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/77.
[106] 'Admission of Indians to the higher ranks of the Army,' Government of India 1914, RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/74.

Beauchamp Duff, commander-in-chief of India, wrote a damning appraisal of Indian leadership concluding that Indians had shown no qualities of leadership in the field or wished for greater responsibility. Beauchamp Duff, akin to Kitchener, also argued that a British soldier would never follow an Indian officer in the same way he would follow a British one.[107]

The basis of these criticisms were centred on a core belief that Indians were incapable of providing the level of leadership and inspiration that British officers could, and that British soldiers would not take orders from anyone but a white man. However, despite the obvious threat to their status that reform of the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army represented, loss of their privileged social standing was not an argument used by British officers to justify one of Indian Army's key discriminatory policies. Instead, the Indian Army's battlefield experiences during 1914-15 only seemed to strengthen such beliefs amongst the Indian Army's British officers, as well as their resolve to cement their position as the ultimate authority in the service.

James Willcocks was a strong advocate of the British monopoly over the Indian Army's leadership. After eight months of service on the Western Front, he wrote to George V, 'the one thing this war has taught is that under no kind of circumstances can the Indian officer replace the British – the British officer is truly irreplaceable and no one knows it better now than the native soldier.'[108] Such assessments were acknowledged by the king, who a month later wrote to Hardinge to put forward his own views on the reform of Indian commissions and how the war had affected his thinking. 'The question of giving commissions in the native ranks is bound to crop up again and will be difficult to reject, though this war has made clear how absolutely dependent the native troops are upon their British officers.'[109]

In the same month, John French, commander-in-chief of the British Expeditionary Force, gave a damning appraisal of Indian officers. 'Broadly speaking,' French wrote, 'the Indian officer in this campaign has shown himself neither a capable tactical leader nor an efficient leader of thought amongst his men.'[110] French reasoned this could be explained to a great extent by Indian officers' declining social status due to the poor level of pay they received. Indeed, when Walter Lawrence commented on the morale of Indian wounded convalescing in France and England during 1915 he noted that a havildar (a rank corresponding to sergeant) received a lower salary than an Indian

[107] 'Appended responses to the Admission of Indians to the higher ranks of the Army, 1914,' RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/77

[108] 'Letter from James Willcocks to George V,' dated 6 June 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/C/Q/832/304.

[109] 'Letter from George V to the Viceroy of Indian, Lord Hardinge,' dated July 15 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/P/522/75.

[110] 'Letter from Field Marshal Sir John French to the India Office, on the subject of sedition among the Indian troops,' 1915 BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517/1.

hospital ward orderly, much to their frustration.[111] Despite this significant factor, French gave an additional explanation for what he perceived to be the poor performance of Indian officers that was not based on social or economic reasons, but on biology. It was possible, noted French, 'that this inability is, to a certain extent, innate.'[112] Willcocks expressed a similar opinion of Indian officers, when he stated in his autobiography, 'in ordinary circumstances in the field they [Indian officers] were well fitted to fill temporarily the place of their lost British leaders… but after a life spent with them in many lands, I do not consider they can replace the British officer in the field.'[113]

Although very little public criticism of Indian officers surfaced in the British press, Haig and Willcocks's private feelings were shared by many British officers lower down the chain of command. When Alexander Maitland, a captain in the Indian Mule Corps, noted in November 1914 that he commanded a company of 500 men and 768 mules unassisted by another British officer, it was more British rather than Indian officers which he thought were required to lighten his burden.[114] Similarly, when Edmund Candler reported the views of the British officers he had conversed with, with regards to Gurkha regiments, he affirmed that British officers were essential to their leadership, claiming, '[the Gurkha's] great fault in a general attack is that he does not know when to stop. Without his *sahib* he would not survive many battles. And that is why the casualties are so heavy in regiments when the British officers fall early in the fight.' According to Candler, Gurkhas' lust for battle was not the only reason which made British captaincy so essential. The writer also remarked that they possessed a, 'boyish, uncalculating nature' and a 'mental range which was limited to their visual range.' [115] The implication being that Gurkhas were incapable of making responsible or intelligent decisions.

Candler also expressed a paternal trope with regards to the relationship that existed between sepoys and their British officers, claiming in the case of Gurkha regiments that the rapport could be likened to that of a school master and pupil.[116] In the preface to his book he wrote that, 'one must be a regimental officer to understand the sepoy,' and concluded that British officers commanded absolute loyalty from their men, writing, 'the devotion of the sepoy to his officer is common to most, perhaps to all, classes of the Indian Army.'[117] This paternalistic trope was designed to give credence to the idea that specialist British knowledge was required to comprehend the sepoy with British officers better

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[111] Walter Lawrence, 'Medical: Hospitals (Code 18(E)): Reports on the working of Indian hospitals and convalescent establishments in England and France and his observations on the Indian soldier in Europe,' NA/WO 32/5110.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Willcocks, *With the Indians in France*. p.5
[114] Hebert Maitland Alexander, *On Two Fronts: being the adventures of an Indian Mule Corps in France and Gallipoli* (London: William Heinemann, 1917). p.5
[115] Ibid. pp.8-9, 16
[116] Candler, *The Sepoy*. p.8
[117] Ibid. p.12

able to understand Indian mentality than Indians could themselves. Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn recorded a similar view to Candler when he eulogised what he thought British officers meant to the rank and file:

> The men of the Indian Army follow their alien officers with a devotion and a gallantry that has no precedent. We see this handful of white men controlling many many thousands of men of high courage, and occupying the position to some extent of demigod, but at any rate a leader as well as guide, philosopher, and friend.[118]

MacMunn and Candler both reflected paternalistic tropes in their perceptions of the relationship that existed between British officers and sepoys. By placing British officers at the top of the Indian Army's racial hierarchy, it posed them as fatherly figures whose leadership was required to guide the seemingly infantilised soldiers they commanded.

Figure 14. Posed as a genuine photograph, the image in fact shows a Gurkha battalion practicing a charge of an enemy trench. One of the regiment's British officers takes centre stage. Surrounded by his men, the image illustrates how the Indian Army wished to portray its cadre of British officers as indispensable leaders.[119]

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[118] Frederick Roberts, *The Armies of India*. p.212

[119] 'Gurkhas charging a trench (near Merville, France). Photographer, H. D. Girdwood. 1915,' BL/VA/DEL Photo/24/(162).

The Indian Amy Corps' chief record officer wrote, 'each officer looks upon his men as his children.'[120] This racialised perception was not only rhetorical, it was also reflected by the organisation's policies. In the years after 1857 conservative elements within the Indian Army decided that Indian commissions should be awarded on the basis of seniority rather than merit, ensuring that VCOs were old and trusted soldiers. The more numerous viceroy commissioned officers commanded at platoon level, while the British officers served as company commanders and company officers.[121] Indian Army Memorandum No.120.E – which was issued to British officers who served in the Indian Army during the First World War – illustrated how this principle was exercised in practice, with the system advocated bearing a resemblance to a British public-school prefect system. At the top of the regimental hierarchy was the headmasterly commanding British officer, who was looked upon as a 'father figure who leads, advises and protects all ranks serving under his orders.'[122] Beneath him were the tutor like British company officers who were supposed to maintain a close working relationship with their Indian officers who were, the directive noted, 'the channels by which the commandant and the other British officers should be kept fully informed of the feelings of the rank and file.'[123]

Indian officers acting as prefects of a regiment, the memorandum advised, should be, 'men of family and standing in their own class.' It is notable that intelligence, training, or aptitude were not advocated as prerequisites for promotion, instead the document emphasised loyalty and trustworthiness as the most important traits. It noted, 'an Indian officer who can be trusted to make an honest straightforward report is worth ten smart ones without this quality… next to honesty comes temper and tact in managing men, and the latter is to be gained by experience alone.'[124] Essentially, the memorandum advocated that Indian officers should be limited to man management, leadership by example, and acting as a link between their British superiors and the Indian ranks so that regimental morale could be gauged and orders relayed. They were not required to make decisions.

[120] Merewether, *The Indian Corps in France*. p.471
[121] Daniel Marston, 'The Bedrock of the Raj.' p.23
[122] A.R. Martin, "Order No.120.E, Indian Army, dated Simla, 7th August 1907," in *Memorandum on the subject of social and official intercourse between British officers and Indians* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919). p.40
[123] Ibid. p.41
[124] Ibid. p.42

Figure 15. British and Indian officers of the 57th (Wilde's) Rifles pose for a photo in the La Bassée area. Indian officers outnumbered their British counterparts but were barred from applying for King's commissions.[125]

This position was also reflected in the training, or rather lack of, received by Indian officers. Unlike their British counterparts, the vast majority of Indian commissioned officers were promoted from the ranks and none of these men received training at an institution equivalent to Sandhurst which would have prepared them to better lead in the field. The few that did attend a college received their commissions from the much-maligned Imperial Cadet Corps. With these factors in mind, it is of little surprise that Indian officers came in for criticism for their leadership abilities during 1914-15 when they had to take initiative on the battlefield due to the death or injury of British commanders. However, personalities such as Willcocks failed to recognise that the Indian Army's own institutional practices led to this shortcoming.

This British monopolisation of leadership was not only to the detriment of Indian officers' career prospects but also to Indian regiments' ability to operate effectively. In a letter to Kitchener, Willcocks told the secretary of state for war: 'The officer question will be a difficultly. The losses in officers are

[125] 'British and Indian officers of the 57th (Wilde's) Rifles (Estaires La Bassée Road, France). Photographer H. D. Girdwood.,' 1915, BL/VA/DELPhoto/24/(277).

very heavy in comparison to the men. The 8th Pathans lost ten out of thirteen, the 2nd Gurkhas eight out of thirteen and 3rd Sapper Company lost all eight officers killed or wounded in one day.'[126] As Willcocks's statement indicated, the Indian Army was reliant on a small group of men, the loss of which had devastating effects. The necessary language skills and cultural experience required to lead Indian regiments was not something that could be quickly assimilated by replacement British officers who had no acquaintance with Indian service.

Douglas Philott, a lieutenant-colonel in the Indian Army, and chief censor of Indian mail at Port Said, wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* in November 1915 to complain as much. Philott, who was a scholar of Urdu, Persian, and Hindustani, informed the editor that in his opinion the principal barrier to expanding the size of the Indian Army will be 'the difficulty to find a sufficient number of officers with a competent knowledge of Hindustani.'[127] According to Willcocks even more problematic would be the staffing of Gurkha regiments. Unlike other units which could recruit men from civilian Indian service backgrounds, due to Nepal lying outside British administration very few expatriates spoke Nepalese. Therefore, officering a Gurkha battalion with new British subalterns meant that in most cases a language barrier first had to be overcome, something which inevitably took time and created inefficiency. However, despite Willcocks's acknowledgement that the Indian Army was over-reliant on a small group of British officers, he never came to recognise that its institutionalised racial discrimination against Indian officers was a fundamentally flawed policy, and instead advocated for more British.[128]

The strength of opposition from the British officer cadre to calls for reforming Indian commissions, in the face of this inherent organisational weakness, illustrated the strength of this group's adherence to the Indian Army's racial hierarchy and discriminatory practices. The Indian Army's institutionalised discrimination against Indian officers, both in terms of training, job roles, and opportunities for promotion, helped to ensure that when Indian regiments' small number of white officers fell in battle, their substitute Asian replacements were criticised for displaying a lack of initiative. What these criticisms failed to acknowledge though was that those in charge of the Indian Army had sought to discourage enterprise amongst the indigenous servicemen that it promoted from the ranks.

For the reality was Indian officers were designed to fail. They were poorly remunerated, and promotion was intended to be limited to men from families of social standing rather than those who demonstrated the greatest ability. In addition, the failings of the Indian Cadet Corps, and the absence of decision-making roles for Indians, as evidenced by memorandum No.120E, demonstrated that

[126] Letter from Willcocks to Kitchener,' dated 10 November 1914,, NA/PRO 30/57/52/3
[127] D.C. Philott, 'Supply of Indian Soldiers,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 November 1915.
[128] Willcocks, *With the Indians in France*. p.9

senior figures within the Indian Army refused to prepare Indian officers to lead units on the battlefield. These shortcomings did not go completely unnoticed by contemporary members of the Indian civil service. When Harvey Adamson, Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, gave his response in September 1915 to the question of admission of Indians for King's commissions, he noted that the inadequacies which Indian officers had displayed on the battlefield had been brought about by design, stating, 'Indian officers in this war lack initiative to command because they have never been taught to do so. Therefore, they must be given opportunities of advancement.'[129] Adamson was not alone in his admonishment of the British officer cadre. Lord Crewe's under-secretary, Charles Roberts, was of the opinion, 'the present position of [the Indian officer's] subordination to British officers in [Indian Army] regiment[s] is calculated to impair any initiative or leadership they may have originally possessed.'[130] This racial prejudice was recognised by Hardinge when he reported the matter of Indian commissions to George V. 'It is not the British soldier who would be unwilling to receive orders from the Indian officer,' he noted, 'but the British officer. This will be the chief difficulty from the beginning.'[131]

Hardinge made a valid point, for in the face of catastrophic casualty levels suffered by the Indian Army's platoon, company, and battalion level commanders in 1914-15, its leadership continued to exert strenuous opposition towards the reform of Indian commissions. As early as November 1914, Henry Keary, who at the time commanded the Garhwal Brigade, recorded, 'every regiment that came out has been almost entirely re-officered and they are mostly raw yokey [sic] lads from Sandhurst – who of course are of little use.'[132] Had British officers slackened their resistance to reform the army would have enjoyed a greater pool of recruits to fall back on. However, instead the Indian Army's high command chose to face down calls for reform. This scenario demonstrated how the strains placed on the Indian Army by the First World War quickly challenged its longstanding racial hierarchy, but in this instance resistance from its British officer class managed to delay a reform which was only reluctantly and moderately accepted in 1917, before once again being resisted after the conclusion of the war.[133] By resisting reform, they not only damaged the ability of the Indian Army to operate under the strains of a modern industrial war, but also illustrated the critical importance placed on the maintenance of an institutionalised racial hierarchy which enabled white British officers to monopolise power at the expense of their Indian counterparts.

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[129] RA/PS/PSO/GV/N/51/74-78

[130] Charles Roberts to Lord Crewe, 25 May 1915, in BL/L/MIL/7/19006. Source quoted in, Chandar S. Sundaram, *Indianization, the Officer Corps, and the Indian Army: The Forgotten Debate, 1817–1917* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019). p.2

[131] Ibid.

[132] IWM/Documents/2170.

[133]

Cold blood and steel: the sepoy in print

The defence which the Indian Army's cadre of British officers mounted to maintain this status-quo also took a public form as the exploits of the Indian Army Corps became a subject of interest for the British media. Newspaper coverage during 1914-15 of the Indian Army's exploits covered all the theatres it served in. However, due to the proximity, interest, and intensity of fighting on the Western Front (as well as the advantage of having Indian military hospitals within a few hours journey of London), the reports tended to focus on the sepoys serving with the Indian Army Corps in France. These articles frequently used stage managed interviews with soldiers or officers as the basis for their stories, or printed verbatim War Office press releases distributed by the Press Brureau Directed by editors and censorship, newspapers adopted a jingoistic tone and unquestioning stance, which led one reporter to conclude that his profession should, 'blush with shame at its denigration and insanity of its [early war] coverage.'[134] Combined with the initial over-excitement that lauded the Indian Army Corps' arrival, these factors fused during the early months of the war to create some fantastical reports about the Indian Army Corps that James Willcocks would later condemn for building up unrealistic expectations and giving the impression that the Indian Army was composed almost entirely of Sikhs and Gurkhas who were portrayed as 'mythical beings.'[135]

After the Indian Army Corps settled into life on the Western Front, language barriers still prevented most journalists from interviewing Indian soldiers directly. This resulted in several stage-managed interviews with wounded or sick sepoys recovering in tightly secured hospitals or convalescent depots, or during officially organised day trips. Such news stories were usually versed in the tropes of martial race theory and often sought to reveal the interviewee's supposedly innate characteristics. The journalists permitted to interview the sepoys, such as the prolific Edmund Candler, often had a history of reporting the Indian Army's activities having been embedded in its colonial campaigns, and enjoyed close connections with many of its officers and administrators, frequently quoting them in such reports.[136] This was an example of the close relationship between the military and the media which had developed since the nineteenth century, where professional and personal affinities between British Army officers and leading journalists and publishers reduced resistance and criticism by newsmakers to the influence of lobbyists in the military.[137] The Indian Army was no exception to this

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[134] Philip Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism* ([New Hampshire: William Heinemann Ltd, 1923). p.217

[135] Willcocks, *With the Indians in France*.

[136] 'Letter from Edmund Candler to Walter Lawrence, asking for permission to visit the Kitchener Hospital,' dated 12 October 15, BL/MssEur/F143/66/162-163. Candler asked for Lawrence to publish an article based on an interview conducted with an Indian soldier. Reference to Candler's reporting of campaigns conducted by the Indian Army include, Edmund Candler, *Youth & the East: an unconventional autobiography* (London: Blackwood, 1924); *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1905).

[137] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*. pp. 137, 276

rule with celebrated figures, such as Kitchener, Younghusband and Roberts, garnering favour in the press in the decades before the First World War.[138] Within months of the outbreak of the conflict the close relations between journalists such as Candler and the Indian army combined with the tight controls enacted by the government to create an orchestrated account of the Indian soldier. These usually contained fewer of the incredible claims made by reports in the first few months of the war, but they were still a choregraphed image which promoted many of the racial stereotypes favoured by martial race ideologists.

As Willcocks critiqued, the excitement of the national press was palpable as Indian troops entered the frontline. Building on the descriptions of Indian soldiers as fine physical specimens which greeted the Indian Army Corps' disembarkation at Marseilles, early coverage of the Corps' combat experience often chose to emphasise physical prowess through descriptions of sepoys' expertise in hand-to-hand combat. This popular trope was used by the press to describe Indian martial prowess, it depicted Indian soldiers as skilled fighters with the knife or bayonet, but often at the expense of more modern forms of combat such as the rifle. When the *Manchester Guardian* reported a telegram, supposedly received from Berlin shortly after the Indian regiments entered the line, the newspaper reported, 'the defeat of the Germans by the Indian troops has made a very disheartening impression in Germany. The Germans say that the Indians are much stronger and more nimble… and it is therefore impossible to vanquish them in hand-to-hand fighting unless the Indians are outnumbered.'[139]

Similarly, when on October 28th 1914 the *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* reported the words of sergeant Richard George of the Argyil and Sutherland Highlanders, who had just returned to Britain from service in India, the sergeant's words were used to portray an Indian appetite for hand-to-hand combat. 'They will prove their love for fighting in close quarters,' recounted George, continuing, 'they don't believe in sniping: their great desire is to apply cold steel, and they will apply it readily enough, and with good results.'[140] The day before the *Daily Mirror* described what was purported to be the Indian troops' first significant action, 'somewhere near Lille,' on October 25th 1914. The newspaper's leading headline read, 'Indian troops' charge routs Germans, who lose 20,000 men: Sikhs and Gurkhas play havoc among Kaiser's fleeing troops.'[141] The article once again chose to emphasise the prowess of Indian soldiers in hand-to-hand combat and only referred to the decisive nature of modern weaponry when in the hands of the attacking German forces, reporting, 'guns, Maxims, and rifles poured rapid death into the [British] ranks.'

[138] Streets, *Martial Races*. p.120
[139] 'German Dismay at Indian Fighting Qualities,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 31 October 1914.
[140] 'Indian Army's Devotion,' *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 28 October 1914.
[141] 'Indian Troops' Charge Routs Germans, Who Lose 20,000 Men,' *The Daily Mirror*, 27 October 1914.

However, once the Germans broke through the British forward positions and into the Indian lines these forms of contemporary armament were left unreferenced. Instead it was the Indian infantrymen's desire to close quarters and use the bayonet or kukri which was described to have been the decisive factor in repelling the attack. The article claimed, 'with terrible force they charged. The Germans wavered and ran pell mell, while the pursuing Indians wrought terrible slaughter… Sikh bayonet and Gurkha kukri played havoc among their disordered ranks.'[142] Reality though did not reflect the article. The Indian Army Corps' own records gave a different account of the fighting on 25thOctober. The 20,000 German casualty figure reported by the *Daily Mirror* was a fallacy, and while some close quarter fighting may have taken place, the IEFA's records made no reference to a decisive Sikh or Gurkha charge, in fact there were not even any Gurkha units present.[143] Instead, the war diary reported that, like most Western Front encounters, it was the IEFA's supporting artillery units which did, 'good execution,' of the attacking German troops.[144]

Despite the pre-eminence of grinding artillery, rifle, and machine-gun fire in the early fighting, the *Daily Mirror's* portrayal of Indian troops as zealous exponents of hand-to-hand combat exemplified a common trope based on an image of German terror in the face of fearsome bayonet or kukri wielding sepoys. *The War Illustrated*, vividly illustrated the subject with an artist's impression of zealous Gurkhas and Sikhs charging enemy lines with knives and bayonets drawn as terrified German infantry are cut down as they flee (see figure 16.).[145]

[142] Ibid.
[143]See diary entries for 25 October 1914. 'Indian Army Corps War Diary 19 October - 14 November 1914,' 1914, NA/WO/95/1088/1. According to Mereweather it was the 57th Wildes regiment supported by a Dogra company and an Afridi company which, 'repulsed a small German attack.' Merewether, *The Indian Corps in France.* p.24
[144] R.A. HQ entry for 25 October 1914, NA/WO/95/1088/1.
[145] *The War Illustrated Album Deluxe: Volume I* (London: The Amalgamated Press Ltd., 1915). p.306

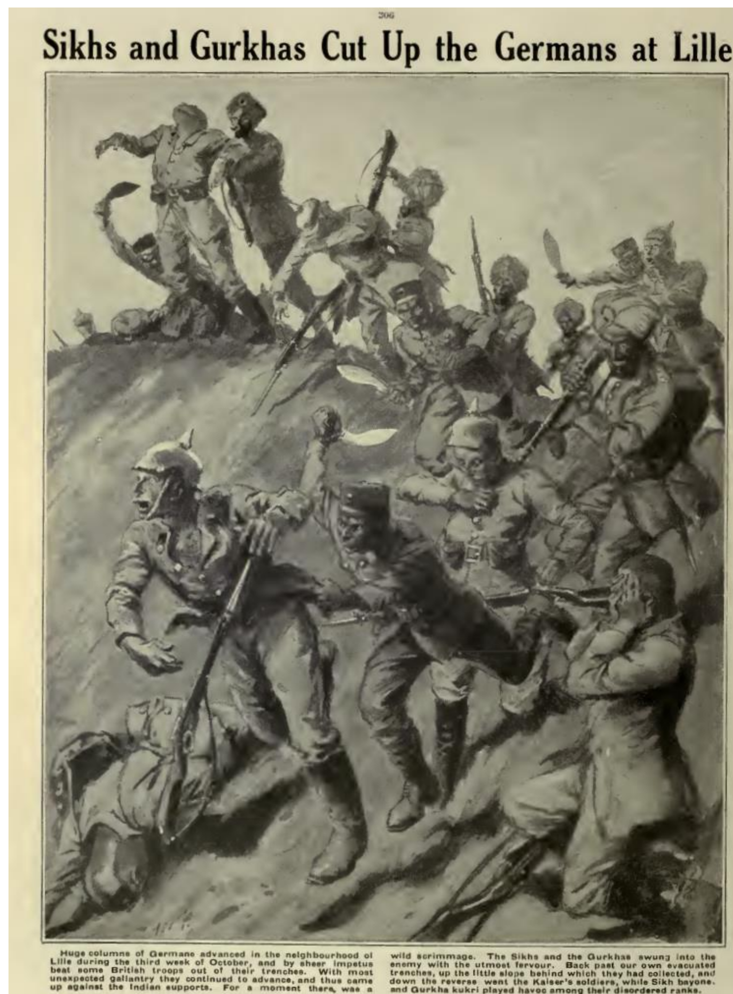

Figure 16. *TWI*'s interpretation of one of the Indian Army Corps' early actions after the first of its units arrived on the frontline in the third week of October 1914. Despite the prominence of Gurkhas in the illustration, no Gurkha units were present during this initial stage of the fighting.[146]

The narrative was one which conjured up images of frenzied colonial soldiers let loose on a European foe prepared for the modern slaughter of bullets and shells, but not the relic of the blade. It was the Gurkhas and their kukris which were presented as the epitome this trope, with the Nepalese soldiers and their hooked knives frequently described as gruesome bed fellows in early press reports. *The Sketch* labelled the kukri's, 'shape and deathly purpose [as] the Gurkha's pride.'[147] On 24th November 1914 *The Daily Telegraph* reported a Gurkha charge in support of an assault made by a Highland battalion. Once again it was the Gurkhas' desire to close quarters and engage the enemy with their kukris which was conveyed as the battle's decisive moment. The newspaper wrote that the attack might have failed, 'In spite of unflinching heroism [of the Highlanders], but for the timely intervention of the terrible kukris of the terrible little men.'[148] The article told that before disappearing into the

[146] Ibid.
[147] 'India's Fighting Men: Their Ancient Civilisation,' *The Sketch*, 13 January 1915.
[148] 'A Gurkha Charge: Germans Flee in Terror,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 1914.

enemy's trenches, the Gurkhas, 'insinuated themselves like cats between the barbed wire… where a terrible medley of cries arose, the harsh battle-cry of the attackers, the groan or scream of the attacked as the terrible knife went home.' So scarred were the German survivors taken prisoner that, 'there was hardly need to guard them… Their eyes' bore a nameless terror… the terror of that charge had deprived them of power of violation, almost of power of motion.'[149]

The wartime descriptions which associated blood lust with the Nepalese troops were part of a enduring continuity of portraits used to describe the Gurkha.[150] However, the reality of the combat experienced on the Western Front was somewhat different to the imaginative picture painted In *The Daily Telegraph's* report. Over the course of the war hand-to-hand combat accounted for less than one per cent of the overall casualties inflicted.[151] While no figures exist for the Indian Army specifically, the common suggestion made by the press that such forms of combat proved to be a recurrent decisive feature of Indian engagements is unsupported by the Indian Army Corps' war diaries which usually affirmed the ascendancy of the bullet and shell. Personal records left by officers also support this view. In one night-time assault conducted by the 2/3 Gurkha Rifles on German positions in the days that preceded the *Daily Telegraph* article, one of the battalion's British officers, Walter Bagot-Chester, recorded in his diary that it was, 'searchlights and machine guns which caused the losses [to the Germans].'[152]

Yet the common narrative found in newspaper coverage suggested an insatiable desire amongst Indians, and particularly, Gurkhas to engage in hand-to-hand combat. This prescribed a type of masculinity to them, but the descriptions also attached savage or animalistic descriptions that suggested that Asian soldiers were exponents of an outdated mode of warfare that European armies had moved away from in favour of modern weaponry. Given the Gurkha units' special status as being the equipped with the kukri, it should be acknowledged that the knife was regarded as being of some cultural significance amongst the Nepalese soldiers, and it also undoubtedly afforded them greater social status amongst other servicemen. However, newspaper reports, like *The Daily Telegraph*'s, used the kukri as a motif which reduced the value of Nepalese soldiers to animalistic fanatics who were devoted to wielding their blades in hand-to-hand combat at the expense of more practical and contemporary methods of warfare. In doing so they chose to avoid the reality of their combat

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[149] Ibid.

[150] Lionel Caplin, 'Martial Gurkhas: the presence of a British military discourse on 'race',' in *War and Society in Colonial India, 1807-1945*, ed. Kaushik Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 225-45. p.241

[151] See Richard Holmes, *Tommy: the British soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005). pp.381-35. In one study cited only 0.32% of British casualties out of a sample of 300,000 were inflicted by the bayonet, p.382

[152] 'Diary of Captain Walter Bagot-Chester covering the period 12 August 1914 to 24 September 1915 in France,' 1915, NAM.1960-12-337-2-1

experiences which, like the British, French and German armies, relied far more heavily on artillery, rifle, and machine gun fire.

As the conflict progressed, other long-established macabre tropes attached to Indian servicemen saw light in the press. Pathans, who originated from the North West Frontier and Afghanistan, made a common subject of ghoulish descriptions. In March 1915 the *Daily Mail* printed an article by Edmund Candler based largely on an interview conducted with a Pathan soldier during one of the journalist's visits to the south coast Indian military hospitals. Candler began by informing readers that the Indian Army's Pathan troops had, 'probably more in common with [the Englishman] than any other Asiatic.' This Candler argued was due to their confident demeanour, humour, cavalier approach to life, and love of gambling. However, despite certain similarities with the average British Tommy, Candler also differentiated Pathans by portraying them as being barbaric and vengeful in nature. Candler wrote the Pathan solider was well practiced at 'the kind of stalking for which we take merit in war.' Candler believed that this was due to his readiness to commit 'cold-blooded atrocities in his blood feuds,' which stemmed from a, 'recognised retributive system, [which made such actions] a pastime with the Pathan in peace.' Consequently, Candler concluded, 'the Pathan starts on a campaign with an advantage. He is out to get his man; he keeps a cool head, and never wastes his ammunition.'[153] At the end of 1915 Candler again visited one of the hospitals in order to interview another Pathan patient, called Mir Ashgar. Ashgar was due to be sent back to India due to the severity of his wound. With Ashgar imminently due to return home, Candler speculated that his sleeping and waking moments were consumed by thoughts of revenge. The subject of Ashgar's animosity being a longstanding feud with a neighbour over a tryst with a married woman which had already cost the lives of five of his adversary's family and two of his own.[154]

Despite the obsession with blood-feuds that Candler attributed to Pathan soldiers, he was also keen to assert the supremacy of the Indian Army and its British officers by stating that feuds were always put aside by Pathans whilst they were on service. In doing so he affirmed to his readership that sepoy loyalty to their British officers came before other cultural obligations. This was a replication of the argument used by British officers of the Indian Army to maintain their grip over its commissions. Candler's descriptions of Pathans also shared similarities with the tropes associated with Gurkhas. Both groups were described as some of the Indian Army's most effective soldiers, but in both cases it was common to characterise their martial prowess with graphically violent fetishisms. Akin to descriptions of the Gurkhas' esteem for the kukri, the use of the 'blood-feud' theme in Candler's

[153] 'The Pathan is a Sportsman,' *Daily Mail*, 5 March 1915.
[154] 'The Road Home,' *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1915.

accounts of Pathan soldiers allowed him to associate certain soldiering qualities with them. The prominence he gave in his reports to their supposed social obligation to assert violent retribution towards rivals was construed by the writer to give Pathans an advantage on the battelfield, yet at the same time the trope could be readily interpreted to mean that Pathans were cruel and devious. In doing so, newspaper articles that depicted the terror of a Gurkha charge or cold-blooded atrocities committed by Pathans displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the respective groups they described. On the one hand such racial stereotyping presented sepoys as being in possession of martial qualities that could be put to effective use on the battlefield, but at the same time they also portrayed their subjects as lacking in the modern cultural practices of their British.

