A CURRIED GAZE: THE BRITISH OWNERSHIP OF CURRY

by

DARLENE MICHELLE WALDROP

(Under the Direction of MICHAEL KWASS)

ABSTRACT

Curry as we understand it today is the result of over four hundred years of interaction between the British and the people living on the Indian subcontinent. At its core, curry is a British construction. It is an understanding of Indian cuisine as expressed by legions of Anglo-Indians since the seventeenth century. Furthermore, curry is one of the most successful symbols of the British Imperial endeavor in India. It is one example of the British success at taking something of the Other and making it part of the British self.

INDEX WORDS: Curry, Anglo-Indian, Domesticity, Cookery, Imperialism

A CURRIED GAZE: THE BRITISH OWNERSHIP OF CURRY

by

DARLENE MICHELLE WALDROP

B.A., Kennesaw State University, 1999

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2007

A CURRIED GAZE: THE BRITISH OWNERSHIP OF CURRY

by

DARLENE MICHELLE WALDROP

Major Professor: Michael Kwass

Committee: Laura Mason
David Roberts

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated primarily to my husband Duane. Without his love, support, sense of humor, sense of adventure, patience and strong stomach I would not have been able to undertake this labour.

Secondly, I would like to thank my parents, Judy and Donnie, who have always supported my love of learning. Without their faith in my abilities, their love and their support, I would not have had the courage to attempt this work.

Additionally I dedicate this to my friends and family across the globe, who never doubted my perseverance. (They will be ecstatic that I might finally stop talking about curry.)

Finally, I want to thank Dr. Kwass, Dr. Mason and Dr. Roberts for enthusiastically supporting my research interests throughout my graduate school career. Without their help, I would not have been able to indulge my fascination with culinary history.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter 1

Introduction

The practical end of British imperialism left a nation of people trying to identify who they were in the contemporary world. The search for a modern British national identity in the years surrounding the turn of the twenty-first century caused several authors to alight on the idea of curry. For them curry celebrated a multicultural Britain: a nation that opened its borders and culture to formally colonized subjects who, in turn, made Britain into a hodgepodge of traditions, ideas and especially cuisines. Of the books and articles written about Britain's love affair with curry, Lizzie Collingham's Curry a Tale of Cooks and Conquers and Susan Zlotnick's article "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England" provide well-researched and articulate catalysts for the research presented here. Both authors allude to the idea that curry is a British construction in a back handed manner and proceed to discuss curry as an Indian artifact that the British admired and appropriated. My ideas on the topic differ significantly enough to submit an alternate way of looking at curry.

As we understand it today, Curry is the result of over four hundred years of interaction between the British and the people living on the Indian subcontinent. At its core, curry is a British construction. That is not to diminish its Indian origin. Instead, by indicating that curry is British we understand that it is the British expression of Indian cuisine, masala especially, as

articulated by legions of Anglo-Indians since the seventeenth century.[1] Furthermore, curry is one of the most successful symbols of the British Imperial endeavor in India. It is one example of the British success at taking something of the Other and making it part of the British self. While that statement is easy to proffer, some will doubt its validity; after all, when we crave curry we dine at an Indian restaurant. To prove the legitimacy of these beliefs we will ask some very specific questions of our chosen primary sources and look to scholars from across disciplines – from cookbook authors to social and cultural historians to economists - to guide us on our journey.

Firstly, what is curry? Chapter two will lay out the modern understanding of the meal, then trace possible reasons for British appropriation of Indian cuisines, as curry, throughout its tenure on the subcontinent. Using cookery texts dating back to the fourteenth century we will delineate three phases of curry: proto-curry, Anglo-Indian curry and British curry. Through those stages, we will assign notions of authenticity, provenance and ownership to arrive at the attitudes the British held about curry. By the end of the chapter, we will be able to understand what curry means to both Anglo-Indian and British conceptions.

Chapters three and four will ask and answer the question: why is curry British? Looking first at India, we will use culinary texts, memoirs and letters of Anglo-Indians to witness the appropriation of Indian cuisine as curry. Spearheaded by East India Company employees who became wealthy very quickly and who competed with local Indian elites and each other for social dominance, curry became a welcome addition to their dinner tables in the eighteenth century. Those early Anglo-Indians chose to embrace Indian cultures and cuisines and hoped the

[1] Anglo-Indian here means a person of British origin who lived and worked in India from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. The term, especially popular in the nineteenth century, fills the reference material that I have used so I have chosen to adopt it throughout this paper.

inclination would continue. However, changing trends in religious, scientific and political philosophies resulted in the rejection of India and Indianess in the nineteenth century; however, curry never disappeared from the Anglo-Indian culinary repertoire. Instead, it was adapted even further for Anglo-Indian palates; from ingredients used to the assignation of their own understandings of regional characteristics of India to curry. By the late nineteenth century, the Indianess of curry in India had been neutralized.

Chapter five turns to the metropole for a discussion of the Britishness of curry by tracing Anglo-Indian curry from the subcontinent to the metropole through culinary texts, restaurant guides and club histories. The Anglo-Indians felt ownership over curry by the nineteenth century but for the British in the metropole curry was still exotic. Anglo-Indian women (the much-maligned memsahibs) and middle class cookery authors helped transmit Anglo-Indian curry into British society. However, they did not leave it at that; by suggesting adaptations to the recipes that would bring the taste of curry to British ingredients, they enabled the further transformation of the meal into British curry. Yet the Anglo-Indian varieties survived next to this newest national dish of Britain, curry. Read together chapters four and five demonstrate the appropriation and adaptation of curry to the palates of the British, whether in India or the metropole, illustrating a sense of ownership over the meal.

The last question we ask and answer is: how is curry a tool of imperialism? Chapter six uses the idea of domesticity in the later half of the nineteenth century to illustrate how curry was used by women to support the imperial ethos. Memsahibs charged with domesticating the empire used their homes and even their bodies as a site of neutralization. For curry, this meant understanding and using curry as they would any meal of British origin: Ordering for appropriate meal times, adapting it to their palates as they saw fit while living in India and

transmitting that power over its creation within the metropolitan context. Through the power of domesticity, memsahibs completed the British ownership of curry and illustrated that it was a way that the British could successfully incorporate the Other into British society, thereby justifying, to the nineteenth-century mind, British imperial ambitions in India.

Chapter 2

Would a curry by any other name smell as sweet?

Beef, mutton, rabbit if you wish,
Lobsters, or prawns, or any kind of fish,
Are fit to make a CURRY. 'Tis when done,
A dish for Emperors to feed upon.
-William Makepeace Thackeray[2]

Every Anglophile knows - curry is to Britain as burgers are to America (or even as Bar-B-Cue is to the South); it functions as a staple both on the table and in the repository of pop culture food references. Take for instance the title characters' mention of her invitation to "Una and Geoffrey Alconbury's New Years Day Turkey Curry Buffet" in Bridget Jones's Diary.[3] Even more current, in the wake of Chef Jamie Oliver's attack on the nutritional value of school lunches in Britain, note the inclusion of Beef Curry on the list of healthy school lunches offered at Rawmarsh School in Rotherham, England.[4] Britain's regular consumption of curry tends to float in and out of the consciousness of the nation; however, the past ten years have seen the publication of three books and at least two articles about the beloved food because of two very important popular culture events.

In 1998 a song, the brain child of Keith Allen and Damien Hirst, called 'Vindaloo' became the battle hymn for supporters of the British teams in the 1998 World Cup games held in France. The songs refrain, "Me and me mum and me dad and me gran/We're off to Waterloo/Me and me mum and me dad and me gran/ and a bucket of vindaloo," ostensibly celebrates, albeit in

---

[2] From *A Poem to Curry*, reprinted in Lizzie Collingham, Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 134.
[3] Helen Fielding, Bridget Jones's Diary, (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 7.
[4] Sarah Lyall, "Glorious Food? English Schoolchildren Think Not," *The New York Times*, 10/18/2006, A4.

a whimsical fashion, the multiculturalism of Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century.[5] Following closely on the heels of the smash hit 'Vindaloo,' Robin Cook, then Britain's Foreign Secretary, told a Social Market Foundation audience in 2001, "Chicken Tikka Massala [sic] is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences."[6] Both of these events allude to the importance of curry in recent constructions of British identity. That withstanding, a question comes to mind, what exactly is curry? The modern consumption of the dish in Britain provides the impetus for our investigation.

For the sake of argument, we will begin with a definition that stems from the minds of the Western world: curry is Indian food - even though modern Indian chefs like Madhur Jaffrey assert that "'the word 'curry' is as degrading to India's great cuisine as 'chop suey' is to China's'"[7]. Unfortunately, that is how most Europeans and Americans describe the culinary culture of India. This chapter concerned with the themes of authenticity, provenance and ownership, will attempt to explain how the British came to use the term curry and what it means to the history of Britain, specifically the colonial endeavor in India. Using culinary texts ranging from the medieval period to the twentieth-century as a guide, we will compartmentalize curry into three stages of understanding: proto-curry, Anglo-Indian curry and British curry. Each stage will deepen our understanding of curry and begin to explicate the sense of ownership the British feel over the meal, an idea that will drive the research behind chapters three and four. Before embarking on our quest, we must expand our own definition and understanding of curry.

---

[5] "Pop Goes the World Cup," BBC News, 05/22/98, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/sport/football/98838.stm.
[6] "Robin Cook's chicken tikka masala speech," Guardian Unlimited, 04/19/2001, http://www.guardian.co.uk/racism/Story/0,,477023,00.html.
[7] Madhur Jaffrey quoted in David Burton, David Burton, The Raj at Table: A Culinary History of the British in India, (Eastbourne, England: Faber and Faber, 1994), 73.

Researchers approach an inquiry each in their own way; for a question about curry in Britain, the starting point seems obvious. According to that bastion of logophiles everywhere, the Oxford English Dictionary, curry simply means "a preparation of meat, fish, fruit, or vegetables, cooked with a quantity of bruised spices and turmeric, and used as a relish or flavouring, *esp.* for dishes composed of or served with rice."[8] This rather concise definition would probably satisfy the most pedestrian curry-eater; after all, it sounds like the dish served at a local Indian restaurant, minus, of course, the Nan bread. However, upon second thought, if all it takes to make a curry is spices, turmeric and a bed of rice, then many other dishes should carry the label curry, including some preparations of black-bean chili (a singularly American dish).

The authors of the O.E.D. further complicate matters by including a second definition: "a name for *Bergera Königii*, the aromatic leaves of which are used to flavour curries; curry-paste, -powder, preparations of turmeric and strong spices, for making curried dishes."[9] Given the idea that curry is a term for Indian food, two problems emerge from these definitions. Namely, the origin of the dish is conspicuously absent; a nod to India seems in order here.[10] Secondly, the authors of the O.E.D. do not feel compelled to explain the differences between the physical variations of curry: the distinction between curry powder, paste and leaves are left to the imagination of the reader. A more complete explanation of curry would indicate that the mixture of spices found in the first part of the description speaks to the style of curry cooked in northern India while the curry leaf chiefly finds employ in the culinary practices of the southern part of the subcontinent. Furthermore, curry paste and powder mixtures appear throughout the Indian

---

[8] Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, accessed online through Galileo, http://callisto.gsu.edu/cgi-bin/homepage.cgi; hereafter referred to as the OED.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] It is true that there many different styles of curry found across Asia, however the O.E.D.'s insistence that curry includes turmeric as a major spice speaks to the dictionary's decision to define curry as the Indian variety.

sub-continent. In effect, the O.E.D. offers the notion that curry is a British dish instead of Indian, an idea that this chapter will help explain.

Perhaps the problem lies in the reference material; the Oxford English Dictionary never claimed to be a cookery book much less a culinary dictionary. Turning to other sources we find that the Encyclopedia of Food and Culture defines curry as an "Anglicized spelling of the Tamil *kari*, a general term for any spiced sauce."[11] The definition goes on to say, "there is no fixed recipe for curry, and the Indians themselves refer to this broad range of spice preparations as *masala*."[12] According to A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food, *kari*, the source word for curry, translates as black pepper from Tamil, the dialect of the Dravidians of southern Indian. English representatives from the East India Company appear responsible for Anglicizing the word to curry from which it came to "symbolize Indian food for the westerner."[13] Even as a catchall term, curry enjoyed its own growth over the years. It originally pertained to "any spiced dish that accompanied south Indian food…later the word curry was greatly widened in usage to include liquid broth, a thicker stewed preparation, or even a spiced dry dish, all of which appear in turn in a south Indian meal, each with its own name."[14] In the early 1600's the EIC opened a

---

[11] Solomon H. Katz ed., Encyclopedia of Food and Culture, v.1, (New York: Scribner, 2003), 484.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Originally chartered as the Honourable East India Company by Queen Elizabeth, they carried the name English East India Company until the creation of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707 when they became the British East India Company; to simplify matters I will refer to them as the East India Company, EIC or the Company; A.T. Achaya, A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 58; The term pepper and the English usage here presents a bit of a problem because even thought we differentiate between a chili pepper and black pepper when we talk about cooking, it was not necessarily the same in the past. While the Dravidians meant *piper nigrum*, a wild, tropical vine from which black, white and green peppercorns are harvested, when they used the word *kari*. However, by the time the English arrived in India, the Spanish and Portuguese had already introduced chili peppers, *capsicum frutescens*, onto the sub-continent. The chili pepper made an enormous impact on the cuisine of India, according to Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat the capsicum pepper "was a revelation to the peoples of Africa, Arabia and Asia" that "have become typical of all exotic gastronomy." It is impossible to say if the English actually tasted the *kari* in their curry or if it was the chili pepper that made the foods of India so hot. Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, trans. Anthea Bell, A History of Food, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 516, 518.
[14] Achaya, 58.

successful factory in Madras, located on the coast in southern India. Perhaps that explains why curry would become the name of all Indian food for the British.

Our definition for curry at this point stands as a highly spiced dish, named for the peppercorns found in Southern India, that is often served with rice. While our comprehension is still muddy, this definition does suggest a direction for our inquiry: cookery books. Beginning with contemporary texts and reaching back into the past will enable us to locate three phases of curry and witness the development of British ownership over the dish.[15]

To better comprehend the modern understanding of curry we will use Harvey Day's The Complete Book of Curries for guidance. First published in 1966, Day's use of the term curry intermingles with the proper Indian names for the dishes. He, like modern cookery book authors, professed to provide authentic Indian recipes for the home cook, an idea that we will revisit in the Anglo-Indian curry phase.[16] Day's text represents one of the better places to start because it marks the bridging between the old and the new. From the outset, his pursuit for authenticity illustrates a post-colonial notion that Indian cuisine is separate from curry, yet he also shows an enduring fondness for the term curry and its place in the British psyche.

Day's book does its readers, and us, a great service in its opening sections. The author, at pains to educate the palate of his readers, quickly discusses the myriad of culinary styles found in India. He notes, "Madras cooking, for instance, is very much more pungent than anything in Hindustan, and Madrassi curries are thinner and more watery…Bengalis specialize in fish and

[15] Even though these cookbooks are prescriptive in nature, the information they hold can illuminate popular attitudes about preferred flavours.

[16] While it is a noble pursuit, it is also impossible to recreate a dish unless all variables are same. Authenticity does not hail only from ingredients, everything from the pan used to prepare a dish to the air and water quality affect the taste of a meal.

bamboo curries cooked in mustard oil."[17] He goes on to remark that religious differences also affect the type of food experienced in India. Day asserts that Hindus specialize in grain based breads, a variety of rice preparations and "in curries called 'bhajjis' made from vegetables, eaten with chutneys, pickles, oil, vinegar, salt, mustard and tyre."[18] Muslim cuisine, on the other hand, offers a meat based fare that mirrors that of the European diet: "their food is much drier, often rendering knives and forks superfluous…[they] 'bogharer' the meat; that is fry it before cooking in spices, an operation that transforms a merely tasty dish into one that is delicious."[19] Clearly, Day intended to set himself up as an expert in the field of Indian cuisine in order to prepare his readers for an abundance of recipes that will challenge their assumptions about curry.

The best information Day includes in the introduction to his book is a list of ingredients that one will find in the different recipes in his book. This catalogue, reprinted here, becomes especially helpful for our inquiry into the history of curry in the English diet, as it will allow us to track the use of certain ingredients from the oldest English language recipes to the first actual curry recipes included in British cookery texts.[20]

---

[17] Harvey Day, The Complete Book of Curries, (Aylesbury, Bucks, England: The Cookery Book Club, 1970), 8.
[18] *Ibid.*; according to the *OED*, tyre, Anglicized from the Tamil *tayir*, means milk or cream that is on the verge of souring, much like a runny yogurt.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*, 9-10; *Americans call coriander cilantro, although if using the seeds then Americans call it coriander; **notice the difference here between the Tamil *kari* cited in the definition of curry; *** the long pepper belongs to the same family as black pepper so is indigenous to southern India.

Indian Name	English Name	Botanical Name
Souf	Aniseed	*Pimpinella Anisum*
Seetul	Allspice	*Myrtus Pimenta*
Eelachie	Cardamom	*Elelbaria Cardamomum*
Jawatrie	Mace	*Myristica Maschata*
Jauphull	Nutmeg	*Myristica Maschata*
Kulmie darchini	Cinnamon	*Laurus Cinnamonum*
Dhunnia or Kotimear	Coriander *	*Doriandrum Sativum*
Laoong	Cloves	*Engenia Caryophyllata*
Zeera or Jeera	Cummin [sic] Seed	*Cuminum Cyminum*
Kala Mirchi **	Black Pepper	*Piper Nigrum*
Rai	Mustard Seed	*Sinopis Chinesis*
Lal mirchi	Chillis [sic]	*Capsicum Frutescens*
Huldie	Turmeric	*Curcuma Longa*
Mayti	Fenugreek	*Trigonella Foenum Craecum*
Lassoon	Garlic	*Alium Sativum*
Sont	Ginger (dry)	*Amomum Zingiber*
Udruck	Ginger (green)	*Amomum Zingiber*
Khush-khush	Poppy Seed	*Papaver somniferum*
Pipel	Long Pepper ***	*Piper Longum*
Hing	Asafoetida	*Ferula Asafoetida*
Chironji	Chironji Nut	*Buchanonia Latifolia*
Badam	Almond	*Amygdalia Communis*
Nareul	Coconut	*Cocus Nufifera*

Now, with an ingredient list in hand and a half articulated definition of curry, it seems intuitive to discuss the first stage of curry, proto-curry- meaning highly spiced food preparations that mimic the modern conception of curry.

