Fixing English in British India: Baptist Missionary Perspectives in Bengal to 1835

Carol Percy

Abstract
English was officially supported as a medium of higher education in British India after the Macaulay Minute of 1835. Advising the Governor-General, Macaulay sought to resolve long-term conflicts about the appropriate language(s) for administration and education and about the obligations of British civil and religious institutions in providing education at all. This paper's main aim is to show the sometimes slow process of linguistic imperialism by telling a rich history of one of these institutions. The Baptist Missionary Society's representatives in Bengal remind us that English was not the only linguistic instrument of cultural imperialism: indeed, the three missionaries from working-class backgrounds known as the Serampore Trio are remembered for establishing standards and status of the local vernaculars eventually established in elementary education. By contextualising their concerns, I also address questions about the relation between linguistic medium and cultural message. While the Trio felt that European learning (Christian specifically) would persuade an audience in any language, Macaulay felt that in Bengal only "our own language" could mediate the "intellectual wealth" of Western "nations". Through the paper I also observe how contemporary comments about good (or poor) English are also discussions about Britishness and about control. Ambitious Indians' good English did not ensure their acculturation, despite the fact that typical curricula combined advanced English with Christian scripture and honest commerce. And the English available to Indians was not necessarily good, although the lifelong learning of the low-born missionaries exemplifies the transformative potential of education for all individuals.

Keywords: missionary linguistics; Indian English; colonial education.

1. Introduction: Language Standards near Calcutta (Kolkata) ca1800

What happens when a language and an ideology of its standard are translated into a different and multilingual culture? The importance

of good English for rich residents of turn-of-the-century Calcutta can be inferred from the popularity of a school in nearby Serampore. An advertisement in the *Calcutta Gazette* (20 March 1800) announced the imminent opening of the Mission House School, actually separate boarding schools for boys and for girls run respectively by the Baptist missionaries Joshua and Hannah Marshman. The advertisement featured not only the possibility of tuition in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, or Sanskrit, but also the assurance that "Particular attention will be paid to the correct pronunciation of the English language" (Chatterjee 1987: 40). The Marshmans' school was by no means the only English-medium institution for prosperous denizens of Bengal: in his nostalgic survey of the Calcutta area in the era of the East India Company W.H. Carey drew on newspapers to document the seminaries and academies and some schools for young ladies that began to appear in the late 18th century. But in Carey's brief survey their emphasis on correctness was distinctive ([1882] 1964: vii, 165-168) and the school was immediately and consistently profitable. Its base fees of thirty rupees per month were relatively expensive, for instance in contrast to the 79 rupees that was the average yearly salary of an Indian professor at an indigenous institution of higher learning (Roy 1994: 106). By the end of 1800 the Mission House School was drawing a profit of three hundred rupees per month or £360 a year; by 1811 its sixty pupils generated an income of £2,300; and for the next decades the school remained a key source of the missionaries' income (Nylund 1991: 57). The long-term success of the Mission House School provides concrete evidence that at least some of the residents of Bengal must have valued good English. And the longevity of the institution also reflects the commitment of its missionary proprietors to living in India.

In this paper I consider how contemporary ideas about good and bad English reflect some specific cultural contexts of early British India. Concrete linguistic examples are harder to find. The English grammar ordered from England around 1802 by the missionaries contained the usual "Exercises, containing bad English, to be turned into good", involving grammar, spelling, and capital letters (Hornsey 1793: 65-90; Drewery 1978: 113-114). Several texts printed in Serampore by the former "corrector of the press" William Ward and probably used at the school confirm a general anxiety about

"false idioms", far from Britain, and about their causes. Appended to William Carey's 1806 *Proposals for a Subscription for Translating the Holy Scriptures into* […] *Oriental Languages* was a

> Catalogue of Works in Oriental Literature, etc., Printed at the Mission Press, Serampore, during the last four years, and of works now printing.

Among these works were *An English Spelling Book* and *An English Grammar, Designed Chiefly to Correct the False Idioms of Children Born in this Country* (Carey 1806: 9, 12; Marshman 1859: I, 93). Inconveniently, no copy of either textbook seems to have survived. Helpfully, the subtitle of this missing *English grammar* singles out "children born in this country" as particularly prone to use incorrect English.

In this paper I will ultimately focus on ideas about the English of those children. However, as the title of the 1806 *Proposals* confirms, Marshman and his missionary colleagues Carey and Ward had not come to Bengal to teach English. The boarding schools and indeed Ward's Mission Press in Serampore were instruments of these Baptists' primary mission to spread Christianity in Bengal, by translating and printing, by preaching and teaching. Although the Serampore Baptists were very aware that a number of the indigenous inhabitants of India were interested in learning English for commercial purposes, for their evangelical ends these Protestant missionaries aimed to translate Christian texts into local vernaculars and to train local missionaries to preach and teach themselves (Potts 1967: 122; Laird 1972: 93-95). Greatly helped by multilingual Indian translators, Carey was particularly involved in the translation of the entire Bible into six languages and of parts of it into a further twenty-nine (Stanley 1992: 38; see also 49-52) and has been both celebrated and vilified for his role in establishing the status and standards of Bengali (e.g. Cox 2004: 251). In an entry from a printed edition of his journal that emphasises his dependence upon a local English-speaking Indian, Carey complains about the difficulty of learning non-standardised languages:

> Had some profitable conversation with Mounshi [Ram Basu] this evening; and, indeed, he is the only conversable person in this place, all the natives here being very ignorant, and speaking a dialect which differs as much from true Bengali, as the Lancashire dialect does from true English; so that

I have hard work to understand them, and to make them understand me. (7 July 1794; in Carey 1837: 157)

Carey's comment effectively draws attention to the inevitable variability of language, whether in Britain or Bengal, and to the social implications of knowing (or not knowing) the standard variety. A former shoemaker's apprentice, the nonconformist provincial Carey epitomises the relatively liminal social status as well as the learning of his fellow missionaries. Both he and Marshman were autodidactic sons of weavers, and became teachers and translators. Before leaving Britain the carpenter's son Ward had been a printer's apprentice, a corrector of the press and then an editor and journalist (Marshman 1859: I, 93-94; Laird 1972: 37-43; Stanley 1992: 18). The socially low missionaries' accomplishments as teachers and as translators attest to the power of education to improve its pupils.

The Serampore Baptist Trio remain best-known (at least in certain circles) for their sustained contribution to the study and teaching of Indian languages, not for their teaching of English. They lived for many years and died in India; when in England (and America), Ward saw Serampore as home (Marshman 1859: II, 209, 221). Carey arrived in 1793 and died there in 1834; the others arrived in 1799, William Ward dying there in 1823, Joshua Marshman in 1837, and Hannah in 1847. My focus on these Baptist missionaries is somewhat arbitrary: English was taught in Bengal by a variety of private individuals and religious groups from the 1790s onwards and particularly after 1813, when the British East India Company was required to provide education for the inhabitants. But because of their longevity and because of their initial commitment to Indian vernacular languages, the Serampore Baptists provide an interesting focus for the changing status of English in India and for attitudes to its standards – or to the lack of standards.