Although a racial hierarchy based on cultural values was only implied in such instances, this was not the case in many of the press reports that covered the relationship that existed between the Indian troops and their British officers. Rather than question whether Indian officers could perform the same duties as their British counterparts, a common narrative unabashedly followed the same arguments presented by the upper echelons of the Indian Army that their monopolisation of its leadership was necessary to inspire the ranks. Upon the India Corps' arrival in France the *Daily Mirror* wrote, 'the devotion of these native soldiers to their English officers would be enough in itself to make them follow unhesitatingly wherever they were led.'[155] Shortly after the IEFA had seen its first action, The *Manchester Guardian* printed an anecdote from a French officer attached to an Indian unit. The Frenchman wrote, 'I have no doubt, after what I have already seen, that most of the Indians are quite devoted to their British officers.'[156]

British officers' views also frequently found their way into press reports through direct quotations. In February 1915 *The Cambrian Daily Leader* printed large extracts of a letter written by an Indian Army officer about Indian troops serving on the Western Front. The officer claimed, 'as to fighting qualities, nine-tenths depend on the British officers.'[157] When reporting on the Indian involvement in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915, The *Manchester Guardian* stated, 'the Indian Army has more than proved its excellent fighting capacity.' However, it asserted that British officers were indispensable to its performance, as the writer of the article commented after interviewing one, '[Indian soldiers'] behaviour in the face of the enemy largely depends on the leading of their white officers. As long as they have them they have never turned back or shown signs of demoralisation.'[158] The article used an

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[155] 'Indians in France: Full of Ardour for the Empire's Cause,' *The Daily Mirror*, 3 October 1914.
[156] 'Indian Troop's Stoical Bravery: Devotion to Officers,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 November 1914.
[157] 'Our Indian Army,' *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 12 February 1915.
[158] 'With the Indian Army: Excellent Work in Trying Conditions,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 March 1915.

example of an Indian regiment's involvement in fighting around La Bassée to remonstrate what would happen when no white British officers were present:

> The battalion was left without a leader and abandoned the position. There was no panic or sudden flight. The men, with no one to direct them, retired very slowly bringing many of their wounded away. They came back for some distance, then halted under cover. Two officers were spared from another battalion to rally them. They were led forward to the attack and retook the position.[159]

This narrative of inspirational British leadership of Indian troops at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle was also strikingly depicted by the *Illustrated London News* shortly after the battle's conclusion through its publication of an illustration of Indian soldiers storming a German trench (see figure 17). At the centre of the image is a British 'bomb thrower' posed as an officer leading the charge who stood tall above an escarpment. The man is depicted preparing to throw a grenade, which at the time was an innovation in trench warfare. Surrounded by his men who were mid charge overrunning the German defenders below, their weaponry of choice was the traditional bayonet.[160] The placement of the officer in the scene made it clear to the viewer that the Indian regiments' British officers stood both above and amidst their men in battle, and through the example set by their bravery and leadership they were able to inspire the necessary courage and appetite for combat amongst the Indian ranks.

[159] Ibid.

[160] 'Troops Praised for their Gallantry at Neuve Chapelle: Indians Charging German Trenches,' *The Illustrated London News*, 29 March 1915.

Figure 17. This illustration, published in *The Illustrated London News*, is a dramatic portrayal of a narrative which sought to depict British officers as exemplary leaders of devoted sepoys.[161]

In another article concerned with the actions of the Indian Army Corps during the same battle, The *Daily Mail* sought to emphasise, akin to descriptions given by men such as MacMunn, how devotion between the Indian ranks and their British officers was a reciprocal relationship. In 'Indian Valour Under Gas,' the death of the Lieutenant-Colonel Rennick, who commanded the 40th Pathans, was described. 'His last thoughts,' testified the writer, 'were for his regiment, and as he was put on a stretcher he said, "Please send two of my Pathans with me. If I die on the way to hospital I should like them with me." With this display of affection from a mortally wounded British officer, the newspaper rhetorically confirmed, 'can it be wondered at that our Indian troops will follow such officers into the jaws of hell?'[162]

Such depictions of devotion between sepoys and their British officers during the stress of combat were a common occurrence in press reports written about the Indian Army during 1914-15. Yet, despite the reoccurrence of the narrative, an analysis of letters written to and from Indian servicemen of the IEFA

[161] Ibid.
[162] 'Indian Valour under Gas,' *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1915.

has highlighted that although references of loyalty to the king emperor, George V, were often found in correspondence, little mention was made of the supposed charismatic pull of British officers as a motive to fight.[163] British officers' ability to command the respect and commitment of Indian soldiers cannot be completely discounted, but surviving records of Indian letters illustrate that both they and the press placed too great a weight in the value of British leadership for its ability to inspire devotion and sacrifice on the part of Indian servicemen. Instead when the motivation to endure the conditions found on the Western Front was discussed in correspondence, Indian servicemen were far more likely to cite efforts to uphold honour, or '*izzat'* as it was referred to, than devotion to their leaders.[164] In this respect, letters often expressed contempt for comrades who ran away or deserted, or were otherwise deemed to have failed to fulfil their duty. This indicated an intense fear of social stigma that was associated with cowardice and that such acts could be interpreted by peers to damage a soldier's *izzat*.[165] As a positive stimulus, many soldiers also regarded *izzat* as a reason for individual sacrifice, believing that it would raise their own social status as well as that of their caste, clan, and family.[166] In addition to the cultural pull of *izzat*, the letters revealed the importance of religion, with the prospect of divine reward for death in battle seen as a form of spiritual recompense by a large number of sepoys.[167]

The public promotion of martial race ideology through the reportage of the British media was a demonstration of its virulence within the Indian Army. For although James Willcocks complained about early press reports inaccurately emphasising the parts played by Sikh and Gurkha regiments and the creation of unrealistic expectations, the motifs used by the press were not media inventions. Instead they represented an excitable repackaged discourse which sought to beguile readerships with the values and tropes of martial race theory. The reports also often embodied the same characteristic ambivalence that officers such as Willcocks regarded his sepoys with, emphasising the necessity of British leadership if Indian servicemen were to perform effectively on the frontline and thus an inherent inferiority to their British superiors.

The restrictions which the War Office placed over reporters, the regular printing of British officers' own accounts, and the reciprocal relationships that existed between the Indian Army Corps and journalists, such as Edmund Candler, who were versed in the tropes of martial race theory, encouraged the transmission of the institution's racial discourse by the British media. This provided the public justification of the institutionalised prejudice and discrimination that existed within the

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[163] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.20
[164] Ibid. p.12
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., extracts 238, 82, 511, 28, 635, 467
[167] Ibid. p.12

Indian Army, which posed the natural supremacy of the British over their Indian subjects. So convinced was the chief record officer of the Indian Army Corps, John Merewether, that he surmised: 'Among the private soldiers, and even among the Indian officers, the degree of dependence upon the [British] officer is on the whole greater than is known, or perhaps has ever been known, in any army in the world.'[168]

Conclusion

Merewether's assessment failed to acknowledge that this scenario of 'dependence' was created by the Indian Army's own discriminatory practices. Indian officers were barred from positions of leadership, and it was only in exceptionally testing battlefield circumstances (which demanded they take command due to the loss of a unit's British officers) that they were presented with the opportunity to demonstrate independent thought and leadership for the first time. Just as significantly, their selection process was flawed and training inadequate. The results should have been predictably traumatic.

As casualties to British officers quickly mounted during 1914-15, Indian subordinates were thrust into positions of leadership which they had never been prepared by the British to fulfil. As a group they were found wanting of the necessary skills and experience to command, when called upon to do so in highly stressful combat situations. However, despite these shortcomings, senior British officers resisted calls for reform. They failed to recognise that the racially prejudiced practices used by the Indian Army damaged its efficiency, and instead interpreted the wanting performance of Indian officers as a justification of the pre-existing racial hierarchy and their own monopolised positions of authority.

As the conflict progressed, the ambivalence displayed by the British officer class quickly came to be publicly propagated by the media in the form of news articles. These provided the first line of defence for commissioned British officers through depictions of British leadership as a necessity if Indian servicemen were to perform effectively. For although the ethnic groups deemed eligible for frontline service were presented as martial, a series of negative tropes simultaneously portrayed them as either savage, unintelligent, or juvenile. Such discourse was not new rhetoric, merely an adaptation of martial race theory to the circumstances. Significantly though, the prominent role that the Indian

[168] Merewether, *The Indian Corps in France*. p.471

Army played in 1914-15 ensured that these views received greater public coverage than they would otherwise have received in peacetime.

Akin to the attacks on the efficiency of Indian officers, martial race theory was also used by the higher strata of the Indian Army to explain away many of the failures of training, supply, and organisation. An inability amongst Indian soldiers to cope with the cold and wet winter months was even cited as a reason for the withdrawal of the Indian Army Corps from France. By July 1915 its commander-in-chief, George V, had made up his mind on the subject, 'confronted as we are with the almost certainty of a winter campaign,' he concluded, 'I hope that it may be decided not to keep Indian troops in Flanders but to send them to Egypt.'[169] George's outlook was framed by a racialised perspective that was common amongst the Indian Army's adherents to martial race theory; in this instance, an assertion that Indian soldiers could not cope with cold weather.

Indian soldiers also faced prejudices from soldiers of British regiments who had served in India. Frantz Fanon discerned of the men employed to garrison colonised societies, 'it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression.'[170] Fanon's observation was reflected in the outlook of Weir and Richards who had been exposed to years of colonial service. They starkly divided European coloniser from Asian colonised and their capacity to empathise with the people they had been employed to subjugate had been drained. When they arrived on the Western Front their views, like those of the officers of the Indian regiments, were transplanted from the imperial periphery to the metropole.

However, despite the ambivalence of the Indian army's cadre of British officers and the violent prejudices of many former colonial servicemen, records left by British servicemen who had no prior experience of colonial service demonstrated that many of the stereotypes espoused by the exponents of martial race theory did not match the reality of what was witnessed on the battlefield. They lacked exposure to the ingrained racial prejudices and the ideology of martial race theory which came with prolonged service in India. As a result, 'classes' such as the Drabi mule drivers of Sulva Bay and the stretcher bearers of the Indian Ambulance Corps on the Western Front, who were not permitted to perform combatant roles by the Indian Army, were frequently credited by British servicemen who lacked the lingua-franca of the martial race theorists. Their views may have often revealed a level of ignorance about the Asian troops they encountered, but they were also unversed in the tropes of martial race theory. Therefore, such records were able to reveal an alternative view of the Indian

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[169] 'Letter from George V to the Viceroy of Indian, Lord Hardinge,' dated July 15 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/P/522/75

[170] Frantz Fanon and Richard Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1961). p.37

serviceman which unwittingly conflicted with the tenants the Indian army's ideologists. They illustrated the strength of the institutionalised prejudice that existed amongst the Indian army's British officer cadre who time and again used race to explain deficiencies, instead of tangible factors often under British control. It also suggests that although the contemporary public discourse concerned with colonialism was able to impart a basic conception of racial otherness, it had not imbibed much of British society with the ideological verve that those exposed to colonialist society so frequently became indoctrinated by.

Chapter 3.

The Indian hospital: the transposition of a colonial environment?

Introduction

In 1915 the War Office commissioned the photographers A.H. Fry and H.D. Girdwood to take a series of photographs of one of the Indian Army Corps' military hospitals, the Royal Pavilion Hospital in Brighton, which had recently been repurposed to perform its new role. With the Indian Army Corps suffering high causalities within a month of its arrival in France, the War Office had promptly converted the former royal palace and its estate buildings into a military hospital for sick and wounded Indians as part of a rapidly established medical system. By the end of 1914, the south coast seaside resort had become the focal point of the Indian Army's hospital system in Britain, with three hospitals established in the town. It is the setting of the general hospitals, such as those in Brighton, and the convalescent depots subsequently used by recovering servicemen, that provides the setting for the chapter.

Figure 18. A hospital ward housed under the ornate ceiling of the Brighton Dome. The photograph records much of the hospital's social composition whilst also referencing the building's opulence.[1]

[1] 'Photograph showing Indian Soldiers in rows of beds inside the Dome during Royal Pavilion estate's use as an Indian military hospital, 1915.,' RPMBH/HA903307.

The Royal Pavilion Hospital was deemed to be of such propaganda value that the War Office produced and published a guidebook for general release in Great Britain and India designed to show a benevolent imperial master.[2] One of the photographs taken of a ward in the Brighton Dome illustrated much of the hospital's worth. Taken from a distance that allowed for the patients to be recorded within the wider context of the Dome's orientalised interior, the image suggests that to have been cared for in the opulent surroundings of a building that once belonged to the British monarchy Indian servicemen were valued by their imperial mother-country. However, like much of the Indian Army's stay in Europe, the photograph is not as straight forward as first seems.

As the image suggests, Indian servicemen fighting in France received a high standard of medical care. This was in contrast to their poor pre-war treatment, but it gave credence to propaganda which sought to portray Indian servicemen as being well tended by the authorities.[3] Indeed, the Royal Pavilion Hospital soon became a propaganda flagship used to promote image of imperial benevolence.[4] Despite the opulent setting provided by the Royal Pavilion Hospital, akin to the anxieties which surrounded the decision to deploy Indian combatants to the Western Front a range of private fears existed amongst those charged with Indian patient care which prevented Indian personnel from receiving rights which matched their British counterparts. In the photograph (figure 18) this is indicated by the presence of a British soldier standing on the balcony. These men were not only deployed as security, but also to prevent Indian patients and medical personnel leaving the hospital without official sanction and accompaniment.[5] The chapter will demonstrate this was a result of orders enacted by the War Office which in effect sought to minimise uncontrolled contact between Indian servicemen and Western society. Demonstrating in the process, that despite the public face of enthusiasm expressed by the authorities towards the deployment of Indian troops to the Western Front, privately they feared that their exposure to the imperial metropole could provoke political unrest and disloyalty, or at the very least engender a sense of equality.

In contrast to the authority's draconian stance towards Indian freedoms was the general attitude of the ward orderlies, who can be seen in the photograph dressed in white robes.[6] Predominantly British, in the main they enjoyed a level of camaraderie with the Indian patients which would have been

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[2] *Indian Military Hospital, Royal Pavilion, Brighton. A Short History in English, Gurmukhi and Urdu of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, and a Description of it as a Hospital for Indian Soldiers*, (Brighton: War Office, 1915).

[3] For a contemporary assessment of the poor standard of medical care given to Indian servicemen prior to the First World War see, 'Report of committee appointed to consider the introduction of station hospitals for Indian troops in place of the regimental system,' 1910, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17/5/2010. p.21

[4] Mark Harrison, "Disease, Discipline and Dissent: The Indian Army in France and England, 1914-1915," *Medicine and Modern Warfare* 55 (1999): 185-203. p.199

[5] 'Letter written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 27 December 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/37A.

[6] This subject matter is addressed in chapter 4.

unthinkable to most British servicemen who had spent long tours of garrison duty in India prior to the conflict.[7] Through their simple acts of kindness they showed how the First World War could in certain instances help to undermine the racial hierarchy of colonialism.

However, the image also shows how despite the pressures ushered in by the war, often change was resisted and prejudices stood firm. This is illustrated by the presence in the photograph of an occasional ward orderly of Asian descent. Many of these men were Indian students studying in Britain at the outbreak of war who had enlisted in the Indian Ambulance Corps with the hope of serving on the frontline. Unlike most Indian servicemen who came from rural peasant backgrounds in the north of the subcontinent, student volunteers were from a wider geographical area and mainly from urban middle-class backgrounds.[8] The chapter will show how racism and political suspicion afflicted their service. As the group was deemed by martial race theorists to be too effete for frontline service, and too politically aware by officials to be left unmonitored.

Also emblematic of the First World War's impact on the Indian Army's institutionalised racism is the presence of a couple of white female matrons. It has been argued that anxieties surrounding white femininity in the colonial environment reappeared with vengeance during the First World War.[9] At first glance the nurses' presence may appear to contradict this argument as prior to the conflict women were barred from nursing positions in Indian military hospitals.[10] However, the chapter will demonstrate how the strains placed on the medical resources dictated a relaxation of this rule, but that a persistent desire to maintain a 'colonial environment' in the hospitals male led officials to ban female staff from carrying out menial tasks which necessitated physical contact with Indian patients. This nuanced position was the result of a compromise that partially undermined the pre-war colonial social structure of the Indian military hospital. However, the compromises also highlighted a gendered aspect to the Indian Army's racial policies, and its commanding officers' desire to resist reforms that were perceived to damage the organisation's colonial hierarchy.

Together, the details contained in the photograph tell a cultural and social story of colonialism which, unlike most other interactions between colonising and colonised peoples, took place in the imperial metropole thousands of miles from the more numerous encounters in colonial British-India. Although seemingly an image of British care for Indian servicemen, the backstory behind some of the minutiae

[7] NA/WO/32/5110/37A.

[8] Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century*, (Harlow: Longman, 2005), p.190

[9] See Fell, 'Nursing the Other;' 'Beyond the Bonhomme Banania'; L. Bland, 'White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation fears in Britain after the Great War,' *Gender and History* 17 (2005): 29-61.

[10] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 1.10.1914),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1.

contained in the photograph reveal various aspects of this colonial relationship, as well as how the First World War could at times disrupt or reinforce the Indian Army's social order. It is such cultural and social facets of colonialism which took place within the Indian military hospital setting that the chapter will explore.

Medical services and the Indian Army Corps 1914-15

In 1914-15, if an Indian soldier was wounded on the frontline his medical treatment began with one of the field ambulances. If requiring further treatment, he would either walk or be carried to a dressing station. If in need of further medical assistance the next step would be evacuation to the field ambulance's clearing hospital, situated close to the frontline. Field hospitals were used to clear the battlefield and to render wounded soldiers fit enough for transport to a general hospital which, if his wound or illness was deemed serious enough, would be the next step in medical treatment. At a general hospital, operation work could be carried out at a safe distance from the frontline with treatment and nursing given until the patient either recovered or was evacuated back to India for invaliding.[11]

For Indian soldiers incapacitated on the Western Front most of the general hospitals they could have been sent to were managed by the War Office, and located in France or the English south coast. They used staff from the Indian Medical Service (IMS) (who accompanied the Indian Expeditionary Force to France), and the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). In addition to the War Office hospitals, the British Red Cross Society and the Indian Soldiers' Fund also ran charitable hospitals.[12] Akin to the Indian Army's segregation of troops into Indian and British regiments, sick and wounded Indian servicemen were almost always sent to general hospitals that specifically catered for Indians. In Britain and France, given the brevity of time between the outbreak of war, the arrival of the Indian Army Corps, and the demand for medical treatment, most of the buildings used for Indian hospitals were converted from other uses ranging from a former royal palace to a work house.

In France, the War Office managed hospitals and convalescent centres in nine locations by January 1915. In the Boulogne administrative area there were over 5,000 beds reserved for Indian patients. The largest was a hospital based in a Jesuit College that was capable of accommodating 1,400

[11] Process of evacuation of wounded and unfit personnel from the frontline is detailed in, *Appendices to the Report of the Combination Appointed to Inquire in the Medical Arrangements in Mesopotamia Volume II*, (Simla: Government Central Branch Press, 1916). p.37

[12] The British Red Cross ran two hospitals for Indian soldiers in Netley, the Indian Soldiers' Fund ran one in Brockenhurst. Both were villages in the county of Hampshire.

patients; but other sites included a hotel in the seaside resort of Hardelot with 800 beds, and a military college at Montreuil, in the Pas-de-Calais, which could accommodate up to 1200 patients.[13] There was also a hospital ship permanently docked at Boulogne that could house 250 patients; a convalescent depot at Rouen which accommodated 700 men; a clearing hospital near to the frontline at Lillers for 200; and at St. Venant was an institution for the slightly injured who were treated pending their return to the front - the authorities being anxious to avoid sending over to England those who would be convalescent within three or four weeks.[14] In addition to these locations the military authorities also maintained hospitals and convalescent depots for Indian troops in Orleans and Marseilles. By November 1915, the latter had become a major centre for Indian medical care, with four Indian hospitals or convalescent depots located in Marseilles with a combined capacity of over 4,000 beds.[15]

In Britain the provision of medical care for Indian troops was concentrated on the English south coast in Brighton and neighbouring Hampshire. Akin to France, most of the south coast Indian hospitals were managed by the War Office. The most famed was the Brighton Pavilion, the former pleasure palace of George IV, which on 27th March 1915 had 515 patients. Less glamourous locations in Brighton included York Place School and the largest Indian hospital located in Britain, the Kitchener Indian Hospital, which made use of the Brighton Workhouse and at its peak in May 1915 had 1,661 out of its 1,736 beds occupied.[16] The War Office also managed hospitals and convalescent homes in Hampshire. These were mostly staffed by IMS personnel and were located in Bournemouth, New Milton, Milford, and Brockenhurst.[17] In addition, the British Red Cross Society ran two hospitals for Indian troops in Netley, Hampshire; and by mid-January 1915 the newly established Indian Soldiers Fund had opened its own 520 bed hospital in Brockenhurst, Hampshire.[18]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the need to create a new Indian hospital system at short notice, a series of criticisms were registered about the quality of several of the buildings chosen for conversion. Ironically, the centrepiece of the India Office's Indian hospital propaganda campaign, the Brighton Pavilion Hospital, came in for disparagement in December 1914 from its newly appointed

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[13] The capacity of these institutions, as with hospitals in other locations, expanded over the course of 1915. Indian Soldiers' Fund: 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 6.1.15),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1; and, 'Reports of The Indian Soldiers' Fund (1914-1919): Second Report of the Indian Soldiers' Fund, for the Period 1st April, 1915, to 20th November 1915,' 1915, IWM/LBY/6339, p.13

[14] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 6.1.15) Walter Lawrence present at the meeting,' BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1

[15] Ibid.

[16] War Office: 'Kitchener Indian Hospital (1915 Jan - 1916 Jan) War Diary,' NA/WO/95/5465

[17] F. F. Perry, 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Report of the First Six Months' Work,' 'Reports of The Indian Soldiers' Fund (1914-1919),' IWM/LBY/6339. IWM/LBY/6339. pp.12-13

[18] Ibid. pp.3-6

commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel McLeod. He wrote to his senior, Walter Lawrence, to complain of, 'the difficult problem of making a hospital out of this most unsuitable building.' McLeod noted that before he was prepared to take a large body of Indian patients it was imperative for political and public health reasons that, 'the essential questions of sanitation and feeding [are resolved], the sanitary problem being particularly difficult.'[19]

The Brighton Pavilion Hospital was not alone in the initial criticism it received. During the proceedings of an early committee meeting of what later became the Indian Soldiers' Fund, the members were extremely critical of the War Office's use of two hotels in Brockenhurst for the first Indian hospitals it established in England in October 1914.[20] After having viewed the Brockenhurst hospitals, Surgeon-General Havelock Charles reported to the committee:

> I wish to put on record that these hotel hospitals have nothing whatsoever to do with the Indian Soldiers' Fund, nothing to do with St. John's Ambulance… They are in two hotels which are jerry-built summer residences, with small rooms and narrow corridors, utterly unsuitable for hospital purposes.[21]

Havelock Charles went on to condemn the Brockenhurst hospitals' use of tent marquees for additional accommodation as well as the buildings' poor sanitation, which had been condemned by the Local Government Board ten years prior. So inadequate was the hospitals' drainage and the stresses that its new role would place on its sewerage system that Havelock Charles told the committee that there was a possibility of an epidemic breaking out. 'Everything was favourable,' he claimed, 'for its spread amongst the wounded, and amongst the villagers.'[22] In case the committee members were left with any doubts about Havelock Charles's opinion he concluded, 'I consider that the visit to the hospitals was satisfactory in every way except one, and that is – the Indians should not be there at all.'[23] On Havelock Charles's recommendation, Curzon, who was also a member of the committee, agreed to express to Crewe, the secretary of state for India, the committee's, 'feeling of grave anxiety on this head.'[24] It is possible that Curzon's complaint had some effect, as later records indicate that only one

[19] 'Letter from McLeod to Lawrence,' dated 3 December 1914, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/147
[20] F. F. Perry, 'Reports of The Indian Soldiers' Fund (1914-1919),' 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339.
[21] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 14.10.1914),' BL/IOR/Mss Eur/F120/1.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

of the War Office's two Brockenhurst hospitals was operational for most of 1915 –the Meerut Indian General Hospital at the Balmer Park Hotel.[25]

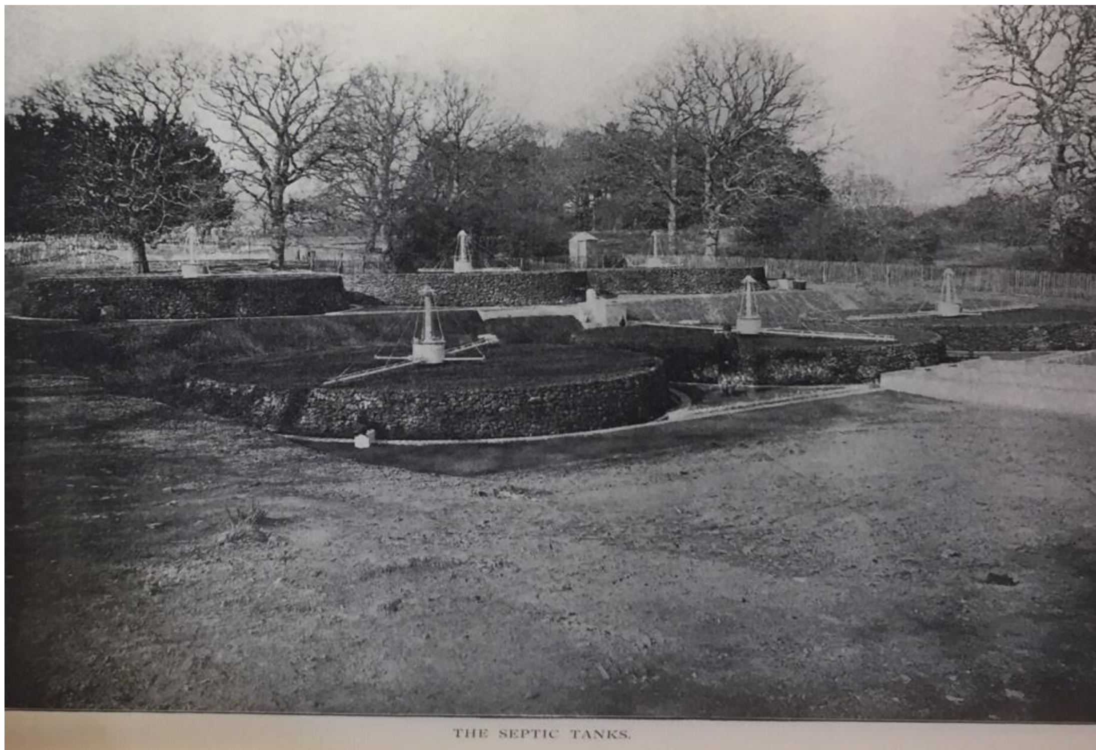

Figure 19. The ISF produced a report about The Lady Hardinge Hospital which included a number of photographs of the facility. This one of its septic tanks inferred The Lady Hardinge's superior sewage treatment in comparison to the neighbouring War Office hospitals.[26]

Havelock Charles's tour was also of significance to the ISF, for he later noted in his introduction to a report produced by the ISF to assess its own Brockenhurst hospital, the Lady Hardinge, that it was the sub-standard condition of the War Office's Brockenhurst hospitals that motivated the charity's establishment of its own institution.[27] The report, which Havelock Charles introduced, also contained numerous photographs of the Lady Hardinge Hospital during its use by Indian troops. One of the photographs was the hospital's sewage treatment plant – a reference which contrasted the standard of the Lady Hardinge's sanitation to that of its neighbouring Meerut Indian General Hospital.[28]

[25] The War Office initially established two Indian hospitals in Brockenhurst, one in the Balmer Lawn Hotel and the other in the Forest Gate Hotel. 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Report of the First Six Months' Work,' IWM/LBY/6339. pp. 5-7
[26] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.4
[27] Ibid. p.3
[28] Ibid.

One of Havelock Charles's other complaints was the War Office's use of tents during the winter months to make up for a shortfall in accommodation. In November 1914, Major Wall, the commanding officer of the Meerut Stationary Hospital in Boulogne, recognised his own hospital's use of tents represented a substandard level of care. Nonetheless, Wall soon after evacuated 231 men 'under canvas' at short notice to a hospital ship after discovering George V was due to visit. His decision was criticised by the British Red Cross Society which complained, 'to turn out 231 men at 6 a.m. on a winter morning for such a purpose is unjustifiable.'[29]

However, despite these early criticisms of the initial building stock, the War Office quickly managed to implement a system that outshone the standard of pre-war medical care provided by the Indian Medical Service. When the ISF conducted a basic review of the medical care situated in northern France for Indian soldiers in 1914, it was reported, 'from our personal enquiries we are in a position to state that the wounded are receiving every possible care and attention.'[30] At the time the ISF was interested in providing its own independent fleet of motorised ambulances, to be placed at the disposal of the Indian Army Corps. However, the authors noted, 'that there is already a large field for voluntary aid in ambulances working [provided by the British Red Cross], supplementing regular ambulance work, and working under the directions of the regular Army Medical Service.' Given the satisfactory nature of the ambulance provision, the authors concluded that the ISF should not establish a separate fleet of its own motor ambulances, but instead place its ambulances under the control of existing services, paying for a convoy of fifty vehicles.[31]

The medical support given to Indian troops was supplied through a mixture of the Indian Army Crops own medical branch, the IMS, and the British Army's RAMC. These branches were supplemented by French medical services and the charitable work of the British Red Cross and the ISF.[32] The ISF's encouraging assessment illustrated the high levels of frontline medical care that General Willcocks's men were furnished with. The general hospitals behind the frontlines also came in for praise. When an IMS captain arrived at Hardelot in January 1915, he was impressed by the hospital's facilities noting: 'It is altogether a revelation to one whose professional lines have been cast in places [in India] where, struggle and strive as one may, the best possible is a compromise between efficiency and cheapness,

[29] 'Letter from the British Red Cross Society to Walter Lawrence,' dated 30 November 1914, BL/Mss Eur/F143/68/5.
[30] Ibid.
[31] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Report of the First Six Months' Work,' IWM/LBY/6339. pp.14-15
[32] 'Memorandum to the Indian Office reporting the medical provisions for Indian troops and distribution of comforts, dated 27 October 1914,' BL/IOR/MSS EUR/F120/15.

with a strong bias in the latter direction.'[33] Willcocks was of a similar opinion. He later noted: '[The Indian Army Corps] was supplied in abundance in France as soon as possible; indeed, the excellence and rapidity with which this was done was astonishing to us who remembered the cheese-paring days in India.'[34]

Statistics help to back up these assessments. At the largest Indian hospital in France, the Jesuit College in Boulogne (renamed the Meerut Stationary Hospital for the duration of its new role), the patient mortality rate amongst its Indian troops stood at a low 1.2 per cent on 8th March 1915. The IMS's embarkation officer at Southampton remarked to the commissioner for Indian hospitals and convalescent depots in England and France, Walter Lawrence, that this, 'is a very remarkable average for such cases as came under treatment in Boulogne.'[35] When representatives from the ISF visited France again in July 1915, they were similarly praise-worthy of the medical services provided. The report summarised that, 'we found everything in most excellent order… the wounded are being carefully looked after.'[36]

At the same time as the Boulogne statistics were quoted to Lawrence, the Indian hospitals in Hampshire enjoyed even lower mortality figures. Between them they had treated, or were treating, over 5000 patients, but only 28 of these cases had resulted in the death of a patient, with all the hospitals at that point averaging between 0.23 – 0.67 per cent mortality rates.[37] The embarkation officer, a colonel McNab, acknowledged that the French hospitals received a greater number of serious cases due to their proximity to the frontline. However, he still considered the Hampshire hospitals' figures to be praiseworthy, commenting to Lawrence, 'I have never seen so low an average of mortality amongst troops in India, and when one remembers the circumstances and environment it is still more remarkable.'[38] In the same timeframe the largest of the Brighton hospitals, the Kitchener Indian Hospital, which was under the command of Colonel Bruce Seton, had a similarly low patient

[33] "Some Experiences in the War by Capt. Hugh Watts, I.M.S.," *Indian Medical Gazette* 50(9) (September 1915): 312–26, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/issues/280755/, Accessed 22/11/2020. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/issues/280755/. Dated accessed 12/12/2020. p.322
[34] Willcocks, *With the Indians in France*. pp.4-5
[35] 'Letter from Southampton Embarkation Officer, A.J. McNab, to Walter Lawrence,' dated 8 March 1915, BL/MssEur/F143/78/15-16.
[36] 'Report received by the Indian Soldiers' Fund from Sir Tevredyn Wynne, Lord Norreys, and Mr C. C. McLeod after their visit to the front in France, 1915,', dated 7 July 1915, BL/IOR/Mss Eur/ F120/12.
[37] The hospitals in question were the Mont Dore Hospital (No. 8A Indian General Hospital) Bournemouth, which had received 869 cases and had experienced two patients' deaths; the Netley hospital which had received 2097 cases at the expense of fourteen deaths, the Lady Hardinge Hospital (Indian Soldiers' Fund), Brockenhurst, which had received 320 cases and two deaths; and the Meerut Indian General Hospital, Brockenhurst, which had received 2,161 cases and recorded ten deaths. '15.3.1915, letter from Southampton Embarkation Officer, A.J. MacNab, to Walter Lawrence,' BL/MssEur/F143/78/17-18.
[38] Ibid.

mortality rate of 0.38 per cent.[39] The mortality rates for these hospitals did rise slightly over the course of 1915; for example, by 23rd July 1915, one per cent of the Kitchener hospital's patients had died, but 85 per cent had returned to duty.[40] Likewise, over the course of the Lady Hardinge's use as an Indian hospital, it had a patient mortality rate of 1.3 per cent by its close in March 1916.[41]

Whilst the standard of medical care for Indian troops serving in France was being commended by the Indian Soldier's Fund report, the dire standard of care in Mesopotamia was just starting to receive attention. The Secretary of State for India, Austen Chamberlain, telegrammed the Indian Viceroy in early 1916 gravely concerned. 'Reports continue to reach me,' Chamberlain noted, 'of gravest deficiencies in medical arrangements in Mesopotamia. I hear of wounds only once dressed during whole river transport, of shortage of bandages and absence of all medical comforts. I fear there is great disorganisation.'[42] The Viceroy confirmed Chamberlain's fears, responding, 'I regret to say that reports of mismanagement and deficiencies in medical comforts and necessaries… leave little doubt in my mind that our wounded and sick soldiers have since the Sheikh Saad engagement [December 1915] undergone considerable suffering.'[43]

The assessments of the medical provisions in Mesopotamia were completely at odds with those conducted in France, signifying the disparity that existed between the two theatres. This gulf remained largely hidden from public view until the scandal grew to such an extent that a public inquiry became unavoidable.[44] The chasm in the standards of care illustrated how the British government regarded the medical system offered to Indian troops serving on the Western Front as a political opportunity. In France and Britain such failures in medical arrangements could not be tolerated and none of the deficiencies in resources, which plagued the Mesopotamian campaign surfaced in the Indian medical system implemented in western Europe.