The Forme of Cury is widely acknowledged as the oldest collections of English recipes ever chronicled. Dated from the 1390's and recorded on a roll of vellum, the manuscript contains an impressive 196 recipes that celebrate "kyng Richard the Secund kyng of .nglond … which was accounted the beft and ryalleft vyanf of alle cften .ynges."[21] The manuscript passed

[21] Richard Warner, Antiquitates Culinariæ or Curious Tracts relating to the Culinary affairs of the Old English, reprint (London: Prospect Books, 1982), 1; according to Warner the sentence translates: King Richard the Second of England…which was accounted the best and royalist viander (eater) of all Christian kings.

through many hands, including those of Elizabeth I, before it found its way into the British Museum in 1782.[22]

While it would be nice to say that by virtue of its title this manuscript solves the mystery of when and how the British diet became infused with curry, unfortunately, the *cury* in the title merely means cookery.[23] A survey of the recipes hints at a fondness for highly spiced foods enjoyed by social elites in the medieval period. Warner, the author of the 1791 transcription, includes an extensive introduction to the culinary affairs of early Britain that outlines the changing culinary heritage of that country. He notes that the establishment of Roman, Saxon, Danish, and Norman culture greatly influenced an uncomplicated culinary heritage based on the consumption of grains. Warner described early English culinary practices as a "fimple, but tedious, proefs" made up of "*picking* the grains from the ear, and reducing them to pafte in a mortar…and this, as Diodorus [Siculus] affures us, was their chief food."[24] Accordingly, the Romans brought refinement of manners, meat, milk and "the luxurious delicacies of *Italy* [that] decked the table of the conquered Briton."[25] The Saxons and the Danes, Warner asserts, were too warlike to introduce much in the way of culinary prowess to the conquered Britons, but they did keep up their culture of feasting while on the island, a pastime they enjoyed as much as battling. Additionally, the Saxons introduced a "beverage…expreffed from barley or wheat" to the Anglo peoples.[26] The advent of the Norman invasion, as can be expected, introduced a quality of delicacy to the foods consumed by the nobility that overrode the Saxon and Danish

---

[22] Constance B Hieatt and Sharon Butler, Curye on Inglysch: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century (Including the *Forme of Cury*), (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 22; Since its donation to the museum the rolls have been transcribed a number of times.
[23] Warner, 1.
[24] *Ibid*., ix.
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] *Ibid*., x.

desire for quantity.[27] Besides new cookery techniques, the Normans initiated a care for the kitchen never witnessed before by the Britons. Although Warner does not catalogue the specific ingredients introduced by each incursion onto the island, a look at the recipes included in his book suggests a healthy international trade in foodstuffs that most likely originated with the arrival of the Romans.

Of the 196 recipes included in the Forme of Cury many exhibit a use and even a dependence on spices that rival the directions found in Harvey Day's cookbook. Five of the receipts in the collection use ingredients in such a way that it would not be wrong to describe them as proto-curries: highly spiced dishes that feature ingredients common in modern curry construction. Taken together, the directions for *Bukkenade*, *Mawmenee*, *Chykens in cawdel* and *Leche Lumbard* include the use of ginger, powder douce[28], "powdor" force[29], cinnamon, mace, cloves, coriander, pepper and saffron. A provision for some sort of flesh as a source of protein accompanied the spices in each dish; rabbits (conynges), veal, chicken or pork top the list of suggestions. The recipe that most compellingly mirrors that of a modern curry is *Bukkenade*:

> Take henes other (*or*) congynges (*rabbits*), other veel, other (*or*) other flefsh, and hewe hem to gobetts; waifche (*wafh*) it, and hit well. Grynde almandes unblanched, and drawe hem up with broth. Cafte thereinne rayfons of corance (*currants*), fugar, powdor [fort], gynger, erbes yftewed (*ftewed*) in grees (*fat*, or *lard*), oynonns and falt. If it is to (*too*) thynne, alye (*mix*) it up, with floer of ryfe (*rice*), other with other tyhng and color it with fafronn.[30]

---

[27] *Ibid*., xii.

[28] Warner suggests that powder douce is allspice while others suggest that it is a mixture of sweet spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, sugar and cloves that might taste like our present day allspice. I am inclined to discount Warner in this instance as it has been suggested that he had a habit of guessing about some of the ingredients he did not know.

[29] Warner and other sources suggests that "powdor" force is a mixture of warm spices like pepper, ginger and other ingredients.

[30] Warner, 6; "hewe hem to gobetts" cut into small pieces; "hit it well" braise the meat until cooked; Hieatt and Butler believe that Warner's decision to use currants here is an example of one of his wild guesses, however the O.E.D. points out that "rayfons of corance" better translates to raisins of Corinth, which means that currants is used properly by Warner in this instance; "other with other tyhng" or another thickening agent, like rice four.

While not exactly the curry you might imagine served at an Indian restaurant today, if you compare the receipt for *Bukkenade* with Harvey Day's first recipe for chicken curry you begin to notice a similarity.

> Fry onion, garlic, cloves, cardamoms and cinnamon in fat and when onions are golden-brown, add other ingredients. [salt, coriander, tumeric, ginger, cumin and ground chilies] Mix well and cook on low flame for five minutes. Then add pieces of chicken and fry in curry mixture, stirring occasionally to prevent burning. Add enough water to form thick gravy, then cover pan and simmer till [sic] chicken is soft. Squeeze lemon juice over curry before serving.[31]

Obviously, these are two very different recipes, but the technique and some of the ingredients mirror one another. Both concoctions use onion, ginger, pepper, turmeric and/or saffron to season a meat and finally each method calls for the creation of a thick gravy that will coat the meat. The flavour profiles of each dish differ significantly but it does not seem ridiculous to label *Bukkenade* as a precursor to modern curry.

Before leaving the discussion of the Forme of Cury, two other recipes that echo those familiar from Indian cookery deserve mention: rice and chutney. Among the first recipes recounted in the text is one for *Rufe (rice) of flefsh*. King Richard the Second's cooks prepared their rice by placing it into an earthenware pot and steeping the grains in a "gode broth." They finished the dish by mixing it with almond milk and colouring it with saffron.[32] Indian cuisine features many different rice dishes, like the filling Pilaus of northern Indian and Pakistan, but the receipt for boiled rice found in the vellum rolls does not sound unfamiliar to the modern rice cook. The inclusion of saffron for colour and almond milk for taste speaks to the wealth of the table for which it was cooked. Similarly, Forme includes a recipe for a *Verde fawfe (green fauce)* that puts in mind the popular coriander chutneys of India. Medieval green sauce called

[31] Day, 14.
[32] Warner, 5.

for the cook to: "take parfel, mynt, garlek a litul ferpell (*wild thyme*) and fawge (*fage*), a litul canel, gynger, piper, wyne, brede, vynegar and falt; grynde it fmale with fafron, and meffe it forth."[33] Compare that to the recipe for *Hara Dhaniya Chutney* that calls for chilis, the seeds of cumin, fennel and onion, asafoetida, shredded coconut, coriander leaves, mint sauce and lemon juice.[34] Comparatively the tastes of these sauces will be wildly different but their textures and composition are surprisingly similar. Each includes the taste of mint and garlic, an acidic property, vinegar in the former and lemon juice in the later, and a similar meaty texture thanks to the bread in the green sauce and the shredded coconut in the chutney.

At this point in the research, one could not assert that curry consumption began in medieval England. The composition of some dishes in the 1390's and the modern period share striking similarities; however, the recipes in the Forme of Cury simply cannot be considered curry in the sense of the modern definition. Instead, their designation as proto-curries speaks to the feeling of familiarity with the Indian foods presented to the early members of the EIC in India. It also hints to the later development of Anglo-Indian and British curry resulting in a sense of ownership of Indian cuisine during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Additionally, these recipes illustrate that English cuisine did not always rely on beef, potatoes and puddings (as popular misconceptions would have us believe). Instead, we see that the consumption of highly spiced foods infused early English cuisine at the elite level of society. From the middle ages we now move our investigation into the stirrings of the enlightenment with the hope that we will see the trend for spiced foods comparable to our modern idea of curry to continue to proliferate.

---

[33] *Ibid*., 26.

[34] Rafi Fernandez, Great Indian Dishes: Easy, Authentic and Deliciously Aromatic Cooking, (London: Hermes House, 1998), 79; asafoetida/asafetida, is a common ingredient in Indian cuisine that has a very distinctive taste, according to Madhur Jaffrey in the glossary section of her book From Curries to Kebabs: Recipes from the Indian Spice Trail, it is made from the hardened sap of a fennel-like plant that has been powdered, it is a very strong ingredient that is renowned for its digestive properties, Jaffrey notes the James Beard compared its smell to truffles.

Two cookery books published within twenty years of each other during the seventeenth century provide fertile ground for further inquiry into proto-curry. The Complete Cook and A Queens Delight (1655) and The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie K[nigh]t (1669) represent the secret recipe collections of two individuals; the latter, a Knight of the English Realm, the former, the Queen Henrietta Maria, the widow of Charles I. Like the Forme of Cury these texts represent the palate of the elite, mainly because the price of the spices used in the foods surveyed preclude all but the wealthiest individuals in the seventeenth century. The publication years of these specific books adds to the benefit of our study. Both books became available after Queen Elizabeth I signed the charter for the creation of the East India Company. By the middle of the century, the principals of the company had set out for the Indian sub-continent with the intent of setting up trade factories to undermine Dutch control of the European spice trade. In the end, the EIC could not wrest control from the Dutch but instead settled into a comfortable trade in Calico from India that they supplemented with a profitable side trade in spices and opium. By the publication years of our representative books, the English had factories in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay and the EIC workers were already enjoying the culinary pleasures that Mogul India had to offer.[35]

The Complete Cook and A Queens Delight represent two of the three books that make up The Queen's Closet Opened, a collection of manuscript materials compiled by W.M. who spent his career in the service of the dowager Queen Henrietta. In his introduction W.M. insists that hardly a dish the passed the lips of his noble patroness that did not garner an inclusion in her personal cookery book. Many of the recipes in The Complete Cook meet the requirements for a proto-curry because they contain ingredients like pepper, ginger, nutmeg and mace. They do not

[35] Michael Lynch, The British Empire, (London: Teach Yourself, 2005), 23.

vary greatly from those included in the discussion about the Forme of Cury, however, the recipe for *A Turkish Dish* stands out:

> Take fat Beef or Mutton cut in thin flices, wafh it well, put it into a pot that hath a clofe cover, then put into it a good quantity of clean pickt Rice, skim it very well; then put into it a quantity of whole pepper, two or three whole Onyons; let all this boyl very well, then take out the onyons and difs it in fippits, the thicker it is the better.[36]

While it does not sound exactly akin to the curry-like recipes discussed previously, this singular recipe presents the importance of the provenance of a dish in the late seventeenth century. Queen Henrietta and W.M. provide an indication that compilers and authors had an interest in where different meals originated. In that vein, a survey of The Complete Cook includes recipes for dressing a pig in "the French manner" making a "Devonshire white pot" and "Spanish Cream."[37] W.M. and Queen Henrietta illustrate that heavy spicing still existed in the 1600's but also indicate that spices often depend on the area of the world where the recipes originated. The ideal of provenance, like authenticity, speaks to the future of curry consumption in Britain and illustrates that the roots of modern British curry recipes echo receipts from the seventeenth century.

Sir Digby's cookery book mimics Queen Henrietta's; both publications sprang from recipes admired and collected by well-known personages. In the introduction to the reprint of Digby's book, we discover that this philosopher-knight "was a friend of Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, Harvey, Ben Johnson and Cromwell, and with all the great spirits of his time, the intimate of kings, and the special friend of queens."[38] The recipes in his collection look a lot like

---

[36] W.M., The Complete Cook and A Queens Delight, reprint (London: Prospect Books, 1984), 87
[37] *Ibid*., 4, 12, 30.
[38] Anne Macdonnell, The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby Knight Opened: Newly edited, with introduction, notes, ans glossary, (London: Phillip Lee Warner, 1910), x.

those encountered in The Complete Cook, though that should not seem so out of the ordinary if Digby was indeed a royal friend.

The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby Knight Opened offers several recipes that we may consider proto-curries, take for instance *To Make Red Deer*:

> Take a piece of the Buttock of Beef, the leanest of it, and beat it with a rowling-pin the space of an hour, till you think you have broken the grain of it, and have made it very open both to receive the sowsing-drink, and also to make it tender. Then take a pint of Vinegar, and a pint of Claret-wine and let it line therein two nights, and two days. Then beat a couple of Nutmegs, and put them into the sowsing-drink; then Lard it. Your lard must be as big as your greatest finger for consuming. Then take Pepper, Cloves, Mace and Nutmegs, and season it very well in every place, and so bake it in Pye-paste, and let it stand in the oven sic or seven hours. And when it hath stood three hours in your oven, then put in you sowsing-drink as is afore-said; and you may keep it a quarter of a year, if it be kept close.[39]

The liberal use of spices here certainly reminds us of the heavily seasoned meat dishes of the medieval period. Many of the dishes in both W.M.'s and Digby's books include one or two of the spices previously highlighted but hint at a slackening off of heavy spicing in some English dishes. Even though we consider these recipes as proto-curries, they do indicate the growth of the much-lamented bland British food. However, Digby's collection does offer a reason for that switch in the first portion of the book, a large chapter dedicated to beverages.

If Digby and his friend's tastes represent a compass from which to judge the seventeenth century, then *meath* was the drink of the aristocracy.[40] In one very informative section, Digby suggests six ways for making mead, which include provisions for strong and very strong liquors. A strong batch contains "ten gallons of water; thirteen quarts of honey, with Angelica, Borrage

[39] *Ibid*., 163; larding is the act of placing fat (lard, fatty bacon) under the skin or directly into the meat before it is placed over heat for cooking.
[40] According to the O.E.D., Meath is an obscure form of the word Mead.

and Burgloss, Rosemary. Balm and Sweet-bryar…Cloves, Elder-flowers, and a little Ginger."[41] A very strong mixture includes lemon peel, Orris-root, Betony, Eyebright, Wood-sorrel or Hypercion and Lilly of the Valley.[42] While it would seem that Digby's attention to spicy drinks might undermine our ideas about curry, it actually strengthens our argument. The appearance of fewer heavily spiced recipes in Digby's book is explained away with his mead recipes; for Digby and his friends spicing transferred from food to drink. Meaning that the English palate still appreciated ginger, nutmeg, mace and cloves throughout the 1600's - they just preferred it in a different form.

The recipe collections of Digby and W.M. represent a dying breed of cookery books in the seventeenth century. Hereafter culinary texts turn away from publishing the secret collections of wealthy individuals and begin printing recipes garnered from many different sources, including personally created recipes. John Brewer's book, Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century explains this turn from old manuscripts to the new types of cookery books. Pleasures illustrates how the makers of taste and culture came from the public sphere instead of the closed off word of the aristocracy beginning in the eighteenth century. While he is more interested in discussing art (paintings, theatre, music) his text does forward an idea about the writing and reading public in the creation of taste and culture. The producers of eighteenth-century fashion worried that the public – read the rising middle classes - may not fully understand the art they saw and heard without a guiding hand so they began publishing guidebooks that helped the audience appreciate art. In turn, they helped dictate the

---

[41] Macdonnell, 56; Sweet-bryar is also called Eglantine or *Rosa rubiginosa*; Bugloss's scientific name is *Echium vulgare*

[42] *Ibid*., 56-7; According to the extensive glossary put up by Prospect Books, Orris-root is the dried and powdered root of the Blue Iris; Hypericon, also called Tutsan, is a common plant valued for its aromatic and medicinal value; Prospect Books Glossary is available at http://www.kal69.dial.pipex.com/shop/pages/gloss.htm.

direction of gentility and politeness.[43] Viewed through Brewers work, we can say the same thing about cookery books in the eighteenth century. Pardon the pun, but cookery authors were the creators of taste and politeness just as their counterparts in the public sphere. As chronicled in these new cookery books, the gastronomy of Britain experienced an upheaval provoked by the arrival of French cuisine. In short, the eighteenth century saw a revolution in the eating habits of the British elite and the rising middle classes.[44]

From the late seventeenth-century, with the arrival of French cuisine, the reputation of British cooking began to decline. The next century saw two opposing culinary forces operating in Great Britain. Initially, the aristocracy began pushing British food favourites aside for the more refined flavours of French cuisine. French chefs, spurred into Great Britain for employment opportunities (and later by the French Revolution), and French-trained British chefs dominated employment in the homes of the elite. Later in the century, they began branching out from the homes of the wealthy and into the restaurants and clubs in London, but more importantly, they began to publish cookery books. At the outset, their books targeted other professional chefs who worked on seemingly unlimited budgets. However, not every British cook enjoyed the ability to work with limitless resources, and they began to influence British cookery in a different way. An army of female cooks and middle-class housewives who believed they could simplify and economize the French culinary standards of the elites for the social and monetary benefit of the middle classes provided a second culinary force operating in England during the later part of the 1700's. The tastes of these opposing cooks influenced the tables of all

[43] John Brewer, Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century, (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1997.
[44] The change from English to British here indicates the creation of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1706.

classes of British society. In terms of our interests though, did they include curry in their repertoires?

In short, the answer is no. Even though the EIC had firmly established its foothold in India by the eighteenth century, Indian curry would have to wait a bit longer before it infused the British metropolitan palate. It is likely enough that EIC employees returning home form India in the early part of the century brought home with them an abiding love of curry and other Indian artifacts, but their numbers were so few that they did not yet influence the culinary trends of the metropole. In Britain, the early eighteenth century provides us with a few more examples of proto-curry. However, given the opposing trends in British cuisine it behooves us to look at representative cookery books from both of the sexes. Our first look will be at the male chefs who here manipulate their own standards of cuisine in order to capture the readership of the middle classes.