In 1790s Bengal the prospects of English were by no means clear. In this paper I use these Baptists to bring into focus a range of contemporary discourses about the English (good, bad, or nonexistent) of the mixed-race and of the indigenous inhabitants of Bengal over the subsequent decades. There is an abundance of material and a diversity of opinion in the writings of government, Company, and missionary individuals. Indeed, although I will ultimately demonstrate that comments about English are often

discussions about Britishness and control, a more complicated interplay of perspectives and factors were at play in the circuitous emergence of English linguistic imperialism.

One watershed for the status of English was the East India Company Act of 1813: the renewal of its charter required the Company for the first time to direct a percentage of any profits to the education of the inhabitants. Differences in the theory and practice of educating the inhabitants nevertheless persisted until (and after) the 1835 English Education Act's restriction that European learning be supported through the medium of English only; Wood's Despatch in 1854 later loosened this restriction (Adams and Adams 1971; Benson 1972; Evans 2002). In order to illustrate some of the effects of these Acts, I survey primary and secondary material for contemporary assessments that I contextualise and interpret, concluding around 1835. And as a background and benchmark for these developments, in the next section I survey the cultural context of British Calcutta around 1800.

2. Background: Multicultural Commerce in British Bengal

English (with the British) had a long-term presence in Bengal, which had been a base of the East India Company since the early 17th century and by the late 18th had become under its "virtually complete […] control" (Adams and Adams 1971: 160). The Company had exploited and exacerbated the collapse of the Mughal empire, and by 1765 had secured judicial and revenue authority. The Company nevertheless continued to fight local wars, expanding its territory. Its own debts made it increasingly and then ultimately subject to British government control (Adams and Adams 1971: 159-160, 166), but before 1813 the Company had no obligation to educate the inhabitants of its territories and had the authority explicitly to exclude missionaries. It was for this reason that the Baptists resided in nearby Serampore, governed by the Danes.

Commerce had directly or indirectly drawn many to Bengal – not just British Company servants and soldiers (Raj 2011). A 1822 census of Calcutta recorded 13,138 Christians, and 414 Chinese in addition to 118,203 "Hindoos" and 48,162 "Mohammadans" (Adam 1835: 7). Visiting Calcutta in October of 1810, Maria Graham was struck by the demographic variety of the country now "possess[ed]" by the British:

Chinese and Frenchmen, Persians and Germans, Arabs and Spaniards, Armenians and Portuguese, Jews and Dutchmen, are seen mixing with the Hindoos and English, the original inhabitants and the actual possessors of the country. (Graham [1812] 1813: 139)

In Serampore in 1800, William Carey reports preaching to

perhaps the most mixed congregation that you ever heard of. It consisted of English, Danes, Norwegians, Germans, Americans, Armenians, a Greek, and a Malabar. (Carey 1837: 325)

Even some of the Company chaplains engaged in commerce, making up for their low salaries (Smith 1885: 76). And the silver plate at the Serampore boarding school made some supporters suspicious that the missionaries were pocketing "colossal fortunes" (Marshman 1859: II, 180, 193). Many of the English in British Bengal became (or appeared) relatively wealthy. The household of Company officer Captain Sherwood had many servants, for instance: his wife Mary Martha enumerated fifteen, including six bearers, and building up to the "Circar" (which she glosses nearby as "banker" or "steward" or "head servant"):

They generally speak a little English; and though they are known to be great rogues, yet it is impossible to do without one of them, for a little while at least. (Kelly (ed.) 1854: 284, 294-295)

Calcutta culture was unsurprisingly multilingual. Many languages were spoken at a party held by Company chaplain Henry Martyn: the long-term resident Sherwood reports that

Most assuredly I never listened to such a confusion of tongues before or since. Such a noisy, perplexing Babel can scarcely be imagined. Every one who had acquired his views of politeness in Eastern society was shouting at the top of his voice, as if he had lost his fellow in a wood; and no less than seven languages were in constant request, viz., English, French, Italian, Arabic, Persian, Hindostanee, Bengalee, and Latin. (Kelly (ed.) 1854: 368)

Perhaps Mary Martha Sherwood was not exaggerating: Latin was a lingua franca for Marshman and a visiting Brazilian Roman Catholic priest (Marshman 1859: I, 439). Sherwood lived in India with her husband from 1805 until 1816, and was a prolific and (in her fiction)

influential commentator. In a popular novel, Sherwood criticised expatriate culture (in the person of a rich and inattentive foster mother) for the fact that both the orphaned *Little Henry* as well as *his Bearer* (1814) of her 1814 novel spoke only Bengali (Regaignon 2001: 87). But in her journals, the relentlessly attentive pedagogue acknowledged that even her own children spoke "little English": her own daughters Mary, Sally, and Lucy, "about to leave their native country", India, pass "all their conversation […] in Hindustani" (Darton (ed.) 1910: 410). Having lived in Bengal since 1793, in 1795 William Carey reported that his own children knew things in Bengali that they did not in English and could "speak nearly as well as the natives" (Carey 1837: 199).

The combination in Calcutta of commerce and social mixing provoked anxious commentary. The visitor Maria Graham acknowledged that the size of Calcutta's population guaranteed "a greater portion of intellectual refinement, than that of any of the other presidencies" but nevertheless condemned

> the avarice, the prodigality, the ignorance, and the vulgarity of most of the white people [that] seem to place them all on a level, infinitely below that of the least refined nations of Europe. (Graham [1812] 1813: 134)

The "vulgarity" of European Calcuttans perhaps reflected their demographics – (male) soldiers and traders. Sen Gupta enumerates "cock-fighting, gambling" and "boat parties on Sundays" (1971: 62); Carey, in his account of bygone Calcutta, has an entire chapter on duelling ([1882] 1964: 189-196). In his diary, Captain Sherwood reports not only duelling but intensifying suicides among the troops (Darton (ed.) 1910: 406). In his life of the missionary Carey, Smith (1885: 77) criticises the suspicious acquisition of fortunes and the worship of Hindu gods by some British immigrants.

For some commentators, the most hyperbolic examples of the dissolution of British (and Indian) culture were the open and often adulterous (Smith 1885: 76) interactions and co-habitations that led to what Graham called "half-caste, and therefore (if I may use the expression), half-parented children", "so many" of whom she observed in the girls' and boys' orphan asylums in Madras in August, 1810 ([1812] 1813: 128). In his biography of Joshua Marshman, his son reports an 1804 dissension between older and younger employees

of the Bengal Civil Service over the extension (or not) of a fund to support the illegitimate orphans of British and Indian mothers. During the debate, some of "the old gentlemen of the service" "remain[ing] in this country too long" are described as "los[ing] our English ideas, and our English affections" (Marshman 1859: I, 203-204). Mixed-race children were among the more visible signs of British assimilation to and influence on India, and their existence and status is key to the language situation in Bengal. As I will report below, children with at least one British parent were seen as particularly in need of both English and Christian instruction.