For sepoys serving on the Western Front, the hospital authorities were also keen to ensure that patients received their medical care in comfortable surroundings. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) ran several recreational tents and huts in the Indian hospitals and convalescent depots in France. When the ISF produced a series of short reports concerned with the comforts provided for Indians in receipt of medical care or convalescing in France, the author, John Hewitt,

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[39] 'Letter from Bruce Seton to Walter Lawrence,' dated 23 March 15, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/50-51.
[40] 'Letter from Seton to Lawrence regarding Kitchener General Hospital mortality figures, 'dated 23 July 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/211.
[41] Ibid.
[42] 'Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy of India,' dated 22 February 1916, UB/AC/46/2/2.
[43] Ibid.
[44] *Report of the commission appointed by Act of Parliament to enquire into the operations of war in Mesopotamia, together with a separate report by Commander Josiph Clement] Wedgwood, DSO, MO, and appendices. Parliamentary Papers* (HoC) (1917), XVI, Cd 8610. 12 vols; BL/IOR/L/MIL/17/15/65.

noted at the Convalescent Depot in Boulogne that the YMCA tent had recently put on a 'cinematograph show' for 500 men, and he described the tent's provisions as a, 'most excellent arrangement.'[45] The ISF supplied the tent with 50 packs of playing cards, Indian musical instruments, a gramophone and Indian records, as well as money for the purchase of goal posts and a shop counter for convalescing Indian soldiers to buy goods from.[46] The YMCA also provided similar services in France at Meerut Stationary Hospital and Secunderabad General Hospital.[47]

In Britain, the War Office and individual hospital managements took over the role of the YMCA and sought to provide recreational facilities within hospitals and convalescent homes, often with financial support from the ISF. Walter Lawrence, the commissioner for Indian hospitals, praised the recreation room at the Barton convalescent home in New Milton, after a visit in February 1915.[48] Impressed by what he had seen, such facilities were duly implemented at other hospitals. Photographs of the recreation room at the Lady Hardinge Hospital shows a room and contents typical of those found in Indian hospitals in France and Britain. Although not elaborate by modern standards they were well-appointed when compared to what their soldier patients would have been used to back in India.[49]

ONE END OF THE RECREATION ROOM.

Figure 20. The Lady Hardinge Hospital's recreation room.[50]

[45] 'ISF inspection report of the Indian Convalescent and the Advanced Base Depots at Boulogne,' dated 27 July 1915, BL/Mss Eur F143/67/27/58.
[46] Ibid.
[47] 'ISF inspection report of the Lahore Indian General Hospital, situated at the Old Military College at Montreuil,' 27 July 1915, BL/Mss Eur F143/67/27/59.
[48] 'Letter from Walter Lawrence to Crewe-Milnes,' dated 8 February 1915, CUM/Crewe/I/19/(9).
[49] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.4
[50] Ibid.

In addition to the recreation rooms, the authorities also sought to ensure that religious and caste practices were facilitated by taking into account the patients' dietary, prayer, and spiritual observances.[51] For example, each of the War Office Indian hospitals in England had its own mosque and a Gurdwara for Muslim and Sikh soldiers.[52] In March 1915, on the orders of the War Office, the Kitchener General Hospital created a 'caste committee' which appointed representatives from all castes present at the hospital, 'to ensure the respecting of religious caste prejudices.'[53] Most of the larger medical facilities sought to provide separate kitchens for Hindu and Muslim patients, as was the case at the Lady Hardinge Hospital, whose commanding officer, lieutenant colonel Perry, reported, 'no difficulties were experienced in connection to Brahmin prejudices as a proportion of the cooks were of that caste.'[54] In France, at the Convalescent Depot in Boulogne, the Imperial War Fund paid for the construction of a brick mosque which was built by Muslim sepoys.[55] The charity also paid for a gurudwara and a mosque for Sikh and Muslim patients at the Secunderabad Indian General Hospital in Hardelot.[56]

The ISF liberally distributed comforts to Indian patients across hospitals in Britain and France.[57] In the case of its own hospital, the Lady Hardinge, the charity gave out a daily allocation of seven cigarettes to each patient, or to non-smokers an equivalent of 2 oz. of sweets. There was also a weekly distribution of 2 oz. of sweets, and a bi-weekly distribution of fruit to every patient.[58] Other articles supplied by the ISF to the Indian hospitals in Britain and France included musical instruments imported from India, gramophones and Indian record collections, newspapers and literature printed in the various languages spoken in the Indian regiments, as well as money for sports equipment, cinematic projections, and furniture for recreational facilities.[59]

The generosity of the ISF did not go unnoticed by the British medical officers who staffed the Indian hospitals. When the War Office's Kitchener Hospital was being prepared for closure in early December 1915 its commanding officer, Bruce Seton, wrote to the fund to thank them for their donations. Seton

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[51] 'Letter from Walter Lawrence to George V's private secretary, Clive Wigram,' dated 19 July 15,' RA/PS/PSO/GV/Q/832/303.
[52] Walter Lawrence, *The India We Served* (London: Cassell and Company, 1928). p.271
[53] War Office: 'Kitchener Indian Hospital (1915 Jan - 1916 Jan) War Diary,' NA/WO/95/5465.
[54] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. pp.3, 9
[55] 'ISF inspection report of the Indian Convalescent and the Advanced Base Depots at Boulogne,' Mss Eur F143/67/27/57-58.
[56] 'ISF inspection report of the Secunderabad Indian General Hospital, situated at Hardelot,' dated 27 July 1915, BL/IOR/Mss Eur/F143/67/27/61.
[57] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Report of the First Six Months' Work,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.9
[58] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.9
[59] Agreement by the Indian Soldiers' Fund to pay for these items are detailed under several committee meetings, detailed in 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1.

praised, 'I cannot adequately express to you what we owe the Indian Soldiers' Fund for an uninterrupted succession of kindnesses to the hospital. Literature, food, money, clothes and amusements have been provided by the Fund without stint.'[60] Gulab Singh, a wounded Dogra of the 57th Rifles, who was hospitalised in England reported to a friend, 'there is no trouble here. The arrangements for our food are excellent… It is a very good arrangement.'[61] Another commented, 'the King has given a strict order that no trouble be given to any black man in hospital. Men in hospital are tended like flowers.'[62]

Given the successes recorded by the hospital medical statistics, the comforts provided, and the facilitation of religious practices, it is apparent that the War Office and other medical authorities concerned with the welfare of Indian troops serving on the Western Front went to great efforts to ensure that the sepoys' medical care and well-being were satisfied. The historian, Mark Harrison, has claimed that Indian medical provisions in France were haphazard due to the arrangements being based on a system established for frontier warfare in India. This, Harrison has contended, not only led to failures but also undermined the morale of Indian servicemen who fought on the Western Front.[63] However, Harrison's analysis more accurately reflects the medical arrangements, or rather lack of, provided by the Indian government for the Mesopotamian campaign which were overwhelmed due to a failure to adequately expand the medical and logistical resources available to the Indian Army in the Middle East.[64]

The Indian hospitals in the media: a propaganda coup

Despite the high standard of resources available to Indian hospitals in the west, the War Office's objectives were not purely altruistic. When Walter Lawrence learnt of efforts by missionaries to visit the hospitals and distribute Christian literature the potential political repercussions clearly worried him as he informed Lord Kitchener, 'I have seen vernacular translations of the Gospels at the [Brighton] Pavilion, and I gave orders that these should be strictly excluded.' Lawrence, who had an extensive background in Indian service, informed the secretary of state for war, 'we cannot be too careful, as if it got abroad that any attempts has been made to proselytise men who are sick and wounded, there

[60] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Report of the First Six Months' Work,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.12
[61] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.50, letter 40, 'Gulab Singh (Dogra, 57th Rifles) to Bhur Singh (25th Cavalry, Bannu, NWFP),' a hospital in England, 3rd April, 1915.
[62]Ibid. p.59, letter 63, 'Isar Singh (Sikh, 59th Rifles) to a friend (50th Punjabis, India),' Indian General Hospital, Brighton, 1st May 1915.
[63] Harrison, 'Disease, Discipline and Dissent.' p.189
[64] 'Review of the report of the commission appointed to enquire into the medical arrangements in Mesopotamia. Gen Sir Beauchamp Duff, C-in-C in India.,' 1916, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17/15/117

would be great trouble [in India].'[65] Lawrence's uncompromising reaction demonstrated that the hospitals' political ramifications, particularly in India, weighed heavily upon the government's decision making.

In the same report that Lawrence expressed his concerns over the distribution of Christian literature he also reaffirmed his belief in the political importance of the hospitals, stating: 'I never lose an opportunity of impressing on all who are working in these hospitals that great political issues are involved in making the stay of the Indians in England as agreeable as possible.'[66] Lawrence's ambition was to present the government as compassionate towards the care of Indian soldiers in its was to its own servicemen. Through this strategy the British government could be presented as a benevolent imperial power.

Working towards this objective, in late March 1915 Walter Lawrence produced a press release, based on a visit he made with the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, to the Brighton hospitals.[67] Lawrence's text was keen to emphasise the professionalism of the staff and the quality of care received by the Indian patients. The release noted, 'there can be no doubt that the Indian Medical Service officers are splendid surgeons and the statistics of mortality in the Indian hospitals both in England and in France are remarkably satisfactory.'[68] Among the Kitchener Hospital's staff, according to the article, were, 'the best-known expert specialists of India,' and at their disposal was a, 'splendid hospital, fully equipped with the most modern and up-to-date appliances.'[69]

Numerous articles were published in national and provincial newspapers during 1914-1915 which conveyed a similar positive tone about Indian hospitals situated in Britain and France, almost entirely at the expense of reference to those outside of Europe. In December 1914, *The Manchester Guardian* reported that visitors to the new British Red Cross Hospital at Netley testified, 'that the wounded Indian soldiers under treatment there are very deeply impressed by the care that is taken to ensure their comfort.'[70] Two days earlier *The Times* had reported George V's visit to an Indian hospital in France, where he was shown, 'x-rays, the operating room, the laundry, the Hindu and Mahomedan kitchens, and the other excellent arrangements of the hospital in which the caste observances of the various sects and communities are as carefully respected as in their own country.'[71] In March 1915,

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[65] Walter Lawrence, 'Letter to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals,' dated 15 February 1915, 1915, NA/WO 32/5110.
[66] Ibid.
[67] 'War Office press release, subject matter: Lord Crewe's visit, on 27.3.1915, to the Brighton based Indian hospitals,' BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/68.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] 'Queen Alexandria's Puggarees,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 December 1914.
[71] 'The King at the Front,' *The Times*, 2 December 1914.

Edmund Candler wrote an article for the *Daily Mail* that underlined the efforts that the medical authorities and ISF went to in order to ensure the Indian troops' well-being. He told readers how a Pathan sepoy he spoke to was, 'surrounded with all the comforts of life, a blue dressing-gown, red blankets, soft green felt slippers – the gift of the Indian Soldiers Fund – and a table strewn with cigarettes.'[72]

Even the hospitals' funeral arrangements for Indian soldiers were a subject of interest for the press. In February 1915, *The Manchester Guardian* published photographs which recorded the funeral service and cremation pyre of a Hindu serviceman who had died at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, from wounds he received on the Western Front. With a full military service and display of diligence towards his religion, the images conveyed a sense of gratitude to the serviceman.[73]

Figure 21. Two photographs published in the *Manchester Guardian* of the preparations for the funeral of a Hindu Indian serviceman who died at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, in February 1915. In the left image volunteers of the Indian Ambulance Corps construct the deceased's pyre, whilst his coffin awaits cremation. In the image to the right sepoy patients have arrived to participate in the ceremony.[74]

In an article published in the *Daily Mail*, Candler described the Brighton Pavilion's opulence and grandeur of its gardens as a, 'veritable Eden.'[75] The journalist gave the impression that all the town's Indian patients enjoyed a similar standard of setting. The injured soldiers were described strolling through the former royal palace's gardens, which Candler supposed gave, 'a holiday air among the men.'[76] Candler claimed that the Indians were so enamoured with Brighton that one hospitalised man, who

[72] Edmund Candler, 'The Pathan is a Sportsman,' *Daily Mail*, 5 March 1915.
[73] 'Hindu soldier funeral and cremation,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 February 1915.
[74] Ibid.
[75] 'The Devil's War: What the Indians Think of It,' *Daily Mail*, 11 March 1915.
[76] Ibid.

had previously recovered at the Brighton Pavilion earlier in the year from frostbite, begged to be transferred back after being sent to a New Forest hospital to recover from a bullet wound. Candler claimed, the soldier called, '*Bri-toun* [sic] the best town in *Wilayat*.'[77] In another *Daily Mail* article the journalist referenced a Jat sepoy he had spoken to, speculating, 'the great banqueting hall where he lies in the pavilion, with its massive chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, must have reminded him of his maharajah's durbar.'[78]

The Brighton Pavilion, despite only receiving a relatively small proportion of Indian wounded, frequently became the focus of newspaper articles. The War Office also demonstrated its ambition to make the building the centre of its propaganda effort by commissioning several paintings of the hospital. Rather than produce close up portraits of Indian patients, the commissioned artists chose to capture the Brighton Pavilion's grandeur and lavish interior, with its architecture and interior design ever present in their depictions.[79] Collectively, the paintings presented a narrative of the Indian wounded being afforded medical facilities worthy of the building's royal connection and men of Asian heritage. The fact that none of the other Indian hospitals were recorded in such a manner also signifies the desire to utilise the Brighton Pavilion as the centrepiece of the propaganda campaign designed to portray Indian medical care as the best which could be afforded.

Figure 22. An oil painting of a hospital ward at the Brighton Pavilion.[80]

[77] Ibid.

[78] '"Indians' View of Neuve Chapelle,' *Daily Mail*, 19 March 1915.

[79] C H H Burleigh, 'Interior Of The Pavilion, Brighton: Indian Army Wounded,' 1917, IWM/ART/116. Also see C H H Burleigh, RPMBH/FA000409 'Oil painting by Charles Henry Harrison Burleigh. Shows Indian Soldiers in rows of beds inside the Dome during its use as a Military Hospital,' 1915. Douglas Foxx Pitt, 'The Dome Theatre, Brighton in use as a hospital for Indian wounded soldiers, 1915-1916,' 1919, RPMBH/FA100626.

[80] C H H Burleigh, 'The Music Room of The Royal Pavilion as a Hospital for Indian Soldiers,' 1915, RPMBH/FA000311.

The War Office produced a commemorative guidebook to celebrate its use as an Indian military hospital as part of this campaign.[81] Recognising its political value to the British authorities in India the guide was published in English, Urdu, and Gurmukhi. Its publication date was held back to incorporate information and photographs of visits made by the King and Queen in August 1915.[82] When it was eventually published, 2000 copies of the book were issued to the hospital's patients and a minimum of 3000 editions were reserved for sale in the Indian market.[83] Such was the book's success that in 1916 the viceroy ordered another 20,000 copies for the Indian market.[84] The Pavilion's commanding officer, lieutenant-colonel McLeod, involved himself in the book's production and, akin to Lawrence, sought to emphasise the hospital's connection to the royal family, its opulence and modern medical equipment.[85] Photography featured strongly with numerous images of the king and queen's visit in August 1915 included.[86] What the book did not mention was just as significant as what it did. Whilst numerous photographs recorded sepoys enjoying the summer sun in the Pavilion's manicured grounds, there were no images of boundary fences or guards present or reference to the restriction of freedom placed on the patients' ability to leave the hospital's grounds.

Figure 23. A photograph published in, *The Indian Military Hospital, Royal Pavilion, Brighton: A Short History*. The lack of security gives a misleading impression that convalescing patients were free to leave the facility.[87]

[81] *Indian Military Hospital, Royal Pavilion, Brighton. A Short History*.
[82] 'Letter from J.N. McLeod to Walter Lawrence,' dated 1 September 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/185.
[83] Ibid.
[84] 'Telegram from Viceroy of India to Secretary of State for India,' dated 26 April 1916, UB/AC/45/2/12.
[85] *Indian Military Hospital, Royal Pavilion, Brighton. A Short History*.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid. p.58

This was not the only occasion that it was publicly implied that Indian patients were afforded freedoms to leave the grounds of their convalescent depots or hospitals. Postcards of Indian patients taking an excursion around Hove aboard a charabanc (see figure 24); or marching out of the Kitchener Hospital for an exercise excursion to the South Downs (see figure 26) all gave the impression that Indian personnel were afforded the freedom to leave their medical facilities. In a printed example of this narrative, Edmund Candler wrote that Brighton's Indian patients, 'have seen the wonders of the aquarium, and the kinemas [sic] on the pier, and the Belgian Art Gallery. They admire the lions of the place, but more than anything its cleanliness and absence of refuse [that impresses them].'[88] However, Candler failed to mention that excursions were accompanied by guards, and Indian hospitals were secured with perimeter fences and sentries to prevent patients and staff leaving without prior permission. In another article, printed in July 1915, *The Daily Mail* implied that Indians enjoyed the freedom to leave their hospital through an interview conducted during an outing with a Gurkha officer, named Nain Singh, who was recovering in one of the Brighton hospitals.[89] Headlined, 'A Happy Day with a Brighton Gurkha,' the article recounted a trip to Brighton Pier and the town's high streets. Once again, no mention was made of the special permissions required for such an excursion or how in ordinary circumstances such a jaunt would have been accompanied by a British guard.

The south coast hospitals proved to be a fruitful setting for British journalists to interview Indian soldiers away from the dangers of the frontline. The contents of such articles usually sought to reveal the interviewee's war experiences, habits, and response to British or French culture. Often, they also sought to racially stereotype the interviewees, continuing the process of ambivalent reportage which had begun with accounts of the Indian regiments' frontline service. In the example of, 'A Happy Day with a Brighton Gurkha,', a number of tropes were used to depict Singh as a simple man who, despite being an officer, would likely require British guidance. Singh, Candler wrote, 'a typical Gurkha, ingenuous, friendly, a born *shikari* [hunting guide], full of jungle lore, and cheerful as a cricket.'[90] Describing how the officer reacted to a Brighton shop, the journalist patronisingly depicted the Nepalese serviceman as juvenile by describing how he, 'peered through the plate-glass windows at the mysteries and elaborate refinements of our civilisation with the wonder of a child.' The article's conclusion reaffirmed the message by recounting how the officer reacted to a joke, 'Nain Singh laughed aloud – a boyish, infectious laugh. An afternoon with the Gurkha makes the dullest dog feel witty.'[91] A couple of months later Edmund Candler visited one of the Hampshire hospitals to interview some of its pa-

[88] 'The Devil's War: What the Indians Think of It,' *Daily Mail.*
[89] 'A Happy Day with a Brighton Gurkha,' *Daily Mail*, 8 July 1915.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

tients. He continued his depiction of the Nepalese as juvenile by describing Gurkhas using the hospital's recreation room as, 'children of the hour, playing on the carpet… absorbed in a game of dice with cowrie shells.' [92]

Akin to articles about the sepoys' frontline service, reports about them in the hospital setting used a series of ambivalent racial stereotypes to imply inferiority and a want of British guidance. The reports also intended to underline a sense of Indian valour, high morale, disdain of Germany, and eagerness to return to the front. In one article Edmund Candler mused, 'one cannot help moralising when one meets the Indians in the forest [New Forest]… fighting besides us to hold the pure soil of England from the last contamination of the Hun.'[93] In another, he reported that the time spent in convalescence left the average sepoy wanting, 'to have another dig at the Boches.'[94] When Indian patients' perspectives of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle were addressed in a *Daily Mail* article, the reporter claimed that after a testing winter, news of the Indian Army Corps' achievements had created 'a more genial spirit everywhere.' The report concluded with the upbeat words of a Dogra patient who the journalist purported was eager to return to the frontline to help see that the, 'German-lôg [sic] is utterly destroyed.'[95] There was no mention of the faltering morale identified by Walter Lawrence in his reports of Indian patients.

Akin to the British media's coverage of the Indian Army Corps' arrival in France and its subsequent frontline experiences, articles based in the hospital setting were eager to describe the sepoy as a loyal and willing servant, who was nevertheless in need of British leadership due to inherent character flaws. The propaganda value of the hospitals lay in their ability to describe the British government as a caring political master, giving credence to the idea that the British empire was an entity which Indians were willing to sacrifice their lives for. Little or no coverage was presented in the national daily newspapers of the controls implemented by the War Office over the freedoms of Indian patients.

Restrictions of freedom: the realities of hospital life

Despite the positive images of Indian medical facilities presented in the press and other forms of media, there was another side to the military hospitals and convalescent depots used by IEFA which did not fit with the narrative of a medical system that regarded its Indian patients and staff as equals to their British counterparts. Away from public view, the hospitals and convalescent depots soon

[92] 'The Road Home,' *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1915.
[93] Ibid.
[94] 'The Devil's War: What the Indians Think of It,' *Daily Mail.*
[95] 'Indians' View of Neuve Chapelle,' *Daily Mail.*

became subject to a series of authoritarian controls that revealed fears within the War Office and India Office about the exposure of a large body of Asian men to Western society. As a result, several policies were implemented that were designed to restrict unregulated Indian contact with the West. This involved confining Indian patients and medical staff to their hospitals or convalescent homes, tightly monitoring who could visit patients, restricting the use of female staff, and maintaining vigilance over correspondence to and from Indian servicemen and medical personnel.

The first Indian patients arrived in Brighton on 14th December 1914.[96] The day after their arrival Walter Lawrence recorded, 'we have strong military guards for the hospitals at Brighton and Bournemouth... in places like Brighton and Bournemouth it will be fatal to let them about in the streets.'[97] Although, at this early stage it appears that Indian patients and medical staff were allowed out of the hospitals, they were still supposed to be officially accompanied.[98] Less than two months after Lawrence's note restrictions of Indian freedoms at the hospitals were tightened further.

At the largest Indian hospital in Britain, the Kitchener General Hospital, its commanding officer, Bruce Seton, issued 'Hospital Order No.4' on 10th February 1915 which implemented rigorous regulations over Indian patients and staff that restricted their ability to leave the facility.[99] The only Indian rank authorised to leave the grounds unconditionally were Indian commissioned sub-assistant surgeons. Those of 'warrant rank' had restrictions placed on their ability to obtain passes, with special passes, requested for up to an hour after the 'lights out' at 9 p.m. given sparingly by commanding officers.[100] Other ranks of Indian personnel, who formed the vast majority of the hospital's Indian staff, were not issued passes, 'except under a small group of circumstances. Ordinarily they would be required to be accompanied by a staff officer.'[101] 'Non-officer' Indian soldier patients experienced similarly tight restrictions to Indian orderlies, cooks, and sweepers as they were only allowed out of the hospital when either taken out by British officers, or on a route march, parade or other duties; on 'joy rides' or to cinema shows; or when taken by a British RAMC or VAD orderly to the dentist or elsewhere on duty.[102]

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[96] 'The Brighton Hospitals for Indian Troops,' *Indian Medical Gazette* 50(4) (April, 1915): 141–43. Accessed: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/27d9/78360b36c9c525402a05a0c362dc2f9efbe5.pdf 12/11/20.
[97] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence, dated 15 December 1915,' NA/WO/32/5110/37A.
[98] Lt.-Col. H. R. Woolbert, 'What the Indians Thought of Brighton,' *The Pavilion Blues,* June 1916, RPMBH/28132.
[99] 'Attempted murder of Bruce Seton, Kitchener Hospital, Court Martial Proceedings,' BL/MssEur/F143/78/17-18.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.

Figure 24. A photograph of Indian soldiers seated in charabanc in front of a statue of the Empress of India, Queen Victoria, on Grand Avenue, Hove. Such images gave the impression that convalescing sepoys were permitted the freedom to interact with the local populace. The reality was that such excursions were organised and controlled by the War Office.[103]

Although the controls were stringent when compared to those experienced by British patients, these original orders were not deemed to be strict enough. On 12th August 1915, the hospital's war diary stated that Seton issued, 'new and more stringent orders regarding passes for sub-assistant surgeons and others of Indian personnel.'[104] Seton had a reputation for being a strict disciplinarian who ran a spartan regime, and on at least two occasions complaints were made to the India Office by Indians working at the hospital about the (non-medical) treatment they received.[105] His introduction of a tough drilling regime was particularly unpopular.[106] It has also been contended that his orders to restrict Indian freedoms were taken at his own volition.[107] Indeed, Seton later wrote, 'it was evident,

[103] Photograph showing Indian soldiers seated in an open charabanc by the Queen Victoria statue on Grand Avenue, Hove, RPMBH/HA928109.
[104] NA/WO/95/5465.
[105] War Office: 'Kitchener Indian Hospital (1915 Jan - 1916 Jan) War Diary,' 1916, NA/WO/95/5465.
[106] Harrison, 'Disease, Discipline and Dissent' p.193
[107] Suzanne Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'

from the very first, that drink and that the sex problem were factors which would have to be reckoned with.'[108]

This extract indicates that Seton was personally motivated by an urge to maintain strict discipline as well as a racial hierarchy which prohibited sexual contact between British women and Indian servicemen. Indeed, he seems to have been more draconian than other hospital commandants, but it is important to recognise that his regime was not unique. Seton's efforts to restrict contact between Indian staff and patients and the local populace were part of a wider War Office policy designed to regulate Indian contact with British society. During the same month that Order No.4 was dispensed at the Kitchener General Hospital, the commanding officer of the Indian Convalescent Home at Barton, lieutenant-colonel Clayton-White, informed Walter Lawrence:

> Under orders of the War Office I am not allowed to let anyone out of the home on any pretext whatever… many hard cases occur. Gentlemen ask to be allowed to take Indian officers out in their cars – old Indian officials presently apply to take the men to their homes first… but no one is allowed out of the boundary fence.[109]

Clayton-White did not agree with the order, stating, 'this acts very harshly in some cases.' He even wrote to the officer who issued it to ask if he could let men out occasionally at his own discretion, but received no reply to his request.[110] Clayton-White's remonstrations with the War Office highlighted that his personal disposition towards fraternisation between Indian patients and the local community was more liberal than Seton. However, his comments also make it clear that the War Office asserted its authority over commanding officers in setting the parameters for Indian patient and medical staff freedoms. A few days before Seton issued his more stringent restrictions, he had been visited by a colonel Beaston of the War Office who enquired into the rules governing Indian passes out of hospital.[111] Indeed, Indian patients and staff were often referred to as 'inmates' in contemporary correspondence from British officers who worked in the Indian hospital system and, unsurprisingly, their status as prisoner patients distressed many of the sepoys.[112] One unnamed 'inmate' told his family back in Ahmedabad, 'Brighton is a large city but I am ignorant of its contents.'[113] When Lawrence visited the Bournemouth hospital he spoke to two Asian officers who were evidently

[108] 'Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital', BL/IOR/MIL/1/5, quoted in Bardgett.
[109] 'Letter from J. Clayton-White, commanding officer of the Indian Convalescent Home, Barton, New Milton, to Walter Lawrence,' dated 21 February 1915, BL/Mss Eur F143/66/28-29
[110] Ibid.
[111] NA/WO/95/5465.
[112] Examples of the term 'inmate' used to describe Indian patients recovering in hospitals or convalescent homes from wounds or illness suffered on the Western Front include, Lawrence. p.271; and IWM/LBY/6339. p.6
[113] Indian letter quoted in Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'

aggrieved by the situation. 'They complained, as indeed did the men in the wards,' Lawrence told Kitchener, 'that the hospital resembled a prison. I explained to them that a hospital was a prison.'[114]

It was not only imprisonment which aggravated the patients. In 1915, 57 of the 377 offences committed under military law at the Brighton hospitals were deemed sufficiently serious enough to warrant imprisonment.[115] The unpopularity of the of the War Office's confinement policies is further evidenced by a letter from one of the Barton Convalescent Home's storekeepers, Mithan Lal, who wrote to his brother:

> Alas, we are not free to go about at will. In fact, we Indians are treated like prisoners. On all sides there is barbed wire and a sentry stands at each door, who prevents us from going out… If I had known that such a state of affairs would exist, I would never have come… I can say I have never experienced such hardship in my life.[116]

In the same letter Lal acknowledged that the medical staff were well fed and clothed, but the comforts provided by the War Office could not compensate for the lack of what he described as, 'the essential thing – freedom.'[117] A photograph taken of the Lady Hardinge Hospital gate illustrated the realities of Lal's frustration with hospital life. A sentry is employed to prevent the public from entering and patients leaving, whilst the facility was further secured with barbed wire fencing.