Charles Carter, professionally trained in the French culinary arts, published The Complete Practical Cook or, a New System of the Whole Art and Mystery of Cookery in 1730. The introduction to the text indicates that although he considered himself a professional, the recipes contained in his book were written specifically for home cooks. He indicated in his introduction that "*the Reader will foon fee, that tho' here is nothing omitted that may pleafe those who have not the* higheft Tafte *of elegant Eating*;" a dig at the type of cookery forwarded by the economically-minded female authors who famously abridged the expensive ingredients out of French recipes in the name of cost-cutting measures.[45] In Carter's book, we find some

[45] Charles Carter, The Complete Practical Cook or, a New System of the Whole Art and Mystery of Cookery, reprint, (London: Prospect Books, 1984), intro 3; emphasis in original; Carter was eluding to the female authors writing at the time who were responsible for the rash of 'mock' cookery practiced amongst the middle classes, dishes like Mock-turtle soup reportedly looked like the turtle soup made by the chefs of the elite but tasted awful.

familiar sounding recipes, like that of the *Hotch-Potch*, but notice a finishing of French-style flare:

> Take of Beef, Veal, Mutton and Pork, of each two or three Pieces of about a pound each; pafs it off brown in a Pan, or on a Spit…then brown off a Piece of Butter, thicken it with fine Flower, put to it fome good ftrong Broth: Put in your Meat with a Piece or two of Bacon ftuck with Cloves…feafon it all well with Pepper, Salt, Cloves and Mace…ftove it moderately 'till very tender[46]

Under the influence of this professional chef, the simple dish of *Hotch-Potch* became a complicated mixture of roasted and stewed meats and root vegetable "Ragouft." No matter though, the receipt contains the mainstay spices that we have tracked over time. Carter's recipe for *Terrene La Savoy* calls for pepper, cloves, mace and nutmeg while his *Fish Pottages* calls for pepper, nutmeg and ginger.[47] A survey of the text indicates that this English chef wanted to illustrate the return to spicing of foods, instead of beverages, but also indicate the possibility of an easy marriage between British and French cuisine when one's budget allowed.

Similar to the cookery books we referenced earlier, Carter writes for cooks and patrons who enjoy a relaxed cookery budget. However, what about those who laboured to feed their families on a limited kitchen budget, especially those who lived outside of the metropolitan areas and grew most of the food they consumed? Richard Bradley enters the discussion to help those country readers of some means. His The Country Housewife and Lady's Director, published together in 1736, defies all of the rules about eighteenth-century cookery books that we previously outlined. It is actually a compilation cookery book authored by a Professor of Botany at Cambridge University. However, the receipts contained therein were not specifically the

---

[46] *Ibid*., 4.
[47] *Ibid*., 5, 22.

secret formulas of the aristocracy or even copies from old family manuscripts; he took letters from the reading public in order to compile his cookery book. This sets an important precedent that some of the most famous female cookery book authors will follow in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Several of the letters sent to Bradley emerge as examples of late proto-curries. For instance, Mrs. Bradbury's recipe for roasted pig called for pepper and cloves, amongst other ingredients, and Mr. La Fontaine's receipt for stewing a salted beef brisket calls for the slow cooking of the meat for several hours in a pot that contains cloves, nutmeg and pepper.[48] Of all the recipes mailed to Bradley, Mrs. L-'s directions *to Stew a Rump of Beef* represents the most interesting curry-like recipe:

> Take a fmall Rump of Beef, lay it in a long Pan, deep enough to allow your Beef to be cover'd; then put to it a Pint of Ale, a Quart of Claret, half a Pint of Verijuice, or the Juice of two large Lemons; and as much water added…fome Pepper and Salt, a Nutmeg fliced, a few Cloves, and a little Mace.[49]

Like the recipes for other stewed meats, the above contains a now familiar mixture of cloves, nutmeg and mace. The three flavours together, heightened by the sourness of the verijuice/lemon juice, will not taste like *Rogan Josh* but the highly spiced taste that the recipe conveys is easily identifiable with modern curry.

Richard Bradley represents the middle ground between books written for elite kitchens and those for bourgeois budgets. His recipes include the spices that we have lately only associated with the finances of the elite; however, his recipe inclusions speak to limited kitchen expenditures. The eighteenth century marks an interesting transition in the monetary means of the British. Domestic commercial growth coupled with the rise of the British Empire in North

---

[48] Richard Bradley, Caroline Davis ed., The Country Housewife and Lady's Director, reprint, (London: Prospect Books, 1980), 52, 60.
[49] *Ibid*., 103.

America, after the Treaty of Utrecht (1720) but before the American War for Independence, meant that more people had money in Britain. Combine that money with the knowledge that the EIC implemented its profits from the importation of calico cloth with a trade in black pepper, cardamom, nutmeg, cloves, fenugreek, aniseed, vanilla, and turmeric from Asia since the early 1600's and you now have more classes that can afford to spice their meals, albeit some with heavier hands than others.[50]

Charles Carter represents the high-end cookery book while Richard Bradley's collection of recipes symbolized cuisine fit for the budget and equipment of the country kitchens. The works of these men mark a great segue into a discussion about cookery books written by women and for women, especially Hannah Glasse's The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy. Glasse's book, easily called "the best known English cookery book of the 18th century," enjoyed such popularity that it ran through numerous editions from its initial publication in 1747 well into the nineteenth century.[51] Comparable to the other books discussed in this chapter, some of the recipes in Glasse's text include the now familiar standards of ginger, pepper, cloves and mace with saffron or turmeric. Her recipes appealed to pocket books of middle-class readers who wanted affordable yet fashionable food, making her one of Brewer's creators of taste and fashion. French cuisine was considered "the height of fashion amongst the Whig political elite, and those who aspired to modishness were obliged to produce French dishes on their tables."[52] Glasse and her comrades found themselves in a curious position of trying to maintain the standards of British cuisine while including the information that the middle classes really wanted. To solve the conundrum Glasse included recipes for economical reformulations of

[50] Lynch, 21, 38.
[51] Hannah Glasse, The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy, facsimile, (London: Prospect Books, 1983), preface.
[52] Gilly Lehmann, The British Housewife: Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain, (London: Prospect Books, 2003), 113.

popular French dishes but she also handily insulted the expensive habits of French and French trained chefs whenever the opportunity arose.

As interesting as the battle of the sexes (cookbook edition) is, Hannah Glasse's book fits into our discussion because of her inclusion of one simple recipe. Nestled on the same page as *To drefs a Loin of* Pork *with* Onions and *To make Effence of* Ham sits *To make a* Currey *the* India *way*! Popular opinion states that Glasse was the first person to include a recipe for a dish called curry, whether that is true or not, hers is the best surviving example of the addition.[53]

Glasse's text marks the point where we stop talking about proto-curries and begin to discuss curry in Britain. However, since this book marks a turning point, it is still important to notice the proto-curries that fill up pages of her book. Glasse's text, like all of the others previously mentioned, includes recipes that mimic those passed down from medieval times. For instance, her receipt for Beef Royal includes sirloin of beef, bacon, salt, pepper mace, cloves, nutmeg, bay leaf, truffles, oysters and anchovies; the slow-cooked beef and abundance of seasonings reminds us of Bradley's directions to stew a rump of beef, except with the added ingredients of truffles, oyster and anchovies.[54] While not the most economically minded of receipts, Glasse illustrates that the eating of highly spiced foods infused the middle classes by the mid-eighteenth century, suggesting a situation that will allow the easy incorporation of curry into British diet.

How does her curry recipe rate? Keep those proto-curries in mind as we look at Glasse's *To make a* Currey *the* India *way*:

---

[53] Many of the recipes in Glasse's book, according to scholars, were taken from earlier cookery books, her recipe for curry has not been singled out as one of those recipes, but curry recipes have not been studied this closely in past scholarship.
[54] Glasse, 22.

> Take two Fowls or Rabbits, cut them into fmall Pieces, and three or four fmall Onions, peeled and cut very fmall, thirty Pepper Corns, and a large Spoonful of Rice fome Corriander Seeds over the Fire in a clear Shovel, and beat them to Powder, take a Tea Spoonful of Salt, and mix all well together with the Meat, put all together into a Sauce-pan or Stew-pan, with a Pint of Water, let it ftew foftly till the Meat is enough, then put in a Piece of frefh Butter, about as big as a large Walnut, fhake it well together, and when it is fmooth and of a fine Thicknefs, difh it up, and fend it to Table; if the Sauce be too thick, add a little more Water before it is done, and more Salt if it wants it. You are to observe the Sauce muft be pretty thick.[55]

Admittedly, if served this dish at a restaurant, we would probably send it back to the kitchen for finishing. Compared to the Beef Royal encountered in this same text, "Currey *the* India *way*" appears bland. Where are the cloves, nutmeg and turmeric? Outside of bruising the spices, this recipe does not even meet the O.E.D.'s requirements for a curry. However, this curry recipe does harken back to some of the first dishes that we examined in this chapter, especially with reference to the use of coriander seeds, both *Bukkenade* and *Verde fawfe* from the Forme of Cury call for the use of coriander, as does Harvey Day's modern recipe for chicken curry. The taste of the curry aside, because as we all know, some recipes just are not good, Hanna Glasse's inclusion of this particular receipt speaks to more important things then flavour.

Think back to our discussion of provenance in reference to Queen Henrietta and W.M.'s recipes; Glasse obviously desires to preserve the origin of her dish by calling it Indian curry, which in turns allows her to posit that hers is an authentic dish. Despite her desires though, it is highly unlikely that her recipe came from an Indian cook. Since she left no indication of where she found the recipe we might assume that it was an adaptation of an Anglo-Indian receipt. Why would she include this receipt? There are two possible answers; perhaps she thought that her readers, or their relatives, worked for the EIC or the Royal Military and they missed curries from

[55] *Ibid*., 52.

India. More likely, she saw a recipe for "Indian curry" and recognized its similarity to some of the other heavily spiced meals she included in her text.

Given the title of the recipe, Glasse's insistence of the foreign and exotic quality of the meal speaks to another desire that interested her, an aspiration to keep curry separate from the middle-class cuisine of Britain. She, and other cookery book authors, felt the push to compete with authors who included expensive French inspired receipts in their texts. Her curry had to seem authentically foreign to validate her insistence that exotic foods need not be expensive. However, the authenticity of the proposed meal is suspect. The inclusion of rabbits and butter speak to the British manner of food preparation: rabbits are not indigenous to India and ghee replaces the use of butter in Indian cuisine. Her adaptation of a curry recipe matched with her desire to make curry accessible to pocketbooks and palates of her readers.

We shall not despair at the apparent problems of this first curry recipe as it teaches us one further lesson, namely that curry recipes cannot be static - a very important idea considering that the word curry encompasses many different cooking techniques. Perhaps the most important aspect of Glasse's inclusion is that it marks the "beginning of colonial importations into the English repertoire," especially into the palates of the middle classes.[56]

Hanna Glasse's curry recipe set the scene for the proliferation of curry in middle-class texts from the eighteenth-century forward. Shortly after the appearance of Glasse's recipe, J. Skeat included a recipe in his /her 1769 book The Art of Cookery and Pastry that includes spices more familiar to our modern pallets: turmeric, coriander seeds and Cayenne pepper.[57] The appearance of turmeric finally satisfies the definition the Oxford English Dictionary put forward

[56] Lehmann, 230.
[57] *Ibid*., 255.

and introduces a higher degree of heat in the dish with the Cayenne pepper; both aspects we associate with the taste of modern curry. However, the author does include a few ingredients that we do not generally include like mushrooms, parsley and egg: aspects that Gilly Lehman calls "an echo of court-style garnishing or…a use of the dish as a repository for leftovers."[58] Like Glasse, J. Skeat aimed at providing an exotic dish to rival French cuisine for the tables of the burgeoning middle-classes in Great Britain but in an economic fashion.

The pace of life changed rapidly with the approach of the nineteenth century and we can say the same for curry. By the end of the eighteenth century, curry had infused the culinary culture of Britain and became a mainstay in the cookery books, especially those targeting the middling sort. The quick adoption of curry into the Britain's culinary repertoire can be attributed to the fact that by the time it arrived in the metropole it had already been adapted to the British palate by the EIC and other Britons over the past one hundred years. With only a few minor adjustments for product availability, Anglo-Indian curry became the perfect middle class meal – exotic yet economical. Curry's popularity continued to grow thanks to two important factors: the increased number of individuals who had spent time working in India, for the EIC or the military, began returning home with a taste for curry and the new availability of imported curry powders and pastes; both of which will be covered in subsequent chapters. As early as 1773 curry recipes began to change when authors started calling for the use of curry powder in their directions instead of including the separate spices needed to curry a dish.[59] Take for instance Susanna Kellet's recipe for *A* Curry *of* Chickens:

---

[58] *Ibid*., 256

[59] *Ibid*.; Lehmann cites Charlotte Mason's (1773) *Curree of Chickens* as the first published recipe to call for curry powder however, other sources cite 1780 as the year that the first commercial curry powder was made available in Great Britain.

> Cut your Chickens into pieces, as you would for a fricaffey with the fkin on; then put them into ftew pan, with a piece of butter, the fize of a large walnut, and feafon them well with black pepper, falt, Kayan pepper; cover them, and fet them over a flow fire for ten minutes, then put in a fmall table fpoonful of curry powder, to two chickens, and a quarter of a large onion, with a little parfly, chopp'd fine, then put half a pint of gravy, and about two small tea fpoonfuls of turmerick to colour it; stew it altogether for half an hour, then fkim all the fat off, and just before you difh it, put in a little lemon.[60]

Curry powder became a key recipe ingredient because it "made curries easier to prepare for the uninitiated…these pre-blended mixtures were designed to be added in prescribed quantities to any stew and required no additional flavouring."[61] Several historians note that the British appetite for all things "Oriental" instigated a deluge of Asian luxury goods to flood into London, a situation due to the success of the EIC in India and its assumption of governing power in the Bengal province (discussed more fully in chapter three). In Britain, London especially, shops began selling expensive pashminas and other luxury goods from India, which quickly translated into the sale of curry powder and other Indian culinary treasures in their shops; "as early as 1784, Sorlie's Perfumery Warehouse in Picadilly advertised that it was now selling ready-mixed curry powder."[62] The popularity for pre-mixed curry powders grew in London and slowly spread into the countryside. Soon after Hannah Glasse and her urban cohorts began including curry recipes in their cookery books, receipts for the dish began appearing in texts published in towns outside England's capital. Lehmann notes, "the arrival of a dish such as curry denoted the spread of metropolitan fashions, and was proof of the growing commercialization of food products."[63] Undeniably, curry took the middle class by storm beginning in the late 1700's, a trend that would only become stronger in future generations.

---

[60] Susanna Kellet, A Complete Collection of Cookery Receipts, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: T. Saint, 1780), 28-9.
[61] Jo Monroe, Star of India: The Spicy Adventures of Curry, (Chichester, England: Wiley, 2005), 70.
[62] Pashmina is a soft, woolen fabric; Collingham, 136, 141.
[63] Lehmann, 257.

As we will see in the next chapter, by the time Anglo-Indian curry recipes began appearing in British middle-class cookbooks a sense of ownership already infused the British public. Some authors continued to assert the foreignness of the dish by calling it Indian curry, or better yet, Bengal or Madras curry. In truth, the Anglo-Indians had already appropriated their favourite aspects of Indian cuisine to create curries. Even as Anglo-Indian curry grew in popularity as more curry powders and pastes arrived in the market, the cookery books announced one further step in the evolution of curry: British curry.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, curry in Britain came to mean two distinct ideas: the Anglo-Indian curry that reputedly tasted of India and a standard British culinary technique. Eliza Acton's book, Modern Cookery for Private Families, first published in 1845, provides the perfect example of this dichotomy of curry in the metropole. Curry features in two chapters in her text: "Curries, Potted Meats, &c." features the currying of many commonplace British ingredients like eggs, ham and oysters, in a later chapter, "Foreign and Jewish Cookery" she includes recipes for Anglo-Indian favourites like *Bengal Curry Powder no. 1*. The recipes in both sections make it clear that nineteenth century conception of curry, the Anglo-Indian and British kind, are dependant on the flavors of India for their existence. The flavour profiles of the medieval period still spring up in certain recipes but the transfer of recipes and curry powders/pastes from India make it a cooking technique appropriated and, according the British, perfected by them.

The elastic quality of curry makes it difficult to pinpoint any static definition of curry; it lies somewhere between the Oxford English Dictionary's abbreviated understanding and the many recipes for Anglo-Indian curry powder that proliferated in nineteenth century cookery books. In this chapter we endeavored to define curry; our journey has taken us through three

broad phases of curry in Britain: proto-curry, Anglo-Indian curry and British curry. Each phase had provided many clues as to how to best define curry. Accordingly, here is the definition with which we shall go forward in our research. Curry is an Anglicized term derived from the southern Indian Tamil dialect; it dates from the 1600's after which its usage became monolithic in the description of any food attributed to the Indian sub-continent. The taste of curry varies to the part of the world where it is cooked and can be influenced further by the ingredients at hand and the personal and/or religious predilections or prejudices of the cook. In physical appearance, curry can take the form of a commercially or personally crafted powder or paste made with one to upwards of twenty different spice and herbal selections. In its finished form a curry may contain meat, fish or vegetables. Curry's consistency varies anywhere between a soupy concoction to a dry mixture that coats the meat, fish or vegetables in the dish. Finally, it is served with prepared rice and/or flat bread, like Nan, and can be topped with a variety of sauces called chutneys. More simply put, curry is a lot like chili; it is a variation on a cooking theme where no singular recipe to operate from exists.

The information gleaned about curry and the growing love of the dish in nineteenth century Britain leads us to wonder how the mainland fell into thrall with the meal. Our assortment of representative cookery books indicates that, beginning in the medieval period, the palates of the English elite enjoyed dishes with a lot of heavy spicing. Comparing several recipes found in the fourteenth-century collection the Forme of Cury with The Complete Book of Curries published in the 1960's allowed us to locate what we chose to call proto-curries. A curry recipe closely resembling those found in modern cookbooks would not appear until the middle of the nineteenth-century; however elite society enjoyed a culture of proto-curry consumption between the 1300's and the early 1700's that set the scene for the importation of Indian-style

cuisine into England. As with other consumable goods like tea and coffee, spices traveled down the social ladder and into the middle-classes by the eighteenth century, aided by the growth of the British Empire and the staggering number of trading house opened in London and other port cities. Accordingly, the late 1700's saw the first named curry recipe appear in a cookery book written for the middle-classes. Beginning with Hannah Glasse, the number of curry recipes in bourgeois cookbooks skyrocketed. Dating from its arrival in the metropole, curry was never anything but a British creation. Glasse and her counterparts proposed to provide authentic recipes for *Indian* curry, in actuality, the recipes they included in their books had already been adapted to the British palate by the army of Anglo-Indians living in India. Curry's arrival in Britain mere marked the final stage of curry's evolution into a common British cooking technique.