As well as merchants, European missionaries from a range of denominations had infiltrated India: the Baptists were by no means the only or the earliest ones. When some of Carey's future colleagues approached Calcutta in late 1799, the local newspaper reported the arrival of "Papist" rather than "Baptist" missionaries (e.g. Smith 1885: 119-120). The first missionaries in Bengal had been Jesuits, associated with the Portuguese from the 16th and 17th centuries: the newspaper's confusion of "Baptist" with "Papist" rightly highlights both the initiatives and the competition among European religious groups to *civilise* Indians. And the first Protestant missionary to Calcutta was not even British: the Swedish-born Kiernander, supported by Danes and accepted by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), arrived in 1758 (Nylund 1991: 49-50).

One of the many impediments to British missions was the East India Company, which until 1813 officially discouraged their interference in Indian culture and thus in British commerce. The Company had chaplains, traditionally for its own "servants or slaves" (Sen Gupta 1971: 14-15; see also Nylund 1991: 41-42). Indeed, the "first English clergyman missionary to India", sent out by the SPCK in 1789, quickly abandoned his missionary work for a post as Company chaplain (Stanley 1992: 2). Evangelically-minded Englishmen were not easy to find in Bengal. When the Company ship's surgeon John Thomas had arrived in 1783, while trying to find Christians interested in missionary work he placed an advertisement in the *India Gazette* (White 2013: 59). Though he was to be "the first English missionary" in Bengal, the Baptist Thomas was not official: his preaching and biblical translation into Bengali was for a short time privately supported by a pious Company official, Charles Grant (Sen Gupta

1971: 20). And even the first official missionary had mostly moral support: after Carey first arrived in 1793, he and Thomas had to finance their evangelising by managing indigo plantations (Stanley 1992: 40). But despite such obstacles, missionaries supported by private voluntary societies from a range of denominations became more numerous with the rise of Evangelical Christianity in the 1790s (Cox 2008: 73-75).

The first official Baptist missionaries in Bengal were socially as well as geographically marginalised. With the Company's opposition to missionaries, in 1799 the Trio settled along with the debtors in nearby Serampore (Marshman 1859: I, 128). And because of the social and provincial backgrounds typical of missionaries more generally (Laird 1972: 37-42), the Serampore Baptists were occasionally condescended to by some of the Anglican Company chaplains, despite shared sympathies about evangelising and translation (Marshman 1859: I, 246). When Carey arrived in Calcutta in 1794 after walking "five Miles in the Heat of the Sun", for instance, he felt offended at not being offered "any refreshment" by Oxford-educated David Brown (Potts 1967: 50-51). In 1806, after Marshman asked Henry Martyn to be ready to replace him and Carey as translators of the bible into "Hindoostanee" "should they be taken off", despite his long friendship with Marshman Martyn privately reflected that "some of my friends" "are so much more fit in point of learning than any of the Dissenters are" (Martyn [1837] 1839: 379; see also Marshman 1859: I, 246, 386). Carey's English had been criticised by his own closest supporter: in 1797 the Baptist Missionary Society's Secretary Andrew Fuller lamented Carey's variable spelling and run-on sentences:

> You desire us to keep to your spelling in what we print. We will endeavour to do so but you do not always spell alike. Sometimes you write Moonshee, & sometimes Munshi, and sometimes Moonshi. […] I never knew a person of so much knowledge as you profess of other languages, write English so bad. You huddle half a dozen periods into one. Where your sentence ends you very commonly make only a semi-colon instead of a period. If your Bengali N.T. sh[d] be thus pointed I sh[d] tremble for its fate. (Drewery 1978: 102)

Even when being defended publicly in the *Quarterly Review*, the missionaries' biblical translations into "Bengalee" and ten other

named languages are contextualised in and contrasted with their "low" social status:

> Extraordinary as this is, it will appear more so, when it is remembered, that of these men one was originally a shoemaker, another a printer at Hull, and a third the master of a charity-school […] in fourteen years these low-born, low-bred mechanics have done more towards spreading the knowledge of the Scriptures among the heathen, than has been accomplished, or even attempted by all the world besides. (1809; in Potts 1967: 190-191)

This defence was written in a pamphlet war concerning (to quote from the title of Thomas Twining's inaugural volley) […] *The Danger of Interfering in the Religious Observances of the Natives of India* (1807; in Potts 1967: 188-191). "The missionary question" was a large part of an even greater debate about the impact and responsibilities of the British in East India; the recent Vellore Mutiny (1806) had been triggered by soldiers in the south convinced that changes to their turbans reflected the government's "design of forcing them to become Christian". Among many of the British there was similar antipathy to religious interference to Indian culture (Marshman 1859: I, 265).

3. The Principles: Debating Languages and Education in British Bengal

Discussions about English in Bengal reflect opinions about British responsibility there more generally, whether it be to spread Christianity and culture as well as commerce, and whether education should be a government responsibility at all. Even in England mass elementary education was not to become a state duty until 1870: in the wake of the French Revolution there was much discussion about potential disruption to the status quo. But by the 1790s the Company had become under increasing pressure to provide some education for some of the inhabitants of their occupied territory. Part of this pressure came from within. As Evans has reported, for instance, the long-term Calcutta resident and Company employee (eventually director) Charles Grant was an early and insistent advocate for British education in India. In 1792 Grant wrote privately-circulated *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* […] *and on the Means of Improving it* in an attempt

to persuade the British ministry to make the Company support religious education. Grant's perspective in large part reflected his conversion to Evangelicalism, after the death by smallpox of his children in 1776. Grant's failure in the 1790s in part reflected the Company's view of missionaries as disruptive to Indian culture and thus to British interests, and of itself as "a political and commercial force in India" (Adams and Adams 1971: 161; see also Laird 1972: 60-62; Evans 2002: 262ff). As I will explain below, its own policy at the time assimilated its British employees to Indian culture.

If the British were to be responsible for education in India, should it be for the learned or the poor, and in English or in vernacular languages? Even commentators who agreed about the audience and content might disagree about the medium. In a territory whose official language was Persian, the foreignness of English to Indians was not an evident impediment to Anglicists like Grant. Unlike the Serampore Baptists, who were convinced that vernacular translations and native teachers and preachers would disseminate Christian concepts most broadly and economically, Grant felt that the most practical medium of education was English, which in his opinion provided "direct access to the superior arts, philosophy and faith of Britain" (Evans 2002: 264) and (most crucially) to "the knowledge of our religion" (Sen Gupta 1971: 66). "If natives became acquainted with the English language, they could immediately read everything written in it" (quoted by Adams and Adams 1971: 162). Finally, Grant believed that only by internalising Western learning would Indians learn how to reason (Adams and Adams 1971: 162).