Figure 25. The Lady Hardinge Hospital's security measures are visible in this photograph.[118]

[114] NA/WO/32/5110/37A.
[115] 'Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital', BL/L/IOR/MIL/1/5, quoted in Harrison, 'Disease, Discipline and Dissent.' p.193
[116] 'Letter from storekeeper, 2 December 1915,' BL/IOR/MSS EUR/F143/86/25.
[117] Ibid.
[118] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund, Report of the First Six Months' Work,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.4

By June 1915 this resentment was turning into anger. One sepoy, named Pirzada, wrote home to tell his family, 'our people are very angry.' Pirzada divulged that the ire felt by Indian personnel had been provoked by the War Office's draconian efforts to confine Indians to their facilities. Pirzada continued, 'They do not allow us out to the bazaars etc. They do not let the French or the English talk to us nor do they let us talk to them. The English have now become very bad. They have become dogs. Our Indian soldiers are very much oppressed, but they can do nothing.'[119] The infuriation felt by Prizada was illustrated by an extraordinary event that took place at the Kitchener General Hospital on 17th November 1915. It was on this day that Jagan-Nath Godbole, a second-class sub-assistant surgeon, levelled a revolver at the hospital's commander, Bruce Seton. The authorities kept the incident secret, but a month later Godbole was found guilty of assault at a court martial and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.[120] Three days before his trial Godbole gave a statement to military police to explain the motivations behind his actions. Godbole stated that he had only been at the Kitchener Hospital for four days before he attempted to shoot Seton. Previously Godbole had been stationed at the No.8A Indian General Hospital (Monte Dore) in Bournemouth where, he informed his interviewer, he had, 'received good treatment.'[121] However, according to Godbole, the draconian restrictions enforced by Seton created such a negative impact on patient and staff morale at his new Brighton hospital that:

> Everyone at this hospital was complaining of being imprisoned, and I took the thing to heart. They all said, "we have come to fight for the King and not to be imprisoned."… I assure you the friction was awful, we were nothing but war prisoners; signing books which were in the custody of a sergeant and getting his permission to go out and come in.[122]

Godbole acknowledged that as a sub-assistant surgeon he was afforded greater freedom than most of his compatriots, provided he first got the permission from the duty sergeant to leave the hospital; but in a later statement given after his trial Godbole reasoned that he, 'felt most for the wounded soldiers, followers and orderlies, who hardly left the building for months together.'[123] Godbole's interviewer included a copy of Seton's Hospital Order No.4 within the evidence submitted for trial. Given the evidence collected by the authorities about the hospital's restrictions it is likely that they believed Godbole's explanation as the motivation for his action. Indeed, although Godbole's attempted murder was the most serious offence committed in the Indian hospitals, it was not the only

[119] Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'
[120] 'Attempted murder of Bruce Seton, Kitchener Hospital, Court Martial Proceedings,' BL/MssEur/F143/78/17-18.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

significant one. In 1915, 57 of the 377 offences committed under military law at the Brighton hospitals were deemed sufficiently serious enough to warrant imprisonment.[124]

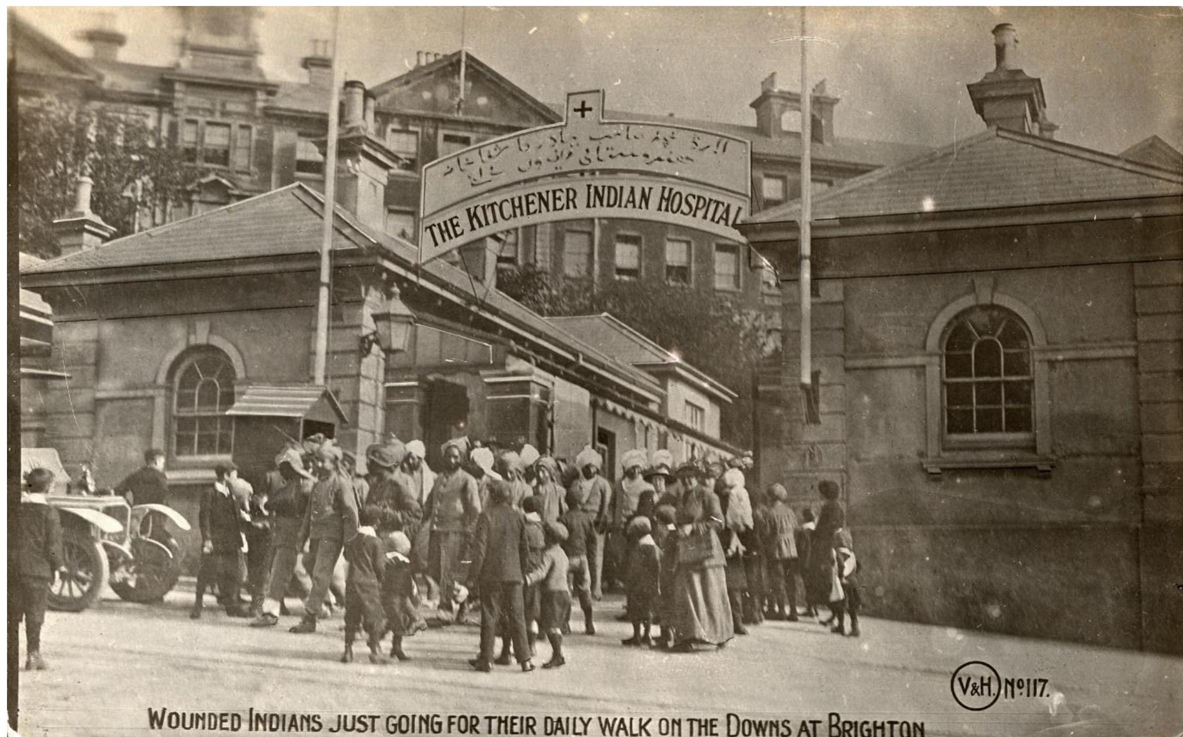

Figure 26. Patients of the Kitchener Indian Hospital leave for an organised route march of the South Downs. The local interest in the Indians is evidenced, as is one of the sentry boxes. The excursion gives the impression of freedom, but such outings were accompanied by guards. It was at this hospital that Jagan-Nath Godbole attempted to shoot the commanding officer, Bruce Seton, for the restrictions of freedom placed over Indian staff and patients.[125]

Despite the unpopularity of these limitations amongst Indian patients and staff, orders from the War Office went beyond limiting Indians' ability to leave their hospitals or convalescent homes; they also restricted who could visit Indian patients. This restriction was made under War Office order No.24/General Number/3405 (A.M.D.2.), issued on 17th December 1914.[126] Its effect was to limit visitors to Indian hospitals to persons who had, 'acquired a permit either from the War Office, the

[124] 'Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital', BL/IOR/MIL/1/5, quoted in Harrison, 'Disease, Discipline and Dissent.' p.193.

[125] Photograph showing a group of wounded Indian soldiers and British onlookers outside of the Kitchener Indian Hospital, 1915, RPMBH/HA903329.

[126] 'Letter from Neil Campbell to Walter Lawrence regarding the admission of visitors to the Brighton Pavilion and York Place Hospitals,' dated 11 March 1915, BL/MssEur/F143/66/91.

India Office, or the G.O.C. of the hospital which was intended to be visited.'[127] Lawrence recorded that although some discretion was given to hospital commanding officers, 'strict orders have been given that no one is to go into hospitals without a War Office pass.'[128]

The Indian Soldiers' Fund rejected the order by allowing visitors into the Lady Hardinge Hospital without a permit.[129] However, in War Office hospitals the effect of the permit system deterred many civilians from even attempting to visit. This was illustrated by an incident when an Indian civilian, Sir Shapoorji Broacha, tried to pay a visit to sepoys recovering at the Mont Dore. Broacha recorded, 'I was twice at the gate of the Bournemouth hospital but the notice at the door deterred me from going in.'[130] Broacha had been knighted, and his high profile eventually enabled him to acquire a visitor's permit directly from Walter Lawrence, but for people of lesser social standing the restrictions undoubtedly either prevented or dissuaded visits.

In the case of the Brighton hospitals, Neil Campbell, the officer commanding the Pavilion and Park Place hospitals, recognised the aggravation that the status-quo caused local residents. 'The Brighton public,' Campbell commented, 'are beginning to feel aggrieved at what they consider the exclusiveness governing the admission of visitors, of the formality and trouble incidental to the procedure to obtain permits.'[131] As early as 12 December 1914, a local newspaper printed an article that agreed with Campbell 's sentiment. The newspaper commented, 'these are days of prohibited areas. It is no easy matter to gain entrance to the Royal Pavilion. Much as many patriotic citizens would like to have a glance at our brave Indian wounded soldiers.'[132] So severe were controls over contact between Indians receiving hospital treatment and the local Brighton population, that in one episode a carter, who had been caught trying to hand whiskey to an Indian sweeper, was prosecuted under the Defence of the Realm Act. As punishment the man was given the choice of paying a £1 fine or spending six days in prison.[133]

The incident illustrated the War Office's unyielding stance towards the management of contact between the British public and the Indians. At the same time, the permit system enabled the War Office to control how Indian medical care was presented in the media to the British public, as

[127] 'Letter from Neil Campbell, Brighton Pavilion Hospital,' dated 19 March 15, BL/Mss Eur F143/66/49.
[128] NA/WO/32/5110/37A.
[129] 'General Committee Book, Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 20 January 1915,' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1
[130] 'Shapoorji Broacha to Walter Lawrence,' dated 24 May 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/98.
[131] BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/91.
[132] 'At a Glance,' *Brighton and Hove and South Sussex Graphic*, 12 December 1914. p.11
[133] NA/WO/95/5465.

journalists were also required to acquire permits.[134] This was even the case for those who extensively reported on the Indian Army, as in the example of Edmund Candler, who in October 1915 wrote to Walter Lawrence to ask for permission to visit the Kitchener Hospital to conduct interviews and research for a newspaper article he planned to write. Candler was granted permission, but subsequently wrote to Lawrence to explain, 'the point [of the article] is the care of the Indian wounded… but of course I will not publish it without your permission. would you mind sending me a line to say if I may?'[135]

Given the measures which the War Office and the medical authorities took to restrict free movement to and from the Indian hospitals, the question arises as to why they took such drastic action. Evidence surrounding these decisions centres around three points. The first is that the War Office and medical authorities were worried about potential disorderly conduct on the part of Indian personnel. The second was a fear of sexual liaisons between white British women and Indian patients or staff, and the third was based on concerns of an outbreak of political agitation or dissent.

Colonial hierarchies: gender and race in the Indian hospitals

With regards to the medical authorities' fears of public displays of indiscipline, those in positions of power were noticeably quick to criticise Indians employed in menial roles, adopting positions like those used by the martial race theorists of the Indian Army. Personalities in the War Office and India Office regarded the Indians used to fill these positions as a threat to military discipline. Early in January 1915 John Hewitt of the ISF recorded that some members of the charity's general committee, 'were rather upset at hearing of the possibility of a very large staff of Indian menials arriving in Brighton.' Holderness continued, the committee expressed anxiety, 'lest they might give a great deal of trouble unless they were subjected to strict discipline.'[136] It is clear from further evidence recorded by the ISF that many, if not all, of its members had a low opinion of the Indians who filled the hospitals' menial positions.

Unlike the vast majority of the Indian Army's soldiers, who came from rural backgrounds in northern India, a large proportion of the Indian menial staff originated from towns or cities. Evidently this irked many of the persons who were responsible for the organisation of IEFA's medical care. Havelock

[134] 'Letter from Edmund Candler to Walter Lawrence, asking for permission to visit the Kitchener Hospital,' dated 12 October 15, BL/MssEur/F143/66/162-163.
[135] 'Letter from Edmund Candler to Walter Lawrence asking for permission to publish an article based on his visit to the Kitchener Hospital,' dated 20 October 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/173-174.
[136] 'Letter from John Hewitt, Indian Soldiers' Fund, to Walter Lawrence,' dated 6 January 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/67/13.

Charles remarked, ‘I have not much commendation for the native menial staff. It is composed of the flotsam and jetsam of Indian bazaars.’[137] The commander of the Kitchener Hospital, Bruce Seton, a member of the IMS who had undertaken many years of service in India, had just as a severe opinion of the menial workers, calling them, ‘the sweepings of Bombay city.’[138] In another incident Lawrence reported that he thought it, ‘a great pity that we should have brought Cingalese [sic] or a Malay to work in Indian hospitals, and as the time comes for reductions they should be the first to go.’[139] The comments could be likened to the beliefs of the martial race ideologists commanding the Indian regiments who placed little value in Indians who came from urban parts of the country.

ANOTHER OF THE KITCHENS.

Figure 27. Cooks who worked in one of the kitchens at the Lady Hardinge Hospital. The men to the left and right dressed in military uniform were probably former sepoy patients requisitioned to work in the hospital kitchen. The two in the centre, dressed in civilian attire, were part of a group of personnel employed by the Indian Army who were subjected to the greatest levels of prejudice from the hospital authorities due to their ethnicity and urban backgrounds.[140]

[137] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 14.4.1915),' 1915, BL/IOR/Mss Eur/F120/1.
[138] ‘Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital’, BL/IOR/MIL/1/5, quoted in, Bardgett, ‘Why were the Indian wounded locked up.’
[139] NA/WO 32/5110.
[140] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.9

However, records which evidence the conduct of Indian personnel and servicemen based in Britain suggest the ISF's complaints had little basis. The chief constable of Brighton, colonel Gentle, wrote to Walter Lawrence in January 1915 to congratulate him on the conduct of the Indians based in the seaside resort. Again, on 27th March 1915, Gentle, assured Lord Crewe, 'that the conduct of the Indians during their stay in Brighton had been in every way exemplary.'[141] Reports from hospital administrators and commanding officers also back these assertions. Clayton-White, of the Barton Convalescent Home, wrote in December 1915 of the 5,000 Indians who had passed through his home, 'the behaviour of the men generally has been everything that could be desired and worthy of the highest commendation.'[142] Even Havelock Charles conceded in his introduction to the ISF's Lady Hardinge Hospital Report that despite the hospital having employed 53 menial staff, 'only on three occasions was it necessary to inflict any punishment. This speaks for itself.'[143] The concerns expressed by men such as Havelock Charles failed to materialise over the course of the hospital's lifetime, and many of the statements made about the Indians who filled the ranks of the hospitals' menial roles displayed a clear prejudice against this group due to their social backgrounds and ethnicities.

However, although these prejudiced views go some way to explaining the authoritarian position taken towards part of the medical personnel, such statements were not made in relation to wounded soldiers in receipt of treatment in the south coast hospitals. What is clear though – from records left by civil servants and army officers who debated the regulations that came to define the contact permitted between the British public and Indian patients – is that one of the most controversial points concerned the ability of women to visit the Indian hospitals. When Thomas Holderness, who was a civil servant in the India Office, recounted a debate about the matter held by a committee of council, Holderness noted that the military secretary for India, Edmund Barrow was, 'against the admission of ladies [to Indian hospitals].' [144]

Barrow's objections were overruled by the council, '[which] doubted whether the total exclusion was necessary or desirable either in the interests of discipline or the patients.' Should the medical services have decided to adopt such a severe stance, Holderness also questioned whether the position, 'could be maintained if questioned in parliament or the press.'[145] At the time Holderness also believed that the director general of army medical services, Alfred Keogh, who also attended the committee meeting, was against the admission of women to Indian hospitals. Keogh's position was not quite so

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[141] BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/68.
[142] 'Letter from Lt. Col. J. Clayton-White to Edmund Barrow,' 14 December 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/233-234.
[143]'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.4
[144] Thomas Holderness, '14.1.1915, letter from Thomas Holderness to Walter Lawrence regarding visitor permits to Indian hospitals,' 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/76.
[145] Ibid.

stringent, but he did still believe that female visitors should be restricted to, 'women with a knowledge of India or possessing some direct interest in some of the Indian regiments.'[146] Walter Lawrence also wished to use social background as a means to limit the number of women who could visit the Indian hospitals to those with a direct connection to India, such as wives of British officers serving in the Indian army or civil service.[147] When Holderness pointed out to Lawrence that his proposals did not include women of Indian origin, he relented to also include this group. Holderness successfully reasoned, 'I have been told that some Indian ladies in London have done a good deal of work in providing comforts for the Indians in the hospitals, and that there would be considerable feeling if they were absolutely refused permits. The number who might apply for permits will be small.'[148]

In early January 1915 James Dunlop-Smith – a former Indian army lieutenant-colonel, Indian government administrator, and member of the ISF's executive committee – spent four days discussing and researching the subject of female visitor admittance with British medical and administrative officers who worked in Indian military hospitals. Dunlop-Smith reported back, 'the general consensus of opinion among them is that ladies who are properly vouched for should be admitted… The men [Indian patients] gratefully appreciate the interest taken in them.'[149] Dunlop-Smith acknowledged that, 'ladies are never admitted to military hospitals in India.' However, he argued, that the advent of the new war had created exceptional circumstances which made, 'precedent not always a safe guide.'[150] Dunlop-Smith went on to make an impassioned plea on behalf of the wounded Indian soldiers to ensure that white British women were allowed admission to Indian hospitals:

> These men are thousands of miles away from their own country and their own people, and, at this time of year at any rate, are living under most depressing conditions. If we exclude English ladies from their wards, while these are freely admitted to visit the British wounded, the Indians will soon get to realise the differential treatment meted out to them, and will feel that, while they have shared the same dangers and hardships of the British soldiers, they are looked upon as suspect and even dangerous. I think we should be very careful to avoid any appearance even of wishing to deprive them of the brightness and human interests that such visits bring into their lives.[151]

[146] Alfred Keogh, '14.1.1915 Letter from Alfred Keogh to Walter Lawrence, regarding visitor permits to Indian hospitals,' BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/78.
[147] Thomas Holderness, '2.2.1915, letter form Thomas Holderness to Walter Lawrence regarding the admittance of women to Indian hospitals,' 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/90.
[148] Ibid.
[149] 'Letter from James Robert Dunlop-Smith to Walter Lawrence regarding the admittance of women into Indian hospitals,' dated 12 January 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/88-90.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

Dunlop-Smith's emotive testimony in favour of the admission of women was required due to the levels of opposition that the issue faced. And, although sympathetic to the wounded Indians' plight, the statement acknowledged the political damage that could be wrought should the authorities have excluded white female visitors. Dunlop-Smith's letter also provides an excellent measure of the political climate in relation to the Indian army that existed at the time. It acknowledged the impact of the First World War on pre-existing understandings and institutionalised hierarchies, which in turn forced the hand of the military authorities to make incremental retreats from long standing racially prejudiced policies. Ultimately though, the position which the authorities came to adopt only incrementally changed, for despite the opposition of men, such as Edmund Barrow, women were granted access to visit the War Office's Indian hospitals. However, the hospitals' white patriarchy ensured that only, 'ladies who are properly vouched for' were to be admitted through a permit system.[152] Such women were usually limited to wives of officers serving in regiments which the wounded men belonged to.[153]

The debate surrounding the presence of white females in the Indian hospitals did not end with discussions concerned with the admittance of visitors. The employment of white female nurses was another contentious issue. When the ISF discussed the use of British nurses in their own hospital the subject divided the opinion of the male committee members.[154] O'Moore Creagh, who had recently retired from the post of commander-in-chief of India, strongly objected to the proposal and was at first supported by Alfred Gaselee, another retired high-ranking Indian army officer. The two former Indian army officers relied on the argument that, akin to the precedence of not allowing female visitors into Indian military hospitals, the employment of female nurses in Indian military hospitals was unprecedented.[155] However, once again tradition was overturned as a number of medical officers present at the meeting, such as the Lady Hardinge's future commanding officer, colonel Perry, managed to sway the argument in favour of a compromise which allowed the use of female nurses on the understanding that the menial work was to be performed by male hospital orderlies.[156]

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[152] Ibid. No definitive statement has been found which stipulates the exact parameters used to define the admittance of female visitors to the Indian hospitals. However, these three sources all reference restrictions which were based on a requirement for female visitors to have received an avouchment from a retired or active man who held a senior position within the Indian army or civil service. The quote is taken from the first of source: BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/88-90. BL/MssEur/F143/66/91; BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/90.
[153] NA/WO 32/5110.
[154] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 1.10.1914),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.

The compromise agreed upon ensured that a measure of the pre-war racial hierarchy was secured due to the arrangement that nurses would be limited to superintending the wards.[157] True to the committee's decision, the Lady Hardinge Hospital went on to employ female ward matrons who were, 'selected specially on account of their having served in India and their knowledge of the vernacular.'[158] Photographs taken in wards of the Lady Hardinge and Royal Pavilion hospitals show the presence of female medical staff who were employed as matrons and in a few other specialist roles. The images intimate that female staff had greater physical contact with Indian patients than was intended by the policies set out by the War Office.[159]

INTERIOR OF A WARD.

[157] Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. pp.9
[158] Ibid.
[159] Top photograph, IWM/LBY/6339p.9. Bottom photograph, 'Photograph showing Indian Soldiers in rows of beds inside the Corn Exchange during its use as a Military Hospital, 1915,' RPMBH/BH411218

Figure 28. The top photograph overleaf was taken in the Lady Hardinge Hospital. The above image was taken in the Corn Exchange building of the Royal Pavilion Hospital. Both photographs suggest that nurses had closer contact with patients than was officially permitted.[160]

A wounded sepoy also told of greater physical care from nurses than was officially permitted. He wrote to his father in the Punjab to tell him, 'here the ladies tend to us, who have been wounded, as a mother tends her child… the ladies even carry off our excreta, so kind are they; and whatsoever we have a liking for they put into our mouths. They wash our bed clothes and massage our backs when they ache from laying in bed.'[161] However, the impression given by the photographs and patient's letter that nurses were officially permitted ordinary physical contact with Indian patients (as might be allowed in a British military hospital) is misleading. After the ISF's original committee meeting where matrons' duties were discussed, further opinions were obtained from Willcocks and Crewe. The final duties settled on confirmed that matrons were to manage ward cleanliness, orderliness of beds, and the distribution of food and medicines, to the exclusion of any menial work.[162] Significantly, matrons were also to be excluded from dressing patients' wounds, which represented another compromise that sought to minimise the physical contact.[163] It is also evident from a copy of the hospital plans, included in the ISF's Lady Hardinge Hospital report, that where possible the charity tried to maintain a physical

[160] Top photograph, 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.9. Bottom photograph, RPMBH/BH411218.
[161] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. pp.38-39, Letter 24 'A Sikh to his father (Punjab),' a hospital, England, [Gurmukhi], 20th February 1915.
[162] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 14.10.1914),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1
[163] Ibid.

separation between the institution's female staff and Indian male staff, with the accommodation for the two groups positioned at opposite ends of the hospital's grounds.[164]

The controversy that surrounded the use of female nurses at the Lady Hardinge is another example of how the advent of war had once again challenged a longstanding British practice based on racial prejudice, as on this occasion two retired conservative Indian Army officers had been forced to accept a partial withdrawal from an absolutist policy which sought to prevent all contact between Indian soldiers and female medical staff. Instead, the ISF's agreement that matrons were to be employed by its hospital, but be prevented from carrying out menial work or physical contact with Indian patients, meant that once again a compromise was reached that enabled both the conservative and more liberal advocates involved in the debate to claim a partial victory. Change had occurred, but it had come up against significant opposition, and what was finally settled upon was not a revolution in Indian military hospital medical practice, but an evolution that had been forced upon the hospital administrators primarily for practical and political reasons rather than ethical ones.

The compromise that was reached resembled the one obtained by the War Office in its discussions over the admission of female visitors to Indian hospitals. Although not reported in the ISF committee meeting minutes, akin to the War Office's debate over the admission of female visitors, it is difficult to divest the committee's decision from the political damage that a failure to employ female nurses at the Lady Hardinge could have caused, as it would have meant a recognisable lack of parity between Indian and British soldiers, despite both groups undertaking the same risks on the battlefield.

The compromise reached was also one which resembled the concessionary use of female nurses at institutions run by the British Red Cross Hospital for Indian soldiers in Netley, where *The Manchester Guardian* reported, that female nurses were restricted from any physical contact with patients:

> In each of the Indian wards is one sister and three orderlies. The sister attends to the general management of the meals. She directs the nursing, but does not come into actual contact with the patients, the nursing being carried out by the orderlies.[165]

At the War Office hospitals, the authorities sought to adopt similar measures, which limited sisters to positions of overseers, with male orderlies carrying out the physical nursing of patients.[166] Given the

[164] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339.
[165] "Queen Alexandria's Puggarees," *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 December 1914.
[166] 'letter from Bruce Seton to Walter Lawrence,' dated 17 February 1915, BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/24. Akin to the newspaper article about the British Red Cross Netley hospital, a press release was also issued by the War Office in late March 1915. This noted that women employed at the Pavilion Hospital were restricted to 'supervising sister' roles. 'War Office press release, subject Indian Army hospitals situated in Brighton,' 1915, BL/Mss/Eur/F143/66/68.

War Office's restrictions, Bruce Seton reported to Walter Lawrence that he did not believe it worthwhile for the Kitchener Hospital to employ theatre nurses. He surmised, that as the War Office orders about sisters were, 'so very clear that we made up our minds to carry on without them.'[167] It was not until almost a month after the Kitchener Hospital had opened that under orders from the War Office that theatres nurses were sent to Seton – a contradictory outcome, given its opposition to female physical contact with patients.[168]

The War Office's attempts to restrict female nurses' physical contact with Indian patients did not go completely unnoticed and managed to attract some bad publicity. A Brighton newspaper reported, 'we understand there are to be no lady nurses for the Eastern warriors.' This it commented was, 'a great disappointment to many of the Brighton fair sex, who had been hoping that a week's attendance at an ambulance class would have made them eligible to nurse the Indian soldiers.'[169] It was also a matter of controversy for Indian businessman, Shapoorji Broacha, when he paid a visit to several of the south coast hospitals in the summer of 1915. Broacha wrote to Walter Lawrence shortly afterwards to comment that he was pleased to find the patients in comfort and that their religious and caste practices had been respected.[170] However, he was displeased that in the War Office's Bournemouth and Brighton hospitals he had visited that the Indian sick were, 'nursed by Tommies and ward boys,' rather than the female nurses.[171] This matter must have caused Broacha distress as a few days later, while on board a ship sailing for India, he once again wrote to Lawrence to argue that, 'your committee may one day wake up to find that it had made a bad mistake.' The mistake, Broacha asserted, could have serious political ramifications:

> You are giving a weapon to the articulate Indians to say, "Our countrymen poured out their blood in service of the Empire and the King – but you would not allow your kindly women to touch men knowing all the good it would have done them."… Do not wait until your country and parliament take up the case in response to some furious articles in Indian vernacular papers.[172]

Broacha contended that at the very least Indian nurses should be sent for. He contested, 'if you think it is contamination… the bitter taste will remain [in India].'[173] Broacha also visited the Lady Hardinge Hospital. Although, judging by his correspondence with Lawrence, he appeared to be unaware of the

[167] BL/Mss Eur/F143/66/24.
[168] NA/WO/95/5465.
[169] 'At a Glance.' *Brighton and Hove and South Sussex Graphic*, 12 December 1914. p.11
[170] 'Letter from Shapoorji Broacha to Walter Lawrence,' dated 30 June 1915, BL/Mss Eur F143/66/114-116
[171] Ibid.
[172] 'Letter from Shapoorji Broacha to Walter Lawrence,' dated 4 July 1915, BL/Mss Eur F143/66/124
[173] Ibid.

ISF's policy which officially at least prevented nurses from dressing Indian wounds, he commented that the Indian patients he met there, 'highly appreciated the female nursing.'[174] It was during his visit to the Lady Hardinge that Broacha had been shown by one of its medical officers a telegram from another high ranking Indian Army officer, Beauchamp Duff, who was Moore O'Creagh's successor as commander-in-chief of India. Beauchamp Duff had telegraphed the hospital after he had seen a photograph of a British nurse standing beside Khudadad Khan, the first Indian soldier to receive a Victoria Cross. Broacha was aghast to find out that Beauchamp Duff had wired to complain about the presence of female nurses in Indian hospitals. Broacha further remonstrated his grievance over Beauchamp Duff's prejudice when he wrote to Dunlop-Smith of the Indian Soldiers' Fund to complain about the matter.[175]

Beauchamp Duff's dislike of white British females being used in the service of Indians was an example of a widespread and longstanding prejudice which existed amongst the Indian Army's British officer class. His reaction was symptomatic of what has been identified as a sub-conscious projection of the frailty of white [colonialist] masculinity; which sought to restrict contact between white female coloniser and male colonised society in order to bolster the self-esteem of male colonialists.[176] Large sections of this social group had vehemently resisted attempts made by reformers from the Indian civil service to give Indian officers opportunities to apply for the King's commissions. Beauchamp Duff's telegram should be interpreted in a similar light and is an example of the Indian Army's upper strata attempting to maintain the organisation's racial hierarchy in the face of the social forces unleashed by the conflict. Akin to the objections made by British officers to the Indianisation of the Indian Army's officer cadre, once again Beauchamp Duff's inflammatory remarks would have damaged efficiency had they been acted upon. Colonel Perry, who commanded the Lady Hardinge Hospital, wrote: 'The nursing staff has done invaluable service and have done much in training members of the St. John Ambulance Brigade; it is difficult to see how the hospital could have been run without the assistance of trained nurses.'[177]

The evidence left about the admission of British female visitors to the Indian hospitals and the use of female nurses, demonstrated a gendered dynamic to the Indian Army's racial hierarchy. Inter-racial sex was a troubled area of colonial consciousness. Historically, the presence of white women in the colonies was seen to be fraught with dangers, especially in terms of the protection of 'white

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[174] BL/Mss Eur F143/66/114-116.
[175] '2.7.15 Letter from Sir Shapoorji Broacha to Dunlop-Smith,' Mss Eur F143/66/149-154
[176] Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: race, masculinity and the development of national consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). p.25
[177] F. F. Perry I.M.S., 'Report of the Lady Hardinge Hospital, Brockenhurst,' *Indian Medical Gazette* 50(10) (Oct, 1915): 361–62, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/issues/280767/, Accessed 22/11/2020.

prestige.'[178] Or, in the words of the chief censor of Indian mails, Evelyn Howell, 'most detrimental to the prestige and spirit of European rule in India.'[179] When Bruce Seton contended that, 'the sex problem [was a] factor which would have to be reckoned with,' he acknowledged that this dogma of colonialist doctrine had been transferred to Europe with the arrival of the Indian Expeditionary Force. Indeed, Seton even claimed that the draconian regime he ran at the Kitchener Hospital was in part due to a fear of 'the ill-advised conduct of the women of the town,' which, according to Seton, 'was bound to result in the gravest of scandals.[180]

Therefore, Broacha was correct to identify the measures taken by the War Office as an expression of the authorities' fears over the 'contamination' of white British women. Howell and Seton's comments underlined that at the root of this system of control was a deep-laid fear amongst colonial officials of sexual contact between white British women and Asian men, which if left unchecked would undermine a pillar of white male colonial power.[181] With this anxiety present in the thinking of administrators, regulation of contact in the hospital system between white female nurses and Indian patients was regarded with importance if any semblance of the Indian army's colonial social order was to be maintained in the West.

In addition to concerns about the Indian army's gendered and racialised hierarchy being undermined, the War Office's authoritarian management of the Indian hospitals' staff and patients also displayed concerns about an outbreak of dissent or political agitation. Lawrence recorded, 'there are so many political agitators, Indian and English, that one has to walk warily.'[182] In another example a member of the War Office discussed the use of 198 Indian students studying in Britain at the outbreak of the war who had volunteered to form the Indian Ambulance Corps.[183] Though relatively small in number, the Indian student community had fallen under suspicion even before the outbreak of war.[184] They usually came from urban middle-class backgrounds, which led one civil servant to remark, 'their type and the Indian sepoy were quite foreign to each other.' It was noted that although the volunteer orderlies, 'were anxious to make a good impression on the sepoy… and had not abused their position,' many of

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[178] Alison Fell, 'Nursing the Other' p.158

[179] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.18

[180] 'Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital', BL/IOR/MIL/1/5.

[181] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest* (London: Routledge, 1995). p.2

[182] NA/WO 32/5110

[183] 'Arrangements made for Indian Sick and Wounded in England and France.' Report by Colonel Sir Walter Lawrence, dated 8 March 1916, NA/WO/32/5110/36B.

[184] Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?* p.190-1 Thompson estimates that there were 700-800 Indian students studying in Britain by 1907-08 with this figure rising to 1,500 by 1922. The fiftieth anniversary of the Indian Mutiny (Indian War of Independence) provided a controversial flashpoint when Indian students wearing 'martyr' badges to commemorate Indian dead clashed with British jingoists who tried to rip the badges from the students.

the volunteers held, ‘advanced political ideas – of the type common to partially instructed youth of many nations.’[185] Lawrence similarly felt, ‘many of them had been infected by the fever of youth and revolt.’[186] Lawrence later recorded that the student volunteers came to render, ‘most useful and loyal service.’[187] But at the time a record made in the Kitchener Hospital’s war diary illustrated that the authorities’ suspicious outlook continued during the war. If agitation was suspected of an Indian student orderly the authorities had no qualms about removing him from the hospital where he worked. In the Kitchener Hospital for instance, under orders from the India Office, an orderly was transferred to France, ‘who had written alarming statements to India which were stopped by the censor’.[188]

As this incident helps to illustrate, the War Office ran a programme of censorship over correspondence to and from the Indian hospitals by making use of the Indian Army Corps’ censor’s office in Boulogne. Due to fears of political agitation, the office had started to examine letters sent to and from Indian hospitals based in Britain and France within three months of the Indian Army Corps’ arrival.[189] In a letter written by Evelyn Howell, the office’s chief censor, on 9th December 1914, Howell asserted that political concerns, rather than military anxieties, were the raison d’être behind the censorship of hospital correspondence. Howell confirmed, ‘from the military point of view little importance need be attached to censorship of hospital correspondence whether inwards or outwards. The War Office, I understand, exercise no censorship over hospitals for British wounded in this country [the United Kingdom].’ Instead, Howell confirmed that the ‘chief objective’ of the censorship of Indian hospital correspondence was, ‘really political.’[190]

Conclusion

Howell’s statement was telling, for much of the Indian hospital system possessed a political dynamic. Despite the undoubted medical successes of the Indian hospitals in Britain and France, the War Office and India Office regarded the facilities as settings which could undermine the Indian army’s colonialist hierarchy. Due to the possibility of political embarrassment, the War Office obscured the reality of its management from public view. Almost universally, newspaper reports concerned with the Indian

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[185] ‘War Office correspondence regarding the use of Indian students as volunteer orderlies,’ dated 15 January 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/36A
[186] NA/WO/32/5110/36B
[187] NA/WO/32/5110/36B
[188] NA/WO/95/5465
[189] 'Letter from the Boulogne office’s chief censor explaining the purpose of censoring Indian hospital correspondence.,' dated 9 December 1914, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/235-237
[190] Ibid.

hospitals were keen to emphasise that Indian wounded received the very best standards of medical care, with their comforts and cultural preferences catered for. However, such reports also commonly implied that patients enjoyed a level of freedom which did not correspond to reality.