Looking at the transformation of curry recipes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicates two dimensions for this dish in Britain. Initially the desire to reproduce authentic Indian curry that catered to the British palate merely meant cooking Anglo-Indian curry. These centuries saw an increase in the number of individuals who traveled to and from India on business with the EIC. Popular knowledge about curry filtered into the British conscious by way of those travelers and the rising availability of commercial curry powders. As more information about Indian cookery became available, the closer those recipes came to our modern understanding curry. However, we discovered that our understanding of curry actually coincides with Anglo-Indian curry instead of authentic Indian creations. Through cookery books written by Glasse and Acton, we witness the transformation of curry into a national dish of the British Isles. In retrospect, that conversion is not that surprising considering that the metropole's

perception of curry always centered on the British conception of the essence of Indian food, even when authors tried to assert authenticity through provenance.

Economic-minded cookery book authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, like Glasse and Acton, worked to provided cuisine both "national and bourgeois in its ethos, developing its own prestige dishes (turtle, curry, elaborate moulded [sic] desserts), with its own references to the exotic and the spectacular, only slightly affected by the Frenchness [sic] which was obligatory in more exalted circles."[64] Acton embraced the ownership of curry in her cookery book. Under her tutelage, and others like her, we see curry emerge as an idea as well as a meal. The idea was ownership. Recognizing that curry is British in conception provides us with an understanding of why, from Glasse to Acton, we witness the disappearance of the Indian provenance in the titles of many curry recipes and why, at the same time, we witness a number of British ingredients being curried.

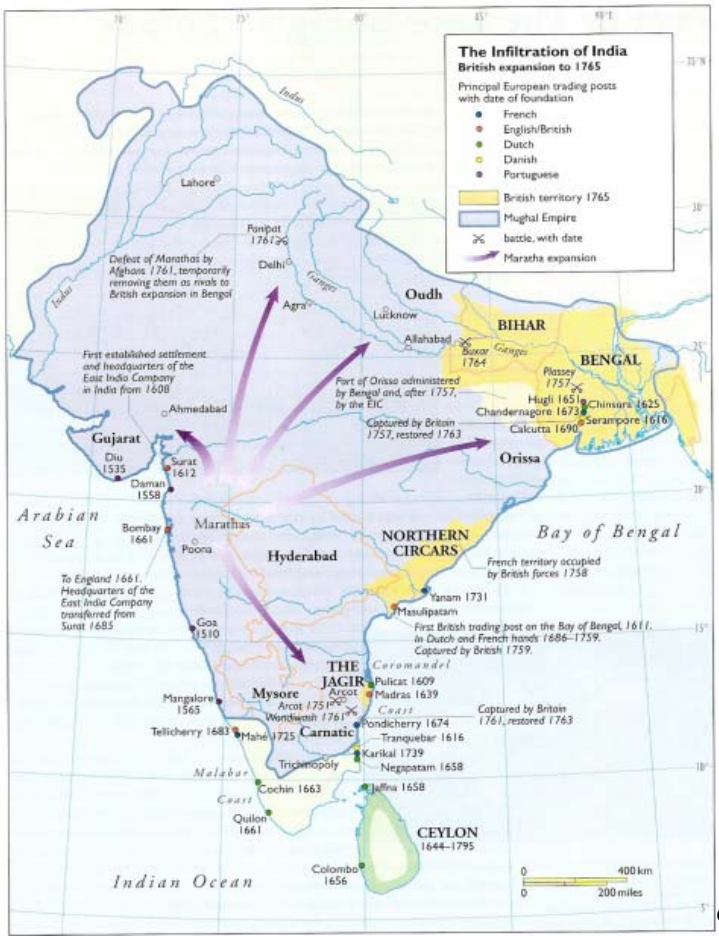
[64] *Ibid*., 287.

Chapter 3

Anglo-Indian Feasts: How Curry Became British

What varied opinions we constantly hear
Of our rich Oriental possessions;
What a jumble of notions, distorted and queer,
From an Englishman's "Indian impressions!"

First a sun, fierce and glaring, that scorches and bakes;
Palankeens, perspiration, and worry;
Mosquitoes, thugs, cocoa-nuts, Brahmins, and snakes,
With elephants, tigers, and Curry.
George F. Atkinson[65]



[66]

[65] George F. Atkinson, Curry and Rice: The Ingredients of Social Life at "Our Station" in India, (Bangalore: Rupa & Co., 2001), x.
[66] Nigel Dalziel, Historical Atlas of the British Empire, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 37.

On Christmas Day in 1601, Queen Elizabeth I signed the charter allowing for the establishment of the East India Company beginning what would be a very long relationship between England with the Indian sub-continent. After several years of getting investors and boats together, the Company reached the coast of India in 1608. Before they could set up business though, they needed to obtain permission from the ruling body in India; accordingly, they left their calling card at the court of the Mogul Emperor Jahangir in Agra. The Emperor did not immediately acquiesce to the EIC's request for a firman allowing trade in India.[67] Undaunted by the dismissal of their request, the Company sent representatives to the Emperor's court in hopes of changing his mind.

The first delegate, William Hawkins, became a fast favourite of the Emperor. Hawkins "settled into the life of a courtier, adopted Mughal dress, married an Armenian lady and is reported to have 'used altogether the custome of the Moores…both in his meate and drinke and other customes.'"[68] Despite his join-in attitude, Hawkins fell out of favour with the Emperor. The Company, still seeking a firman, replaced him with Sir Thomas Roe - a gentleman resolute in his desire to maintain his Englishness. With attitudes diametrically opposed to Hawkins', Roe dressed in English fashions and, although he had an Indian cook on his staff, used an English chef who had accompanied him on his journey to India.[69] Ultimately, he too was unsuccessful at obtaining the writ needed by the company. In the end, it took something besides courtier flattery or brash nationalism to convey the seriousness of the EIC's request. The introduction of these two individuals sent to Jahangir's court to lobby for the interests of the EIC perfectly

[67] The Oxford English Dictionary defines a *firman* as a grant, license, passport, permit ordered by an *Oriental* sovereign.
[68] Collingham, 83.
[69] *Ibid.*

characterize the type of people who undertook work in India; their personality types resonate throughout the history of British interactions in India: the affiliate and the abstainer.

My designation of curry as a British construction in the last chapter might seem a hard pill to swallow. After all, when we want a curry we do not head a British eatery, instead we go to an Indian restaurant. In order to understand fully why I have chosen such a designation we must look at the rise and fall of curry consumption amongst the British living and traveling in India between 1608 and 1900. We will notice that curry falls into two distinct phases: first, as a food of the Mughal Emperors and Indian Nawabs, then as an Anglo-Indian culinary stand-by. Unlike the attitudes discussed in chapter two, the notions of provenance and authenticity of Indian food does not take precedence in India as it did for a short time in Britain. Additionally, the shifting political field on which the British played in India contributed to the belief of Anglo-Indian ownership of curry on the subcontinent. This chapter will address the British conception of Indian foods and the growth of British ownership over curry over three hundred years of interaction in India.

The failure of Hawkins and Roe to secure a trading charter in the first four years of EIC residence in Indian did not amount to much in the big picture. The Emperor seemed to be waiting for something special to induce him to accept the terms of the EIC; a show of English naval superiority over the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century provided the impetus he needed. In 1612 Jahangir relented and issued a firmen guaranteeing the safe establishment of the first East India factory in Surat, on the Western coast. From the organization of that first factory in 1612 until the middle of the eighteenth century, the agents of the EIC comprised the sole representatives of England and English interests in India. Their foothold in Surat coupled with

the forces of changing power in Europe resulted in the rapid establishment of new Company trading posts at Madras, Calcutta and Bombay.

For the early employees of the East India Company 'home' – which always meant Britain- seemed like a world away. The only passage to India being the sea route that took an average of three months travel time around the Cape of Good Hope and into the Indian Ocean meant that Company employees operated in a relatively autonomous state from the East India House in London. The adage 'out of sight, out of mind' perfectly describes the attitudes of Englishmen in India before the nineteenth century. Separated from the cultural and social obligations of home, many of the early agents gorged themselves on the culture of their Indian hosts along with proffered heaping bowls of - what they would come to call - curry. While EIC factors operated in relative autonomy from their home base in London, so too did the factories dotted over the Indian subcontinent. To gain a proper appreciation of the distances between the new factories envision a map of Western Europe, "imagine an English community in Paris, another in Berlin, and a third in Rome; and then you will have an idea of the distances between the English communities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras."[70] Within India, the vast distances between trading factories resulted in the growth of self-sufficient, yet similar, factories and settlements.

Percival Spear notes that between 1612 and the 1750's, the small trading factories grew into small towns, some with more success than others; Bombay, so close to the commercially successful Surat, suffered at first while Madras boomed and Calcutta steadily grew. According to Lizzie Collingham, Calcutta became so successful that in 1690 it developed into the base of

[70] John Law, Glimpses of Hidden India, (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., ?), 43.

the Eastern Company operations on the sub-continent.[71] Merchants, lured to the EIC forts by the promise of secure trade opportunities with the English, settled near the Company factories, encouraging the growth of Indian towns.[72] Despite the growth of the factory towns, Company agents continued to live within the walls of the EIC forts.

Besides work, large communal messes punctuated life in the factories; the agents met for lunch and supper on a daily basis. This early period marks the institution of some of the peculiarities of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian social stratification. Besides the luxurious meals placed on their tables, notice also the seating arrangements at the EIC mess; the Governor presided over the meal, around him sat the other employees of the EIC, in order of precedence. This arrangement of individuals echoed throughout the history of the British in India – even at dinner parties during the Raj, diners sat around the table according to their rank at station.[73] The elaborate food service featured at the mess mimicked the feasts enjoyed by local Nawab's; Indian cooks employed by the Company prepared dishes featuring "thick purees, lots of spices, sweet and sour sauces, [and] cooked vegetables" that were popular with wealthy Indian Muslims.[74] However, in order to appease the English love of meats and illustrate the English need to adapt local cuisine to their satisfaction, EIC cooks obliged their diners by roasting a lot of game for mealtimes. Padre Ovington, a chaplain who visited the factory at Surat, noticed that "Indian, Portuguese and English cooks were employed to 'please the curiosity of every palate':

---

[71] Collingham, 87.

[72] Percival Spear, The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 5, 10.

[73] David Burton insists that the Raj dinner party was a breathtaking spectacle of Anglo-Indian ritual. The line going into dinner was headed by the host and the most senior lady at the party, followed by the hostess and the most senior man and then the rest of the dinner party in order of precedence, also the order they would sit at table. During the meal, "the senior lady would sit at the right hand side of the host, and the hostess would have the senior man on her right…for ladies, the etiquette was to talk first to the man on the right and then the man on the left, and to open conversations but never close them." Burton, 22.

[74] Nawab is the name for the local Indian and Muslim gentry; Rachel Lauden, "The birth of the modern diet," *Scientific American* (August 2000), 62; Collingham, 89.

everyday dishes included rice pilau, 'cabob' (a goulash-like curry), dumpoke, and plenty of chutneys and relishes."[75] More elaborate fare appeared on the table for Sundays and holiday occasions; Ovington observed that those instances featured "'Deer and Antelopes, Peacocks, hares and partridges, and all kinds of Persian fruits, Pistachoes [sic], Plums, Apricots, Cherries, etc.."'[76] Just reading the list of possible ingredients for a meal at the Surat factory assures one of the dearness of the repasts made available to EIC employees. Just imagine the exorbitant cost of the factory mess in Calcutta where both dinner and supper were rumored to included fifteen courses.[77]

When discussing the early EIC representative's introduction to Indian food we should remember that, like England, India came under the influence of a myriad of cultures before the arrival of the Europeans. According to Collingham, Syrian, Arab, Jewish, Persian and finally Mughlai culinary culture influenced the well-established cuisine of India well before the arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch and English.[78] Additionally, we must recognize that the Indian foods prepared in the factories of Surat were indicative of the cuisine enjoyed by the wealthiest fraction of the predominately-Muslim Mughlai society. Given the intersection of Christian and Muslim societies throughout time, the earliest employees of the EIC did not face culinary preparations foreign to their idea of good food. Take for instance a dish called *Mangee Real* described by an Englishman Edward Terry in 1616, that sounds like it could have come from The Forme of Cury; it included chicken in a stew of ground rice and almonds, flavoured with ambergris, sugar and

[75] D. Burton, 5; dumpoke is a cooking technique that calls for the deboning of a meat, stuffing it and then cooking it over steam.
[76] Ovington as quoted in Spear, 12.
[77] Spear,12.
[78] Collingham, 92.

rose water.[79] Terry's use of the actual title of the meal he describes marks one of few attempts by the British to indicate the proper names and authenticity of a recipe. Noticing a similarity to the medieval inspired foods that they still enjoyed in England paved an easy entry for Indian-style cuisine into the Company mess. The English had yet to start referring to the foods offered by their Indian hosts and cooks as curry, but they would in a very short time. Their notice of the similarity between the foods of India and the foods of medieval Britain may have been a catalyst that emboldened the men of the Company to venture outside of the walls of the fort and interact with their host population.

This earliest period of English involvement in the trade factories of India resulted in what Percival Spear calls the superficial 'Indianization' of many EIC agents. The men stationed in the factories ate Indian food, wore Indian clothes and associated themselves with Indian prostitutes; however, their way of living was not radically changed.[80] Lawrence James points out that "Indian sexual diversions paralleled those in Britain in form if not embellishments."[81] Prostitution was rife in both Britain and India so even sexual encounters with Indian women did not contribute overmuch in the process of Indianization. Behind the walls of the EIC factories, the agents remained English in thought and action; however, after 1750 the situation of the English in India changed significantly enough to give rise to the infamous 'nabobs' of British recollection.[82]

Without belabouring the point, the Seven Years' War fought between Britain and France influenced every area of the world where those two nations had interests. The war brought

---

[79] *Ibid*., 89.
[80] Spear, 22.
[81] Lawrence James, Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India, (New York, St. Martin's Green: 1997), 216.
[82] Nabob: a derisive term for people who gained wealth and prominence in India and used that wealth when they returned to Britain to purchase political power and the social standings that came with it.

members of the Royal Military into India as well as gave the EIC an excuse to raise their own army thereby increasing the English presence on the sub-continent. In India, British-Indian armies met French-Indian forces in a number of battles. Thanks in part to Robert Clive's military acumen, the British-Indian forces won out. Consequently, areas once held by the French came under the influence of the EIC, signaling the Company's entrance into Indian politics.[83] These events enabled the speedy growth of the Company and "weakened the force of tradition … to prevent old settlers from greatly influencing the new;" as the numbers of Britons swelled, the settlements that grew around the EIC forts "can be said to almost to have commenced life anew."[84] Following the success of his campaigns during the Seven Years' War, Robert Clive, better know as "Clive of India," successfully led the British forces to best Nawab of Bengal, Siraj Ud Daulah, at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and caused the transfer of all of the Bengali territory into the hands of the East India Company.[85] The Company metamorphosed from a commercial power to a political one with its takeover of the Benglai *dewanni*, civil administration, an action that heralded the decline of the Mogul empire and the rise of British governance.[86]

Although Surat was the first of the Company's factories in India, Clive's activities in Bengal catapulted Calcutta into a place of prominence in the EIC's India. The Bengali *dewanni* meant, most significantly, that the Company took the responsibility for the collection of taxes in the territory. Under the new rules of settlements in Bengal, the agents of the EIC experienced a

---

[83] Lynch, 39-42.
[84] Spear, 23.
[85] The reasons for the Battle of Plassey are numerous. The Nawab felt that the EIC had violated the conditions of their agreements by building more fortifications in Bengal than were allowed. In retaliation, he ordered the capture of the EIC's Fort William in 1756. This attack remains infamous in the history books because of the stories about the Black Hole of Calcutta-a large number of EIC prisoners were shoved into a very small cell causing the asphyxiation of more than half of the prisoners. Clive marshaled a couther attack at Plassey in 1757 to repay the Nawab's perfidy.
[86] Spear, 23-5, D. Burton, 2.

"transformation of factors into soldiers and statesmen…it meant that soldiers and officials brought commercial minds to their new duties, in which, if they were not always over-careful of the Company's coffers, they never forgot their own."[87] Rampant corruption perpetrated by a burgeoning number of EIC agents resulted in "English merchants living in Bengal [becoming] fabulously wealthy…these were the nabobs, envied yet despised at home as being rather coarse and ostentatious, and in outward ways quite *indianized* by the mistresses many of them had adopted."[88] Spear explains their influence on the *indianization* of Anglo-Indian society thus:

> These officials usually came to India as writers at the age of fifteen; with habits and principles unformed they easily assimilated the customs and traditions of the society into which they just entered. Further, the distribution of the collectors all over Bengal brought them into contact with the local country gentry, the nawabs and zamindars. In consequence, they not only failed to increase English social influence, but strengthened the already existing tendency to Indianize manners.[89]

The remembrances of the nabobs indicate food as an important feature of the *indianization* process of impressionable youth sent from the confines of the factory to collect taxes. Peter Mundy, one of these young fellows, divulged that in India he and his cohorts ate "'dopage and rice, kedgeree and pickled mangoes,'" additionally they used Anglo-Indian slang to communicate with one another and adopted Indian dress.[90] James Forbes, another would-be nabob, signed on to work with the company in 1766, at the tender age of seventeen.[91] A prolific writer who spent seventeen years in India, Forbes documented his observations of Indian life from which we can infer the influence of food on his own manner of living on the sub-continent.