One recurring theme in the emerging British discourse and in this paper concerns the correlation – or not – between language and culture, and especially between Indians' proficiency in English and their assimilation (or resistance) to British intellectual and moral culture.

4. The Practice: English and Foreign-Language Learning before 1813

Before (and after) 1813, practices as well as principles were mixed with respect to the British teaching of English in India. For both British and indigenous inhabitants, English was one of a number of useful foreign languages in multilingual Bengal. Portuguese remained a

lingua franca. Persian had been imposed by the Moghul Empire, and even as and after power shifted to the British from the Nawab of Bengal it remained the official language "for all legal and administrative purposes" until 1833 (Clark 1956: 454-455; Adams and Adams 1971: 162). Until the 1820s the British believed that their most "effective governance depended on an elite corps of acculturated British officials" who would exercise power through their knowledge of "Indian institutions" (Nylund 1991: 43-45; Evans 2002: 262-263). For enforcing British rule by mastering the complexities of local law and contracts, the Company at this time educated its often very young employees in local, modern and classical languages such as Persian at Fort William College, recently (and controversially) founded in November 1800 by the Governor-General Lord Wellesley (Marshman 1859: I, 142-150; Nylund 1991: 46-49). Indeed, in 1801 William Carey was hired to teach Bengali there, despite his protests of inability, his status as a missionary and a nonconformist, and his relatively limited formal education (see e.g. Drewery 1978: 126). English was also taught by the university-educated company chaplain and College Vice Provost Claudius Buchanan, along with Latin and Greek classics (Carey [1882] 1964: 172-174). The curriculum of the Mission House School when it opened in May 1800 had thus been particularly well pitched to rich residents ambitious for their children: Persian and Sanskrit were offered as well as Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and English.

Persian could be learned in indigenous schools by Hindu and Muslim boys (Nylund 1991: 25-27; 32-33). Muslim and Hindu youths could also learn Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit at the Calcutta Madrasa (1781) and the Benares Sanskrit College (1791), two institutions founded by the British and intended to prepare them for "responsible and lucrative offices in the State", especially involving the translation of law (Raj 2011: 67-69). English was not taught at these institutions around 1800; before 1815 knowledge of English was rare, "acquired only through individual initiative" (Clark 1956: 462). In "Englishing India" Roy assumes that some of the clients of the Mission House school were rich Indians keen to improve their English (1994: 90-91). Drewery describes the students as both "European and Anglo-Indian" (1978: 113); Nylund as "of British origin" (1991: 57). What all the pupils had in common were funds to

pay the fees; around 1830 a series of bank crashes in Calcutta had a negative effect on the school (Marshman 1859: II, 421).

The good English spoken by some Indians was often correlated with their high-caste status in Bengal (Clark 1956: 462; Roy 1994: 90). Brahmins are often reported as speaking English well, for instance; they were members of "the highest or priestly caste" (*OED*, s.v. BRAHMIN/BRAHMAN, sense 1). Their piety made them a prize for the missionaries. Soon after arriving in Bengal in 1793, Carey attempted to convert "a Brahmun who speaks English well" (though according to Carey not well enough to "defend himself against the gospel" unaided; Carey 1837: 109-110). In their first years at Serampore, in 1802, the missionaries were approached by another Brahmin who had been inspired to drop "idolatry" while independently memorising "the English Primer, then in vogue, which […] ended with a metrical translation of the Ten Commandments" (Marshman 1859: I, 155). When she was near Bombay in August of 1809, Graham too had observed that

> The Bramins of this village speak and write English; the young men are mostly *parvoes*, or writers, and are employed in the public offices and merchants' counting-houses, while the elders devote themselves to their sacerdotal duties, and the study of the Vedas. ([1812] 1813: 10-11)

Distinguishing the pious "elders" from the "young men" who deploy their English as clerks, Graham concludes that high-caste Indian culture had been affected less by Christianity than by commerce.

Some other observers linked Indians' learning of English with their commercial aspirations or connections. The excellent English of Rammohun Roy, who collaborated with the Baptists from around 1816, is attributed not to his status as a Brahmin but to his employment in the public service as chief officer to a collector (Marshman 1859: II, 127-128; Potts 1967: 226ff; Sivasundaram 2007: 139). Indeed, as reported by Roy (1994: 90), merchants had been the first Indians to learn English: one estimate from 1673 had 1000 English-knowing interpreters in Bengal alone. Contemporary British observations might mock Indians' agency in learning English. For instance, in the wake of the 1787 Calcutta publication of Gilchrist's *Dictionary, English and Hindoostanee*, in 1789 a spoof Calcutta newspaper advertisement featured "several natives of Bengal"

who "beseech[ed] any gentlemen" to produce a "Grammar and Dictionary" with "all the common Bengal country words made into English" so that "we shall be enabled to recommend ourselves to the English Government and understand their orders" (Carey [1882] 1964: 118). Indians certainly learned and used English in a variety of commercial contexts, although copyists and clerks were stereotyped as "satisfied with a mere smattering" (Marshman 1859: II, 121). Carey had interacted with and tried to convert "traders" and "money-changers" in Calcutta who could speak English, one of the "very crafty" money-changers well enough to attempt a theological debate with him (Carey 1837: 130; Smith 1885: 84, 158). And as we have seen, the newly-arrived Sherwood stereotyped the house stewards (*OED*, s.v. SIRKAR, sense 4) as "great rogues" who speak "a little English". Sherwood's comment conflates linguistic and moral opacity.

While earlier Protestant missionaries in Bengal had disseminated Christian teachings, the English language was not their only medium of instruction. One of the first teachers was not British: the first Protestant missionary to Calcutta was the Swedish-born Kiernander, supported by Danes and accepted by the SPCK, who arrived in 1758 and taught reading and writing as well as arithmetic and Christian religion to a mixed group of British, Armenian, Portuguese and Bengali boys and eventually girls. And it is unclear whether Kiernander taught in English (Nylund 1991: 49-50) or in Portuguese, "which was more familiar to him than English" and the language in which he ministered to his "native congregation" (Marshman 1859: I, 21-22). Moreover, the man often called 'the first English missionary', John Thomas, after returning to Bengal in 1786 focused on learning Bengali from such locals as Ram Basu, and translated parts of the Bible into that language (Marshman 1859: I, 30; Sen Gupta 1971: 20). After Carey arrived in 1793, he and Thomas set up two boarding schools where they taught Indian boys "Sanskrit, Persian, Bible study, science and mathematics" (Drewery 1978: 85). But Carey's main aim was learning Bengali, first from Thomas and then from Ram Basu; preaching in it whenever possible; translating scripture into it and other languages; and working the indigo plantation (Marshman 1859: I, 60, 69; Drewery 1978: 70, 80, 85). Only Bengali schools had been established by the only two other missionaries effectively teaching at the time, two Evangelicals also sponsored by Charles

Grant. The sole missionary sponsored by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in this period managed neither to learn Bengali nor to establish native schools (Laird 1972: 65-67).