Part of the reality of hospital life was the negotiated contact which Indian personnel were permitted to have with white female nurses. Evidence suggests that in practice nurses often chose not to adhere to the strict rules designed to prevent physical contact with Indian patients – providing an example of how the circumstances of war could undermine colonialist protocols. However, the objections of men, such as Beauchamp-Duff and O'Moore Creagh, displayed an unremitting desire to maintain the pre-war status quo. As Shapoorji Broacha identified, this was based on a fear of 'contamination.'[191] A fear, administrators and army officers believed could weaken a pillar of the Indian army's social order. Despite pleas from figures, such as Perry and Dunlop-Smith, to abandon rules which barred female visitors and staff from Indian military hospitals, strong opposition from conservative advocates meant reforms were negotiated so as to maintain an element of the pre-war colonial order. Their resistance was not without its consequences. The attempted murder of Seton was the most extreme example of the damage to morale that the War Office's policies inspired amongst Indian patients and staff. As the next chapter will show, the tribulations suffered by Indian personnel who were cared for, or worked in the hospitals, were part of a wider set of grievances which ultimately contributed to the decision to withdraw the Indian Army Corps from France.

[191] BL/Mss Eur F143/66/124

Chapter 4.

Behind the lines: new encounters and old hierarchies

Introduction

> Many of the roads leading up, and parallel to, the Allied front present a kaleidoscope of the strangest contrasts. Several types of humanity can be seen, from the wild Arab horseman of the North African deserts, clothed in flowing robes of blue and scarlet, to the tribesman from the mountains of the North-West Frontier of India. There is something grotesquely incongruous in the appearance of the dusky faces and oriental garments… amidst the surroundings of driving sleet, seas of mud, and long squalid rows of brick cottages such as those in the small industrial towns where many of these troops are billeted… the impression [of romance] is quickly shattered by the drab reality of a convoy of motor lorries, lumbering and snorting alongside little mule drawn Indian ammunition carts which bump along with the native drivers huddled up to the eyes in great-coats. A British Territorial battalion just out from home swings through a village, where it is surveyed by a mixed contingent of Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Baluchis, whose heads, as is the way with the native of India in cold weather, are wrapped in every conceivable form of headgear, even newspapers.[1]

This vignette, depicted by an anonymous British officer, described the roads of December 1914 that led up to the newly formed trench network. It not only illustrated the grim conditions faced by the Allied armies, but also demonstrated how within a matter of months Britain and France had begun to leverage their empires' human resources, and that even by this early point in the war the global nature of the conflict was apparent. The passage illustrated how the roads and towns immediately behind the frontline became locations for parts of western society to mix with elements of colonial society. Whilst opportunities to observe life outside of the immediate proximity of a soldier's unit were limited when stationed in the linear and static trenches of late 1914; when servicemen were in the relative safety of the billets, towns, or encampments behind the frontline, or travelling the roads which supplied it, opportunities were more forthcoming.

For many Indian non-combatants such locales became the setting for the entirety of their time in Europe, for others they provided an interlude from the fighting. It was at these points of contact that many British servicemen or civilians had their only interactions with the sepoys of the Indian Army. The fourth and final chapter will analyse how metropolitan society responded to Indian soldiers within

[1] Anonymous, *Eye Witness's Narrative Of The War: From The Marne To Neuve Chapelle' September, 1914 - March, 1915* (London: Edward Arnorld, 1915). pp.177-178

these settings, away from the combat zones of the Western Front. To do this it will use records left by individuals who encountered Indian servicemen, and documents which show how elements of civil life responded to their presence in Europe. Despite recent academic research into the Indian Army's role in the First World War, relatively little research has focused on spaces of interaction behind the frontline beyond the hospital setting, or the authorities' responses to them.[2] Peter Stanley's studies of Australian interactions with non-white civilians and soldiers (including Indian sepoys) are amongst the closest examples of research into interactions between white and colonial British Empire servicemen.[3]

Stanley's studies drew divergent conclusions about the attitudes of Australian troops to the different ethnic groups they encountered, demonstrating the complexity of attitudes towards race which could be found amongst soldiers from Britain and the settler colonies.[4] The thesis draws slightly differing conclusions, by emphasising the importance of exposure to colonial society amongst white British soldiers and officers for a greater susceptibility to prejudiced reactions towards the sepoys. The thesis also highlights that soldiers who had no experience of colonial service often demonstrated more malleable attitudes towards race which could evolve through encounters with the colonial soldiers of the Indian army.

Civilian encounters with Indian personnel are also studied. Karen Leenders has concluded that, 'interest shown in the Indian soldiers does not appear to have gone beyond the novel.'[5] There is evidence to support this view, with knowledge of the Asian servicemen often limited to hazy tropes of 'the East' which lacked even a rudimentary understanding of Indian society. However, the chapter will demonstrate that despite a small proportion of overtly prejudiced responses, most civilians who had direct contact with Indians during 1914-15 looked favourably upon the sepoys and often showed compassion towards and a desire to interact with the Indians that was at odds with the conservative position adopted by the authorities.

The chapter concludes with an examination of how the settings of contact between East and West cultivated the apprehension which existed amongst the authorities who were responsible for the

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[2] For examples of studies that analyse civilian responses in the hospital setting or to ethnic groups brought to the Western Front to perform non-combatant roles see, Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*; Fell, 'Nursing the Other;' Koller, 'Representing Otherness;' Joshua Cockburn, 'Attitudes to gender and race in France during World War One' (Cardiff University, 2005); Bourne, *Black Poppies*;' Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France*.
[3] Examples of research which explore the reactions of soldiers from the settler societies of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand to contact with African and Asian colonial societies include, Maguire, 'Colonial Encounters during the First World War'; Stanley, 'He was Black, he was a White man, and a Dinkum Aussie;' *Die in Battle, do not Despair*.
[4] Stanley, *Die in Battle, do not Despair*. p.220
[5] Karen Leenders, "A Hazardous Experiment.' p.167

Indian army's stay in Europe. It will also show how examples of dissent and rebellion that broke out in Indian units stationed outside Europe ignited fears in the India Office and War Office that the same could take place in France, and in the process damage British political prestige. As a result, restrictions were extended from the Indian military hospitals to the many encampments and depots based in Marseilles. Finally, the chapter will show that, despite the measures taken, the fear of dissent became such a significant factor by July 1915, that it contributed to the decision to withdraw the Indian Army Corps from the Western Front at the close of the year, fifteen months after its arrival.

British and Indian servicemen: comrades-in-arms and cultural gaps

Evidence presented in chapter two suggests that most British servicemen who met Indian soldiers on the frontline developed an admiration for their South Asian counterparts. However, interactions on the frontline were limited by the linear trench system of the Western Front, and it was only when soldiers were pulled out of the trenches that greater opportunity for fraternisation presented itself. Frederick Higgins's unit, 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, served as part of the Lahore Division in France 1915, but even with Indian troops positioned next to his own battalion the former NCO noted after the war that there was little opportunity for interaction. Higgins reflected some years later: 'They had their part of the line and we had our part of the line. So, although we were in the same division, we were never with them much.'[6] The interactions which did take place on the frontline being mostly limited to neighbourly gestures, such as lending tea.[7]

The billets and encampments behind the frontline created greater opportunities for contact between British and Indian servicemen, although even here Higgins noted that few friendships were struck up. Language proved to be one barrier, as did, according to Higgins, many of the Indians' reserved demeanours.[8] A memorandum issued to the Indian Army's British officers was of a similar disposition, noting, 'Englishmen are frequently rough, ready and offhand with each other. Most Indians will not appreciate such a demeanour.'[9] However, despite the cultural distance often found between the two groups, Nepalese Gurkhas recur in British soldiers' accounts as men whom it was easy to strike up relationships with. Henry Holdstock, a balloonist who served on the Western Front with the 6th Squadron of the Royal Naval Air Balloon Service gave one such description. Due to the nature of

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[6] 'Higgins, Frederick Charles (oral history),' 1986, IWM/SOUND/9884.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Indian Government Press: 'Memorandum on the subject of social and official intercourse between European officers and Indian gentlemen,' 1913, NA/Mss Eur/F256/25.

Holdstock's work, his squadron was stationed behind the frontline by an orchard that was used by a number of Indian units rotated out of the trenches to recuperate over the course of 1915.

Like Higgins, Holdstock found it difficult to strike up a rapport with most of the Indian troops he encountered, but it was the Gurkhas that he interacted with most. Unlike other Indian classes who ate alone, much to Holdstock's liking the Nepalese soldiers used his squadron's facilities for meals. Holdstock recalled, 'it was a privilege which only the Gurkhas had, to go into the white man's canteen.' The balloonist continued, 'and they were treated as every bit a white soldier. They came in and sat with us and ate their chapattis.' Holdstock reminisced, 'As friends they were very good indeed.'[10] Holdstock even exchanged his clasp knife with a kukri belonging to a Gurkha, a souvenir which over sixty years later he was sad to have later lost during his wartime service.[11]

Figure 29. A football match between Gurkhas and a British Signals Company, taken in France, 1915.[12]

Holdstock's reflection upon Gurkhas being, 'every bit a white soldier,' was a perspective that was commonly repeated by other accounts given by British servicemen who met the Nepalese. It was commonplace to regard Gurkhas as culturally more like British soldiers than other groups within the

[10] 'Holdstock, Henry Thomas (oral history),' 1973, IWM/SOUND/20.
[11] Ibid.
[12] 'A football match. Gurkhas versus a Signal Company (St Floris, France). Photographer H. D. Girdwood.,' BL/VA/DELPhoto/24/(45).

Indian Army, and it was often recorded that the Nepalese soldiers were less reserved amongst white troops than other ethnic groups that served in the Indian Army. This possibly stemmed from the fact that Nepal was not a British colonial possession and, therefore, Gurkhas behaved with less deference than soldiers recruited from British controlled parts of India. As Frank Richards's reflections of his time in India indicated, it was not uncommon for professional British soldiers who had spent long periods of time on colonial service prior to the war to treat Indians prejudicially.[13] This attitude towards Indian society may go some way to explaining why many Indian troops demonstrated a reserved demeanour when it came to fraternising with British troops in France.

British and Nepalese cultural similarities provide an additional explanation. As Holdstock's anecdote of Gurkhas using a British canteen indicated, many British soldiers believed that Nepalese soldiers did not adhere to caste prejudices as stringently as other ethnic groups in the Indian Army, making interaction on occasions such as mealtimes more likely. In one example, Charles Shobbrock, who served with the 1/9th Hampshire Regiment, stated that British troops in his unit respected Indian soldiers but, like Higgins and Holdstock, it was with Gurkhas whom his battalion struck up the best friendships with. Shobbrock admired the bravery of the Nepalese sepoys, stating, 'they did not know what fear was, you could not frighten them under any circumstances.'[14] He also believed Gurkhas to be the most sociable group in the Indian Army, and like Holdstock he remembered that it was only the Gurkhas who used British canteens.

When Shobbrock reflected upon his experiences with Sikh troops, he stated, 'they were a wonderful bunch too.' However, it amazed him, 'how strict they were with their religion.' He continued, 'if one [a Sikh soldier] was having his lunch by the wayside and I was walking along the road, the first thing he would do is turn his back so that my shadow wouldn't fall on his food.' Australian medic, Joseph Beeston, also recounted that for many of the wounded Indians he attended at Gallipoli, 'their caste prohibited their taking anything directly from our hands. When medicine had to be administered, the man came in, knelt down, and opened his mouth, and the medicine was poured into him without the glass touching his lips. Food was given in the same way.'[15] For Holdstock the cultural divide that these types of caste prejudices created was a significant one, and he found some of the Indian soldiers' practices, 'more or less unbelievable.'[16]

Even some of the Indian habits which did not stem from religious beliefs or caste prejudices often left British troops dumbfounded. Holdstock recounted how chanting by an Indian brigade exasperated the

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[13] Richards, *Old soldier Sahib*. p.54
[14] 'Shobbrock, Charles Ernest (oral history),' 1985, IWM/SOUND/9145
[15] Beeston, Joseph, *Five months at Anzac*. p.31
[16] Ibid.

men stationed in his cabin. ‘One night they were all singing away, 2,000 of them, singing a monotonous chant for hours and hours in the orchard next door.’ To stop the noise, one of the balloonists picked up a rifle and fired over the Indians’ heads.[17] In another example, Walter Williams, who was a member of the 14th Motor Ambulance Convoy, voyaged with Indian labourers aboard the *SS Menominee* to Egypt in 1915. Sixty years after the voyage Williams still remembered the smell of the ghee which the Indians used for cooking. To Williams’ mind the smell was ‘dreadful.’[18] Edwin Pope, a trooper with the West Kent Yeomanry, who served at Gallipoli also found some of the smells he associated with Indian servicemen to be objectionable. In Pope’s case it was the mule dung used by the Indian mule drivers as fuel for the fires which kept them warm at night. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a man who would have been used to the smell of burning wood or coal to heat fires, Pope found the smell to be terrible. [19] These examples illustrate that puzzlement at some Indian practices was a common feature amongst the anecdotes of British veterans. Combined with the language barriers and the reserved attitude displayed by many Indian soldiers towards their British counterparts, it seems to have stifled the type of fleeting acquaintances often struck up between British soldiers who encountered troops from the Dominions or the Nepalese servicemen of the Indian Army.

However, as records of shared frontline experiences indicate, despite the cultural gap that seemed to have existed between many British and Indian troops, most British servicemen who met Indian soldiers gained an admiration for their South Asian counterparts. Frederick Higgins, of the 1/4th Royal Fusiliers, acknowledged that Gurkhas aside few relationships were struck up with Indian soldiers. But he also noted that the men of in his battalion regarded them well as troops and that when asked in an interview some years later if he witnessed any acts of prejudice from members of his unit towards the sepoys, Higgins replied that he could not recall any incidents and that there was no animosity between the two groups.[20] Similarly, when Harold Medcalf of the 1/5th Bedfordshire Regiment awoke on a Gallipoli beach waiting to be evacuated after being wounded and knocked unconscious by shellfire, a nearby British officer pointed out the Indian serviceman who had rescued him and brought him down to the shore. Medcalf thanked the man and subsequently reflected, ‘it never made no difference whether he was black, green, pink, or blue.’[21] Other accounts of Gallipoli, paint a picture of greater fraternisation between British or ANZACsoldiers and their Indian counterparts, perhaps due to the confined spaces that troops operated in during the campaign.

[17] IWM/SOUND/20.
[18] 'Williams, Walter Edward,' 1987, IWM/SOUND/9754.
[19] 'Pope, Edwin Richard (oral history),' 1984, IWM/SOUND/8272.
[20] IWM/SOUND/9884.
[21] 'Medcalf, Harold,' 1987, IWM/SOUND/9755.

The medics John Hargrave and Joesph Beeston, who worked closely with the men of the Indian Mule Corps at Gallipoli, both recounted several anecdotes which demonstrated that it was possible to build closer relationships with Indian servicemen (other than Gurkhas) than was normal for men in other units who encountered Indians with less regularity.[22] Similarly, Walter Lawrence noted in a report about the Indian hospitals under his jurisdiction that when Indian sick and wounded were tended by British orderlies and supervising sisters, the two groups struck up close bonds of friendship during the greater lengths of time spent in each other's company than was normally possible whilst on active duty. Lawrence recorded:

> I notice a charming camaraderie between the British orderlies and the Indian patients. When the R.A.M.C. orderlies who were, greatly to our regret, removed from Brighton, there was quite a demonstration; the Indians cheered them and exchanged presents. I feel sure that the kindness shown by these orderlies and by supervising sisters, is highly appreciated by the Indians and will never be forgotten.[23]

Lawrence commented that many of the Indian patients learnt English or French whilst on service, and likewise British ward orderlies often picked up some Hindustani.[24] Lawrence's opinion is corroborated by a letter from Dogra Rajput patient who was recovering in a hospital in England. He wrote, that despite the, 'great oppression that has been exercised [by the hospital authorities]… the Gora Long [British soldiers] are most attentive to our wants.'[25] A photograph taken of Indian patients at a Brighton hospital listening to a bagpiper from a Scottish regiment brought in to entertain the patients gives a similar impression of close relations. Although the photographer was commissioned by the War Office for propaganda purposes, the bond between a young British orderly and Gurkha patient sat just behind the stretcher trolley is evident.[26]

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[22] Beeston, *Five months at Anzac*. pp.31-32; Hargrave, *At Sulva Bay*. pp127-128, 130.
[23] Walter Lawrence, 'Letter to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals, dated 15 February 1915,' 1915, WO 32/5110.
[24] Ibid.
[25] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.50, letter 44, Gulab Singh (Dogra, 57th Rifles) to Bhur Singh (25th Cavalry, Bannu, NWFP), a hospital, England, [Urdu] 3rd April, 1915.
[26] 'Wounded listening to the bag pipe, and sunning themselves (Brighton, England). Photographer H. D. Girdwood.,' BL/VA/DELphoto/24/(23).

Figure 30. Wounded Indian sepoys listen to a bagpiper from a Scottish regiment in a Brighton hospital.[27]

Such demonstrations of affection would have been unthinkable to British servicemen on colonial service in India prior to the war, for whom the idea of serving an Asian man would have been an anathema. The close bonds displayed in the photograph and Lawrence's reference to the rapport which built up between Indian patients and British medical staff suggest not only that cultural divides were overcome, but also that the colonialist stigma of Europeans serving Asians was too. According to another account written by a nurse, Kate Luard, who worked aboard a hospital train carrying Indian wounded from the front to Boulogne, 'the orderlies make great friends with them all [Indian troops]. One Hindu was singing "Bonnie Dundee" to them all in a little gentle voice.' With this account taking place only days after the Indians had seen their first action on the Western Front, it is also apparent that much ignorance surrounded the medical staffs' initial encounters with the sepoys. According to Luard: 'The Gurkhas are supposed by the orderlies to be Japanese. They are exactly like Japs [sic], only brown instead of yellow.'[28] Similarly, the medic, John Hargrave, homogenised the Indian army

[27] Ibid.
[28] Anon [Kate Luard], *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front 1914-1915* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1915).

servicemen he encountered during the Gallipoli campaign. In one poem he wrote about a fictional figure called 'Johnnie Jhill-o,' [see figure 11.] who encapsulated some of the most memorable stereotypes associated with the variety of sepoys who served at Gallipoli. This included polygamy, the 'dangerous knife' of the Gurkhas, and abstinence from alcohol amongst Muslim troops.[29]

Despite the lack of awareness which framed many of the early encounters between British medical staff and Indian soldiers, a study by Alison Fell, which analysed Luard's diary, has concluded 'texts written by [female] nurses who had prolonged contact with colonial troops are the ones most likely to question or reject colonial stereotypes in favour of more individualised and nuanced representations.'[30] This is reflected in Luard's diary, which was published in 1915. Luard began her account of the many encounters she had with Indian troops through entries which demonstrated a sense of novelty at the prospect of encountering Indian servicemen for the first time. Even before she had received her first Indian patients, Luard made records during October 1914 of sightings of Indian servicemen at stations or aboard passing trains.[31] After her first encounter with wounded Indian soldiers being transported on her carriage, Luard developed this sense of novelty by stereotyping the classes of Indian soldiers she had met. According to one of her early entries, Sikhs were 'whinny,' Gurkhas 'stoic,' and Muslim Bengali Lancers 'splendid.'[32] Despite this superficial categorisation, Luard quickly gained affection for the sepoys, and like many British medical staff learned a basic knowledge of Hindustani.[33]

Luard also demonstrated a deeper emotional connection with the Indian soldiers. She emphasised with some of the sepoys who emotionally grappled with the incorporation of Western practices into their own cultural framework. In one example, she empathised with the plight of a Muslim soldier who was distressed by being told by an Indian interpreter to eat a biscuit handed to him by a Hindu. The clerk (or '*babu*' as Luard referred to him), told the soldier that England did not care for Hindu and Muslim prejudices. Luard recounted, 'my sympathies were with the beautiful, polite, sad looking M. [sic], who wouldn't budge an inch, and only salaamed when the babu went for him.'[34] Luard's responses to these initial encounters with Indian servicemen, demonstrate that many British medical staff had little awareness of the diversity of the Indian army during their initial encounters, and it was not uncommon for them to engage in a rudimentary form of ethnography which associated various cultural and emotional responses with race. However, despite the cultural divides (such as those

[29] Hargrave, *At Sulva Bay*. p.132
[30] Alison Fell, 'Nursing the Other.' p.168
[31] Luard, *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front 1914-1915.* pp.78, 83
[32] Ibid. p.128
[33] Ibid. pp.123, 125
[34] Ibid. pp.124-125

displayed in the religious prejudices of the Muslim soldier), they were usually able to empathise with their Indian counterparts.

There were though occasions when this was not the case, particularly amongst British or Dominion soldiers who had lived or served in colonial societies where racial prejudice was institutionalised and part of everyday life. Walter Lawrence recorded one such incident when, due to an over-supply of Indian hospital ships, some Indian doctors and orderlies found themselves caring for wounded British and Dominion troops evacuated from the Dardanelles. With good relations struck up between the evacuated British wounded and the Indian medical staff, Lawrence told Kitchener in May 1915, 'there is no doubt that this war is in many directions creating a spirit of real camaraderie between the British and the colonials and the Indians.'[35]

However, the camaraderie was not universal amongst white British empire servicemen, for in his next letter to Kitchener, sent in October 1915, Lawrence reported, 'I was sorry to learn at Southampton that the Australian wounded objected most strongly to being treated by Indian members of the medical service.' Such was the force of the Australians' objections that Major Dunn of the IMS reported to Lawrence, 'that the officers commanding the Indian hospital ships all thought it would be wise to remove all Indians doing medical duty on the ships in order to avoid the racial question becoming acute.'[36] Curiously, this example of Australian prejudice towards Indian medical staff conflicts with Peter Stanley's examination of Anzac attitudes towards Indian troops at Gallipoli (as well as the memoir written by Joseph Beeston).[37] Stanley concludes that most Australian troops serving had a great deal of respect for their South Asian counterparts, regarding them as 'martial and manly.'[38]

One diarist, referenced by Stanley, was though surprised at the camaraderie given the prejudice aborigines suffered in Australia.[39] The esteem that Australian troops came to hold Indian personnel serving in Gallipoli also contradicts Stanley's findings in relation to their behaviour towards indigenous populations in cities such as Columbo, Dakar, Cape Town, and Durban. At these ports Australian troops gained a reputation during voyage stop-overs for drunkenness and derogatory displays of behaviour towards the local communities, in what Stanley described as, '[a] belief in the essential superiority of what they thought of as the white race.'[40] Similarly, Anna Maguire has concluded that when white New Zealand soldiers disembarked at Cape Town they, 'slipped into and reconfirmed the dominant

[35] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals, dated 27 May 1915,' 1915, WO 32/5110/20A.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Beeston, *Five Months at Anzac.* pp.31-33
[38] Stanley, 'He was Black, he was a White man, and a Dinkum Aussie.'
[39] Stanley, *Die in battle, do not despair: the Indians on Gallipoli, 1915*. p.220
[40] Stanley, 'He was Black, he was a White man, and a Dinkum Aussie.' p.223.

racist culture of the empire.'[41] Whilst Morton-Jack has noted that during the East African campaign white South African troops were, 'openly disgusted at the prospect of fighting alongside the Indian Army.'[42]

Collectively, this evidence suggests that the hardships of Gallipoli presented extraordinary circumstances, and once removed from this adverse environment the racism expressed towards indigenous populations in early twentieth century white settler colonial societies resurfaced aboard the hospital ships. Walter Lawrence reflected, 'if it is the intention to bring more Australians to England… the question of removing Indians from medical duties on the hospital ships should be considered.'[43] In contrast to the prejudices held by many wounded Australian servicemen aboard the Indian hospital ships, Lawrence noted that British servicemen continued to not show objections to being treated by Indian medical personnel.[44]

The example of Australian objections to Indian medical personnel is one of the more extreme instances of a collective display of racial prejudice expressed by a large group of white British empire servicemen towards their Indian counterparts. This occurrence had even been expected by the India Office before the arrival of IEFA. A memorandum written in August 1914 recorded, 'if the Native Army [sic] fights side by side with Canadian or Australian troops, colonial opinion about what are known as "Coolie regiments" will be unedified.' As a result, it was deemed a worthwhile exercise asking the Colonial Office to publish pro Indian propaganda in the Dominions in order to try to foster a, 'sound opinion about India and Indians.'[45] Evidently, this exercise was not without its shortcomings.

The response of white dominion troops to Indian personnel is of note to this study, and its principle concern with British responses, because it was comparable to cases of prejudice displayed by British soldiers who had spent long periods of service in India prior to the war and the British expatriates who volunteered in the Indian militia. Collectively these examples help to illustrate that, like the Indian hospital ships used to evacuate Australians from the Dardanelles, occurrences of overt racism and discrimination against Indian servicemen were more likely to come from white soldiers who had spent long periods of time in colonial societies where racial prejudice against the indigenous population was a cultural norm.

[41] Maguire, 'Colonial Encounters during the First World War.' p.70
[42] Morton-Jack, *The Indian Empire at War.* p.337
[43] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener from Walter Lawrence regarding Indian Military Hospitals,' dated 2 October 1915, 1915, WO 32/5110/32A.
[44] Ibid.
[45] 'India Office memorandum concerned with fostering support for Indian intervention' dated 27 August 1914, CUM/CREWE I/18(2).

Although little evidence of active discrimination against Indian servicemen is left in the papers of British soldiers who encountered sepoys for the first time during the conflict; even for British personnel who had no prior experience of colonial society, race was still a common means of categorising Indian troops. Luard's comments are particularly interesting in this regard. By mid-February 1915 she had been in regular contact with Indian soldiers for almost four months, frequently nursing them as they travelled aboard her hospital train. After this time, 'the race differences,' to Luard, 'seem more striking the better you get to know them.' She continued:

> The Gurkhas seem to be more like Tommies in temperament and expression, and all the Mussulmans and the best of the Sikhs and Jats might be princes and prime ministers in dignity, feature, and manners. When a Sikh refuses a cigarette (if you are silly enough to offer him one) he does it with a gesture that makes you feel like a housemaid who ought to have known better. The beautiful Mussulmans smile and salaam and say Merbani, however ill they are.[46]

This latter entry shows how Luard's awareness of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Indian army was expanding. She had begun this process of classification in early November 1914 by linking displays of emotion (or lack of) made by sepoys to their religion or ethnicity. Four months later she was developing this process of classification by linking cultural nuances to religion and ethnicity.

Like Henry Holdstock, Fredrick Higgins, and Charles Shobbrock, Luard had also equated the Nepali soldiers she encountered to British 'Tommies' due to the cultural similarities she perceived them to share. Indeed, for most British soldiers who had briefer encounters with Indian servicemen the cultural practices adopted by other sepoys frequently led them to look upon most Indian soldiers as an oriental 'other' who were too culturally dissimilar to form acquaintances with. It was usually only in scenarios, such as Luard's, which necessitated greater contact where such divides were to be bridged. The weight of evidence suggests that most British soldiers respected their South Asian counterparts, but, except in the case of Gurkhas, they remained voluntarily separated from most of Indian Army's indigenous ranks. In such scenarios, racial categorisation was not completely abandoned as a concept. Whilst the resulting vocabulary did not possess the complexity of the ethnic categorisation embraced by the martial race ideologists of the Indian Army's British officer class, it did still usually embed conceptions of culture and temperament with identities of race.

As a result of a perceived cultural distance between British soldiers and most of the ethnic groups who served in the Indian army, relatively few records are found in British servicemen's personal papers that reference Indian personnel. This was a reciprocated measure, with few mentions of British

[46] Luard, *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front 1914-1915.* pp.203-4

servicemen found in Indian letters transcribed by the Boulogne Censor's Office.[47] To some extent this can be explained by the institutional nature of army life and the hardships faced on the frontline which reinforced the camaraderie between the men who served in the same units. However, the silence also indicates that the cultural and linguistic divides that existed between the two groups curtailed interactions deemed newsworthy for inclusion in letters sent to family and friends.

Whilst culture and language often stifled fraternisation, Indian troops' unfamiliar uniforms, physical appearance, and habits could also become a subject of fascination for some British servicemen. Henry Holdstock recounted the fantastical impression that an Indian cavalry regiment made on him when it was temporarily stationed in the orchard next to his squadron's hut. Holdstock recounted the sight of the regiment over half a century after, 'we had never seen such a pretty sight in our lives,' the former balloonist remembered, 'it was a wonderful colourful sight in the Autumn sunshine with their spotless horses, harnesses, and glittering weapons, and the most ornate figure, we called him the *Raja*. They were really smart, as a sight it was beautiful.[48]

It was not just ornate spectacles which could be the subject of fascination. Whilst in the Dardanelles, Edwin Pope was bemused by the method of washing employed by Indian servicemen that required two men to help each other. When they washed one man would drop about an egg cup of water from a brass bowl into the hands of the other cleaning himself. They would clean themselves with about a pint of water.'[49] He also supposed that, due to religious beliefs, when Indians picked off the lice ubiquitous amongst the men who fought at Gallipoli, unlike their British or ANZAC counterparts who would kill the parasites, the Indians tended to allow the lice to survive by throwing them onto the ground.[50]

The exoticism of the Indian regiment, which caught Holdstock's imagination, and the cultural peculiarities which grabbed Pope's attention also often appealed to servicemen with artistic interests who were stationed with or near Indian units. Trevor Jones, who served with the Indian Sappers and Miners, filled sketch books with illustrations of the Indian soldiers he met. Subjects included silhouette paintings of Indians moving through the Palestinian countryside, where Jones spent part of his service; Khattak dancers, drummers and pipers from the 28th Punjabi Infantry Regiment performing on the deck of a transport ship (see figure 30); and Indians competing in a divisional sports day in front of a mixed British and Indian audience.[51] Similarly, for Richard Lunt-Roberts – who served as an officer with

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[47] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.20
[48] IWM/SOUND/20
[49] IWM/SOUND/8272
[50] Ibid.
[51] Trevor Jones, 'Two Sketch Books by a Soldier in the Indian Army, 1913 -1918,' IWM/DOCUMENTS/9261

the 2/6th Royal Welch Fusiliers at Gallipoli, Egypt, and later Palestine – the foreign lands he served in formed the subject of an evocative collection of illustrations of his overseas service.[52] In amongst the drawings of Egyptian street scenes, working parties from the Egyptian Labour Corps, and Turkish prisoners of war, are illustrations of Indian troops (see figure 31). The headwear, uniform, and facial features of the different ethnic groups encountered by Lunt-Roberts being one of his subjects of interest with sketches of Sikh and Muslim soldiers of the Indian Army, and their differing facial hair and headwear, drawn on pages which also included portraits of Egyptians wearing local forms of turban and fez.

Figure 30. Sketch of Khattak dancers, drawn by Trevor Jones whilst aboard a steamer.[53]

[52]R. J. Lunt-Roberts, 'collection of art and photograph albums of service with 2/6 Bn., Royal Welch Fuiliers,' RWFA/3093

[53] IWM/DOCUMENTS/9261

Figure 31. An illustration of a Punjabi Muslim sepoy sketched by Royal Welch Fusilier, Richard Lunt-Roberts, during his battalion's deployment to Egypt in 1915. In the background is another Indian serviceman and men of the Egyptian Camel Corps.[54]

The artwork produced by Lunt-Roberts and Jones demonstrates that although many British servicemen only experienced limited fraternisation with Indians, and subsequently often failed to document an interest in the sepoys they had met, a small number recorded their experiences in a detailed manner that could be likened to a form of cultural tourism that had been enabled by their military service. For Lunt-Roberts and Jones, use of Indians as artistic muses merely required observation and therefore allowed them to visually capture the Indians they encountered. Rather than drawing generic Indian soldiers, both men recorded the visual distinctions between the various ethnic groups that composed the Indian Army and through their artwork categorised these groups within a multitude of foreign cultures encountered and chronicled during their wartime service. Their artwork demonstrates that for a limited group of British society the First World War enabled a type of orientalist record making, popularised in the nineteenth century, to extend beyond its traditional wealthy and academic confines. Whilst the cultural unfamiliarity of the soldiers of the Indian Army proved to be a barrier for many British servicemen, for artists, such as Jones and Lunt-Roberts, this unfamiliarity proved to be a source of inspiration.