---

[87] Spear, 28.
[88] D. Burton, 3.
[89] Spear, 32.
[90] D. Burton, 3; kedgeree is a dish of rice, fish, hard boiled eggs and spices; the slang would have been English with indigenous words sprinkled in.
[91] James Forbes, Oriental Memoirs: Selected from a Series of Familiar Letters Written During Seventeen Years Residence in India, vol.1, (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1988) reprint, 1.

Early in volume one of his four volume remembrances he makes a note about the capsicum pepper and its relation to curry:

> The Chili pepper (capsicum), of various sorts, is planted throughout Hindostan, and forms a principal ingredient in curries, and other savory dishes, which the natives are all fond of, whether they eat animal food or not: to the capsicum they generally add cardamom (amomum-repens, Linn.) a pleasant spice from the Malabar coast; which, with salt, pepper, and ginger, season their viands, mingled in small quantities with the rice, which is their chief article of food among all the higher classes of Indians.[92]

Men like Mundy and Forbes associated closely with the moneyed element of Indian society when they conducted their business collecting the dewanni dues. Such close association led to the assimilation of certain aspects of Indian culture that these young and adventurous men found desirable. This is especially true when it came to Indian women.

Historians note that the scarcity of European women contributed to the habit of Company men to have Indian mistresses while they worked in India. However, as previously mentioned, sexual or communal relations with women only differed subtly from experiences available to men in Britain. In the metropole, one could find common prostitutes – women forced into prostitution for lack of gainful employment or underpayment for work, or for loss of income from the death or disability of a spouse – or more expensive and well-kept prostitutes who worked for a wealthy Madame, or even acquire a mistress to be kept or to keep ones' house. The same was true in India. Some women were forced into prostitution to make ends meet, famine or "caste taboos on remarriage [that] often drove young Hindu widows into the margins of society and prostitution."[93] Others were trained as courtesans from a young age in places that Alexander Hamilton once called a "'Seminary of female Lewdness where Numbers of Girls are Trained up

[92] *Ibid*.,32-3.
[93] James, 214-15.

for the Destruction of unwary Youths.'"[94] However not all encounters were fleeting, many EIC men kept mistresses who, according to Richard Burton:

> …keeps house for him, never allowing to save money, or if possible to waste it. She keeps the servants in order. She has an infallible recipe to prevent maternity, especially if her tenure of office depends on such compact. She looks after him in sickness, and is one of the best nurses, and, as it is not good for a man to live alone, she makes him a manner of home.[95]

Of all the interactions between EIC men and Indian women, often these long-term female companions communicated languages, customs and the enjoyment of local foods.[96]

The rise of the nabob also came from the British desire to assert their wealth and dominance by competing with the local Indian elite. This competition for status resulted in the well-publicized Anglo-Indian habit of living beyond ones means. Besides the hiring of an army of servants to cater to every aspect of life in India, nabobs prepared food and entertainments that were vital to maintaining their status in the English settlements. Collingham cites James Macnabb as an example of this idea; in order to keep up appearances he spent upwards of £50 a month on food alone, to wit "his table would always have been well supplied with 'delicious salt humps, brisket and tongues…superb curry and mulligatawny soup.'"[97]

The remembrances of these nabobs in India indicate that by the late eighteenth century, the term curry emerged as a term for most Indian food. It is important to notice here that for the nabobs, curry meant the Indian foods eaten by the Indian elite. Their desire to compete with the local nobility opens the door for British ownership of curry, their idea of Indian food. From this

---

[94] *Ibid*, 211.
[95] *Ibid*., 215.
[96] Collingham, 111.
[97] Collingham, 112; Robert Twigger, "Inflation: The Value of the Pound 1750-1998", http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp99/rp99-020.pdf, 10, 12; according to my own calculations, made possible by a research paper on price indexes available at the British House of Commons Library, £50 in 1800 would have roughly equaled £2574 in 1998.

point on curry becomes Anglo-Indian instead of Indian. Following the transfer of governance from the EIC to the Crown in 1857, Anglo-Indian curry will metamorphose into something a little different, but for now, suffice it to say, that from the late 1700's curry became British. This period in the history of the British in India, roughly in the one hundred years between 1750 and 1850, coincides with the appearance of the first curry recipes in British cookery books. In a relatively short period, curry surfaces as a term to equip the British mind to understand the large variety of foodstuffs available across India. When Indians spoke of the dishes they prepared for their meals they called those dishes by their proper names while the British choose to compartmentalize all Indian food into one easy to remember term; curry, "a generic term for any spicy dish with a thick sauce or gravy in every part of India."[98] Even after witnessing Madhur Jaffrey's vitriol towards the term curry, the early British colonials thought curry was an apt term for the Indian food they consumed while living in India, for as Mrs.' Steel and Gardner indicate in their bestselling The Complete Indian Housekeeper & Cook: "Meat curries are legion…the procedure in all is the same."[99]

The nabob's association with the Nawabs of India caused one further important development in the expansion of British India. Namely, they began to associate wealth with gentility; a hallmark of the rising middle classes in Britain. Which explains why curry, in Britain, attached itself to the middle classes; however, in India the wealthy nabobs embraced the meal. Before long, the factors that styled themselves as nabobs believed that their wealth guaranteed their transformation into gentlemen. When they left India for Britain, the wealthy nabob returned home and instantly attempted to insinuate himself on the upper classes he was

---

[98] *Ibid*. 115.
[99] F.A. Steele and G. Gardner, The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook, (London: William Heinmann, 1921), 12th edition, 368.

now used to associating with: he invested in property and occasionally titles, entered Parliament and influenced the tide of imperial matters in the metropole, much to the derision and annoyance of the elites.[100] While the returning Company nabobs gave the impression that every person living in India had a "country estate, [a] troop of servants and ostentatious equipage;" the truth was much different than they supposed.[101] However, before they left India their conclusions about gentility actually contributed to the creation of British India into a society without a middle class.

Their attitudes of superiority and their identification with the Nawabs of India despite their merchant or military background "prevented the formation of any strong middle class to which the merchants should naturally have belonged."[102] Therefore, when the former soldiers from the Company and Royal militaries decided to stay and contribute to the growth of British settlements throughout occupied India they opened and maintained, "punch houses, European shops, or act[ed] as coachmen to settlers," there was no middle class for which to identify.[103] The stratification of Anglo-Indian society instead looked like this: the agents of the EIC held the pinnacle position in society while everybody else fit below the gap for the middle-class.[104]

Even though the stories of wealthy Anglo-Indian nabobs dominate the literature of the British in India, historians like Spear describe this period in the history of English and Indian affairs as one of transition. While the growth of English influence and settlement in India came with the growth of the *Indianization* of society, the period of wholesale English acceptance of Indian tradition and culture quickly reached its zenith.

---

[100] Spear, 32.
[101] Forrest, 22.
[102] Spear, 37.
[103] *Ibid*., 30.
[104] *Ibid*.

David Burton noticed that even though the first generation of individuals who explored outside of the bounds of the Company forts, studied and embraced the culture of their host nation, "they were very much visitors, too few in number, and too vulnerable to do anything about the aspects of Indian life of which they were secretly critical."[105] Consider also that the old Company hands did not want to confront the traditions of the Indian with whom they associated; "they believed that any such challenge would destabilize Anglo-Indian relations … and it would be bad for business."[106] So distrustful of any challenge, the EIC went so far as to ban Company chaplains from preaching to Indians in the company towns and restricted the number of missionaries allowed into India. Despite their efforts to successfully maintain the status quo established between the EIC and their Indian partners, when the Company charter came up for review in the early 1900's they could not compete with the powers of persuasion elicited by Evangelical Anglicans. The tide of Evangelism was so strong in England – especially since their beliefs helped successfully end Britain's hand in the African slave trade- that the EIC lost its control over missionary activity in India. The new East India Act of 1813 "not only opened the door to missionaries, but also provided for the appointment of a bishop and three archdeacons for India."[107] The arrival of Evangelical missionaries marks a point where the EIC began to loose its governing power on the subcontinent and attitudes about the Indians began to decline. With the arrival of the nineteenth century, the *indianization* of the British began to fail.

The evolution of curry lies bound up in the tale of the rise and fall of British interest in Indian culture. Considered by early Company officials and nabobs as an elite dish and served at

---

[105] D. Burton, 3.
[106] Niall Ferguson, Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons of Global Power, (New York: Basic Books, 2002),112; Anglo-Indian used here means relations between the EIC and Indian merchants.
[107] *Ibid.*, 112-13; 114.

most dinner parties, curry, after the transformation became a meal for breakfast and lunch but no longer the mainstay of evening gatherings; the drinking of punch too gave way and wine or beer took its place and clothing began to follow the fashions of Britain. However, this transition of attitudes did not take place overnight. The first half of the nineteenth century produced several authors who bridged the old interest with the new sensibilities. Through these individuals, we can trace curry in the tide of change.

Sir Richard Burton, a commissioned officer in the Indian army between 1842 and 1849, spent six months traveling in India while on convalescing leave. In his observations of the former Portuguese colony of Goa, Malabar and the hill station at Ootacamund Burton makes several mentions of curry, indicating its place in the imagination of the British. Written at a time when the debate about establishing a permanent settlement in India consumed the minds of government officials and intellectuals alike, Burton squarely places himself in the anti-colonization camp. That is not to say that he was an anti-imperialist, quite the contrary, he and others of a same mind used the example of the rise and fall of the Portuguese empire, especially in Goa, to indicate the folly of permanent settlement in India. The Portuguese situation provided "evidence that Europeans who attempted to establish permanent residence in India would inevitably degenerate, lapsing into the purgatory of poor whitedom and miscegenation."[108] This widespread belief in the failure of permanent settlement lends understanding to the attitudes about the colonized evidenced by the arriving colonials in the nineteenth century. Although Burton does not spell it out, without the arrival of Evangelical missionaries to save the "heathen" Indians and the "orientalized" British, permanent settlement might follow the path of the

[108] Dane Kennedy, introduction to Richard F. Burton, Goa and the Blue Mountains; or, Six Months of Sick Leave, (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1991), xii.

Portuguese. After all the nabobs had "overwhelmingly … adapted to Indian customs and learned Indian languages; many also took Indian mistresses and wives" who had children who, despite their British blood, "'in outward appearance [looked like] little mahomedans, wearing turbans etc..'"[109] However, for all of the dangers of miscegenation espoused by the anti-settlement supporters, Burton still believed that "'the greatest danger in British India is the ever-growing gulf that yawns between the governors and the governed; they lose touch of one another, and such racial estrangement leads directly to racial hostility.'"[110]

Burton's travels over India include some discussion of food, especially curry. Given his feelings about the problems plaguing the imperial situation and his attitude about settlement, Burton's personal adventures espouse a "do as I say, not as I do" attitude; Burton sampled the cuisine and culture of India with abandon. Throughout his remembrances in this one collection, he refers to curry on a number of occasions, as a meal of both Indians and Europeans. In the first instance, Burton describes his trip to Goa on a *pattimar* boat. A vessel usually used to transport cargo, Burton opted to take a leisurely trip along the western coast, traveling from Sind to Goa. His description of the vessel includes "half-a-dozen black 'tars' engaged in pounding rice [and] concocting bilious-looking masses of curry."[111] Considering that the boat did not usually transport passengers, Burton's mention of curry indicates that the meal was meant to feed the workers on the boat, and possibly Burton himself. Upon reaching Goa Burton spent a lot of time describing the situation of the Portuguese in India. Concerned with the outcome of permanent English settlement in India, he used the fate of the Portuguese colonials as a cautionary tale for his English readers. Curry receives a mention when he describes the flow of life of the colonials

[109] Ferguson, 111; second quote attributed to Captain Robert Smith.
[110] Isabel Burton quoted in Kennedy, viii.
[111] R. Burton, 3.

in Goa. The Portuguese, like the British, took many meals while at station. Burton describes the daily routine of the higher classes through their stomachs: "They rise early…take a light breakfast at some time between seven and nine…followed by dinner, usually at two…a heavy meal of bread, meat, soup, fish, sweetmeats, and fruits all served up at the same time, in admirable confusion…about five in the evening some take tea and biscuits…and the day concluded with a supper of fish, rice, and curry."[112] Burton follows up the observation with the quip, "considering the little exercise in vogue, the quantity of food consumed is wonderful."[113] On the subject of curry, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese, like the British, did not include the dish for the main meal of the day, lunch; instead curry featured as an at-home meal consumed in the evenings. Besides his discussion of the Portuguese, curry features in his description of the native Christians of the Goa provinces. A people "decidedly the lowest in the scale of humanity" they subsist on "fish and rice, with pork and fruit when they can afford such luxuries" while "clarified butter, rice, water, curry, and cocoa-nut milk are everyday food."[114] Curry, according to Burton, is a cheap dish enjoyed by all who live in Goa; from the highest classes of the Portuguese to the poorest classes of Christians.

Richard Burton's memoir begins with his trip through Goa but ends with his experiences amongst his British contemporaries. His overland trip from the Malabar Coast to the Blue Mountains allows Burton to introduce his audience to the trials of overland travel before the railroads stretched the length and breadth of the sub-continent. The extreme heat caused most travel to take place during the night, meaning meals were taken at village travelers' accommodations, *caravanserai*, (later government managed *dak* bungalows) during the days.

---

[112] *Ibid*., 91.
[113] *Ibid.*
[114] *Ibid*., 104.

Breakfast at these accommodations usually consisted of "a spatchcock, or a curry with eggs, and a plateful of unleavened wafers, called aps."[115] The dish of curried eggs mentioned by Burton smacks of British influence; once it became a popular condiment in British middle-class cookery, curry appeared more often at breakfast and supper than lunch.[116] Burton's last mention of curry references the plight of the Anglo-Indians in the vacation/convalescing towns of the Blue Mountains. It is clear from his description of Ootacamund, or "Ooty" as the British called it, that Burton had little patience for the pace of standard Anglo-Indian living in India. Perhaps as a means of excusing his speedy departure from the mountains, Burton complains:

> You dress like an Englishman, and lead a quite gentlemanly life – doing nothing…at the same time your monthly bills for pale ale and hot curries, heavy tiffins, and numerous cheroots, tell you, as plainly as such mute inanimate things can, that you have not quite cast the slough of Anglo-Indian life.[117]

Burton returned to his employ with the Indian Army after fleeing from the mountain towns dominated by Anglo-Indian holidaymakers.[118] Although he worked for several more years, his health never fully recovered until he returned to Europe.

Burton's attention to detail in his chronicle tells his audience about the facts of life in India, not just for the British, but also for many others, like the Portuguese and some of the indigenous populations living on the sub-continent. Burton's legacy speaks of a rabid imperialism but he occasionally tempered his personal feelings with the objective eye of an ethnographer. We are lucky that he took the time to notice the consumption of curry in his

---

[115] R. Burton, 255; Spatchcock is a split and roasted chicken.

[116] Curried eggs here should not be confused with what we consider deviled eggs, which usually contain curry powder for flavouring. According to Ms. Acton's text, curried eggs are hard-boiled eggs sliced thin and re-heated in gravy made of butter, rice flour, curry powder and onions, found on page 301 of Modern Cookery for Private Families.

[117] R. Burton, 289.

[118] Mountain towns like Ootacamund feature predominately in the writings of Anglo-Indians. The oppressive heat found in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay during the summer months forced many British settlers to the foothills where the air was cleaner and the conditions were more healthful.

travels. However, the use of the term curry represents the failure of his ethnographic mind. During his travels in Goa, he indicates that the highest classes of Portuguese colonials eat curry for supper, whereas a few pages later he indicates that the poorest native Christians who live in the region eat curry as an everyday meal. As democratic a notion as that is, it seems unlikely that the wealthy and poor in Goa are eating the same meal for supper. Burton's ethnographic spirit fails his readers when he does not take the time to investigate how the two pots of curry and rice might differ significantly.

In his dealings with the Anglo-Indian consumption of curry, Burton again fails his readers. Indian cooks who worked in the travelers inns or in Ootacamund found their proffered cuisine influenced by the demands and desires of the British palate. Throughout the text, his curry is merely a mixture of Indian spices and meat. Burton would have us believe that from the Goa to the Blue Mountains, every individual who ate curry ate the same dish. His missteps and indifference to the careful preparations of curry aside, Burton's inclusion of curry in his memoirs speaks to an idea of British ownership of meal. If Burton wrote that the Portuguese in Goa feasted on Vindaloo – a Goan adaptation of a Portuguese recipe- in the evenings or that he enjoyed a lovely Rogan Josh – a meaty masala dish from Northern India - while in Ootacamund, his readers could not have identified with his story. By describing the food as curry his audience ostensibly knew exactly what he was talking about – a mixture of meat and/or vegetables and Indian spices.

Up to this point our impression of India, its inhabitants and its food have relied on the memories of the men who experienced the daily tide of Indian life. Even though there were few British women living in India, we should not give the impression that they did not live and travel there before the establishment of the Crown colony. Three women, Fanny Parks, Isabella Fane,

and Emily Eden, all wrote about their experiences living and traveling in India well before Victoria was crowned its Empress.

The most prolific writer of the three, Mrs. Fanny Parks resided in India from 1822 to 1839. William Dalrymple's introduction of Mrs. Parks's journals notes that she went to India to join her husband who worked for the EIC. Being the daughter of a former colonial official, her mindset upon entering the lifestyle of India was much different from those of her contemporaries. Dalrymple comments that the longer she stayed in India the more "Indianised" she became; she "gradually transformed into a fluent Urdu speaker, spent less… of her time at her husband's *mofussil* posting, and more… of her time traveling around to visit her Indian friends and assimilating herself to the world she discovered."[119] Her admiration for the lifestyle of her Indian hosts eventually caused her to turn a critical eye on the activities of the British: missionary, military and EIC alike.