Very soon after their arrival in 1799 the Serampore missionaries were very aware of a demand for English among the inhabitants. In 1800 Carey had written to Fuller back in Britain that he wanted "to turn the almost universal desire of this people to acquire English to some profitable account" (Carey 1837: 326). And in the same period Marshman hoped to harness the power of "commerce", which he claimed had

> raised new thoughts and awakened new energies, so that hundreds, if we could skilfully teach them gratis, would crowd to learn the English language. (Marshman 1859: I, 131)

They were certainly not the only Christians to regard and reject this "key to fortune" as a tempting potential tool for converting the heathen (Marshman 1859: I, 341-342). For the missionaries, one impediment to an English school was the expense:

> I have long thought, whether it would not be desirable for us to set up a school, to teach the natives English. I doubt not but a thousand scholars would come: I do not say this because I think it an object to teach them the English tongue, but query, is not the universal inclination of the Bengalies to learn English, a favorable circumstance, which may be improved to valuable ends? I only hesitate at the expense. (Carey 1837: 321; see also 326)

Another was that "[a]t present our hands are quite full" with the "vernacular school for native youth", opened in June 1800 (Marshman 1859: I, 131).

From the start most of their Indian students were taught little English by the Serampore Baptists, who worked on the principle that it was more efficient and economical to translate Christian texts into local vernaculars and to train local missionaries who would use those translations to teach and reach more people (Marshman 1859: I, 229; Potts 1967: 122; Stanley 1992: 49-52; Laird 1972: 93-95). For the translations on which their preaching and teaching would depend, the Serampore missionaries collaborated with English-knowing Indians. One was to be Rammohun Roy; the first was Ram Basu, who likely in the company of John Thomas had acquired a

"little knowledge of English" – not enough to interpret Carey's first attempts at preaching, but enough to become an important, long-term collaborator for Carey's vernacular translations (Marshman 1859: I, 61, 64, 131; Smith 1885: 88). Like Carey earlier, soon after his arrival in 1799 Joshua Marshman opened a "vernacular school" in June of 1800 to "diffus[e] the knowledge of the gospel" to "native youth" (Marshman 1859: I, 131).

English was taught to some mixed-race pupils at other schools, perhaps in principle acknowledging their British heritage more than their Christian belief. In practice, however, the Serampore Baptists also extended English not only to mixed-race Christian children but also to native Christians, at least to some of them. It is not always easy to identify the recipients of English. For instance, in a letter describing a "free school" apparently dating from the earliest years of the Serampore mission (1801-1802), although Bengali was taught to all the boys, especially to children of the natives who had lost caste, some other boys would "learn to read and write Bengalee and English". Reflecting that "English is unlikely to be taught in a native elementary school", Nylund infers that this school is for "children of converted natives (1991: 57) which they began to plan in 1802 (Marshman 1859: I, 160). Potts concurs with Nylund's assumption that the missionaries extended English to Christian Indian children, with the aim of training them to evangelise their compatriots (Potts 1967: 116, 122). By 1809, some of these teachers were "country-born" young men distinguishable as British perhaps only by their "European habits". Their biculturalism and multilingualism would spread rather than contaminate British culture (Marshman 1859: I, 413-415).

Carey's (and Thomas's) colleague Ram Basu is a convenient if arbitrary example of the impossibility of instilling Christian faith along with Western knowledge. In 1793, Carey himself had drawn attention to the difficulty in his optimistic description of this "very sensible man, and, I hope, a very pious man" (Carey 1837: 112). Ram Basu was essential to Carey's evangelising enterprise as an instructor and fellow translator of Bengali. However, he was not a Christian: although previously converted to Christianity by Thomas, before Carey's arrival his faith had subsequently and permanently lapsed, and in 1796 he was (temporarily) dismissed on the grounds of adultery and abortion-procuring (Carey 1837:

224; Drewery 1978: 70, 92; Sivasunderam 2007: 120). Ram Basu also raises the question of Indians' agency in acquiring Western learning – in his case, the doctrines of Christianity. For whatever motives, despite his permanently lapsed status, in 1800 and 1801 Ram Basu wrote – at Carey's request – two Christian tracts in Bengali, one particularly anti-Hindu (Carey 1837: 323; Marshman 1859: I, 132; Sen Gupta 1971: 93-94). A later biographer of Carey introduces Ram Basu as "in debt" and "all along a self-interested inquirer" (Smith 1885: 84). Anxieties about controlling Indians' use of their learning intensified once educating them became an obligation for the British.

5. The East India Company Act 1813: English in its Immediate Aftermath

English was not immediately imposed in India, even after the Charter Act passed. The East India Company was newly and finally required to divert a certain percentage of its profits to the education of the natives in "useful knowledge and moral improvement" (Adams and Adams 1971: 162); its rising debts had decreased its power over Parliament, relative to the intensifying social and political influence of Evangelical values and politicians (Adams and Adams 1971: 161-165). The Act's main aim was rather vague: the

> revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories of India. (Adams and Adams 1971: 163)

The 1813 Act did set up and support an Anglican religious establishment, paid for by the Company; missionaries from other denominations were required to apply for (and now might expect to be granted) a license (Stanley 1992: 26). Its immediate aftermath witnessed activity: private individuals (British and Bengali) and religious and civil institutions begin to proliferate (Carey [1882] 1964: 164-172; Nylund 1991: 64ff). But in the decade after 1813, there was not much progress: both the government and the Company were more focused on wars and debts, and with no state education system in Britain to serve as a model in India, it was a

> period of controversy over the objects of educational policy, over the medium of instruction, over the agencies for organizing schools, and over the methods for spreading education to the masses. (Adams and Adams 1971: 164)

– in particular, whether education should be relayed in the vernaculars or in English. In this context, whatever their practices, participants' assessments of Indians' good – and bad – English reflect their principles about language planning in Bengal (see Adams and Adams 1971: 164; Laird 1972: 93-100; Evans 2002: 265ff).