[54] RWFA/3093

Sepoys and civilian society: deconstructing colonial barriers

The First World War also enabled thousands of civilians to encounter Indian servicemen for the first time. Small groups of sepoys were billeted with French families in hundreds, if not thousands of homes and farms, whilst further back the Indian Army supply depots, encampments, hospitals, and convalescent centres (small conurbations in their own right) were situated amidst civilian life. It was in these locales that contact between Indian servicemen and civilians was most common. The numerous press reports which interviewed Indian soldiers, or detailed aspects of their everyday life, highlighted the curiosity which surrounded their arrival, and this was reflected in the reactions of the local populaces where the Indians found themselves stationed.

After the Indian Army Corps' disembarkation at Marseilles the earliest form of support that the British public could offer Indian servicemen was to send gifts or letters. Although it is difficult to estimate how many were sent by individual members of the public to the Corps, they seem to have been received in the hundreds if not thousands.[55] Similar to many of the press reports which covered Indian troops, despite their good intentions many of these letters and gifts were sent in ignorance of Indian soldiers' cultural practices and religion. Much to James Willcocks's disgruntlement the general complained about tracts and Bibles which had been put into socks and sent to Sikh units, which led him to conclude that much of the British public did not, 'seem to know a Hindu from a Turk.'[56] However, despite the British public's undoubted ignorance of Indian customs and the diversity of the men who served as sepoys, there is little doubt that the Indian Army Corps was largely well received.

In Brighton, the local authorities went to extensive efforts to accommodate the Indian wounded. Walter Lawrence noted that a great deal was owed to the town's mayor, as well as other civil servants who undertook a range of tasks from making civil buildings available for conversion into hospitals to fire prevention once the hospitals were established.[57] Lawrence also wrote to inform Kitchener about the sepoys' reception from the local populace: 'The people generally are most kind and helpful.'[58] The *Daily Mail* also reported that the locals were 'very kind' to the Indians.[59] Examples included the establishment of a gift house, set up and run by a Mrs Bailey, for donations to be made to the Indians

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[55] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund, Report of the First Six Months' Work ' IWM/LBY/6339.
[56] 'ISF General Committee Book, Appendix II, letter from Willcocks, *With the Indians in France* dated 13.10.14 addressed to Hewitt General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 14.10.1914),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1/Appendix II
[57] NA/WO/32/5110/27A
[58] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals, dated 15 February 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/27A
[59] 'The Devil's War: What The Indians Think Of It,' *Daily Mail*.

who received treatment in Brighton.[60] Whilst the managements of the Court Theatre and of the Academy Cinema allowed free admission to the wounded Indians.[61] Between December 1914 and February 1915 the Indians were given more freedom, although even at this early point for most Indians it was a case of being 'taken out for a walk.'[62] This was done with an RAMC private acting as escort.[63] When allowed out, walks along the seafront and arcades were frequented, whilst visits to the aquarium, cinema, and circus were also enjoyed.[64] Up to one hundred at a time could be taken on route marches, designed as much to make the sepoys fit again for frontline duties as to allow them a view of the English countryside.[65] It was in these locations where contact was made with the local community. One Indian patient at a hospital in England wrote home to report, 'when at four o'clock we go out from the hospital, the ladies of the city give us fruit. They say, "never have we seen such men. Only have we heard of them… Now we see them with our eyes as we see our sons." They cheer us for routing the Germans.' [66] Another Indian wrote home to tell, 'these people love us from the bottom of their heart.[67]

Indeed, Brightonians did seem to take pride in the town's association with the Indian hospitals. Locals learned to say 'salaam' on meeting Asian servicemen, and in January 1915 the *Brighton Herald* reported that to local residents, 'the Indians were a centre of the keenest interest.'[68] Reporting one encounter, the newspaper highlighted the friendly disposition of the townspeople, as well as the sepoys' novelty:

> Inspiration seized a small boy to hand a baby brother up to one of the Indians to be held in his arms. The Indian took the child with eagerness. That set the fashion. The next minute girls and mothers, too, were handing up their small children freely, either to shake hands with the Indians or to be taken in their arms.[69]

Undoubtedly, part of the appeal of the Indian servicemen lay in their 'otherness.' However, there were efforts to improve cultural understanding.[70] A feature in the *Brighton Herald*, in March 1915,

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[60] Walter Lawrence, 'Walter Lawrence collection, letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence, dated 10 March 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/31B

[61] Lt.-Col. H. R. Woolbert, "What the Indians Thought of Brighton," *The Pavilion Blues,* June 1916, RPMBH/28132.

[62] Ibid. The implication being that they were not supposed to be allowed to leave hospital indepently

[63] Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches.* p.174

[64] Woolbert.

[65] Corrigan. p.174

[66] David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. pp.38-39, letter 24, 'A Sikh to his father (Punjab), a hospital in England, 20th February, 1915'

[67] British Library IORL/ D681/18 Letters censored 18 November 1914-12 June 1915

[68] The *Brighton Herald* 16 January 1915, BL/IORL/D681/18

[69] Ibid.

[70] Suzanne Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'

introduced readers to Hinduism and its rituals, quoting from the Rigveda and explaining how for Hindus the morning bath was a daily baptism.[71] The town's public museum even arranged an exhibition of weaponry from the subcontinent in the hope that Indian patients would be allowed to visit. A local newspaper reported in December 1914: 'There is a rare collection of Indian arms in the Brighton Public Museum which are sure to interest the convalescent brown warriors, if and when they are allowed to pass into that part of Brighton's famous institution.'[72] The lack of assurance displayed in the article acknowledged the uncertainty as to whether the Indian patients would be granted the independence to visit the museum.

There was though an undoubted desire on the local communities' part for free interactions to take place with the wounded sepoys – conflicting with the War Office's policies which sought to regulate contact between the local population and Indian personnel. Indeed, the openness and affection shown by the people of Brighton was recognised in by number of letters written by sepoys. A wounded subedar-major wrote, 'the inhabitants [of Brighton] are very amiable and very kind to us, so much so that our own people could not be as much so.'[73] A sub-assistant surgeon told a friend: 'The women here have no hesitation in walking with us. They do so hand in hand. The men so far from objecting, encourage them. The fact is that this is the custom here.'[74] In another example, an unnamed soldier wrote home to Delhi: 'The children and ladies will not let us walk unmolested. They get hold of our hands and want to kiss us, and in other ways to make much of us.'[75] The evidence from both sepoys and the local community portrays a clear divide between the displays of affection shown by Brightonians towards Indian personnel, and the more conservative response that colonialist IMS hospital administrators would have preferred to have seen. This led the blunt Bruce Seton to condemn what he had witnessed as, 'the ill-advised conduct of the women of the town,' and appears to have directly fed into the decision to tighten the restrictions over Indian access to the local community.[76]

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[71] Ibid.
[72] 'At a Glance,' *Brighton and Hove and South Sussex Graphic*, 12 December 1914. p.11
[73] Omissi. p.27, letter 4, 'Subedar-Manjor [Sardar Bahadur Gugan] 6th Jats, to a friend (India)'
[74] British Library IORL/ D681/18 Letters censored 18 November 1914-12 June 1915, From S.A.S. M.M. Pandit at Brighton to a friend at Sholapur, dated 23/3/1915.
[75] British Library IORL/ D681/18 Letters censored 18 November 1914-12 June 1915, from anon writing to a correspondent in Delhi, dated 23/1/1915.
[76] 'Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital,' BL/IOR/MIL/1/5

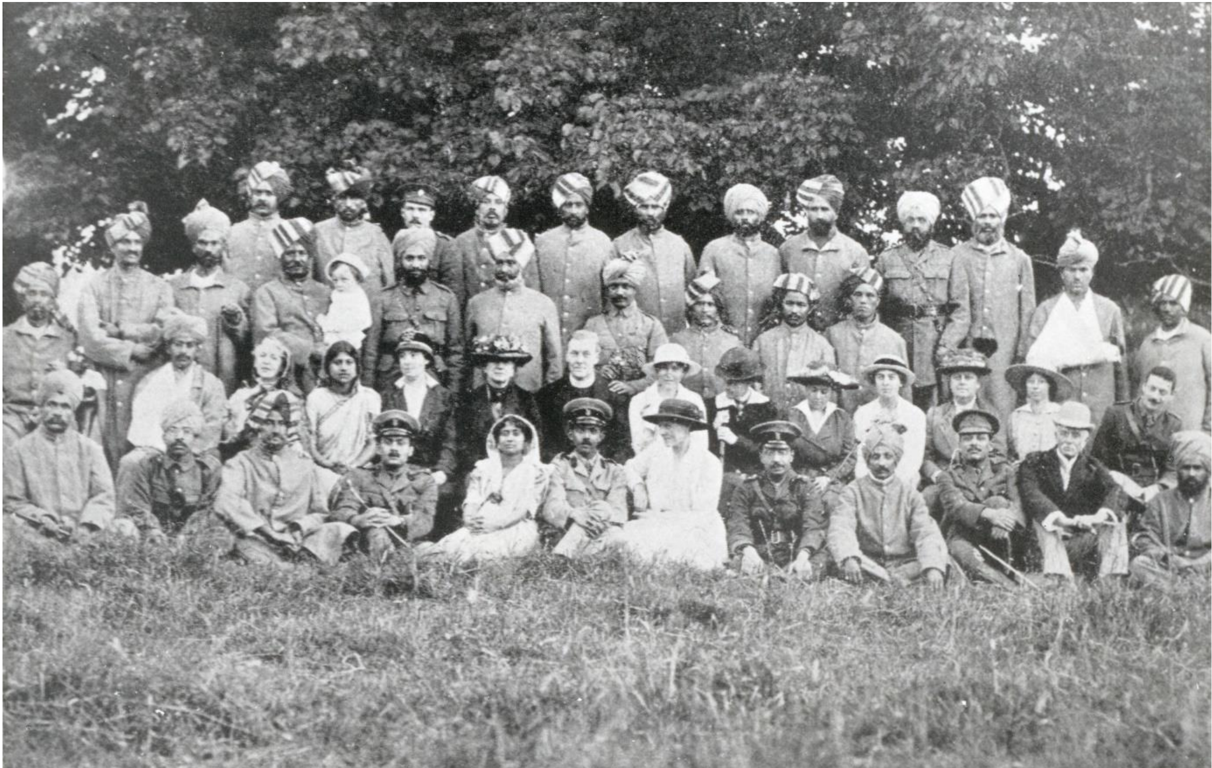

Figure 32. A postcard of Indian patients and staff from the Kitchener General Hospital, Brighton, on an organised excursion. Present are local dignitaries and members of Great Britain's small resident Indian community.[77]

It was not just in Brighton where the Indians were well received by communities local to their hospitals. At Brockenhurst there was an unusual incident which resulted from the death of a Hindu sweeper who worked at the Lady Hardinge Hospital. The man, named Sukha, was a member of a sect which did not cremate its dead. Unsure of what to do with the body the War Office approached the Woking Muslim Burial Ground but was refused internment. Fortunately, the vicar of Brockenhurst came to the aid of the War Office by allowing the sweeper to be buried in the church graveyard.[78] Part of the inscription of Sukha's gravestone read, 'by creed he was not "Christian," but his earthly life was sacrificed in the interests of others. There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. *Ephesians.IV.6.'*[79] The tract chosen for the epitaph symbolically implied that all men are equal in the eyes of God, whilst the unusual act of allowing Sukha's body to be buried on Church of England consecrated ground signified a physical representation of this parable.

[77] 'Photographic postcard showing a group of Indian soldiers from the Kitchener Hospital in Elm Grove and British children gathered on the Race Hill, Brighton, 1915,' RPMBH/HA927775
[78] Ibid.
[79] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339 p.10

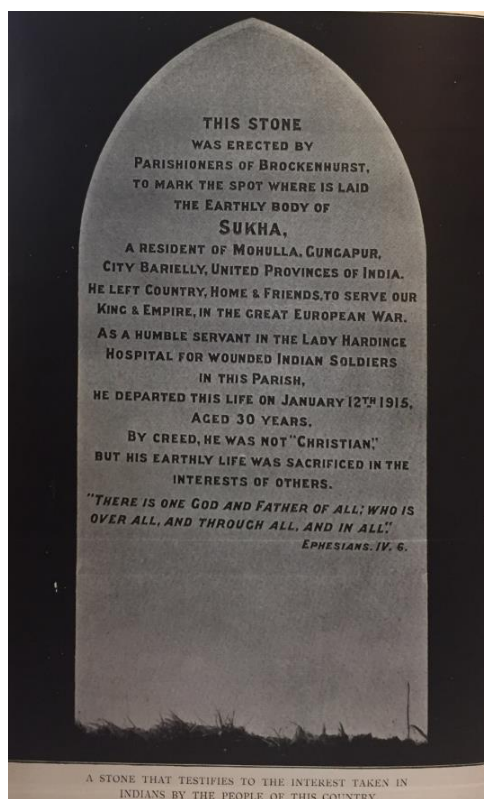

Figure 33. The gravestone erected in memory of sweeper at the Lady Hardinge Hospital, named Sukha. The act of remembrance was regarded as symbolic by the author of the Lady Hardinge Hospital report.[80]

In France too, the Indians were generally well received. Once the adulation witnessed upon their arrival in Marseilles had subsided the locals continued to show an interest in the new residents. Lawrence reported after the Indian Army Corps' departure that, 'everywhere the French people took a sympathetic interest in the Indians, and the relations between the Indians and the French, and between the officer of the Indian Medical Service and the residents have been of the most friendly character.'[81] Another Frenchman observed of Indian troops near the frontline, 'they like to be with our peasants and talk to them by signs.'[82] This viewpoint seems to be supported by references to French civilians in the records of the censored letters written by members of the Indian Army Corps. One sepoy judged, 'however much one praises these people, one's praises fall short.'[83] Another wrote home to tell of the care and affection that he received from a French woman he was billeted with. The sepoy wrote:

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[80] 'Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339. p.11

[81] 'Arrangements made for Indian Sick and Wounded in England and France.' NA/WO/32/5110/36B

[82] (author) Massia Bibikoff, (translator) Leonard Huxley, and (introduction) Maurice Barrès, *Our Indians at Marseilles* (London: Smith, 1915). pp.9-10

[83] Omissi; p.259, letter 451, 'Fateh Mohammed (Punjabi Muslim) to Dafadar Jan Mohamed Khan (Rohtak District, Punjab), 19th Cavalry, France, 3rd December 1916. Other examples of Indian letters referencing treatment from French civilians include letter 359, pp.210; letter 207, p.133.

> She comforted me to such an extent that I cannot describe her kindness. Of her own free will she washed my clothes, arranged my bed, polished my boots, and washed my bedroom daily with warm water. Every morning she gave me a tray with bread, milk, butter and coffee … When we left the village, the old lady wept on my shoulder and gave me five Francs.[84]

According to correspondence from the *prefet* of Marseilles, it was not just sympathy which the Indian troops elicited. The *prefet* reported to Lawrence, 'when the Indian troops first reached Marseilles, the French women of the town were seized… by a kind of *frénésie*, but after sometime this subsided.' Other correspondence sent from local French authorities to Lawrence suggested that the '*frenzy'* went beyond Marseilles.[85] One news report wrote, 'The cult of the Asiatic, always strong in France, is now, thanks to the added sentiment for the brave ally, almost an obsession.' This, the journalist added, translated into romantic interest in the Indians:

> A young princeling in my hotel is embarrassed by many kind smiles and glances. A motorcar will drive up and disgorge a bevy of heavily furred ladies in the lounge where he is sitting. All through dejeuner their eyes will wander to him. The interest of course is half military and patriotic, and half due to the romance that dwells in everything remote.[86]

Likewise, references can be found amongst sepoy letters to sexual encounters with women in Brighton and various French locales.[87] In northern France, Frank Richards of the Royal Welch Fusiliers believed that the Indian troops stationed near his battalion fathered a number of children whom he identified by the colour of their skin when three years after 1914 his unit marched through the streets of a village that the Indian regiment had been billeted in.[88] The veteran claimed, 'one old Expeditionary Force man remarked to me that if the bloody niggers were no good at fighting, they were good at something else that sounded much the same.'[89]

With his colonial service background, Richards looked upon the idea of Indian men having sexual relations with white European women with disdain. However, despite this uncompromising position, he often referenced his own battalion's use of Indian brothels and his fellow Fusiliers' siring of illegitimate children with Indian women in his writings about his time spent on colonial garrison duty

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[84] Omissi. pp.135-6, letter 212, 'Sher Bahadur Khan (Punjabi Muslim) to Raja Gul Nawaz Khan (Jhelum, Punjab), Secunderbad Cavalry Brigade, France, 9th January 1916

[85] Walter Lawrence, 'Walter Lawrence collection, letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence, dated 27 December 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/37A

[86] "Lionising the Indians," *Liverpool Echo*, 16 November 1914. Quoted in Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'

[87] Omissi. examples of references to sexual relations with European women can be found in letters 170, 171, 183, 184

[88] Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die*. p.39

[89] Ibid.

in India.[90] To Richards this was an acceptable position to take, but, when the genders were reversed, he considered it to be an act which challenged a pillar of his understanding of colonial society and the fragility of white colonialist masculinity.[91] Akin to the words of Seton and Howell – who also regarded the idea of sexual liaisons between Indian soldiers and local white women a scandal and an affront to British colonial prestige – Richards's position revealed a gendered aspect to his racialised thinking.[92] For all three men, sex was a powerful means of regulating hierarchies of gender and race. Much to their frustration, these social constructs were being undermined by the Indian army's presence in Europe and they evidently wanted to see this situation reversed. However, this colonialist position was at odds with significant sections of the local communities where the sepoys were stationed. Descriptions of female interest shown in the sepoys suggests that part of their sexual appeal lay in their otherness. But the more liberal minded attitudes displayed by women in Brighton, Paris, and Marseilles towards intimacy with the Eastern servicemen provides another piece of evidence that their perceptions of racial identity were not as boundary laden as those belonging to colonial administrators and veteran servicemen who had toured India with their regiments.

Indeed, references to sexual intimacy between Asian servicemen and white European women were occasionally recorded in the Indian letters transcribed by the Boulogne Censor's Office. Much to one Punjabi Muslim's distaste, use of prostitutes was not uncommon.[93] However, a Muslim sub-assistant surgeon wrote home in January 1915 to tell of a comparatively hedonistic lifestyle, 'I have been to the theatre. Enough, don't you ask me anything. I am not tied up (by scruples) as you are. I go about to enjoy myself.'[94] Fleeting sexual relationships were also reported. One Sikh wrote that families in France were at ease with daughters sleeping with servicemen, 'it is indeed a very free and easy country,' the writer remarked, 'nothing is prohibited.'[95] Another wrote, 'the ladies are very nice and bestow their favours upon us freely. But contrary to the custom in our country they do not put their legs over the shoulders when they go with a man.'[96] Both passages provoked the ire of the censors

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[90] Richards, *Old soldier Sahib*.
[91] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*. p.2
[92] For Howell reference see, Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.18. Seton reference see, 'Report on the Kitchener Indian Hospital', BL/IOR/MIL/1/5.
[93] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. pp.225-6, Letter 383, Anwar Shah to Aurangzeb Shah (Punjabi Muslim, signal troop, Lucknow Caalry Brigade, France) [Urdu] 18 August 1916.
[94] British Library IORL/ D681/18 Letters censored 18 November 1914-12 June 1915. Letter from a Muhammedan Sub Asst Surgeon now in England to the Subedar Major of a regiment in India. dated 23/1/15. Quoted in Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'
[95] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.153, letter 247, 'Lance Dafadar Chanda Singh (Sikh) to his wife Pertab Kor (Lahore District, Punjab)'
[96] Ibid. p.114, letter 171, 'Balwant Sigh (Sikh) to Pandit Chet Ram (Amristar, Punjab).'

that read them and were deleted from the letters for, 'being calculated to convey a wrong impression and discredit our allies.'[97]

On a number of occasions, relations went beyond one-night stands or brief flings. Accounts written by and about a marriage of a Muslim cavalryman of the 6th Cavalry named, Mahomed Khan, to a local French woman whom he was billeted with are particularly revealing. Before Khan married, another member of his unit, called Abdul Ali, wrote home to report what he deemed to be a scandalous affair. Ali recorded, 'there was an extraordinary affair in the regiment yesterday… Mahomed Khan, the lance dafadar, is engaged to a Frenchwoman on the understanding he becomes a Christian. The marriage ceremony is to take place in three days. We have done our best to prevent it, but all has been in vain.'[98] Ali reported marriages between sepoys and local women had taken place in other regiments, but the letter illustrated that it was not just European sensibilities which frowned upon inter-religious marriage, often the groom's comrades also deemed it to be a taboo matter.

A record of Khan's side of the story was also transcribed by the censor's office, with it being likely that his correspondence was targeted for censorship after Ali's mail had been discovered. A few months after Ali's letter, Khan wrote home to inform his family that he had been wed. He began, 'I was stationed in a village and was in a house where they were very kind to me. There was a young woman in the house and her parents were very pleased with me.' Khan recognised the relationship would be deemed outrageous by his family and, therefore, gave an unlikely explanation for the marriage, claiming that his French wife petitioned George V who then personally ordered the marriage to go ahead. Khan excused, 'she did all this without my knowledge.' When the colonel of Khan's regiment discovered what had happened, Khan said the officer tried to stop the marriage threatening Khan with demotion should he go ahead with it, and telling him his wife would have to convert to Islam. Again, Khan claimed that his wife wrote another petition to George V and according to, 'His Majesty's order, the wedding came off on 2nd April… I swear to God that I did not want to marry, but after the King's order I should have got in grave trouble if I had refused.'[99]

Khan's story demonstrated that inter-religious and racial marriages occasionally took place, but that they could be deemed immoral acts by sections of both communities. Ali's letter indicates that men in Khan's regiment disapproved and, judging by the lack of agency Khan claimed to have had in his own wedding, Khan also appeared to think that the marriage would cause him a loss of *izzat* and caste

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[97] Ibid. p.153, letter 247, 'Lance Dafadar Chanda Singh (Sikh) to his wife Pertab Kor (Lahore District, Punjab)

[98] Ibid. p.279, letter 492 Abdul Ali (Hundustani Muslim) to Rizaldar Farzand Ali Khan (6th Cavalry, Sialkot, Punjab, 51). [Urdu] 28th February 1917.

[99] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. pp.298-299, letter 535, 'Mahomed Khan (Hindustani Muslim) to [illegible] Mahomed Khan (Rohtak District, Punjab) [Urdu] 18th June 1917.

back home in the Punjab.[100] If we are to believe elements of Khan's story, then it is also apparent that once again a divide existed in the response of different sections of European society. Obviously, his wife approved of the idea of marriage, but so according to Khan did her family. However, the 6th Cavalry's commanding officer's approval was not so forthcoming, once again showing a dichotomy of Western responses to inter-racial relationships.

Whether it was Khan who converted to Christianity, or his wife to Islam is unclear (Khan had his family believe that it was the latter). Either way his family disapproved of his actions. A few months later, Khan replied to a letter from India that he had received in response to the news he sent of his nuptials. Khan remorsefully wrote to a family member, 'I have received a letter today, the perusal of which has made me much ashamed. Well, whatever I have done, it was my fate… Why do you think me evil?' He told his family that his wife would not go to live in Hindustan, and thus, 'you are welcome to my home [in India] and to my village.'[101] It was a sad conclusion to an occasion which Khan and his wife would have wanted to have been celebrated, however unlikely that would been, with elements of Khan's version of events almost certainly fabricated to excuse his actions. Nonetheless, the marriage of dafadar Mohammed Khan to a local French woman was another instance, brought about through the deployment of Asian servicemen to the battlefields of Europe, which chipped away at the Indian Army's colonialist social structure.

Figure 34. An Indian infantry band of the 40th Pathans plays to residents and workers of a French farm. It was in this type of rural setting that Mohammed Khan met his wife.[102]

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid. pp.313-4, letter 568, 'Mahomed Khan (Hindustani Muslim) to Dafadar Mancuh Khan (5th Cavalry, Risalpur, Peshawar District, NWFP). [Urdu] 20th August 1917.

[102] 'Indian Infantry Band (40th Pathans) playing on a French farm (at St Floris, France). Photographer H. D. Girdwood.,' BL/VA/DELphoto/24/(45).

Like the unnamed French woman who married Khan, the nurse, Kate Luard, also seemed less encumbered by the colonialist proclivities embraced by more conservative elements of Western society. In the diary she published in 1915, on several occasions Luard expressed physical attraction to some of the Indian servicemen she encountered. In one entry, she wrote about a group of wounded Sikh soldiers travelling aboard her train, 'they have masses of long, fine, dark hair under their turbans done up with yellow combs, glorious teeth, and melting dark eyes… The younger boys have beautiful classic Italian faces.' Yet the nurse also expressed a somewhat ambivalent response towards the soldiers. In the same episode she noted, '[the wounded Indians servicemen] hold up their wounded hands and arms like babies for you to see and insist on having them dressed whether they've just been done or not.' However, she counterbalanced the statement by remarking, 'they behave like gentlemen, and salaam after you've dressed them.'[103]

An autobiographical account written by a young Russian artist, called Massia Bibikoff, of the short time she spent visiting the Indian encampments in Marseilles immediately after the Corps' arrival in October 1914, also details an intimate view of her relationship with the men of a Sikh regiment.[104] In the immediate aftermath of the arrival of the Corps, Bibikoff spent six days visiting the Indian cantonments in and around the city. In the book she wrote about these experiences and openly displayed physical attraction to some of the Sikh soldiers that she mingled with, fantasising about the men she met.[105] So captivated was Bibikoff that she lamented at the conclusion of her book, 'the fact is I have lost my heart to these proud and gallant bronze-skinned soldiers.'[106]

The artist also detailed her infatuation with Sher Singh, an officer who served in the Jodhpur (Imperial Service) Lancers, whom she met on several occasions (see figure 35).[107] Although only implied, her account suggests that she enjoyed a close if fleeting sexual relationship with Singh. Remembering her first encounter, Bibikoff recorded, 'he turned towards me and it was like a gleam of sunlight. Never in my life had I seen a handsomer man.' [108] Such was her beguilement with Singh that she included a

[103] Luard, *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front 1914-1915.* p.98
[104] Bibikoff, *Our Indians at Marseilles.*

[105] Ibid. pp. 21, 85
[106] Ibid. p.85
[107] Bibikoff referred to Singh as 'Sher Singh.' In fact, his name was 'Sir Pratap Singh,' the Maharaja of Jodhpur. Singh sailed as part of IEFA to France with the Jodhpur Imperial Lancers. As a young man he was given an honorary rank of Lieutenant, as one of several members of the Indian aristocracy given temporary commissions at the bequest of the viceroy. By the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 Singh was attached to John French's general staff. CUM/CREWE I/.19(6).
[108] Bibikoff, *Our Indians at Marseilles.* pp. 21, 85

sketch of him on the opening page of her book. When she reflected upon his regiment’s departure Bibikoff wrote, ‘I nearly wept. It was as if something had been torn out of myself.'[109]

Figure 35. Massia Bibikoff’s sketch of Sher Singh, published in *Our Indians at Marseilles.*[110]

This type of reciprocated interest between a significant, but undefined, number of European women and Indian servicemen could be looked upon with disdain by British servicemen, such as Frank Richards, who had experience of colonial service in India and who condoned sexual relations between European men and Asian women, but not vice-versa. By contrast, Bibikoff, who had not experienced life in colonial India, was seemingly unconstrained by such inhibitions. In the conclusion of her book, Bibikoff gave tribute to the Indian servicemen she met by writing, ‘I felt such an affection for all these

[109] Ibid. p.158
[110] Bibikoff, *Our Indians at Marseilles.*

kind and gallant soldiers, who left me with the keenest and deepest and most radiant memory of my life.'[111]

However, despite her disregard for the taboos which influenced Richards, her account still managed to depict the Indian servicemen she encountered as outer-worldly colonial 'others.' For all the affection she displayed towards the sepoys of the Indian Army Corps, there was an ambivalence to Bibikoff's text which depicted them as alien to the European society that they had entered. Bibikoff recorded that the Indians, 'seemed to have come to life again from the depths of bygone ages,' and transformed the sepoys she encountered into muses for an exotic fantasy, which she declared left her with, 'the sense of wonderment and a heightened imagination.'[112] Even in her description of Singh, Bibikoff exoticised the officer describing him as a man who was alien to conventional descriptions of physical attraction. 'He realised the dreams of beauty,' reminisced Bibikoff, 'in which I loved to wrap the heroes and princes of the Arabian Nights.'[113]

Although Bibikoff displayed a clear affection for Singh and the other men of the Indian Army Corps, it is also apparent that she sought to separate them from Western society. Indeed, through her use of exaggeration and stereotyping the most significant part of the Indians' appeal was their 'otherness.' The English translator, noted in his preface to Bibikoff's text that her depiction of the Indian troops she met, 'unstudied and unrevised, reveal an impressionable personality as genuine as it is unselfconscious.'[114] Indeed, as fanciful an account as Bibikoff's book may have been, her affection for the Sikh servicemen she met cannot be doubted and it contrasted starkly with that of Richards who, as a veteran of colonial service, regarded Indians as inferior and believed that they should remain in a state of subservience to Europeans.

Bibikoff's hierarchical tendencies were less pronounced but still discernible. She not only associated the sepoys with 'a bygone age,' but also through the occasional use of colonialist tropes to describe some of the other ethnic groups that she encountered the text displayed a degree of ambivalence. Bibikoff claimed, the Sikhs she met were, 'wild, rough soldiers… as merry as children.' [115] When describing the soldiering abilities of Pathan sepoys she turned to an animalistic stereotype claiming that they possessed, 'a catlike litheness [which] enables them to creep like wild beasts over any sort of ground and surprise the enemy.'[116]

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[111] Ibid. p.158
[112] Ibid. p.159
[113] Ibid. pp. 21, 85
[114] Ibid. pp. translator's note
[115] Ibid. p.159
[116] Ibid. p.25

Such stereotyping featured even more prominently in the book's introduction which was written by a French academic, named Maurice Barrès, who recounted his experiences of meeting sepoys in northern France. Whilst Bibikoff more frequently sought to emphasis cultural differences between the Indian servicemen and Europeans through genteel romantic motifs, Barrès adopted a more aggressive and racialised aspect to his othering of the sepoys he wrote about, which shared more in common with the pseudoscientific ethnography of the martial race tropes used by Edmund Candler. Like Candler, Barrès also displayed a fascination with violence, which he imparted upon to the men of the Indian Army Corps and in particular the Gurkhas.

In one example, Barrès used the distinctive nature of a Nepalese soldier's eyes, when compared to a European's, to dehumanise a Gurkha he met, 'his wrinkled yellow face was expressionless. His eyes blinked like a wild animal's and seemed to avoid meeting one's look. "Poor Boches!" I remarked to the Colonel.'[117] To Barrès this facet of physical appearance also gave the Gurkha a physiological advantage in battle, as he determined that the Nepalese possessed a quality of eyesight that made them excellent night-time stalkers. 'They are said to see clearly at night,' pronounced Barrès, 'and their great art is to glide across the hollows of their mountain valleys and the slopes of the Himalayas so as to surprise their enemy and cut out his tongue.' Like other examples, Barrès made a connection to the Gurkhas' use of kukri knives with this chilling vignette, asserting it, 'works wonders in hand-to-hand fighting in trench warfare.'[118]

Barrès's description of Gurkha soldiers was similar to the tropes propagated by the Indian Army's martial race theorists and the academic concluded that this brutal instinct, 'would be their natural tactics, [were they not] disciplined and tempered by British civilisation.'[119] The similarities and differences between the Bibikoff's and Barrès's texts illustrate how the men of the Indian Army Corps could be depicted in various manners as a racial 'other.' Both writers held the Eastern soldiers in esteem for different reasons. For Barrès it was the sepoys' warrior qualities, whilst for Bibikoff it was a physical attraction and cultural intrigue. However, both texts also sought to emphasise the differences between the sepoys and European society, and both displayed ambivalent attitudes towards their Indian subject matters.