Fanny and her husband lived in India at a time when the attitudes toward potential colonial situations enjoyed by the British were on a cusp. Like the nabobs, travelers and intellectuals of Parks's ilk began to fade away when political, religious, and scientific countercurrents of the nineteenth century began to reach the frontiers of British influence. As the power of the Mugal and Maratha empires faded and the British undertook more governing power in the territories, a feeling of superiority replaced the attitudes of conviviality. In addition to the political climate in India, the rising tide of Evangelism taught individuals to view the Hindu religion as heathen, thereby replacing scholarly interest with scorn. Finally, ideas about racial superiority began to infiltrate the minds of the governing in India. Surprising though it may

[119] Fanny Parks, Begums, Thugs and White Mughals, (London: Sickle Moon Books, 2002), vii.

seem, the consumption of curry actually fits into this time of transition. By the time Fanny Parks arrived in India, nabobs

> began to be objects of surprise even, on occasions, of derision in Calcutta…there was a growing 'ridicule' of men 'who allow whiskers to grow and who wear turbans'…curries were no longer acceptable dishes for parties, and pajamas…for the first time became something that an Englishman slept in rather than something he wore during the day.[120]

Fonder of her Indian hosts or local Nabobs than her fellow citizens, Parks's memoirs make several mentions of the food served on Indian tables. In terms of curry, she only uses the word to describe the foods eaten by the common classes of Indians. Upper class foods, on the other hand, she calls *native* dishes. Take for instance a note from 1825; she mentions that upon her arrival at Sahseram, "a native gentleman, Shah Kubbeeroo-deen Amud, called upon us…at tiffin time he sent us some *ready-dressed* native dishes…it was his usual custom."[121] Other British travelers would probably describe such "*ready-dressed*" meals from a local Nawab as curries. Upon other occasions, especially when she found herself in the company of the favourite Nabob, Colonel Gardner, Fanny speaks of delightful "dinners of native dishes which were most excellent."[122] At Gardner's estate Parks once spoke of being offered food from the *zenana* (women's apartments) which was prepared by a Timoorian woman, a culture whose women prided themselves on their cooking. Fanny noted that those "dishes were so very unlike, and so superior to any food I had ever tasted…I never failed afterwards to partake of any dish when it was brought to me with the mysterious whisper, 'It came from within.'"[123]

While many other Europeans writing at the time would have described any dish offered to them from an Indian table as a curry, Parks makes a decided distinction between curry and

---

[120] *Ibid*., xi.
[121] *Ibid*., 42.
[122] *Ibid.* 201.
[123] *Ibid*., 201.

other native dishes. Parks' distinction speaks to a desire to preserve the spectacular in her remembrances rather than a need to preserve the authenticity of the dishes. We can assert that she desired to hold the culinary traditions of her hosts above the consumption of Anglo-Indian curry, but she did not have the foresight to preserve the origins of the dishes beyond their "native" status. The British ownership of curry had transformed the dish into a commonplace meal, by now a dish eaten all over the British Empire. Her preferred term, native dish, on the other hand, allowed her to maintain a notion of romantic Orientalism in her adventures. As for curry, Parks only mentions partaking of it upon two occasions during her time in India.

The first instance found Parks and her husband down on their luck while traveling in 1829; they left Benares and met rotten weather on their journey home. On their second night their camping spot comprised "a tent and nothing else…we were *planté* in the jungle without food, bedding, or warm clothing!"[124] Luckily, for the Parks "a camel driver caught a chicken, and drawing out a long queer crooked blade, killed it and dressed an excellent curry in a few minutes" that they "devoured…to the last grain of rice."[125] The second mention of a curry meal finds the Parks in yet another precarious position. In January of 1832, while traveling to Lucknow, their horses had trouble navigating the sands of the Oude. As the night approached the couple, again without a place to stay or food to eat, noticed a shelter in the distance that proved habitable for the travelers. Upon setting up, "a boy came forward and saying 'I Christian,' offered to procure a chicken and give us a curry, which we ate off red earthen dishes, with two bits of bamboo as a knife and fork, after the style of chopsticks."[126] These two

[124] *Ibid*., 68
[125] *Ibid*., 68-9.
[126] *Ibid*., 104.

instances indicate to her readership that she is not opposed to eating curry; she merely prefers other "native" dishes when she has the choice.

Besides her few tales of eating curry to sustain herself while in the wilds of India, Parks reserves her mentions of curry when discussing the culinary creations of Indian servants. One of the more interesting curry ingredients that she attributes to Indians is locusts. While visiting some of her husband's EIC colleagues in Allahabad in 1832 Fanny observes storm of locusts that caused great excitement amongst the staff working at the fort. A sudden rainstorm caused an abundance of the locusts to fall to the ground upon which "the native servants immediately ran out and caught them by handfuls, delighted to get them to make a curry; for which purpose they may, perhaps, be as delicate as prawns."[127] Instead of expressing obvious disdain for this practice of the servants, Parks follows up her story with the idea that "the food of St. John in the wilderness was locusts and wild honey."[128] Parks mentions that she and some companions endeavored to taste the locust curry in 1833 when the *khansaman* (head table servant) where they were dining repeated the story that freshly caught locusts "'in curry they are very good, like prawns, but roasted whole the moment they are caught, they are delicious!'"[129] As to the tasting, Parks "had not the resolution enough to taste them."[130] Parks decision to relate this particular story about curry harkens back to her desire to perpetuate the foreignness of her experiences; nowhere else does curry feature such an un-British ingredient.

Parks notices when she travels by boat that the *dandies* (boatmen) eat curry as their main source of sustenance. So too do the *slave* girls working in the *zenana* at the nabob, Colonel Garderner's home; "each slave girl carried her curry and rice on the wheaten cake which was

[127] *Ibid*., 140.
[128] *Ibid*., 140.
[129] *Ibid*., 158.
[130] *Ibid.*

about the size of a plate, and used it as such; until having eaten the contents she finished with the cake."[131] Like Burton, Parks generally does not refer to the preparation techniques for the curries that she mentions. Besides chicken or locusts, the reader does not receive an explanation about what makes a curry taste good in Allahabad or Sahseram. Moreover, as with Burton, we are left to infer that her audience knows exactly what a curry is and therefore she need not supply a recipe for it.

Fanny Parks represents an aberration when compared to the memoirs and letters of her female contemporaries living and traveling in India. Isabella Fane and Emily Eden filled their writings primarily with observations about life in English settlements and spoke of the people of India more as an afterthought. The introduction to Miss Fane's letters suggests that the status of the Indian population surrounding the women spoke to their treatment as subjects in letters and journals. Miss Fane's pen treated Indians in Calcutta and throughout the Bengal region with indifference, a situation that John Pemble attributes to the colonial situation of the Bengalis under the British. Essentially, the British viewed them as a conquered population. In the late eighteenth century, the Bengalis attempted to resist the growing influence of the EIC in their territory; "the ease with which their resistance had been overcome at the battle of Plassey (1757) had stamped them once and for all, in British estimation, as soft and effeminate."[132] On the other hand, the British treated the people of the Punjab with respect and even a little awe because the EIC were visitors to the region, not the ruling class.[133]

Mentions of curry throughout Miss Fane's and the Miss Eden's journals and letters are rather few considering the amount of time they spent in India. Unlike Parks, Fane never owns up

---

[131] *Ibid.* 245; 70; 244.
[132] Isabella Fane, Miss Fane in India, (London: Alan Sutton, 1985), 8.
[133] *Ibid.*, 8.

to eating a curry. She mentions it in passing when she describes the meals prepared by the boatmen when she travels with her father to inspect the troops. Outside of the town of Culna their processions halted

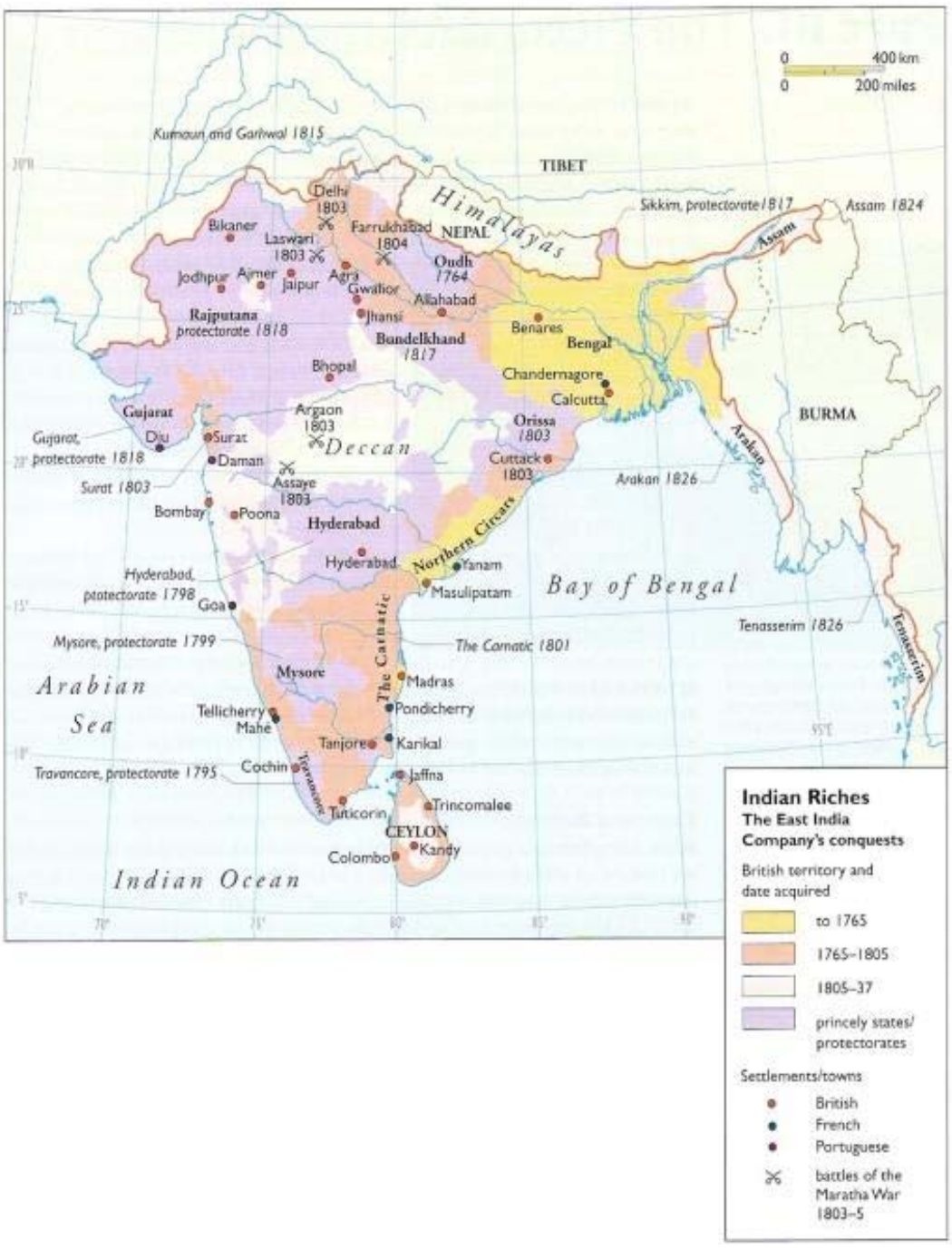
> off a piece of ground chosen expressly by my father for accommodation of our Hindoo [sic] servants, that they might put on shore to cook and eat their victuals…their religion forbids their doing anything of the kind on their sacred river…on shore they make a little fireplace of clay in a minute, make some fire, and cook a nice curry.[134]

While Miss Fane never mentions eating a meal of curry; however, her descriptive term "nice" indicates that she both understands curry as an Anglo-Indian dish and that she eats it regularly.

The letters and diaries of Miss Eden shed some light on the paucity of Miss Fane's references to curry in her journals. It is not that each of these ladies do not deign to mention the act of eating, on the contrary, dinners and breakfasts receive regular discussion - a description of what they are eating is missing. In a 1837 letter Emily Eden relates that the King of Oude's cook had been sent to accompany her brother Lord Auckland, and herself. This cook would prepare "a second dinner, which they put down by the side of the other [common dishes]…some of the dishes are very good, though too strongly spiced and perfumed for English tastes…but we stick to the rice and pilaus and curries."[135] Miss Fane lived in India at the same time as Eden; they even shared a few meals together; indicating that if Emily Eden enjoyed her curry then so did Isabella Fane. Each woman's silence about curry actually speaks volumes about the dish. By the time that Fane and the Edens arrived in India, the British feeling of ownership over curry was so strong that to mention that one ate a late supper at home with her family is to say that at least one dish on the table was curry.

---

[134] *Ibid*., 110.
[135] Emily Eden quoted in D. Burton, 38.



136

[136] Dalziel, 59.

In the years following the departure of the Fanes and the Edens, the situation in India underwent a significant change. Throughout the nineteenth century, the EIC found itself removed more and more from the governance of its Indian holdings. In 1857, the outbreak of the First War for Indian Independence signed the metaphorical death warrant for the Company's political control in India.[137] The conflict lasted for most of the year and centered in the northern and central territories held by the EIC. The conflict was particularly vicious in the minds of the British. For the Sepoys – the leaders of the conflict – "were Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs [who] regarded their calling as warriors as inseparable from their religious faith."[138] When rumors began to spread in 1857 that they were to use new gun cartridges lubricated with animal fat the Sepoys began to believe that the British were going too far in their quest to stamp out Indian religions and traditions.[139] For them, the First War for Independence amounted to a religious war; indeed surviving Indian reports repeat the idea that they were at war "'in the cause of religion.'"[140] As such, any Christian was a target for the Sepoys. The "rebellion," as the British remember it, resulted in the loss of many lives. The Anglo-Indian blood spilled was not only that of EIC and military men, but women and children as well. For instance, in Cownpore over two hundred women and children were slaughtered and at Lucknow, after nine months of siege, nearly two-thirds of the British community were dead.[141] Despite the warnings of Richard Burton and his anti-settler cohorts, by the time the dust had settled from the conflict, Victoria and her parliament had transformed India from a commercial venture into a crown colony; marking

[137] Also called the Sepoy Rebellion, the Indian Mutiny, and the Rebellion of 1857. It is extremely difficult to find a neutral term for this event so I have defaulted to the most popular modern term for the conflict.
[138] Ferguson,121.
[139] The cartridges had to have the heads removed from them before use; this involved the use of a soldier's mouth. The Sepoys would have defiled their bodies if they had used the cartridges.
[140] Ferguson, 121-22.
[141] Ferguson, 123-4.

1857 as the turning point in the history of the British in India.[142] After the battle was over and the Sepoys and the East India Company were vanquished India was reborn as the British Raj.

The metamorphosis of India's status did not merely include the transfer of governance to the crown; it effectively opened up the sub-continent to settlers. The difficulty attributed to the dearth of British women in India quickly became a problem of the past. Not only did women accompany the army of Civil Servants assigned to duty in India, many unmarried women arrived at Indian ports during the cool weather to partake in the Anglo-Indian social season with the view of finding a husband employed by the Indian Civil Service. These women settlers, collectively called memsahibs, did much to influence the Anglo-Indian lifestyle; theirs was a civilizing mission. They attempted to bring the social norms of Victorian Britain into the colonial situation. Because of this, earlier historians of the Raj blame the arrival of the memsahibs for the ultimate failure of the British imperial mission in India. It is true that the pace of life changed in India after their arrival, but the approaches to imperialism and especially the latter nineteenth-century attitudes about the colonized were already changing in India. Serendipity merely arranged for those changes to coincide with the arrival of British women.

Besides the previously mentioned arrival of Evangelical missionaries' intent on Christianizing and civilizing the Indians, the British in 1858 could add most of the sub-continent to their list of people to which they could feel morally and technologically superior. During Miss Fane's sojourn in India, the British viewed the Bengalis as a conquered people because of the Battle of Plassey; now, in the aftermath of the First War for Independence, they considered a much larger population of India as conquered.[143] In addition to religion and technology, the

[142] The colony of India included present day India, Pakistan and Myanmar.
[143] The British had control over the southern portion of the subcontinent but the northern section still included some princely states/protectorates.

memsahib invasion coincided with a wave of new "isms" that justified the British imperial endeavor: "racism, paternalism, ethnocentrism, and national chauvinism."[144] However, one cannot deny that the memsahib changed the rhythm of life in India. The memsahib-ran homestead in the British Raj tried to replicate life in the metropole. Owing in part to the new closeness of "home" - which for the Anglo-Indians never meant India, it always meant the metropole- British women had easy access to British furniture and clothing and to ingredients popular in Anglo-French cookery. The memsahibs were lucky; by the latter half of the nineteenth century, the travel time to India had been reduced from three months – baring unforeseen problems- to as many weeks with the opportunity of the overland route through Egypt in 1838 and then by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

In this new, closely connected empire, curry's popularity amongst the Anglo-India population went through transition. The memsahib's insistence on keeping to the culinary fashions of home created a new type of food culture, Anglo-Indian cuisine, a food style that completed the transition of curry ownership to the British. On the topic of Anglo-Indian cuisine, Lizzie Collingham notes two important ideas about curry and the British. Their indifference to the various types of Indian food they consumed caused a flattening of Indian cookery, and their rate of travel across India, helped by the introduction of the railroad across the sub-continent, caused the spread of their favourite curry dishes across the areas of British settlement, in India and beyond its borders. More plainly put, their "cooks gradually altered and simplified their recipes to suit British tastes," resulting in Anglo-Indian cookery, the "first truly pan-Indian cuisine."[145] This cuisine grew from British palates that "adopted recipes, ingredients, techniques,

[144] Margaret Strobel, European Women and the Second British Empire, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), xi.
[145] Collingham, 117, 118.

and garnishes from all over the subcontinent and combined them in a coherent repertoire of dishes."[146] However, when asked what they had to eat while staying in India, any Briton who mentioned curry could still be describing both Indian food and Anglo-Indian food. When they met an unfamiliar dish prepared for them by their Indian cooks or were served from a table of the Indian gentry the British labeled it curry; however, when they prepared their daily menus for the cook, they used curry to describe the Anglo-Indian cuisine with which they were familiar.

The memsahibs brought some changes in the lifestyles of the Raj but some things remained the same. Like their predecessors in the East India Company, the average colonial hired a veritable army to oversee the daily routine of chores in India resulting in a legion of British colonials with little but work to occupy their time. Eating and entertaining remained fixtures of the Anglo-Indian experience. Like Tolkien's hobbits, the Anglo-Indian population ate numerous meals throughout the day: breakfast, tiffin (second breakfast), lunch, tea and supper. At these numerous eating occasions, excepting the frequent elaborate dinner parties, the diners ate curry. Collingham points out that the tables of the Anglo-Indians were incomplete unless they included "bowls of curry that, eaten like a hot pickle or a spicy ragout, added bite to the rather bland flavors of boiled and roasted meats."[147] However, this post-1857 curry falls under the second phase of the Anglo-Indian definition; it is not necessarily the same as the dishes described by Burton, Parks, Fane or Eden.