Upon the 1813 Charter Act's toleration of missionary activity, the various societies continued and expanded their practices. The local languages were ultimately to remain the primary medium for native elementary education, and were supported by the vernacular publications of the interdenominational Calcutta School Book Society, founded in 1817 (Laird 1972: 80, 101-105). The Serampore Baptists founded the first Bengali newspaper in 1818, to "stimulate the spirit of inquiry" (Marshman 1859: II, 161). And they continued their vernacular translations, joined by locals like Rammohun Roy from around 1816 and British ministers like William Adam in 1818 (Potts 1967: 232ff; Laird 1972: 54). And in their 1816 proposal for mass native primary education, the Trio continued to focus on "improving them in the knowledge of their own language" (Carey, Marshman, Ward 1816: 10-11). Marshman had expressed concern that a little knowledge of English would alienate the natives from rural or manual labour, while cultural disruption and widespread unemployment would result from their fruitless search for urban work (Laird 1972: 95). The missionaries moreover used monitorial teaching methods that depended upon (native) older pupils to drill younger ones in rote learning of elementary numeracy and vernacular literacy (Nylund 1991: 56). More important than the medium was the graduated and grammatical method for drilling British discipline and "emulation" (Carey, Marshman, Ward 1816: 22; Marshman 1859: II, 82-84, 125). On printed wall charts, Bengali grammatical paradigms were the vehicle for teaching not only parts of speech but also (in such sentences as "The earth moves round the sun…") the western science that was a metonym for civilisation (Tschurenev 2011: 103-104). In theory, the Baptists' plan

used rational science to instil Christianity and separated language from content: Indians could (and should) be *civilised* without learning English.

However, when instructing mixed-race children in English, the Serampore Baptists also extended English to others. Just as they had taught children of converts in Serampore from around 1802, in 1809 they established their first "Benevolent Institution": in Calcutta, for "destitute" mixed-race children of at least one European parent and thus "bearing the Christian name" (Marshman 1859: I, 422-425; Carey [1882] 1964: 172); more were to be founded in large towns "with large Anglo-Indian populations". However, although "Anglo-Indians were in the majority", it appears that these institutions were in practice open to children of native as well as European origin. Although the missionaries hoped that some of their students would become teachers and missionaries (Marshman 1859: II, 84), others were servants "to various gentlemen". Indeed, according to their *Reports*, the pupils were taught to keep accounts as well as to read the bible and write in both English and Bengali:

> It was hoped that eventually they would have a sufficient grasp of English to allow them to act as interpreters between English gentlemen and Indian servants, and to check 'the accounts of a sircar [house steward], and, should they prove men of principle, to detect or prevent errors therein, possibly of the most serious nature'. (1815; Potts 1967: 129)

Even for the Baptists, good – or at least "sufficient […] English" – is correlated with honesty and piety (or at least with their possibility) and also with commerce.

English was also associated with diligence, and a proficiency in Bengali perhaps meant to restrain the emulation that inspired multilingual literacy. In contrast to the Baptists, other missionary societies provided primary native education not only in local languages but sometimes in the English their market clearly demanded (Laird 1972: 93-100; Nylund 1991: 88-92). The Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) had been particularly responsive to market demand. In April 1814,

> [e]ven before their vernacular schools were fairly started […] the Calcutta Committee of the CMS was contemplating the teaching of English. (Laird 1972: 96)

In 1816, "English was […] taught from the start" at Kidderpur to "'such Boys as were most proficient in the Bengalee Language'". Soon other schools were opened with advanced or selective study of English for "the brighter pupils", although Bengali remained the main medium for the curriculum (Laird 1972: 97). The cross-denominational London Missionary Society (LMS) made a similar link between English and intelligence and diligence. In 1815, Robert May reported that at his school

> 'a few of the more advanced boys are taught English, as an encouragement or reward' for their progress in the Bengali schools. (Laird 1972: 95)

This was clearly a common attitude and practice: at the elementary school she established in 1815, the wife of the Governor General also rewarded the "attention" of pupils to their arithmetic, reading and writing non-religious but moral stories with lessons in English (Laird 1972: 125). By teaching English as a reward for mother-tongue diligence, British missionaries hoped that multilingual Indians would translate the best of British culture. The Anglican Company chaplain Thomas Thomason emphasised "the importance of Bengalee", but after examining male pupils at a CMS school in 1823, linked their ideally "full and efficient acquaintance with English" with their expected destiny as "teachers and translators" of what he elsewhere called "the treasures of our own language". While a smattering of English was sufficient for commercial work, evangelising required "great proficiency" in English (Laird 1972: 97-98).

6. English in the 1820s and 1830s

Through the 1820s, discussions of Indians' competence in English became increasingly contextualised in debates about policy and practice (Adams and Adams 1971; Benson 1972; Evans 2002). Especially after the establishment in 1823 of a General Committee of Public Instruction to administer the educational grant that was finally available (Nylund 1991: 70), British officials from Company and Government exchanged increasingly escalating memos over the relative roles of English and the vernaculars in colleges and schools and public duties; a simultaneous debate involved the abolition of suttee (Marshman 1859: II, 399ff). 1833 saw a watershed: after events

including Rohammun Roy's speech to a Parliamentary committee, the British government took over Company administration and all public offices were opened to every qualified applicant, regardless of origin (Adams and Adams 1971: 167). In 1835, Governor-General Bentinck's

> Order in Council […] established English as the medium for Education in India and education of the upper classes as the means of spreading Western knowledge. (Adams and Adams 1971: 165; see also Benson 1972: 2-3; Evans 2002: 264-267)

One interesting index of Indians' access to standardised English is the spread of Bengali-medium English codifying texts. Long's retrospective and likely inaccurate *Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works* (1855) records Johnson's and Walker's dictionaries used as the basis for bilingual Bengali-English works, and Murray's grammar translated into Bengali, first by the Reverend Pearson in 1820, and then by Marshman's son, John Clark Marshman, in 1833 (Long 1855: 3-6, 20-21). The British Library Catalogue records (apparently) English editions of Murray's grammar and exercises printed for the Calcutta School-book Society in 1831 and 1834. The three-volume thirty-year monument of "CAREY'S DICTIONARY" is also featured by Long. But perhaps the best index is the initiative of Indians. Among their many multilingual dictionaries in Long's catalogue is Ram Kissen's *Vocabulary: English, Latin and Bengali* (1821) and Ramcomul Sen's 1834 translation of Johnson and Todd, a fifteen-year project culminating in Bengali definitions of 58,000 English words (Long 1855: 3-4).

6.1. Higher education

The introduction of English into some institutions of higher education provides another representative benchmark for further developments. Around 1813 these had all focussed on traditional Indian learning: Arabic and Persian for Muslim males at the Calcutta Madrasa, Sanskrit for Hindus at Benares, and Indian languages generally for British officials at Fort William College (Carey [1882] 1964: 172-177; Nylund 1991: 44-49, 74-79). But in and after 1816, Indians' proficiency in English likely had additional significance for commentators after three new institutions of higher education

were set up, two sacred and one secular: to what extent could – and should – good English and European religious and intellectual knowledge be acquired independently of each other (Nylund 1991: 111ff)?