Bibikoff exoticised and eroticised the Sikh cavalrymen she spent time with. For all the qualities she associated with them, she also depicted them as alien and archaic fantasies when comparing them to the modernity and mundanity of European society. For different reasons, the negative connotations

[117] Ibid. p.5
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.

of Barrès's introduction are even starker. Barrès, who was a proponent of ethnic nationalism and the leader of a French right-wing nationalist organisation, Ligue des Patriotes, portrayed the sepoys he met as imbued with innate martial qualities.[120] However, the qualities which Barrès associated with the sepoys were simultaneously based on animalistic and barbarous instincts which, in the academic's view, could only be controlled and sanitised by 'British civilisation.'

Examples of open hostility were also occasionally to be found amongst the reactions displayed in both Britain and France. One Indian non-combatant recorded after the soldiers of the Indian Army Corps had departed the Western Front, 'I am sorry the hatred between Europeans and Indians is increasing instead of decreasing, and I am sure the fault is not with the Indians.'[121] In fact, right from the arrival of the Indian expeditionary force, a minority of civilians disliked the idea of the Indian army using Brighton as a centre for hospital care, believing that Indians lacked the fortitude to resist the temptations associated with a seaside resort town. Walter Lawrence referenced this in his closing report, writing, 'when it was decided that the Indians should be sent to Brighton, the critics at once said that it would be dangerous to expose Orientals to the temptations of a popular watering place.'[122] In the same report, Lawrence stated that this prejudiced narrative continued after the Indian army's arrival as a few individuals who opposed the deployment of Indian troops to Europe continued to spread false rumours in order to denigrate the sepoys' service and standing:

> It is necessary to refer to the excellent behaviour of the Indian soldiers as there are some who, objecting to their being employed in Europe, and deprecating their being received in England, have not hesitated to spread false suggestions of inefficiency in the field and misbehaviour in the hospitals. I can repudiate these insinuations with absolute sincerity.[123]

Unconcealed prejudice also continued to be displayed by a minority of the British civilian population after the hospitals were established, particularly by individuals who had lived in British colonies. A Miss Stevenson, who worked for the Scottish Women's Hospital in Rouaumont for less than a month in 1918, complained: 'Anyone who has lived in the East knows well that it is not fitting for white women to wait on natives (men) in practice as… it will only retard matters by lowering the prestige of the white women.'[124] Stevenson had briefly cared for French colonial troops, but experiences of 'the

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[120] Peter Rutkoff, 'The Ligue des Patriotes: The Nature of the Radical Right and the Dreyfus Affair,' *French Historical Studies, 8(4)* (1974): 585-603. p.585 Zeev Sternhell, 'National Socialism and Antisemitism: The Case of Maurice Barres,' *Journal of Contemporary History, 8(4)* (1973): 47- 66.
[121] Quoted in Bardgett, 'Why were the Indian wounded locked up.'
[122] 'Arrangements made for Indian Sick and Wounded in England and France.' NA/WO/32/5110/36B.
[123] Ibid.
[124] 'Unclassified letter dated 12 June 1918, Tin 42, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, Scottish Women's Hospital Collection,' Quoted in Fell, 'Nursing the Other.' p.166

East' had left her with a prejudiced outlook towards African and Asian servicemen which reflected those of high ranking Indian Army officers, such as Beauchamp Duff and O'Moore Creagh, who shared her dislike of white women being in the service of colonial soldiers.

Similar experiences of prejudice from British civilians who had experienced colonial life were encountered by Jagan-Nath Godbole (the Senior Assistant Surgeon who later levelled a revolver at Bruce Seton), whilst he worked at the No.8 Indian General Hospital in Bournemouth. Godbole reported to a friend back in Poona: 'The people here are of a very amiable disposition. They talk pleasantly, treat us kindly, and are pleased to see us.' However, Godbole noted, this contrasted with how British people often behaved in India. He remarked, 'we do not hear [in England] the words "damn" and "bloody" at all frequently, as in India. But this only applies to those who have not seen India.' His observations of the British he encountered in England who had worked and lived in India, bears a striking resemblance to the writings of British soldiers who had experienced colonial service. Godbole lamented, 'those [British] who have [been to India], gnash their teeth at us, some laugh and make fun; but there are not many who do this… It is impossible to say why they become so bad on reaching India.'[125]

In France too, the occasional objection was made about the presence of Indian servicemen. In 1915, one British officer wrote of a widowed French woman's attitude towards the Gurkhas under his command. The officer, who was billeted in her house, wrote, '[she] won't have my orderly anywhere near as she says, *"Je n'aime frai les noirs,"* ["I do not like black people"], which makes me very angry.'[126] The widow's objections to the Nepalese soldiers, and Godbole's experiences with the British public, illustrate that although Indian servicemen were generally well received, this was not a universal response. Furthermore, like British servicemen with prior experience of colonial service, civilians who had lived in colonised societies were more likely to display overt forms of prejudice towards the Asian personnel they encountered, than those who had spent the entirety of their lives living in Britain or France.

Such experiences of encounter illustrate that civilians did display distinguishable responses towards Indian personnel. Examples of discrimination were present in a minority but, more often, they welcomed the sepoys into their communities. Bibikoff's account illustrated that for many of the more positive encounters part of the appeal of the Indian troops lay in their novelty of 'otherness,' which in many aspects was either exaggerated or invented by the Westerners who met them. However, despite

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[125] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. pp.42-43, letter 31, 'Senior Assistant Surgeon, J.N. Godbole to a friend (Poona, Bombay), No.8 Indian General Hospital, Bournemouth, 18th March 1915.

[126] 'Diary of Captain Walter Bagot-Chester covering the period 12 August 1914 to 24 September 1915 in France,' diary entry made on 9 August 1915, NAM.1960-12-33-2-1.

the stereotypes deployed by Bibikoff in her writing, she was relatively unencumbered by the type of boundary laden hierarchical views displayed in the policies of the War Office which were designed to fend off the deconstruction of the Indian army's colonial hierarchy. As Bibikoff's account suggests though, through the simple presence of the sepoys in metropolitan society, if left unchecked encounters between Indian servicemen and European civilians (particularly those of an intimate nature), could weaken the hierarchical constructs used to divide colonisers from colonised.

Charities, officialdom, and the Indian Army

It was not just individuals who engaged with the Indian Army Corps as civilians. Numerous charitable organisations some small and new, such as the gift house organised in Brighton, and others well established, such as the YMCA and the Order of St John of Jerusalem, took an interest in raising funds and administering the proceeds for the benefit of the Indian troops serving in Europe. The Indian Soldiers' Fund, which was established by the Order of St John of Jerusalem, raised and contributed the greatest amount of money to the welfare of Indian servicemen. The establishment of the ISF as a charitable endeavour to support solely Indian troops – rather than British and Indian troops serving in the Indian army – is indicative of a recognition that Indian personnel received inferior conditions to their British counterparts. Sasir Sarbadhikari, who volunteered as a stretcher bearer in Mesopotamia, believed as much:

> The discrimination that is always practised between the whites and the coloured is highly insulting. The white soldier gets paid twice as much as the Indian sepoy. The uniform of the two is different – that of the whites is better… In fact, whatever little provisions can be made are made for the Tommy.[127]

Sarbadhikari served in Mesopotamia. With the campaign there, until 1917, principally funded and organised by the spendthrift and negligent British Indian government. However, even in France a significant amount of Indian soldiers' comforts were provided by the ISF. The construction and upkeep of the charity's Lady Hardinge Hospital at Brockenhurst was its largest outgoing. [128] However, occasional purchases of specialist medical equipment for IEFA also came from the charity. By June 1915, amongst many other items, on a weekly basis the ISF supplied 300,000 cigarettes, 300 lbs tobacco, 600 pipes, 3,000 tins of milk, 1,500 tins of barley sugar, 1250 lbs of sugar candy, 250lbs of

[127] Sisir Prasad Sarbadhikari, *Ahhi Le Baghdad* (Kolkata: privately published, 1957).p.188; quoted in Santanu Das, 'Indians at home, Mesopotamia and France.' p.80

[128] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund, Report of the First Six Months' Work ' IWM/LBY/6339. p.2, The annual upkeep of the hospital was recorded being £50,000 per annum.

candied coconut, 1,200 lbs of nuts, 300 lbs of peppermints, 3,000 handkerchiefs, 17,500 sheets of notepaper, and 17,500 envelopes to the sepoys serving in France.[129]

To the ISF's volunteer committee, the charities work was also significant as it allowed them to rekindle ties with India. The majority of the ISF's committee was composed of members of the aristocracy or high society who had previously experienced India as members of the Indian civil service or as officers serving in the Indian Army. The presence of a contingent from the Indian Army in Europe enabled these committee members to rejuvenate their colonial ties. Most of the ISF's committee were British males, the most notable being the former Indian viceroy, Lord Curzon, but ten of the thirty members were women married to men with Indian connections, such as Lady Willcocks, the wife of General James Willcocks. In addition to its British membership, three members of the committee were Indian, including the Aga Khan and the steel magnate, Tata.[130]

To raise funds the ISF placed advertisements in the British press asking for donations, but, reflecting the backgrounds of the committee members its most successful fund-raising activities targeted wealthy sections of British and Indian society who had longstanding trade or financial interests in the subcontinent. A fund-raising event held in the City of London at the London Commercial Sale Rooms, 1 December 1914, was one of its most successful. Attended by 2,000 persons, within five minutes of Lord Curzon delivering an address to the audience £1,500 had been donated. By the time the sub-committee next met on 16 December this sum had risen to £3,200.[131] Considering the heavy losses in trade and the depreciation of securities which had taken place in the City since the outbreak of war, as well as the closing of the London Stock Exchange, this figure was deemed to be a satisfactory sum by committee members.[132]

Businesses with financial or trade interests with India were also contacted, as were Chambers of Commerce in Lancashire and Yorkshire, many of whose memberships had a strong composition of cloth manufacturers who obtained the bulk of their cotton from India and subsequently sold a significant amount of the finished product back. A similar event to that held in the City of London was also organised in Dundee, this time targeting jute manufacturers and merchants who obtained most of their raw materials from India. On that occasion some £2,540 was subscribed.[133]

[129] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 14.4.1915),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1
[130] 'Indian Soldiers' Fund, Report of the First Six Months' Work ' IWM/LBY/6339.
[131] 'General Committee Book (Proceedings of Indian Soldiers Fund Sub-Committee, Order of St John of Jerusalem, 16.12.1914),' 1915, BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.

By 31st March 1915 the ISF had raised £127,538, with over £30,000 alone being raised by its City of London sub-committee.[134] The concentration of donations from wealthy sections of British society and, in particular, from areas with longstanding commercial interests in India is indicative of how the benefits accrued from the Raj were not universal to all regions and sections of British society. However, many of those who had gained the most wealth from Britain's prised imperial possession were willing to reinforce their connection through financial support for Indian soldiers.

With the ISF focused on the provision of comforts and the maintenance of the Lady Hardinge Hospital, the YMCA played a significant role in the provision of recreation facilities for the men of the corps. It did this through the establishment of amenities in camps away from the frontline that were used by resting units and sepoys recovering from wounds. Almost as soon as the Indians arrived in Marseilles the YMCA established a recreation shed for servicemen based in and around the city, and soon after it opened establishments in Rouen and Boulogne. The men employed by the YMCA to run the facilities had previously worked in India, but despite the charitable work undertaken, Walter Lawrence was initially sceptical about the involvement of a Christian organisation in the provision of recreational facilities for Hindu and Muslim soldiers.

In another example of the political sensitivity which surrounded the Indians' deployment to Europe, Lawrence requested that the YMCA abandoned all Christian terminology in reference to the services it provided Indian troops with. Lawrence told Lord Kitchener in the spring of 1915, 'I have begged the commanding officers [at Rouen, Boulogne, and Marseilles] to keep a very sharp eye on the proceedings of the YMCA, and to prevent sepoys using YMCA paper with the inscription '*Christian Anjuman*' for their letters home.'[135] 'Christian' was removed from the letterheads of the paper distributed by the YMCA at Lawrence's request whilst any form of missionary work was strictly forbidden. With these policies in place, within a few months Lawrence's misgivings had been allayed. He became increasingly impressed with YMCA staff who did much to help the Indian servicemen that used their facilities, especially in the matters of letter writing and the provision of activities such as sports, games, literature, music, and amateur dramatics.[136]

Lawrence found himself in a similar position when another charity composed of retired Indian government civil servants, The Layman's Missionary Society, opened a recreational club at the Barton convalescence home. The society performed similar functions to the YMCA. However, in this instance, Lawrence was so concerned about the damage that an organisation with the word 'missionary' in its

[134] BL/IOR/MSS/EUR/F120/1.
[135] Walter Lawrence, 'Letter to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals and encampments, dated 30 April 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/14A.
[136] Ibid.

title could do to Indian soldiers' domestic social standing that at his request the word was dropped when used in reference to the charitable work conducted with Indian troops. The members agreed to this request and put aside the proselytising aspect of the charity's work. One of its members, Alfred Ezra, was even given special mention by Lawrence for his gifts of miniature Korans to the Muslim patients he visited.[137]

Both charities adhered to Lawrence's wishes and by the spring of 1915 he was satisfied that, 'nothing in the way of proselytising is being done.'[138] Such details illustrated the efforts that the War Office went to in order to ensure that the caste and religious prejudices of Indian soldiers and their families were not interfered with. The concern which Lawrence had displayed reflected the political sensitivity that surrounded the deployment of the Indian Army Corps to the Western Front and the War Office's ambition to nullify any external influence that could potentially provoke unrest within the Indian Army Corps or destabilise support in India for the expedition.

Despite the efforts made to avert religious faux pas which had the potential to turn into political embarrassments, a small number of examples of obstinance and prejudice from public bodies asked to help the Indian Army Corps arose during 1914-15. One of the most prominent of these examples stemmed from local French authorities which, although in most matters sought to accommodate the Indian Corps, in a few cases, particularly in Rouen, proved to be inflexible. Lawrence compared the Rouen authorities unfavourably to those in Marseilles, noting that, 'there seems as general a desire to help here [in Marseilles], as there is a tendency to oppose and delay in Rouen.'[139] The burial and cremation of the Indian dead was a particularly difficult subject. In December 1914, the Rouen authorities promised Lawrence to expedite the burial and cremation of Indian dead, but by March 1915 they had still done 'nothing to help.'[140] The War Office recognised the political importance of memorialising the Indian dead and satisfying Muslim and Hindu rituals in the disposal of the deceased.[141] However, despite a good standard of burial grounds and record keeping, cremation of the Hindu dead in France proved to be problematic in most parts of the country.[142]

On the frontline it was deemed too impractical to conduct cremations, whilst further back, due to objections from French authorities, cremation also proved to be impossible unless conducted at a War

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[137] NA/WO/32/5110/36B.
[138] NA/WO/32/5110/14A.
[139] 'Letter to War Office regarding Indian Military Hospitals, dated 3 March 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/27A.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Narrative and letters early war regarding the burial and memorialisation of the India dead, CWGCA/GRC 1.
[142] 'Letter from Walter Lawrence to Lord Kitchener,' dated 14 December 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/33A.

Office administered base hospital.[143] Lawrence believed that some Hindu troops were understanding of the circumstances, but others objected. Given the strenuous efforts that the War Office went to satisfy Indian religious practices, the French authorities' resistance to cremation was a political blow and it even manged to offend some Muslim sepoys who disliked the idea of Hindus and Muslims being buried in the same plots. One Muslim Afridi wrote, 'I am sorry to say that this is an evil country, because they bury Hindus and Mussulmans in one place.'[144]

Like the reactions from civilian populations, those from civil society were generally positive towards the men of the Indian Army Corps. Although, examples of obstinance and a lack of understanding of the Indian Army's cultural requirements could be found, particularly where the subject of cremation was concerned, for the most part responses from both British and French civil authorities sought to accommodate the Indian Army Corps and make their stay in Europe as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The scale of the response mobilised was perhaps even more impressive with organisations, such as the newly established Indian Soldiers' Fund or local authorities in towns such as Brighton, quickly able to supply resources that enabled the average sepoy serving in Europe to enjoy superior levels of comfort (when away from the frontline), than he had experienced before the war.

The Indian Army and Marseilles: anxiety, dissent, and departure

Given the good relations that predominantly existed between the British and French public with Indian servicemen during 1914-15, it might be expected that the military authorities would have allowed Indian troops the same freedoms enjoyed by British personnel. In northern France, with most sepoys operating with their regular units under the command of British officers there is no evidence to suggest that they were not afforded the same freedoms experienced by British troops when away from the frontline. However, in Marseilles where 11,000 Indian non-combatants and convalescing servicemen were stationed (the largest concentration of Indian personnel in Europe outside of trenches of the Western Front), the sepoys did not enjoy such levels of equality. The authorities' desire to place restrictions on the Marseilles Indians came within days of the arrival of the Indian Army Corps. The War Office, already unnerved by the deployment of colonial servicemen to Europe, was put on alert after a member of the Indian Revolutionary Party was arrested at Toulouse station on board a

[143] 'Walter Lawrence collection, letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 27 December 1915, 1NA/WO/32/5110/37A.
[144] Extract quoted from Indian censor's office transcribed letter and included in, 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 10 March 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/31B.

train which was transporting troops from Marseilles to Orleans. According to Evelyn Howell, the event set the authorities 'upon their guard' and led to the formation of the covert Indian Mail Censor's Office in Boulogne.[145]

Given that only a matter of weeks before the Toulouse arrest was made the War Office had contemplated retaining the Indian Army Corps in Egypt, the speed and extent of its response to the arrest illustrated that despite its decision to send Indian divisions to France it remained nervous about the political risks it associated with the deployment of sepoys to Europe. In addition to the systemic monitoring of Indian mails, the military authorities quickly moved to restrict the sepoys' ability to make physical contact with the outside world by ordering the confinement of all Indian servicemen based in Marseilles to their respective camps when not on duty. Reflecting many of the anxieties surrounding the Indian hospital system, the Indians permanently or temporarily deployed to the bases in and around Marseilles were subjected to what Walter Lawrence described as, 'very tight controls,' which white servicemen did not experience.[146] The War Office's objective was to isolate Indian personnel from the local civilian population in order to minimise opportunities for external political agitators to make contact with the sepoys and to thwart Indian liaisons with the local community, and in particular with local women.

Even the location of the War Office's convalescent depot in Marseilles, Chateau Mussôt, was chosen partially on the basis that it was removed from the city and thus made the task of segregating Indian troops from the civilian population easier.[147] Lawrence recorded that Mussôt was, 'significantly far from Marseilles to prevent the dangers which arise from women.'[148] An intelligence report produced by a Major Battine for the British Army's GHQ detailed, 'at present all Indian ranks, except Indian officers, are confined to their camps. It would not appear easy for the men to leave their camps at Mousso [*sic*], La Valentine and La Barasse.'[149]

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[145] 'Report on Twelve Months' Working of the Indian Mail Censorship, written by E.B. Howell, 7 November 1915,' BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/82.

[146] NA/WO/32/5110/33A.

[147] Mussôt, was designed to accommodate up to 2,000 Indian convalescents. It became the principle Indian convalescent depot in France after the closure of the one at Rouen in the spring of 1915 (14A Letter sent to Kitchener, 30th April 1915). NA/WO/32/5110/14A.

[148] Walter Lawrence, 'Letter to War Office regarding Indian Military Hospitals, dated 3 March 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/27A. The subject of War Office controls placed on Indian servicemen based in the Marseilles camps is addressed later in the chapter.

[149] 'G.H.Q. Intelligence Report, Marseilles 16th April 1915; Annexure 2: Note on the possibility of seditious persons tampering with the loyalty of our Indian troops in Marseilles, by Major Battine, G.S. Indian Corps,' 1915, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/124.

Despite the conviction of the author, other evidence suggests that Indians were able to escape their camps at night.[150] Evelyn Howell wrote:

> It would appear from the tenor of certain letters passing between the Base Camp at Marseilles, where the scum of the Army has naturally tended to collect, and the front, that the Indian soldiers in camp at Marseilles have been able in some cases to obtain access to the women of the neighbourhood and that a certain amount of illicit intercourse with them is going on.[151]

With many of the Indians at Marseilles looked upon with the same scorn as the sweepers employed in the hospitals in England, the War Office's attitude towards the port city reflected the anxiety that abounded over the employment of female nurses and the admittance of female visitors to the hospitals. In effect, by trying to prevent Indians forming relationships with local French women, the authorities were once again seeking to transpose the racial hierarchy of colonial India to Europe.

Further to the concerns surrounding sex scandals, the authorities sought to tightly control the Indian servicemen stationed in Marseilles because they feared the possibility of widespread dissent or even rebellion breaking out. The servicemen that Howell bluntly described as, 'the scum of the army,' were deemed to suffer from poor morale which outside political agitators could exploit to encourage insubordination or mutiny. If such an incident occurred in France, close as it was to the British empire's metropole, it would be a serious cause for embarrassment that could not only threaten the stability of Indian units serving on the frontline in Northern France, but also reek political damage to the *Raj*.

Evidence of poor morale and political agitation began to surface soon after the camps' establishment at Marseilles. By mid-January 1915, Evelyn Howell had identified a rise in the number of malingerers who had been sent there to use the convalescence depot at Mussôt.[152] One soldier wrote to a fellow serviceman that should he be sent from India, 'get yourself written down ill or something in Marseilles, and say that you are weak… Sick men do not come to the war.'[153] Seeking to stave off a return to the front, this group of men had a negative impact on new drafts arriving in the city, with one report noting the unsatisfactory state of mind of the men in the infantry encampment. Its author commented, 'the men in this camp are practically all recovered sick and wounded. Their one object is, by any means, to avoid return to the front. These men undoubtedly contaminate fresh arrivals from

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Censors' Report, April 24, 1915, BL/ IOR L/MIL/17347.
[152] 'India Office censorship correspondence to and from Indian Expeditionary Force in France, note by the censor, dated 23rd January 1915,' BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347.
[153] Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. p.59, letter 63, 'Isar Singh (Sikh, 59th Rifles) to a friend (50th Punjabis, India),' Indian General Hospital, Brighton, 1st May 1915.

India.'[154] Furthermore, many of the drafts and reserves who landed in Marseilles were also criticised as being of poor quality due to either being deemed unfit for frontline service, or because they were non-combatants inefficiently employed with little or no duties to perform.[155]

Men who failed to pass fit for frontline service ended up staying in Marseilles with little to do and despondent about their confinement to camp. Lawrence commented, 'the B men are degenerating form want of work and rapidly pass into C class. I have seen large numbers of the B class, and have talked to them. They are dejected and ashamed, and it would be wise either to send them back to India, or to find them some regular suitable work out here.'[156] Soon after Lawrence made this comment in June 1915, another report noted that the morale in the Marseilles camps had ebbed to such an extent that, 'disloyalty arising from inside is perhaps much to be as feared as sedition, which has been instilled by foreign agents.'[157]

By this point in the war, a conflict of loyalties between religious and political interests had also been identified by the authorities as a threat to the loyalty of Muslim servicemen, with the report referencing the ideological threat of pan-Islamism, and the unusual devoutness of Muslim troops convalescing at Mussôt.[158] With Britain and the Ottoman Empire at war by 1915, the report implied that the religious fervour of some of the men based in Marseilles could turn them against their paymasters in favour of their co-religionists. However, despite the question of religious loyalties, the report deemed the War Office's own confinement policy as the most significant and damaging factor to the state of Indian morale at Marseilles.

In fact, the restrictions placed on the Indians by the War Office at the camps in Marseilles contrasted starkly with the French Army's management of its colonial troops stationed in the city. Lawrence believed that, 'the French treated their colonials better than we do.'[159] According to one India Office document, French colonial troops, 'were given exactly the same privileges as Europeans.'[160] Many Indian servicemen were also aware of this disparity of treatment, which led the author to comment, 'some of them [Indian servicemen] noticed the status of the Muhammadan regiments in the French

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[154] 'G.H.Q. Intelligence Report, Marseilles 16th April 1915; Annexure 3: precis of a report on Indian troops and possibilities of sedition at Marseilles drawn up by a staff officer, General Headquarters Author visited Marseilles on 13th June, 1915, by Major Battine, G.S. Indian Corps,' 1915, BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/125
[155] NA/WO/32/5110/27A.
[156] Ibid. Note the military graded combatants on suitability for frontline service. C class were deemed completely unsuitable for frontline service.
[157] 'Extract from a British Army report on the subject of sedition amongst Indian troops in France, 22 June 1915,' BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517/7.
[158] Ibid.
[159] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 10 March 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/31B.
[160] 'Letters to the India Office regarding the subject of sedition amongst Indian troops in France,' dated 5-7 July 1915, BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517/19.

Army, and they have drawn very important conclusions.'[161] In another instance Lawrence reported, 'I do not see how the retention [of the confinement policy] can fail to excite a very bitter resentment [amongst Indian personnel].' His conclusion was supported by another report which included the summary of an interview with an Afridi serviceman convalescing at Mussôt who let it be known that there was, 'considerable discontent among the men being kept inside the camp.'[162]

This frustration was of significant concern to the India Office and War Office who looked upon the Marseilles encampments as part of a wider mistrust of the loyalty of Indian servicemen which went beyond those deployed to Europe. By the summer of 1915 the allegiance of Indian troops was privately being questioned due to several examples of mutiny and insubordination which had broken out across various locations around the globe where the Indian Army maintained a presence. The most famed and largest of these was the Singapore Mutiny of February 1915, where approximately half of the 850 men of the 5th Light Infantry had mutinied and then proceeded to riot.[163] When rumours spread that the regiment was to be sent to Mesopotamia to fight the Ottoman Army, the regiment's Muslim Rajput companies revolted against their British commanding officers, whilst its Pathan companies scattered. Various factors contributed to the mutiny, including ineffective leadership on the part of the regiment's commanding officer. However, religious fervour and external agitation also played significant roles. The 5th Light Infantry was composed entirely of Muslim sepoys. As news spread of the Ottoman Sultan's call to jihad, anti-British sentiment was spearheaded by the Ghadr movement who disseminated pamphlets in a variety of languages to the sepoys, whilst a local Imam and Muslim merchant helped to persuade members of the regiment to adhere to the fatwah.[164] The result was a mutiny which led to the deaths of eight British officers and soldiers, three Malay servicemen, nineteen civilians (fourteen of whom were British) and one German internee, before finally being quelled nearly seven days after the riot began. Once the rebellion had been put down the British inquiry tried to cover up the global origins of the mutiny, attributing it instead to, 'jealousy about recent promotions.'[165]

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[161] Walter Lawrence, 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 27 December 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/37A.

[162] 'Correspondence with the War Office as to the action to be taken to counteract the seditious influences to which the Indian troops at Marseilles and elsewhere are exposed. Forwarded from Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India to Hardinge,' BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517/124.

[163] Farish A. Noor, 'Racial Profiling' Revisited: The 1915 Indian Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore and the impact of profiling on religious and ethnic minorities,' *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 12, no. 1 (2011): 89-100.

[164] Heather Streets-Salter, 'The Singapore Mutiny of 1915: Global Origins in a Global War,' in *World War One in Southeast Asia: Colonialism and Anticolonialism in an Era of Global Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 17-54. The Ghadr being a revolutionary anti-British paper printed by Indian dissidents in America.

[165] Ibid. p.52

Despite the coverup, the riot had more than a passing resemblance to the 1857 rebellion which still lingered in the mindset of many colonial administrators and officers.[166] However, the mutiny at Singapore was not a unique incident during 1915. With news of the fatwah disseminated around the globe and external agents seeking to agitate Indian troops, a number of other insubordinations and attempted mutinies occurred over the course of the year. In all cases the insurrections were contained in the immediate locality where they took place, but subsequently news of these events circulated beyond the vicinity of their occurrence to other units further afield, and in turn helped to inspire new acts of insubordination. In January 1915 Hardinge sent the India Office a telegram detailing a number of cases of dissent and mutiny that had broken out in other Indian regiments.[167] In the Persian Gulf, Pathans of the 20th Infantry had deserted, whilst other men in the regiment had shown disinclination to fight Arab and Turkish troops.[168]

Back in India, seventy men from another Muslim regiment, the 130th Infantry, were court martialled and imprisoned for a series of insubordinations. When the remainder of the regiment was ordered on service more desertions occurred and whilst embarking at Bombay on 20th November 1914 a sepoy bayoneted and killed a British officer. The murderer, a Mahsud from Waziristan, received a summary court martial and was executed. After the remainder of the regiment was again readied for embarkation to Mombasa it was reported to army headquarters that most of the Pathans, largely trans-frontier men, would refuse to embark for overseas service. Upon hearing this, headquarters decided to disarm and imprison three companies of the regiment's Pathan troops. Seven ringleaders were court martialled and received death sentences (five being commuted to transportation), whilst 197 other men were court martialled and sentenced to various terms of transportation.[169]

The length and number of seditious and insubordinate acts carried out by the 130th, as well as the number of men from the regiment who were court martialled, demonstrated that despite the public claims made in the media of Indian faithfulness to the British empire, conflicting loyalties did exist that could provoke unrest and even insurrection amongst Indian regiments. At the time Hardinge concluded that although he believed Punjabi Muslims remained loyal, 'there is no doubt that there is a strong disinclination among certain classes of Pathans, especially Afridis, to not fight against Turks or

[166] Chandar S. Sundaram, 'Seditious Letters and Steel Helmet: Disaffection among Indian Troops in Singapore and Hong Kong, 1940-1, and the Foreign formation of the Indian National Army,' in *War and Society in Colonial India, 1807-1945*, ed. Kaushik Roy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 127-60. p.130
[167] Hardinge, 'Telegram sent by the Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State of India, dated 29 January 1915,' 1915, NA/PRO30/57/69/8.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

their allies.'[170] Such was the Indian government's concern about the reliability of trans-frontier Pathans that they stopped recruiting them at the end of 1915.[171]

The loyalties of other religious groups who served in the Army also came into question during 1915. In June, Hardinge reported that a conspiracy had been uncovered in India. On this occasion it involved fifty Sikh men of the 23rd Cavalry Regiment. Hardinge reported to Chamberlain in June 1915, 'they had actually been making bombs in the lines of the regiment, and that on a certain day they had decided to mutiny; 50 horsemen being ready to attack the rest of the regiment and to throw bombs into the regimental mess while the officers were there.' However, the mutiny had been postponed after their Sikh priest dissuaded the conspirators on the grounds that it would fail whilst other regiments in the cantonment remained loyal. The plot was then foiled before it could take place.[172] Akin to the Singapore mutiny, an investigation demonstrated that external political agitators, inspired by the Gadhr movement, were the 'chief actors' in the conspiracy's instigation.[173]

Reports of dispirit and sedition were not limited to the Viceroy's telegrams and letters. The censor's office in the India Base Post Office in Boulogne reported to Edmund Barrow a similar impression, this time based on two letters which came from Sikh soldiers who had taken part in the capture of the German controlled port of Tsingtao in China. According to the report, the first letter indicated that pro-German agencies were at work in the Far East. The second proved, 'that those agencies are not altogether unsuccessful.'[174] Complaints recorded in the letter included the political oppression of the Punjab by the British, poor pay received by Indian soldiers in relation to their counterparts, and the formidable reputation of the German army. The censor concluded:

> It is certainly my impression, from the letters which have come under my notice that there exists amongst the Indian troops, both here and in India, in more than one class, to no insignificant degree a spirit which would be favourable to disloyal agitation. That spirit is certainly not disloyalty yet, nor is it universal. But it exists.[175]

The Marseilles encampments were susceptible to the same internal and external impetuses referenced in the report. The letters, which had originated in the Far East and were destined for the

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[170] Ibid.
[171] Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*. p.121, quoted from note by Viceroy, 15 Feb. 1916; GOC Egypt to WO, July 1918; BL/IOR/L/MIL/718848.
[172] Hardinge, 'Austen Chamberlain, India Office Memoranda 1915-16, extract from private letter from the Viceroy, dated 3rd June 1915,' 1915, UB/AC/21/6/3.
[173]Government of India, 'Memorandum on the Internal Situation In India Consequent of the War,' 1915, UB/AC/20/3/5.
[174] 'Report for Edmund Barrow from the India Base Post Office, Boulogne, received on 28/2/1915,' BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/179-182.
[175] Ibid.

Western Front illustrating how the postal system could be used to disseminate internal discontent and external political agitation; with acts of mutiny, insubordination, or simple disgruntlement capable of being communicated to men serving in other units stationed thousands of miles away from the source.

The type of location where the mutinous actions were conducted was also significant, as almost all were conducted away from the frontline. In such settings servicemen had more time to plan, they could be more readily accessed by external agents, and fewer frontline allied units were in close proximity to help neutralise an uprising. Given the spate of rebellious acts which broke out across many locations where the Indian Army had a presence, it is unsurprising that the British military authorities viewed Marseilles as a risk. It was some distance from the frontline, home to a significant number of disheartened personnel, and known to be a location that was targeted by political agitators.