We have castigated our early writers because they did not mention the regional differences in the curries they observed and ate. However, with the growth of the new Anglo-Indian cuisine, there came some indication of regional variations in Indian food. Granted this

[146] *Ibid*., 118.
[147] *Ibid*., 115.

acknowledgement resulted from Anglo-Indian definitions of regionalism - a rather obtuse and arbitrary division of the sub-continent into convenient divisions. According to Joseph Edmonds, Anglo-Indians believed that curry came in three dominant flavours: Bengal, Madras and Bombay; yet most cookery books included recipes for Ceylon and /or Melay curry as well.[148] The Anglo-Indian regionalization scheme arose simply from the amount of time the British occupied these areas. Madras came under the control of the EIC in 1639 followed by Bombay in 1661, the Bengali city of Calcutta in 1690 with the rest of the Bengali region after the Battle of Plassey in 1757; finally, the EIC won Ceylon from the Dutch in 1796. Since Anglo-Indians had consumed the indigenous foods of these areas for so long it made sense for them to regionalize curry in such a manner.[149] W.H. Dawe's book The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery gives recipes for Madras, Bengal and Malay curry, while an unidentified Lady Resident includes a receipt for Madras Curry paste in her book The Englishwoman in India. Besides providing recipes for curry which will allow memsahibs to sound knowledgeable about food in India when they order menus as part of their housekeeping duties, cookbooks also worked to solidify the meaning of curry in the minds of Anglo-Indians. Found between receipts for their favourite British dishes, curry is understood as an Anglo-Indian construction and not traditional Indian food.

Dawe's book gives the best example of the differences between Anglo-Indian curries. Madras curry comes across as the most pedestrian of the curries; it called for mutton, onions, and curry powder. Madras curry powder, according to the author, was composed of turmeric, ginger powder, coriander-seed, cayenne powder, black pepper, cumin-seed and cardamoms.[150] His Bengali curry, on the other hand, called for the creation of a curry paste made of "a dozen

---

[148] *Ibid.*
[149] Dalziel, 59.
[150] W.H. Dawe, The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery, (London: Elliot Stock, 1888), 59, 69.

onions, a teaspoonful of cayenne pepper, and an ounce of coriander seeds." These ingredients were pounded together into a mortar to wait for their addition to the meat.[151] On the cooking end of the receipt, Dawe gives the direction to fry onion and turmeric in ghee to cut the bitterness of the spice, to which curds were added. These two mixtures prepared, it was finally time to put together all the ingredients for the meal:

> Put all into a pan, adding the meat cut in pieces, two ounces of Nariyál-cocoanut grated, and salt to taste. While the meat is browning, add a little water to the stew to prevent its burning, and stir constantly. As it is supposed to be a dry curry, no gravy need be added. Peas and other vegetables may be substituted for the meat, to vary the dish.[152]

Finally, his recipe for Malay curry includes the ingredients for a very different type of dining experience. The Malay curry included an ingredient called the pulwul, "a vegetable the size of an egg and is much used in curries."[153] The cook stuffs the pulwul with ground meat - chicken is called for in the recipe – and adds it to a sauce of coconut milk, lemongrass and curry spices. The curry mixture used for this dish differs only in its inclusion of garlic and its exclusion of coriander or caraway, spices that would "destroy the cocoanut flavour."[154] Dawe seemingly appreciated the foods that he experienced in India, so much that he not only made notes about the regional differences that he noticed, but also of the construction of the meal, down to the correct process of adding ingredients. His careful notes, however, were lost on most of the Anglo-Indian eating public who did not prepare their own curries but left that task to their cooks. Overall, despite their willingness to notice the large regional differences in their curry, the British palate

---

[151] *Ibid*., 59.
[152] *Ibid*., 59.
[153] *Ibid*., 61; The term Pulwul is no longer in use, I believe the ingredient is the Thai Eggplant. It stands to reason that Anglo-Indians were taking curry recipes with them from the India into Malaya and Ceylon, the original recipes would have called for eggplant, an indigenous Indian vegetable, but with none available the cooks would have improvised and used the local eggplant variant. Additionally, the Thai eggplant resembles the vegetable described by Dawe.
[154] *Ibid.*

was too obtuse to notice the regional and environmental minutia that influenced their meals. Their "broad categorization missed out on much of the subtle variety of dishes…even within one region the variations in soil, water, and air from one locality to another are thought to produce subtle distinctions in taste."[155]

The creation of Anglo-Indian cuisine completed the Raj's conquering of curry. The mystery of the dish resolved and the taste of the curry regionalized to the comfort and palates of the Anglo-Indians, they began to turn their backs on curry in favour of what they considered civilized cuisine, namely Anglo-French concoctions. However, curry never disappeared from their tables; it just no longer required the attention it received at first. The sahibs and memsahibs left the older settlers who adored and propagated their love for curry throughout the colony to watch with sadness as "the steady advance of civilization in India [caused] the sublime art of curry-making" to gradually pass into history.[156] As Col. A.R. Kenney-Herbert, who published under the name Wyvern put it, that generation "fostered the art of curry-making, and bestowed as much attention to it as we, in these days of grace, do to copying the culinary triumphs of the lively Gauls."[157] The author blames the decline of curry making on the careless handling and storage of curry powder and the loss of valuable recipes, once guarded like "other precious secrets of a lady's escritoire."[158] Writing for "Anglo-Indian Exiles," Wyvern brought recipes for "reformed cookery" for those Anglo-Indians who had returned home and other interested parties. He may have lamented curry's loss of popularity amongst the Anglo-Indians in India, but he hoped, with this book, to make it accessible to his audience in the metropole. A discussion of

---

[155] Collingham, 116.
[156] Wyvern, Culinary Jottings for Madras, (London: Prospect Books, 1994) reprint of 1885 edition, 285.
[157] *Ibid*., 286.
[158] *Ibid.*

those Anglo-Indians who returned to Britain and how they influenced the British desire for curry will be the topic of our next chapter.

The story of curry in India, for our purposes, ends here; beyond the turn of the twentieth century, its consumption in India did not change enough to warrant further inquiry; the Anglo-Indian mind decided the fate of curry before the turn of the century. However we would be remiss if we did not note that the British did actually bring British curry back to India. In the pages of cookery books and in hotels and restaurants frequented by British travelers and Anglo Indians. The most interesting of the dishes brought back to India is Chicken Tikka Masala. While its specific provenance remains contested, popular wisdom claims that the dish first appeared in a Bangladeshi restaurant in England. After a patron of the establishment complained that a dish of traditional Chicken Tikka lacked gravy, the chef supposedly whipped up gravy of cream of tomato soup and a few spices for the patron: Chicken Tikka Masala was born. Since then the dish has found a home on the menus of most curry houses in Britain, America and even in establishments patronized by Europeans in India.

Food provided one of the seminal experiences of EIC employees and British colonizers in India. As the scope of Britain's influence transformed and grew, the conceptions of Indian food changed. This chapter traced the Anglo-Indian appropriation of Indian food and its transformation into curry in the British mind.

Notions of authenticity and provenance introduced in chapter two did not last in the rapidly changing situations faced by the EIC in India. By the time Clive bested the Nawab of Bengal in 1757, the growth of the nabob sealed the destiny of Indian food at the hands of the British. The nabob's desire to compete with the local Indian elite led to the designation of Indian food as curry. A purely British construct, to mention curry was to mention Indian food. We

have chosen to consider this phase as the Anglo-Indian curry period. In the era before the First War for Indian Independence, curry, like other Indian cultural and traditional aspects, enjoyed a prominent place in the minds of Anglo-Indians. Curry regularly featured on their tables and often appeared at EIC dinner parties. However, as the years passed it became commonplace. The British victory in the First War for Indian Independence in 1857 and the arrival of more British women into India brought about one more turning point for curry. The Anglo-Indians took their ownership one-step further in the nineteenth century by adapting curry more to their palates and to their ideas of regionalism. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, curry could mean Anglo-Indian curry whose flavours had been regionalized into the four regions where the British had large holdings or it was still used as a term of understanding for Indian cuisine. The final step completing the ownership of curry by the British resulted in a decline of the dish's popularity in India. Memsahibs brought a desire to mimic the fashions and tastes of home to colonial India. As we will see in our next chapter, the fate of curry in the metropole enjoyed a different path.

Chapter 4

The Curious Fate of Curry in the Metropole

"Capital," said he. His mouth was full of it; his face quite red with the delightful exercise of gobbling. "Mother, it's as good as my own curries in India."

"Oh, I must try some, if it is an Indian dish," said Miss Rebecca. "I am sure everything must be good that comes from there."[159]

Our last chapter traced the British ownership of curry as well as monitored the rise and fall of that dish's popularity amongst Anglo-Indians living in India. Curiously, as we will see, even as its popularity began to decline in India, its star rose in Britain. The circumstances behind its popularity there can be partially laid at the feet of individuals like Thackery's rotund nabob, Joseph Sedley, and culinary authors like Col. A.R. Kenney-Herbert; each man, fictional or otherwise, returned to Britain with a taste and appreciation for Anglo-Indian curry. In addition to returning nabobs, EIC employees, members of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army who brought their taste for curry back home with them, the crowning of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1876 increased the popularity of all things Indian in the metropole.[160] In a word, curry quickly became ubiquitous in the metropolitan British diet. Its popularity came about because of several factors: travelers returning home with recipes for their favourite curries, a number of middle-class cookery books that began featuring curry recipes, the dish's appearance as an a la carte item at several London restaurants and the opening of social clubs for Anglo-Indians. Similar to the instances mentioned in chapters two and three, the popularity and consumption of curry in Britain can be measured in phases. Here, however, we will utilize

[159] William Makepeace Thackery, Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero, (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 26.
[160] Collingham, 129-136.

cookery books, restaurant guides and the history of the Oriental Club to trace curry concurrently in the Anglo-Indian and British phases, emerging with a more solid understanding of Britain's ownership of the dish.

Before we discuss the popularity of curry in cookery books, we should back up and discuss the advent of commercially produced curry powders in Britain. As we saw in chapter two, curry powder recipes that appeared in cookbooks soon gave way to receipts that instructed cooks to add a spoonful of purchased curry powder to their culinary creations. The reason for this rather quick change occurred because of price and convenience. Easy access to the ingredients needed to make curry powders made it easy for grocers to make and sell ready-made curry powders to their patrons for prices below homemade curry powders. We mentioned in chapter three that Anglo-Indians regionalized the flavours of their curries; domestically produced curry powders followed that same trend. One historian observes that by the end of the nineteenth century "even non-specialist grocers normally stocked three types of curry powder: a yellow, a brown, and a fiery, chilli [sic]-flavoured red one."[161] It should not be surprising to note, given the choice, shoppers preferred to purchase imported curry stuffs over ones domestically produced. Even Wyvern used his book to tout the superiority of imported curry powders.

One of the biggest problems with domestically produced powders was adulteration. Wyvern goes accuses some perfidious grocers of buying Barrie's powder, an imported variety, and making concoctions featuring: "Two parts of arrowroot coloured with saffron, and one part Barrie…a mixture that can hardly with justice be called 'genuine Madras curry powder,' not withstanding its being bottled in a very pretty bottle, and priced two and six."[162] For that reason,

[161] *Ibid*., 141.
[162] Wyvern, 288-9.

consumers who could afford the added expense traveled to specialist shops that featured curry stuffs of the best reputation.

Collingham notes that by 1784 Sorlie's Perfumery Warehouse in London sold imported curry powders and pastes to those willing to travel to Picadilly for it.[163] Wyvern weighs in with his recommendation for the best imported curry powder available in Britain: Barrie's Madras. Concerned that his readers would get the wrong impression, Wyvern assured his audience that "my advice is not of a 'gent' traveling for Messrs. Barrie and Co., it is the honest exhortation of one, my friends, who has the success of your curries very close at heart."[164] He goes on to enlighten the audience about the best place to obtain Barrie's Madras, the "Oriental Depot" on the southern side of Leicester Square. The shop had a smell to make ones mouth water and a list of patrons to impress any familiar with Anglo-Indian Society in India. Wyvern admits, "the smell and the order book convinced me…the former was that of my friend Barrie, and the latter contained the names of such high degree in connection with India that I immediately removed my hat."[165] Although domestically produced or imported curry powders remained popular, their esteem never caused cookbook authors to stop reprinting recipes for making the spicy mixtures at home.

Many cookery authors believed, like Wyvern, the nature of curry powder required that it be made in large quantities and kept in an airtight container, because the quality of the curry flavours improved upon storage.[166] Authors continued to furnish recipes for making curry powders at home so that cooks could control the quality of their powders and excellence of their curry dishes. Mrs. Beeton, one of the preeminent female cookery authors of the nineteenth

[163] Collingham, 141.
[164] Wyvern, 288.
[165] *Ibid.*
[166] *Ibid.*, 287.

century, included the recipe for Dr. Kitchener's *Indian Curry-Powder* in her text just as Wyvern provided his idea of a basic recipe for curry powder in his. By comparing the two recipes, it is possible to begin our discussion about the difference between Anglo-Indian curry and British curry in the metropole. Isabella Beeton's receipt called for: ¼ lb. coriander-seed, ¼ lb. turmeric, 2 oz. of cinnamon seed, ½ oz. cayenne, 1 oz. of ground ginger, ½ oz. allspice, 2 oz. of fenugreek-seed."[167] Wyvern's on the other hand, said the most enjoyable curry powder contained: "4 lbs. of turmeric, 8 lbs. of coriander-seed, 2 lbs. of cummin [sic]-seed, 1 lb. of poppy-seed, 2 lbs. of fenugreek, 1 lb. of dry-ginger, ½ lb. of mustard-seed, 1 lb. of dried chillies [sic], 1 lb. of black pepper corns." The two recipes contain common ingredients with the inclusion of turmeric, coriander, ginger, fenugreek seed and each has a spicy component. However, each recipe would produce different flavours. For our discussion of Anglo-Indian and British curries, we need to consider the disposition of each author.

Colonel Arthur Robert Kenney-Herbert, known to us as Wyvern, was a self-proclaimed Anglo-Indian exile living in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. He returned home after spending thirty-three years in India attached to the Madras Calvary.[168] Truly an epicure at heart and a military man second, the recipes printed in his book reflect his fondness for the curries he ate in India and a desire to communicate Anglo-Indian curry to fellow exiles and other interested parties in the British Empire. Simply, Wyvern wanted everybody to be able to prepare a tasty curry, a task that anybody could accomplish with ease given their attention to careful preparation and proper ingredients:

> The actual cooking of a curry presents no special difficulty. A cook who is adept with the stew-pan, and who has mastered the art of slow, and very gentle

[167] Isabella Beeton, The Book of Household Management, (London: Ward, Locke, and Tyler, circa 1860's), 220.
[168] Wyvern, iii-iv.

> simmering, will, whether a Frenchman, an Englishman, or a mild Hindu, soon become familiar with the treatment of this particular dish. The knotty points are these:- First the powder or paste, next the accessories, and lastly the order in which the various component parts should be added.[169]

Wyvern's text illustrates his idea of the classic conception of Anglo-Indian curry. Besides his basic curry powder recipe, he also includes directions for making all of the Anglo-Indian regional curry favourites: Bengal, Madras, Bombay and Ceylon. His recipes speak to the idea of presenting authentic recipes, a notion we covered in previous chapters; however, we know that authenticity, when it comes to curry, means authentically Anglo-Indian and not Indian. Mrs. Beeton, on the other hand, illustrates another type of curry that developed in the nineteenth-century: the British curry.

Mrs. Beeton was a young married woman who, to help her husband's flagging publishing business, wrote one of the most influential middle-class cookery books in British history. She died in her early twenties, just before the printing of the second edition of her book. She never left England so only knew about curry from her associations and other cookery books. Accordingly, we can surmise that her decision to include a curry powder recipe in her text resulted from necessity, it being a component in some of her other dishes. In a note following the preparation instructions for the powder, Mrs. Beeton says, "we have given this recipe for curry-powder, as some persons prefer to make it at home; but that purchased at any respectable shop is…far superior…and very frequently more economical."[170] Of the ten curried recipes that Mrs. Beeton includes in her text, only one hints at the Anglo-Indian background for curry: Curried Fowl, á la Indienne. Instead of propagating the popularity of Anglo-Indian curry in the metropole, Beeton preferred to use it in a purely British way. In curry powder Beeton saw the

[169] Wyvern, 287; as honest as Wyvern's intentions were, the number of aspects that needed to come into play to make his curries taste as they did in India were impossible to reproduce.
[170] Beeton, 220.

perfect seasoning agent to dress up leftover meats; she refers to this as cold meat cookery. Leftover beef, chicken, veal, mutton, fowl and fish were curried in a similar fashion: cold meat " 2 large onions, 1 apple, 2 oz. butter, 1 dessertspoonful of curry-powder, 1 teaspoonful of flour, ½ pint of gravy, 1 tablespoonful of lemon-juice."[171] Mrs. Beeton's British curry dishes followed a trend amongst middle-class cookery authors, a trend that led to the nationalizing of curry in the British diet.

As Collingham notes, "whether it was for the taste, its practicality, or its nutritional values, curry was firmly established…by the 1850's…while [it] was 'formerly a dish almost exclusively for the tables of those who had made long residence in India, [it] is now so completely naturalized, that few dinners are thought complete unless one is on the table.'"[172] The nationalization of the meal happened because of women like Beeton; the women of the middle-classes who sought to adapt a seemingly exotic meal to the palates of their readers. As Susan Zlotnick pointed out:

> The Englishwoman at home could remake the foreign into the domestic by virtue of her own domesticity…in being brought back to England and located in the domestic sphere…curry could be naturalized, converted from the exotic into the familiar (and the familial) through its association with the woman's domain of the home and kitchen.[173]

Whether we discuss British curry or the nationalization of curry, we are speaking about the same thing. This curry of the metropole was not like the curries the Anglo-Indians fondly remembered because it was adapted to suit the palates of the British at home.