For the Serampore missionaries, the English language was semi-independent of "Eastern Literature and European Science" (Marshman 1859: II, 168). Through the 1820s, the Serampore missionaries diverted their energies to higher education from their vernacular mission schools (many of which had been closed by 1824). Serampore College was established in 1818: it aimed to train Christian Indians to replace the English as preachers and missionaries, and to educate students of all religions in the European arts and sciences. Characteristically they did so by decoupling language and content, teaching in a medium that was mostly Bengali. Science – and Sanskrit – were taught ultimately to undermine Hindu religious principles (Marshman 1859: II, 168-170; Potts 1967: 129-134; Laird 1972: 142-150; Sivasundaram 2007: 132-139). English was restricted to the more advanced students, "to deepen their acquaintance with European culture" (Nylund 1991: 86) and "help them enrich their own language with its choicest treasures" (Marshman 1859: II, 170).

From the warnings at Serampore College in 1823 against the use of English, one can infer its popularity elsewhere (Potts 1967: 131; Laird 1972: 94, 142-154). English was not initially taught at the Government Sanskrit College, opened in 1824 to promote indigenous higher learning (Nylund 1991: 74-77). But in the nearby High Anglican Bishops College (1820) English was learned along with classical and vernacular Indian languages by native and other Christian students studying to become preachers and schoolmasters (Sen Gupta 1971: 114-115; Laird 1972: 150-153; Nylund 1991: 92-93). And by Indian initiative, English was taught at the Hindu College (or *Vidyalaya*), privately founded in 1816 by "wealthy Bengalis" – for "brothers of clerks, nephews of accountants or grandsons of sarkars" (Roy 1994: 97). In 1822, its printed rules describe its aim as to "instruct the sons of the Hindoos in the European and Asiatic languages and sciences" (Carey [1882] 1964: 178; Nylund 1991: 102-106; White 2013: 6-7). As reported by Viswanathan (1989: 43-44), its founders focused on achieving "a classical knowledge of the English language and literature" as "an end in itself" rather than "a medium

of modern knowledge and as a source of religious instruction". The setting was in some ways secular: its Hindu founders were also opposed to suttee (Clark 1956: 463), and in 1815-1816 one of them – Rammohun Roy – attacked the polytheistic principles of Hinduism in treatises that simultaneously demonstrated the academic potential of Bengali (Clark 1956: 463-464). Indeed, in his polemical writings Roy also deployed the medium of English to criticise the principles of Christianity, in a series of public debates with Joshua Marshman in the early 1820s "equat[ing] Trinitarian Christianity […] with corrupt Hinduism as polytheistic"; around the same time Roy also converted the Baptist missionary William Adam to Unitarianism (Potts 1967: 234-244; White 2013: 111ff). Roy is a splendid if unrepresentative example of an Indian able to separate the message of Western learning from the medium of English.

6.2. A little English?

Vernacular education remained the dominant method of missionary education (Laird 1972: 94ff), but through the 1820s some inhabitants desired English education for their children: by some reports, parents who had been educated in the vernacular wanted English for their children (Marshman 1859: II, 157). Some of them could afford it. According to Sen Gupta (1971: 119-120), in 1819-1820 the CMS missionaries at Kidderpur had changed their school to "an English school" at the request of "a wealthy Hindu gentleman" who promised to support it financially. Carey's reminiscences of early Calcutta also claim that by 1827 there were about 200 pupils attending Calcutta English schools financed by "some of the richest of the Hindoo community" and supervised by the Calcutta School Society (Carey [1882] 1964: 179). By 1829, even the Serampore Baptists were condoning English in some of the fewer mission schools they were still supporting. The correlation made between good English and wealth (or poor English and poverty) is again evident, for instance from the excuses made by one of their former students for his lack of success as a teacher. In 1832, J. Smith explained that his students learned to read only "tolerably well" because they attended irregularly and left prematurely, being "dependent upon their relatives who are employed in the Courts here, and whose situations are precarious" (Laird 1972: 246).

The value of an English education was perhaps most dramatic when it was free. In an oft-reported anecdote, "broken English" was one memorable medium for three hundred applicants' demands for a place at Alexander Duff's free English Institution, supported by the Church of Scotland (Laird 1972: 202-222; Nylund 1991: 93-100). As selected from Duff's accounts, by showing in "broken English" that they know English is a valuable medium for morality and piety, prospective students demonstrate that they must and can improve:

> 'Me good boy, oh take me;' […] 'Me poor boy, oh take me;' […] 'Me want read your good books; oh, take me'; […] 'Oh take me, and I pray for you'.

Even once they have acquired proficiency in English, Duff's representation of the "Oriental hyperbole" of their description of English "knowledge" as "the great and fathomless ocean of all imaginable excellences" suggests that their learning has its limits (Smith [1879] 1882: I, 137-138; Viswanathan 1989: 51). Duff represents both categories of English speaker as having adopted a position of abjection. Was this European hope or Indian tactic?

Although for Joshua Marshman English was simply one medium for the material they hoped to transmit unchanged through their translations and monitorial teaching methods, for the Church of Scotland educator Alexander Duff the English language had a value derived and inextricable from the moral and intellectual material for which it was a vehicle, and from the context of the classroom in which it was taught (Viswanathan 1989: 57). For Duff, the graduated (and openly Christian) curriculum and interrogative teaching methods in his college for training teachers aimed to associate English (through the exercises in its spelling and its grammar) with intellectual 'curiosity' and 'concepti[on]' and with independence of thinking: writing essays on such topics as "On the need for a Saviour", the boys in 1833 to one contemporary "revealed 'a manly, unshackled, and independent style of thinking'" (Laird 1972: 211, 216). The Christian indoctrination that undermined Duff's claims to independent thinking is evident in his link between fluency in reading and comprehending English with the introduction to the bible (Laird 1972: 217) and with such (typical) assertions that when a student has 'mastered […] the language' and its 'new terms' and

'*new ideas*, the *new truths*' he 'must be tenfold less the child of pantheism, idolatry and superstition than before' (Laird 1972: 207-208). But Duff's pedagogical methods avoided the rote memorisation of the monitorial system. For instance, in his *Recollections* of Duff (1879) his former student Lal Behari Day recalled being taught about the *ox* and asked whether boys 'had any tails, etc, to the infinite entertainment of all' (Laird 1972: 210) and built up to whether the Bengali *goru* 'cow' was more or less useful than the Bengali *guru* 'Brahmin teacher'. Duff's "associative technique" simultaneously undermines "Brahminical concepts" and the Bengali language (Viswanathan 1989: 58).