Furthermore, despite public claims made by the British that Islamic ties to the Ottoman Sultan – who was at the time regarded as the religion's preeminent figurehead – could not split the loyalties of Muslim sepoys; the acts of insubordination and rebellion that occurred in Muslim regiments, demonstrated that many in fact did regard their loyalties as torn between religion and King-Emperor. By mid-1915 there was substantial evidence to suggest that disquiet was growing amongst a large part of India's Muslim population, particularly in the north where the lieutenant governor of the Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, reported that the vernacular press had inflamed, 'Mahamedan opinion, especially in the towns.' This, according to O'Dwyer, 'had been adversely influenced by the Turkish participation in the war… and the issue of a *Jehad Fatwa [sic].*'[176] Whilst in Bengal, which had long been the centre of the Indian nationalist movement, the same report noted, 'that the political conspiracy to overthrow and subvert the government still exists in a most virulent form… [and] the outbreak of hostilities in Europe has been seized upon by nationalist leaders to stimulate followers to fresh exertions.'[177] With agitation, 'daily gaining fresh strength,' the draconian Defence of India Act 1915 was passed by the Indian Government in March, following 'urgent representations,' from the governments of Bengal and Punjab who claimed that the ordinary criminal law and court procedures were, 'unequal to deal with the situation.'[178]

Back in Marseilles, despite an internal admission that the War Office's own discriminatory policies of confining Indian servicemen to their camps contributed to unrest, officials such as Battine could not contemplate giving Indian servicemen an equality of freedom that matched that of British or Dominion servicemen. The decision to continue with the policy of confinement was a symptom of the mistrust

[176] UB/AC/20/3/5.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.

of Indian personnel which had pervaded Whitehall since the decision had been taken to deploy them to Europe, and had continued to accompany the Indian Army Corps throughout its stay in France.

Given the hostility that this policy sparked amongst Indian soldiers it may seem odd that the War Office persisted with it, but despite the self-inflicted harm that it caused to morale, Battine claimed, 'I do not see how these restrictions could be relaxed.'[179] The War Office was trapped in a quandary by the knowledge that should the confinement policies of Indian servicemen be eased they would make easier targets for agitators, but should they continue with them they would only further weaken the already poor morale of the men stationed in Marseilles. Ultimately, mistrust of Indian personnel was too dominant a factor in British thinking and Battine concluded that the restrictions should be maintained. He surmised, 'the moral seems to be that the fewer Indians we have at Marseilles the better.'[180] Willcocks was of a similar mindset, writing after the war he concluded, 'it was a great mistake keeping wounded men at Marseilles. They did little good and much harm, and they should either have been kept in England or returned to India.'[181] So alarmed was Willcocks by the situation that in mid-July 1915 he travelled down to the city to assess the situation in the encampments for himself. He concluded:

> Talk of the mentality of the East: I truly learned more of it in those four days in Marseilles than I had in a lifetime. The mind of India was laid bare. The ignorance of the West, when endeavouring to understand the viewpoint of the East, suddenly stood naked before me. I thought I knew something of Indians; I left Marseilles knowing a little more, but still very far from all.[182]

By the end of the month confidence in the Indian Army Corps had collapsed within the India Office, War Office, and the higher echelons of the British and Indian Armies. Its deteriorating physical state and overstretched Indian resources had combined with growing fears of Indian servicemen's loyalty. This combination of factors led figures within Whitehall to conclude that only the withdrawal of the Indian Army Corps from Europe could remedy the problem. On 28 July 1915 the India Office's military secretary, Edmund Barrow, at the request of the new secretary of state for India, Austin Chamberlain, wrote to the War Office to request its withdrawal from the Western Front. Barrow, with the approval of Chamberlain and other key figures in the India Office, reasoned:

[179] BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517/124.
[180] Note on the possibility of seditious persons tampering with the loyalty of our Indian troops in Marseilles,' BL/IOR/L/MIL/17347/124.
[181] Willcocks, *With the Indians in France*. p.311
[182] Ibid.

> the real solution of the problem lies not in the adoption of this or that palliative or improvement but in the recognition of the fact that the Indian regiments of the Indian Army Corps in France are so far exhausted that it would not be safe to rely upon them for further prolonged exertions, and that in particular it would not be safe to retain them in France for another winter of trench warfare.[183]

By this point it was realised that the resources at the disposal of the Indian Army Corps meant that it was struggling to cope with the demands of the Western Front. By the summer of 1915 France was only one of many theatres that the Indian Army had been committed to in addition to its usual garrison duties. These logistical strains were undeniable and this final draft of the letter emphasised the exhaustion of Indian units and the Indian Army's incapacity to replenish them.

However, it was Barrow who had instigated the idea of withdrawing the Corps by writing to Chamberlain at the beginning of July in response to the series of memorandums and reports circulated about the increasing despondency of Indian troops stationed in Marseilles and the seditionist activity taking place in the city. With these points in mind, Barrow's original letter placed far greater emphasis on the condition of the Indian soldiers, significant elements of which he believed were increasingly at risk of insurrection:

> In my opinion the disease is not one to be eradicated by patient cures or other palliatives. The patient requires 'change of air.' The Indian soldier in France (I speak only of the infantry) is sick of the whole business and is therefore ripe for evil influences. The only thing to do is to give him 'change of air.' The coming winter will give us a good excuse for sending him away and I think the best thing we can do is send him to Cyprus or Egypt to rest and recuperate before the cold weather comes on.[184]

Austen Chamberlain, who had taken office as secretary of state for India in May 1915, agreed with Barrow's conclusion, telling the British government's cabinet just days after Barrow's memorandum that, 'in my opinion, it will be impossible to maintain the Indian troops in France for another winter in the trenches.'[185] Chamberlain got his way, and by November the Indian infantry units had been pulled out of the frontline ready for their departure a month later. Whether political or military

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[183] 'Minutes written by Edmund Barrow for Austen Chamberlain regarding the withdrawal of the Indian Army Corps from France, 20-28 July 1915,' 1915, BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Austen Chamberlain, 'Memorandum, written by Austen Chamberlain, addressed to the cabinet regarding requesting the withdrawal of the Indian Army Corps from France, dated 30 June 1915,' 1915, UB/AC/20/3/4

considerations were the decisive point, it is apparent that the fears of damage to British prestige played a significant part in the decision to remove the Indian infantry from the Western Front.

Conclusion

When reflecting upon the arrival of the Indian expedition in Marseilles in 1914, the chief record officer of the Indian Army Corps, J.W.B. Merewether, recorded: 'The landing of the two Indian Divisions, numbering 24,000 men, on the quays of Marseilles in September and October 1914, was a great event, not merely in the annals of the Indian army, but in the history of mankind.'[186] Merewether believed, 'those who knew the Indian soldier best were confident, however sudden his immersion into the Great War might be, that his traditions, his loyalty and his sense of duty would carry him through.'[187] Yet the officer also acknowledged in the same passage that their deployment to the Western Front had been deemed by 'high authorities' to be 'a hazardous experiment.'[188] As it turned out, the experiment was estimated too hazardous to see through to the conclusion of conflict, as an increasing sense of dread in Whitehall grew over the stability of the Indian facilities in Marseilles and combined with the declining material state of the Indian Army Corps to bring about the decision to withdraw the Corps long before its actual departure took place in December 1915.

This though was not a new perception of the Indian Army Corps. From its arrival, fears had abounded amongst civil servants and army officers about the risks to the Indian army's colonial order brought about through its presence in Europe, and this unquenched fear only grew and resulted in stricter regimes as the corps' stay lengthened. Fundamentally, the British authorities feared uncontrolled Indian access to domestic British and French societies which shared few of the colonialist social boundaries that were taken for granted in British India.

Many of the civilians and servicemen who encountered Indian troops in 1914-15 identified the sepoys as a racial other, upon which they transposed romanticised fetishes, or hazy amalgams of 'Eastern' culture much of which was based in fantasy. But it is also clear that for most servicemen and civilians who had not experienced life in a colonial society, their conceptions of racial identity were not as firmly preconceived as those who had spent considerable time in the colonies. Most demonstrated greater flexibility in their understandings of racial identity and showed greater capacities to adapt

[186] Merewether, *The Indian Corps in France*. p.xi
[187] Ibid. p.469
[188] Ibid. p.469

their notions of 'us' and 'them' through their encounters with the servicemen of the Indian army, than colonial administrators would have desired.

In the military environment examples of this adaptation included the assimilation of Gurkha identity with that of the British Tommy, and the openness of British orderlies and nurses to tend and serve wounded Indian soldiers in a manner that would have not been countenanced by army regulars who had conducted tours of garrison duty in India. In the civilian setting although it is apparent that the sepoys possessed a novelty value in the eyes of many individuals. In cases, such as the communities of Marseilles and Brighton, the popular consensus demonstrated a greater desire for opportunities to interact with Indian servicemen than the administrators of the Indian army would permit. In both locations, intimacy between local women and Indian servicemen was not an uncommon feature of the relations that existed between the two groups.

This subject matter exacerbated the hierarchical inclinations of Indian army officers and administrators more than any other which arose from the Indians' presence in the West. It also illustrated the divide that existed between the attitudes commonly found in the communities local to the new Indian army facilities, and those common amongst the sepoys' military leadership. So much so that correspondence written by administrators demonstrates that intimacy between Indian personnel and local women was a significant factor in the decision to segregate the Indians in Marseilles and the English south coast. War Office reports recognised this policy damaged morale. Despite this, the anxiety that surrounded unregulated Indian contact with Western society combined with the growing fear of political agitation to force the authorities to maintain the policy. This in turn caused the stability of the Marseilles camps into a downward spiral which was only remedied through the withdrawal of the resource weakened Indian Army Corps to end its 'hazardous experiment.'

Thesis conclusion

Andrew Thompson calls British society's relationship with 'imperial culture' a complicated position, rejecting ideas that most Britons were largely ignorant of or indifferent to the empire, but also contending that they were not saturated by imperialism. Rather he argues that the effects of empire on British society were complex (and at times) contradictory.[1] The thesis has similarly shown that British responses to the India's entry into the conflict, and the subsequent arrival of the Indian Army Corps on the Western Front, were complex and at times contradictory. The evidence examined demonstrates that spectrums of interaction, knowledge, and perception existed with regards to Western responses to India and the sepoys of the Indian Army during the initial eighteen months of the First World War. It also argues that the responses provoked were often dependent on the part of society that encountered the sepoys.

At one extremity were the British officers that commanded the Indian regiments, who utilised the convoluted pseudoscientific racial discourse of martial race theory to ascribe innate values and tendencies to the servicemen under their charge. The ambivalence they displayed towards the Asian servicemen they commanded through their adherence to this ideology cannot, as Santanu Das has asserted, be exaggerated in importance.[2] During the First World War this conviction was displaced to the Western Front where it was frequently expressed through assessments of the Indian Army Corps' performance on the battlefield and resistance to reforms which would have resulted in the Indian Army being better able to meet the demands of the conflict. However, enacting such reforms would have created greater racial equality within the service and challenged British monopolisation of authority over it. Evidence reviewed by the thesis also indicates that professional soldiers of non-Indian regiments who had spent long periods of time on colonial garrison duty tended to demonstrate a diminished ability to treat or view the peoples they garrisoned with empathy. The prejudices that Frank Richards expressed towards the Indian servicemen he encountered in France, and the actions of the Australian servicemen aboard hospital ships who refused care from Indian medics, indicate that such predispositions were not left in the colonial societies where they had been cultivated, but instead accompanied the servicemen to Europe.[3]

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[1] Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?* pp.4-5
[2] Santanu Das, 'Ardour and Anxiety.'
[3] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener from Lawrence regarding Indian Military Hospitals,' dated 27 May 1915, NA/WO 32/5110/20A

Despite these stereotypes of British colonialist culture and discourse which have subsequently received greater historiographical attention, at the other end of the spectrum were the citizen soldiers and civilians who came into contact with Indian servicemen for the first time during 1914-15. This group tended to have had little or no first-hand experience of colonial society, and for the most part only a vague knowledge of the tropes which were used to describe the British Empire's colonised peoples. Whilst evidence shows that race was still an important factor in their perceptions of the Indian servicemen they encountered, their records lacked the nuanced racialised discourse of the martial race theorists, or the highly prejudiced views of many veteran servicemen who had conducted tours of duty in India.

Gavin Schaffer has commented: 'In imperial constructions of soldiering, the perceived superiority of Northern Europeans and variously dismissive accounts of the 'native' soldier can be taken as read, mitigated as they sometimes are by the persistent countermyth of the noble and brave savage.'[4] However, the quietly spoken admiration that newly recruited British servicemen tended to hold their Indian counterparts in undermined this notion, and was unknowingly at odds with the pseudoscientific ethnography of the martial race theorists who determined that only certain ethnic groups employed by the Indian Army were suited to frontline service. Whilst the Drahbi mule drivers of Gallipoli and the stretcher bearers barred from combatant duties on the Western Front were remembered by a number of volunteer British servicemen during 1915, these non-combatants received fewer accolades from men such as MacMunn, Candler, and Willcocks who cultivated the tropes of martial race theory as the defining feature of their understanding of Indian servicemen, and as a result were always predisposed to discriminate more against certain indigenous 'classes' than others, and view all Indian servicemen as inferior to their British counterparts.[5]

However, although newly recruited British servicemen were more positive and empathic in their attitudes towards the sepoys, it is still certain that a social distance was present in most encounters due to cultural and linguistic barriers. British servicemen often failed to grasp the ethnic diversity of the Indian Army, and lumped together various cultural artefacts practiced by its different ethnic groups. It is also apparent that many were puzzled by the various cultural nuances displayed by the sepoys. When British veterans of the conflict were interviewed by the Imperial War Museum over sixty years after the war had concluded, their most abiding memories of the Asian personnel they had

[4] Gavin Schaffer, 'Racializing the Soldier: an introduction,' *Patterns of Prejudice* 46, no. 3-4 (2012): 209-13. p.210. Also see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
[5] Edmund Candler, *The Sepoy*; George Fletcher MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India;* 'Letter from James Willcocks to the Royal Household,' 1915, RA/PS/PSO/GV/C/Q/832/304.

met were usually anecdotes of Indian cultural habits which seemed strange to Western sensibilities.[6] Within this respect, the volunteer soldiers of 1915 seem to have often regarded the sepoys as a somewhat obscure colonial 'other,' which frequently led them to look upon most Indian soldiers as too culturally dissimilar to form anything but a fleeting show of respect for.[7]

In *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, the books' authors chart the spread of 'whiteness' as a transnational form of racial identification. An outcome of which they propose politically bolstered policies of racial exclusion, as well as culturally strengthened a subjective racial sense of self and an imagined transnational community of white men.[8] Certainly, official policies administered by the Indian army and War Office were reflective of an effort to bolster policies of racial exclusion. Adherents to the 'colour line' argument could also point to a cultural dynamic to their argument as the presence of certain basic tropes associated with groups such as the Nepalese Gurkhas – such as a love of hand-to-hand combat and use of the kukri knife – were almost ubiquitous to British racial preconceptions of the Nepalese.

However, the perceptions of racial identity which resulted from the experiences of encounter require a more nuanced understanding. There is evidence to suggest that most British servicemen did not dogmatically adhere to a 'white' versus 'non-white' division (certainly those who had not experienced colonial society). Instead most could adapt their perception of the sepoys on the basis of their cultural interactions with them. A prominent example of this was in the Indian hospital system where greater levels of contact and time to develop individual relationships helped to foster a camaraderie between the sepoy patients of the Indian military hospitals and the British ward orderlies and nurses who provided much of their care. The bonds displayed between the two groups would have been unthinkable to professional British soldiers who had served in India before the war, as would have been the concept of a British serviceman or female nurse being in the service of an Asian patient.[9]

Similarly, away from the hospital setting, the one group of Asian servicemen that British troops repeatedly demonstrated greater affinity for were the Nepalese men of the Gurkha regiments, who were often referred to as honorary 'white' soldiers by British and ANZAC troops.[10] This basic

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[6] Various oral histories recorded in the 1970s through interviews conducted with British First World War veterans support this assessment, see chapter four for examples.

[7] Shobbrock, Charles Ernest (oral history),' 1985, IWM/SOUND/9145; 'Williams, Walter Edward,' 1987, IWM/SOUND/9754; 'Pope, Edwin Richard (oral history),' 1984, IWM/SOUND/8272; 'Holdstock, Henry Thomas (oral history),' 1973, IWM/SOUND/20.

[8] Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line : white men's countries and the international challenge of racial equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). pp.3-4

[9] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener from Lawrence regarding Indian Military Hospitals,' dated 15 February 1915,'NA/WO 32/5110

[10] Holdstock, Henry Thomas (oral history),' 1973, IWM/SOUND/20; Richards, *Old soldier Sahib*. p.106

differentiation of the Nepalese from the other ethnic groups of the Indian Army demonstrated a rudimentary level of racial profiling. For British servicemen it was a means of making sense of, 'who we were, and who others were.'[11] But it was one which stemmed from perceived cultural similarities experienced through encounter, rather than a simplistic preconceived 'white' versus 'non-white' demarcation. Heather Jones has concluded that European comprehensions of 'race' often amalgamated understandings of 'biology, ethnicity, and nationality.'[12] The evidence reviewed by 'Eastern Presence' with regards to the interactions of Nepalese and British servicemen suggest that pluralistic understandings of race existed, but that they could at times also incorporate culture and social disposition into many Britons' understanding of the term.

The closer relationship that generally developed between British and Nepalese servicemen originated from a common belief developed through encounters with the Gurkhas of the Indian army that they did not adhere to caste practices which prejudiced them towards other religious groups and castes as strictly as many of the Indian Army's other classes did. This made fraternisation easier and helps to demonstrate that wider cultural dynamics informed British servicemen's responses to their Asian counterparts. For although British perceptions often came to incorporate racial identity, this identity incorporated cultural experiences which went beyond a simple racial delineation of white and non-white. Likewise, although interactions between British troops and the other ethnic groups of the Indian Army were often limited, a review of the evidence of these encounters suggest that cultural and linguistic barriers, rather than predisposed racial prejudice, stifled fraternisation.

It is also a principle difference as to how British military personnel with no prior experience of colonial India differed in their responses to those that had served there. For those servicemen who had not been directly exposed to the colonial world, racial identity remained more of a malleable concept which could be adapted through experiences of encounter. Significantly, this group of British servicemen did not possess the complexity of racial vocabulary and categorisations that were used with regularity by the martial race ideologists of the Indian Army. Nor did their language share the extreme racial prejudice expressed by the army regulars who had conducted tours of duty of the subcontinent. This is because experience of colonial service often left individuals indoctrinated by racist ideology that prevented, or at the least disinclined them, from evolving their perceptions of the sepoys through experiences of encounter. Those without experience of colonial service, although

[11] Used by Gavin Schaffer as a broad concept to define colonial soldiers, 'Racializing the soldier' p.209 The construction of racial 'selves' and 'others' was most famously discussed by E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). It is an analysis that has been problematized by research such as David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: how the British saw their empire* (London: Penguin, 2002). This sought to incorate social class into the colonial hierarchy.

[12] Jones, 'Violence Against Prisoners of War in the First World War.'

sometimes displaying a basic and hazy understanding of colonial discourse, did not feel obligated to adhere to the tenants of martial race theory (usually because they lacked a detailed knowledge of them) or the highly discriminatory practice of army regulars who had conducted tours of garrison duty.

The nuanced position of British servicemen's rapport with the soldiers of the Indian army is reflective of Thompson's argument that British society's relationship with imperialism was complicated and at times contradictory. Records of civilian encounters with Indian personnel during 1914-15 also demonstrate a level of complexity. The evidence suggests that perceptions were informed, at least in part, by racial conceptions of a colonial other, which in the case of the Asian personnel were more often than not fed by a rudimentary colonial discourse which associated the sepoys with a novelty value and hazily understood myths and tropes of an anachronistic 'East.'[13] Yet, despite these often inaccurate preconceptions, civilian populations again showed themselves capable of adaptation through encounters with Asian servicemen based in facilities or billets local to them. Much to the aghast of many administrators and high ranking IMS and Indian army officers, communities in Brighton and Marseilles demonstrated little conception of the boundary laden racial divides and hierarchies of colonial society, and few appeared to have agreed with the War Office's desire to segregate Asian personnel from the communities they were stationed in.[14] It has been detailed how later in the war, labourers brought to Europe from Asia to make up for shortfalls in the workforce quickly came to suffer widespread discrimination and prejudice.[15] However, with social and economic conditions very different in France in 1917-18, for the most part good relations existed in 1914-15 between Indian servicemen and the civilian populations where they were located in France and Britain.[16]

Although the predominantly good relations existed between the men of the Indian Army Corps and the parts of British and French society they encountered; officials desired to segregate and mediate control between the two groups by restricting the sepoys' contact with the West. Reports which assessed the morale of the personnel based in Marseilles and the possible access that political agitators had to them fuelled fears in the War Office and India Office of sedition which could lead to dissent or even rebellion. This would have not only threatened the stability of Indian units serving on the Western Front but also British prestige in India. In addition to these political fears, correspondence

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[13] Bibikoff, *Our Indians at Marseilles.*

[14] The Brighton Herald 16 January 1915, BL/IORL/D681/18; 'At a Glance,' *Brighton and Hove and South Sussex Graphic*, 12 December 1914.; Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*. pp.38-39, letter 24, 'A Sikh to his father (Punjab), a hospital in England, 20th February, 1915'; 'Letter to Lord Kitchener regarding Indian Military Hospitals, dated 15 February 1915,' 1915, NA/WO/32/5110/27A; ' Lady Hardinge Hospital Report,' IWM/LBY/6339 p.9; 'Arrangements made for Indian Sick and Wounded in England and France. NA/WO/32/5110/36B.

[15] Guoqi Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front*.

[16] See, Tyler Stovall, 'The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War,' *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 737-69. p.740

and records left by high ranking officials, such as Walter Lawrence, demonstrate that the decision to regulate Indian interaction with Western society was taken because of a belief that unregulated contact, particularly with European women, would lead to a destabilisation of the Indian army's racial hierarchy.[17]

The position and debate which surrounded the employment of female nurses in the Indian military hospitals was demonstrative of this, and also highlighted that gender had a role to play in the Indian army's racial hierarchy. In this instance some concessions were made at the bequest of reformers, not least the admission of white female nurses into Indian military hospital system for the first time. However, shortages in medical staff brought about by the conflict and a fear of political damage being wrought in India was pivotal to this concession. The eventual admission of women into the hospitals remained a negotiated one, with nurses officially barred from physical contact with Indian patients (even if this policy seems to have been frequently ignored in practice). The patriarchal decision making that resulted in this impractical official position supports the analysis of Anne McClintock who has identified that experiences of race and gender did not operate in isolation in colonial settings.[18] The negotiated position eventually reached also demonstrated that the social forces unleashed by the war could force the Indian army's British administrators to loosen their grip, if not entirely relinquish their adherence to the racial hierarchy implemented within the organisation.

The military hospital provided another example of a weakening of the Indian army's racial hierarchy with the admittance of a small group of middle class, mostly urban educated, Indian students as hospital orderlies who had been studying in Britain at the outbreak of war. Barred by the Indian army's discriminatory recruitment policies from combatant roles, the students instead volunteered with the Indian Ambulance Corps.[19] However, even in this form of service they were limited to positions in the Indian hospitals which were away from the frontline. Akin to the use of female nurses, material pressures and a fear of political unrest in India proved the decisive factors which led to their employment, rather than a widespread desire within the Indian Army and War Office to embrace a sense of racial equality. For the changes in policy were negotiated, and a continued adherence to martial race ideology resulted in a bar against the Indian volunteer students from performing frontline duties.

Andrew Thompson has argued that as a social force on British society, imperialism at times compelled progress but at others it could fortify tradition.[20] There is little evidence to suggest that in respect to

[17] 'Letter to Lord Kitchener written by Walter Lawrence,' dated 15 December 1915,' NA/WO/32/5110/37A.
[18] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*. p.4
[19] NA/WO/32/5110/36B.
[20] *The Empire Strikes Back?* pp.4-5

the administration of policies that impacted the Indian army that colonial doctrine compelled progress in 1914-15. Rather, 'Eastern Presence' concludes that it was the social forces unleashed by the First World War which forced aspects of British colonialist doctrine to evolve. During this period the polices administered by officials in Whitehall to regulate sepoy contact with Western society and maintain, where possible, the Indian army's colonialist hierarchy were circumspect and restrictive. They demonstrated that the attitudes of civil servants in the India Office and War Office shared more in common with the Indian Army's officer class than some of the more relaxed views found in wider sections of civilian British society. For although some figures supported the need for reform, the decisive factor in the changes that resulted were political, social, and material pressures unleashed by the war; rather than an egalitarian sense of imperialism which was frequently associated by the media with the British empire during the opening months of the conflict.

The deployment of the IEFA is a prime example of this. It could be argued that the admittance of Indian servicemen into frontline duties on the Western Front represented a weakening of the old colonial order. After all, it was only a little over a decade since Indian servicemen had been barred from combatant roles during the Boer War. However, despite the jubilant publicity that Indian Expeditionary Force A received upon its arrival in Marseilles, evidence reviewed by the thesis demonstrated that the decision to deploy Indian combatants to Europe was still in the balance even as it voyaged westward and were it not for the realpolitik factors which informed their decision, the British government had appeared to favour deploying IEFA in Egypt.[21]

With the arrival of Indian combatants in Europe more a result of practical military and political considerations, than it was a desire to give Indian servicemen an equal role in the conflict, their deployment to the Western Front exemplifies another argument forwarded by the thesis – that there was often a disconnect between a public show of support for the deployment of Indian servicemen to Europe and the private fears within Whitehall which surrounded the presence of Asians on the Western Front. The arrival of Indian soldiers in Marseilles was publicly supported by politicians such as Asquith and Crewe, and their coming gave credence to a popular propaganda claim that the British empire was at odds with a tyrannical form of imperialism practiced by Germany, which it was supposed would have never countenanced the use of African or Asian servicemen on a European battlefield.[22] Their presence also supported a claim frequently made by the British media that the war effort was an imperial one embraced by all of the citizens of the British empire, no matter their skin

[21] 'Forces dispatched from India: telegram from Crewe to Hardinge, dated 25 August 1914,' CUM/Crewe I/18(3)

[22] See Chapter 1 for examples of press reports and imagery.

colour.[23] The fact that the people of India had no say over if or how their country would partake was conveniently overlooked by the British press coverage, as was the lack of awareness and apprehension displayed towards the war amongst poorer sections of Indian society.[24]

Despite the internal fears and remonstrations which took place within the Indian government, India Office, War Office, and the higher echelons of the Indian Army, public discourse concerned with the presence of Indian personnel in Europe maintained a welcoming if racially ambivalent narrative. Those in positions of authority sought to see that servicemen received levels of recreational facilities, medical care, religious and cultural accommodation comparable to that received by British servicemen. These accommodations enabled propaganda, such as those used to publicise the Royal Pavilion Hospital, to claim that Indian servicemen were treated as equals to their white counterparts.[25] However, despite the hospitable public portrayal, a prejudicial desire to maintain the Indian Army's racial hierarchy and a fear of political agitation dominated the perceptions of British officials towards Indian personnel. Similarly, despite efforts to portray the British empire as an egalitarian imperial endeavour, as the conflict progressed the accounts of sepoys slipped into the use of racialised tropes informed by proponents of martial race ideology such as Edmund Candler.

The official historian of the Indian Expeditionary Force's campaign in France called its deployment to Europe 'a hazardous experiment.'[26] This description was reflected in the private discussions of civil servants and politicians who sanctioned its deployment to the Western Front, the policies they enacted during the Indian Army Corps' stay in Europe, and finally in the documentation that proposed its withdrawal. The proposal for the decision originated from the India Office and was taken in July 1915, five months before the corps' eventual withdrawal in December 1915. It was not just the casualty list which informed this decision. The India Office's military secretary, Edmund Barrow, stated in his original draft letter to be sent to the War Office, 'the Indian soldier in France is sick of the whole business and is therefore ripe for evil influences.[27] Barrow's statement acknowledged the military strains that the Indian Army Corps was under, but also the danger that this could fuel a widespread outbreak of dissent or even rebellion.

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Examples of propaganda specifically used to publicise the Royal Pavilion's use as an Indian military hospital include paintings by Douglas Foxx Pitt, 'The Dome Theatre, Brighton in use as a hospital for Indian wounded soldiers, 1915-1916,' 1919, RPMBH/FA100626; C H H Burleigh, 'Interior Of The Pavilion, Brighton: Indian Army Wounded,' 1917, IWM/ART/116. Also see *Indian Military Hospital, Royal Pavilion, Brighton. A Short History*.
[26] Merewether, *The Indian Corps in France*. p.469
[27] 'Minutes written by Edmund Barrow for Austen Chamberlain regarding the withdrawal of the Indian Army Corps from France, 20-28 July 1915,' 1915, BL/IOR/L/MIL/7/17517.

Reports from the Boulogne censor's office, those conducted of the Marseilles encampment, and news of acts of sedition and mutiny by Indian army units overseas all contributed to this fear of 'evil influences.' But the objectives of the policies implemented during the Indian Army's stay in the West, also suggest that Barrow and others believed that the simple exposure of Indian servicemen to metropolitan society was a benign influence in itself, and enough to challenge British authority over the Indian army.

Beyond officialdom, the often-contradictory experiences of the diverse elements of British society who encountered the sepoys illustrated the paradoxical outcomes which resulted from this experiment. Newspaper reports at times sought to depict sepoys as equals to their British counterparts, at others the tropes derived from martial race ideology were propagated to imply inferiority. Whilst official policies sought to restrict the sepoys' freedoms, those communities that they were restricted from freely fraternising with often desired greater interaction than they were permitted. Likewise, many officers sought to preserve the Indian army's pre-war-social hierarchy, but a few officials recognised the need for reform if the organisation was to navigate the social forces unleashed by the First World War. In wider society, British sentiments ranged from violently racist to welcoming and empathetic, usually depending on whether they had lived, worked, or served in a colonial society. Similarly, whilst understandings of the sepoys stretched between those grounded in detailed and elaborate pseudoscientist racist discourses, wider sections of British society with no previous experience of life in colonial India tended to know little of the cultural and ethnic diversity that existed in the Indian army.

It is certain that perceptions of race informed many, if not most, of the encounters that took place between Briton and Indian in 1914-15. Indeed, it has been asserted that colonialist discourse was a dominant force in British culture during the early part of the twentieth century.[28] Supporting this view, the thesis demonstrates that the British media's emphatic support of India's entry into the war, and the subsequent prominence given to martial race ideology in news reports, aligns with the proposition that pro-imperial discourse and iconography played a conspicuous role in British culture, as it certainly did in the public realm during the opening months of the conflict. However, the thesis also contends that knowledge of, and adherence to, racialised colonialist discourse was most pronounced amongst those with experience of colonial society – such as Indian army officers, and civil servants concerned with the deployment of IEFA to Europe.

[28] John MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*.

At the other extreme Bernard Porter has written, ‘there can be no presumption that Britain was an imperialist nation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.’[29] In reflection of British society’s experiences with the Indian army in 1914-15 this contention also goes too far. As the study contends, for most Britons who encountered sepoys during this early period of the First World War conceptions of ‘otherness’ were founded in at least a basic, if hazy, awareness of colonialist discourse, and most persons without direct experience of living in a colonial society still regarded most British and Indian identities as separate. However, these preconceptions were capable of adaptation through the experiences of their encounters, and they lacked the nuanced categorisations of martial race ideology that were observed by colonial elites.

Therefore, the dichotomy of perceptions are better described by a more nuanced position that acknowledges that conceptions of colonialism and race played a role in British society’s various relationships with the servicemen of IEFA; but also recognises that these relationships were diverse and sometimes contradictory. Perhaps most significantly for the study of culture associated with race and colonialism during the First World War; 1914-15 demonstrated that for sections of British society not wedded to colonialist ideology, conceptions of race were capable of revision through the experiences of encounter with the sepoys. Whilst for those sections of British society committed to the idea of maintaining the Indian Army’s racial hierarchy, the forces unleashed by the conflict could at times force them to concede concessions which undermined their pre-war understandings of colonialism.

[29] Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*. p.24

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