Could Indians separate missionaries' English from their Christian message, and learn only sufficient English for the workplace? Day's father had planned to withdraw his son from Duff's school before he was baptised but after he had acquired

> as much knowledge of English as would enable me to obtain a decent situation; and that long before I was able to understand lectures on Christianity, he would withdraw me from the Institution and put me into some office. (Viswanathan 1989: 58)

Day's father was by no means the only Indian who intended to separate English medium and message. As reported by Sen Gupta (1971: 120), the villagers who in 1821 urged the Baptist missionary John Harle to open an English school were so keen to learn reading, writing and accounts that they expressed indifference to his information that "the Bible would be one of the School Books". Some missionaries resisted teaching English, knowing that their students could and would separate the English medium from any religious message. In 1823 two London Missionary Society (LMS) educators decided not to open an English school, as

> they thought that 'a knowledge of English will do nothing towards the salvation of the soul'. (Laird 1972: 96)

And indeed, in 1828 the irascible LMS missionary Isaac Wilson closed an English school because "'among ye boys no proof of Christianity appeared'" (Laird 1972: 169). In short, some missionaries attempted to control Indians' cultural mobility by not teaching English at all.

7. Coda and Summary: English in Serampore in the 1830s

By the 1830s, because of the demands of the market (and some difficulties in teaching science) English instruction had become a priority even at Serampore College (Marshman 1859: II, 502). English was becoming more common in tertiary education: English along with Bengali continued at the Hindu College, where Sanskrit was discontinued early (Carey [1882] 1964: 178). English studies were "cautiously" introduced at the Calcutta Madrasa and (with more resistance) at the Calcutta Sanskrit College, and near but not at the Benares Sanskrit College (Nylund 1991: 75-79; Evans 2002: 262-263). And even at Serampore College, English took over more of the curriculum: it was difficult for newly-arrived British teachers not just to learn Bengali but to use it as a medium for Western subjects, especially with a shortage of texts in translation (Potts 1967: 132); by 1826 Carey was lecturing on botany in English and a select class of students "destined to Missionary labours" was learning English among other "European habits". In 1829 an English teacher was hired. The expansion of the college curriculum to include more English lectures and texts had a quick impact: whereas in 1828 there were no non-Christian students, in 1834 there were 34 non-Christians and 21 Christians (Nylund 1991: 87). According to Marshman's son, even this secular instruction in "English literature and European science [...] emancipated them from the fetters of Hinduism". Certainly

> Sanscrit had given way to English, the cultivation of which had become the great object of ambition among the natives of the country. (Marshman 1859: II, 501)

A synchronic picture of access and attitudes to English in Serampore institutions is provided by William Adam, lapsed Baptist Unitarian minister and editor of the *India Gazette*. Nylund (1991: 19ff) reports that in 1829 he proposed "to provide information for the educational reforms under consideration by the government"; in 1835 he was appointed Commissioner of the survey resulting in *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal* (1835-1838). Adam classified his reports by region and by kind of school – categories included "elementary", "schools of learning" and "English" schools, and sponsors were

classified as "indigenous" and "not indigenous". In part because his local agents used questionnaires, Adam's *Reports* more reliably indicate attitudes than actuality. He implicitly connects linguistic medium and cultural values by asserting that the indigenous elementary schools of a particular region fail to relay both "the orthography of the language of the country" and "the personal virtues and domestic and social duties" (1835: 11).

Adam's reports relay some facts and anxieties about the dissemination of English. English was clearly very popular in Bengal generally: for instance, Adam mentions a number of native-initiated English schools, both private and free (1835: 39-41). However, the teaching of English clearly reinforced boundaries of race, class, and gender. From Adam's reports on schools connected with Serampore, English was not taught at the majority of schools connected with the Serampore mission, including to native girls. It was taught to the children of "the principal natives" of one district, and (at two other schools) to poor European Christian boys and girls (e.g. 1835: 17, 74-75, 80-81, 92-94, 97-100, 123-124). The role of English in school curricula attempted to control Indians' use of it. At the Serampore Benevolent Institution, English grammar was studied alongside Christian scriptures and arithmetic, by students destined for "usefulness in life, though it be in the humblest situations" (47-48). English was only one instrument of cultural imperialism at Serampore College, whose aim was "to promote the progress of Christianity in India". Here English was taught along with Bengali and Sanskrit to forty-eight native Christian and thirty-four non-Christian students. This "thoroughly classic" Sanskrit education will give prospective missionaries both the knowledge to reject Hinduism and the status to persuade others (1835: 67-72). In Adam's *Report* and in my sources more generally, such discourses about English clearly involve anxieties about inspiring and guiding Indian cultural agency.

A different history of good English in British Bengal might draw on educators' letters and annual pamphlets, on records of textbooks (and wall charts) and on reports of examinations. In local newspapers from 1824 onwards, students' "proficiency in English" in public examinations was reported at length and testifies to elite readers' interest in English (Clark 1956: 469). In his survey of Bengal education, Adam emphasises the "very uncommon" "precision

and purity" of the English pronunciation at a public examination and attributes it to the boys' exposure to "educated Europeans" at a native academy run by two *baboos* "English-educated Hindus" (1835: 81-82; see *OED*, s.v. BABU, sense 2). As we have seen, the English available to other Indians was not necessarily *good*, although the scholarly and pedagogical achievements of provincial British missionaries and "country-born" instructors exemplify how education can simultaneously undermine and strengthen social distinctions in this ever-mixing culture.

In this paper, I have focussed on a specific group of imperial agents. But different imperial agents had different aims and employed different, and sometimes conflicting, strategies to achieve them. The British government, imbibed both with Whig notions of Britain's civilising role and a Tory paternalism which (following Burke) prized stability and organic development, pursued policies which sought to promulgate assumed British virtues (Schama 2002: 138, 270). Correct English was one of the vehicles of such virtue, and its difficulty and the social circumstances of its acquisition saw in general that social hierarchies were bolstered and not undermined. Indians' good English was often associated with status or wealth. And while associated with diligence, good English was also associated with knowing your place.

The East India Company must have viewed education from a more utilitarian standpoint. Instructions needed to be given and understood. A certain level of literacy was desirable for a limited number of functionaries. And commercial agents must have had a market-driven view of the functions of English: sufficient English was enough.

The missionary societies, especially those in a Dissenting tradition with a historic commitment to scriptures in the vernacular dating back to the Reformation, began with very different assumptions about culture and language. Simple Christian truths, as they saw them, could be conveyed, and had been conveyed, in unpolished vernaculars. At the same time, they were convinced, to use a biblical metaphor, that the harvest was large and the harvesters few. Thus a monitorial system was developed in which bilingual Bengalis were an important link in the chain. Multilingualism was seen not as corrupting but as promoting Western culture. English was one medium, not the message. But good English became the official vehicle for the improving values of British civilisation.

Beyond these diverse imperial agents, however, the native Bengalis had their own agendas. The educational mix on offer presented many opportunities and many possible roads of advancement, some of which were intended by those who supplied them, and some not. Ambitious Indians' good English did not ensure their acculturation, despite the fact that typical curricula combined advanced English with Christian scripture and honest commerce.

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