As Wyvern and Beeton indicate, curry in the metropole followed divergent paths with former residents of India and the adventurous preferring Anglo-Indian curry and others in Britain

---

[171] *Ibid*., 466.
[172] Collingham, 138.
[173] Susan Zlotnick, "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian Britain," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2/3. Gender, Nations and Nationalisms, (1996), 62-3.

choosing to use curry as a dress-up for leftovers. However, that is not necessarily true. While cookery books indicate that "there was virtually nothing that the British would not stew in curry sauce, from ordinary cuts of meat to calf's feet, ox palates, sheep's heads, lobsters and periwinkles," it soon "shook off its reputation as a way of using up leftovers and began to appear at dinner parties."[174] Eliza Acton, first mentioned in chapter one, provides the perfect example for us to speak about the coexistence of Anglo-Indian and British curry in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Eliza Acton's book, Modern Cookery for Private Families, first published in 1845 and republished up into the twentieth century, spoke to the popularity of Anglo-Indian and British curry in the metropole by the middle of the nineteenth century. The inclusion of the appearance of these two curries in Acton's book becomes more important when one considers that prominent food writers like Elizabeth David consider Acton's book as "'the final expression, the crystallization, of pre-industrial England's taste in food and attitude to cookery.'"[175] It is important to notice that concerning curry she tried to write for the needs and wishes of her largely middle-class audience; Acton placated her readers by including recipes for both curry types. Ostensibly, she tried to mark a division between British and Anglo-Indian curries by splitting the receipts into different sections, "Curries, Potted Meats, &c." and "Foreign and Jewish Cookery." However, a look into each chapter reveals that in less than the hundred years following Hannah Glasse's introduction of curry in her cookbook, both Anglo-Indian and British curry had become so fundamental to the British diet that she could not wholly separate them.

---

[174] Collingham, 138.
[175] Elizabeth David quoted in Stephen Mennell, All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present, (Urbana, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 213.

In "Curries, Potted Meats, &c." Acton includes direction for making British curried items: macaroni, eggs, oysters and sweetbreads, along with Anglo-Indian varieties of curry adapted to the metropolitan British palate. Acton opens the chapter noting that British curries were inferior to those procured in the "Orient." Not because of "want of skill or of experience on the part of our cooks, but is attributable in some measure, to many of the ingredients, which in a *fresh and green state* add so much to their excellence, being here beyond our reach."[176] The author suggested that domestically produced curry powders relied too heavily on turmeric and cayenne pepper, which marred the taste and appearance of the dish. To rectify the situation, Ms. Acton offered *Mr. Arnott's Currie-Powder* and his recipe for curry to help her readers achieve more flavourful curries at home. The powder included turmeric, coriander seed, cumin seed, fenugreek seed and cayenne pepper.[177] In addition to Mr. Arnott's recipes, Acton includes directions for making Bengal, dry, common Indian, and Selim's curries (marketed under the name Captain White's).[178] Throughout the chapter, Acton makes many notes that lead us to believe that she indeed adapted and wanted to modify further Anglo-Indian recipes for the palates of her audience. For *Mr. Arnott's Currie-Powder* Acton admitted that she thought, "it would be an improvement to diminish by two ounces the proportion of turmeric, and to increase that of the coriander seed."[179] Other notes indicate, when making *A Common Indian Currie*, young rabbits "make a very good currie [sic]" and "cayenne pepper can always be added to heighten the pungency of a currie [sic], when the proportion in the powder is not considered

---

[176] Eliza Acton, Modern Cookery for Private Families, (London: Longman, 1865), 296.
[177] *Ibid.*, 297, Mr. Arnott, we should understand, spent some service time in India, or at least that can be surmised from his comment that "a 'high-caste' chemist should be applied to" for the mixing of the curry-powder when the home cook did not have the time or patience to do it themselves.
[178] *Ibid.*, 298-303; Captain White's curry paste and powders were well-know commercially produced products in Britain.
[179] *Ibid.*, 297.

sufficient," or if you had some Anglo-Indians around who thought the curry too weak.[180] In this first chapter, Ms. Acton's adaptations and notes on how to better adapt the recipes set her in league with other middle class cookery writers who were busy working to nationalize curry. However, she does not completely abandon the seemingly exotic origins of the Anglo-Indian curry; instead, she features it in a chapter all to its own.

At the very end of the book, after desserts and breads and just before the index, lies a chapter called "Foreign and Jewish Cookery." This is where Acton chose to feature her knowledge about the forebearer to British Curry. Of the Anglo-Indian recipes in the foreign cookery chapter, Acton notes, "we are indebted for these receipts to a highly intelligent medical man who has been for twenty years a resident of Mauritius."[181] Of the ten Anglo-Indian recipes included in the section, only three are for curry. As mentioned in chapter three, the Britons living in India appropriated more than just curry from Indian cuisine. They created Anglo-Indian cuisine by selecting their favourite dishes from all the culinary traditions found in India, created and adapted recipes for the dishes to suit their palates and then transferred them all over the British Empire. Of curries, Acton includes two recipes for *Bengal Currie Powder*, which if made would produce a flavour profile slightly different from Mr. Arnott's recipe, featured in the curry chapter. The Bengal style curry powder called for the inclusion of black pepper, cassia and white ginger, in addition to the ingredient listed in Arnott's recipe.[182]

As for other Anglo-Indian favourites recounted in the foreign section, Acton includes well known (by the middle of the nineteenth century) favourites like *Burdwan* and *Kedgeree* that had began to enter the British diet along with curries. However, with these recipes she did not

[180] *Ibid*., 297, 300.
[181] *Ibid*., 610.
[182] *Ibid.*, 614.

try to adapt them for the metropolitan palate, instead, as she mentioned in reference to *Bengal Currie Powder no.1*, they may give a "strong coarse flavour…but as it may be liked by persons who are accustomed to it."[183] Acton's statement alluded to an idea that because Anglo-Indians enjoyed stronger flavours that the British who lived in the metropole, their curry, similar to their other Anglo-Indian favourites, should remain in the foreign section so that her audience could discern the difference between British and Anglo-Indian curries when choosing their meal plans.

Eliza Acton's careful consideration about the placement of curry recipes in her book leads us to understand, better than even Wyvern or Beeton, the predicament of curry in nineteenth century Britain. In the nineteenth century, curry could be both a national and a foreign dish. In addition to including several renditions of British and Anglo-Indian curry sure to please any palate, Ms. Acton's treatment of her recipes allows us to think about curry as an idea and a meal.

We have noted the difference between British and Anglo-Indian curries but we should always remember that one preparation is based on the other. Without Anglo-Indian curry in the nineteenth century there would not have been British curry, despite its likeness to spicy medieval preparations. That point is important when we think about curry as an idea. As discussed in chapter two, the cookery authors to the upper and middle classes waged a culinary war for the palates of Britain. French cuisine for the elites and Anglo-French cuisine for the middle-classes enjoyed prominence in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When curry arrived on the scene, its usefulness proved a valuable weapon in the hands of the middle class authors. Even though they adapted Anglo-Indian curry into British curry to meet the needs of their audience,

---

[183] *Ibid.*

they could trace it back to a seemingly exotic origin; thereby the nationalization of curry provided a meal that could rival all of the French cuisine popular in Britain.

This leads us back to our discussion about ownership. We have posited that the British owned curry from its first utterance. It is easier for us to see from our standpoint than it was for the British in the nineteenth century; after all, the Anglo-Indians considered curry as Indian, just adapted to their own palates. Domestic cooks in Britain saw Anglo-Indian curry as exotic and something that needed to be domesticated. The first step in understanding the meal was bending it to their needs. They asserted power over this unknown quantity by using it with familiar ingredients, as Acton and Beeton illustrate with their recipes for currying oysters, hares, eggs, sweetbreads and macaroni. Their need to domesticate the exotic speaks to the prevalence of the imperial ethos all over the British Empire, a topic that will drive the research behind chapter five.

Before we leave curry in cookery books to discuss other outlets for the dish in the metropole, it is important that we include a discussion about the modern curry recipe with which we began our discussion. In relation to our understanding of modern curry recipes – those recipes in Harvey Day's book - a comparison of *Mr. Arnott's Currie-Powder* and the two Bengali curry powder recipes from Acton's book and Wyvern's recipe for a basic powders reveals a large number of similar ingredients, hinting at very similar flavour profiles. They all include turmeric, cumin seed, fenugreek, mustard seed, black peppercorns, coriander seed, poppy seed and dried ginger and chilies.[184] Finally, we have located the predecessor to our conception of the modern curry recipe. However, that also means that the conception of Anglo-Indian curry stopped evolving in the nineteenth century. Harvey Day, publishing in the 1960's, despite his

[184] Acton, 297, 614; Wyvern, 291; Day, 11.

calls to authority and authenticity, merely regaled his readers with renditions of Anglo-Indian curry popular since the late nineteenth century.

Cookery books were not the only institutions that propagated the ownership and popularity of curry in the metropole. While it was difficult to find British curry preparations outside of the domestic sphere, Anglo-Indian curry could be found in a variety of locations. Besides the restaurants where returning Anglo-Indians could reminisce about their years on the sub-continent, Victorian London brimmed with social and political clubs that, along with dining rooms, provided "a semi-private premises that played the role of social regulator…by choosing a club, an individual chose a particular society."[185] For individuals returning from service in India, whether with the EIC or the Crown, organizations like the East India United Services Club or The Oriental Club provided a means and a place where a person could comfortably join or rejoin London society. The Oriental Club, established in 1824, filled a niche for returning Anglo-Indians. As Denys Forrest comments in the official history of the club, "the condition of the expatriate returning to these shores has always been uneasy, but particularly for those who have spent their working lives in the East."[186] While the 1834 *New Monthly Magazine* complained that the club operated as a "'nabobery'" utilized as "'a hospital in which a smell of curry powder pervades the wards – wards filled with venerable patients dressed in nankeen shirts, yellow stockings and gaiters, and faces to match.'"[187] Forrest insists that the founder, John Malcolm, and the original members were not all nabobs but gentlemen disillusioned by the inability to find a place in the older, more exclusive clubs throughout London.

---

[185] Antonia Taddei, "London Clubs in the Late Nineteenth Century," University of Oxford, *Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, no.28, 04/1999; social clubs as discussed here were notably places where men sought membership, while women were allowed in the dining halls or other areas of the club at certain times or upon certain occasions, in general Victorian Britain saw the women's place as in the domestic sphere.
[186] Denys Forrest, The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club, (London: B.T. Batsford LTD, 1968), 21.
[187] *New Monthly Magazine* quoted in Forrest, 33.

Unlike other popular organizations, an Anglo-Indian found "the prospect offered them by the Oriental Club of being able to live in London with 'that respectability and those comforts which their station in society renders so essential,' that saved many 'Indians' from prolonging their residence in the East and thereby shortening their lives!"[188] Membership in this club appears more democratic that that of other London social clubs which depended only on lineage, income and connections. The official charter states that eligibility for membership included living in the eastern hemisphere or working for the Crown or the East India Company, membership in the Royal Asiatic Society, involvement in the administration of any holding located in the East, travelers or individuals whose work attached them to matters in the Eastern half of the world. Such membership qualifications meant that the association collected "intellectuals and men of action of a great epoch" on their rolls.[189]

Of curry eating at the Oriental Club, the official history does not make much mention. Even though the *New Monthly Magazine* characterized its members as saffron clad individuals who subsisted "'chiefly on curry and drink maderia [sic],'" Forrest insists such comments are pernicious stereotypes.[190] However, the nabob platitudes elicited sufficient strength for Masters Crosse and Blackwell to solicit the chef of the Oriental Club for a testimonial to adorn their bottles of Captain White's Fish and Chicken Curry and Mulligatawny Paste:

> Kitchen Department, Oriental Club
> July 8th, 1851
>
> I have for four years exclusively used your CURRY PASTE AND POWDER and have invariably found that they have given general satisfaction.
>
> G. Fidle[191]

---

[188] Forrest, 22; the author notes that the term Indian preceded the term Anglo-Indian in the description of individuals who spent their lives working on the subcontinent.
[189] *Ibid.*, 26-7, 33.
[190] *Ibid.*, 53.
[191] Label quoted in Forrest, 53.

Surprisingly, curry did not appear in the minutes of the club "until 12 August 1839, when Mr. Williamson (Bombay Civil Service) suggests that 'a native Indian cook' might attend the kitchen to give instruction to the chef, but this is turned down as 'the curries now made by the cook give general satisfaction.'"[192] The only other curry related element in the minutes relates to the 1859 change from Crosse and Blackwell's curry paste to Payne's Madras curry paste and the resolution for a shipment of curry powder and paste from a Madras-based company, Parry & Company.[193] Forrest concludes that member satisfaction with the curries served in the dining room accounts for the little amount of conversation about it in the club minutes; the satisfaction of which will resurface in our discussion about restaurants.

Besides the few clubs set up to handle the needs of the returning Anglo-Indian population, many restaurants in the metropole served curry and other Anglo-Indian favourites on their menus to meet the needs of exiles and others who enjoyed curry. The Hindostanee Coffee House opened in the early nineteenth century to accommodate those individuals. Located "at the corner of Charles Street and George Street…old India hands could sit in custom-made bamboo-cane chairs, surrounded by paintings of Indian scenes, and reminisce about their former lives while savoring curries 'allowed by the greatest epicures to be unequalled to any…ever made in England.'"[194] The Hindostanee was especially set up to appeal to Anglo-Indians who missed the lifestyle they left behind in India. For individuals who enjoyed Anglo-Indian curry but did not necessarily need an atmosphere reminiscent of India to complete their dining experience, there were many other Victorian restaurants featuring differing aspects of the Anglo-Indian diet on their menus.

---

[192] *Ibid.*
[193] *Ibid.*, 53-4.
[194] Collingham, 129.

An anonymous 1858 publication called London at Dinner, or Where to Dine, notes several locations where one can locate curry and other Indian specialties. The "Ship and Turtle" located in Leadenhall Street served turtle and "a grilled fowl done Indian fashion" that would "repay a stranger for going the distance" to the establishment located off the beaten track near Finsbury Circus and Whitechapel.[195] The author also mentions that the dining room at the Oriental Club "is famed for its Eastern condiments and wines; and as the members are unquestionably good livers – (we do not speak of their gastric organs) - they may dine here to their heart's content."[196] Additionally, an advertisement section in the back of the book allows The Wellington to publicize its well-rounded menu. Along with Potages a L'indienne, possibly a Mulligatawny soup, and Filets de Boeuf avec Sauce Poivrade, the Wellington boasts a Chicken Curry for 1s6d on its a la cart menu that can be washed down with a pint of Old East India Madeira for 7 shillings.[197]

Besides restaurants, the author also includes information about general dining etiquette and possible suggestions for breakfasts at home. Given that by the nineteenth century, Anglo-Indian curry consumption in India had been relegated to breakfasts and simple dinners, it is not surprising to find another Anglo-Indian standby on Anon.'s breakfast list. Kedgeree, "a breakfast cup of rice, boiled and strained; four eggs, [h]ard boiled; a large haddock boiled, or any cold fish; put a large piece of butter in a stewpan [sic], mince all together, season well, and serve hot," was touted as a perfect breakfast repast.[198] Interestingly, Kedgeree, like curry, withstood the test of time in the British diet. According to the web site for the British Food Trust, that

[195] Anonymous, London at Dinner, or Where to Dine, (London: Robert Hardwick, 1858), 10.
[196] *Ibid.*., 18.
[197] *Ibid.*., advertisement section, 1-10.
[198] *Ibid.*., 63.

organization considers Kedgeree as a "Heritage Dish," in the same league as marmalade and Cornish pasties.[199]

Curry, Madeira and Kedgeree aside, the errata section includes one more popular Anglo-Indian favourite. The header of the section speaks of an omission by the author and the publisher of an advertisement for a wonderful new sauce, the perfect accompaniment for diners who "require either a zest to enable them to relish their food, or stimulant to assist the stomach in digesting it."[200] Apparently good on everything from salad to curries, the sauce, now a common condiment, was Worchester Sauce. While Worchester is not an Indian name; the sauce is based on chili vinegar concoctions "commonly seen on the table of every officers' mess, since many officers, accustomed to curries, found soup insipid."[201] The recipe for the sauce originally appeared in Britain through the auspices of Lord Marcus Sandys, the former Governor of Bengal. Sandys, missing his favourite sauce from his days in India, commissioned two pharmacists, John Leah and William Perrins, to whip up a batch from a recipe he brought home. According to David Burton, the sauce was too spicy and pungent when they first made it so it was put away and forgotten about. When the barrel was unearthed some time later each man braved a taste of the concoction before throwing it away and found that the "mixture had mellowed into a superlative sauce," hence Worchester Sauce was born.[202] Burton's story took place merely twenty years before the errata section of this book, marking the rise of other Anglo-Indian cuisine along with curry in Britain.

Fast-forward to 1899 and we find that Anglo-Indian curry's popularity had not waned in London. Lieutenant-Col. Newnham-Davis wrote an amusing bit about curry in chapter ten of his

[199] The British Food Trust, "Eating History," http://greatbritishkitchen.co.uk/eh_index.htm.
[200] Anon., errata, 1.
[201] D. Burton, 72.
[202] *Ibid.*

Dinners and Diners. In an attempt to convince his uncle, the Nabob, that delicious curry could be found outside of the East Indian Club dining room, Newnham-Davis decided to threat his uncle to a dinner at The Hotel Cecil. The author humorously writes,

> I would not dare to trifle with the Nabob's digestion, for I have reason to believe that he has remembered me in his will; but I also thought that he should not be allowed to go to his grave with the erroneous impression that curry can only be made out of India in St. James's Square.[203]

The author, who admits to eating a good curry at the Criterion, the Savoy and the Grand Hotel, chose The Hotel Cecil because they made curry a specialty of the house. Newnham-Davis's uncle, a picture of the stereotypical Nabob, "hook-nosed, clean-shaven, except for two thin side-whiskers" remarked that "'Holkar never gave a great curry feast without asking me to it, for he said that I was the only European who understood what a curry should be,'" thereby setting himself up as an expert in the realm of curry-eating.[204] The curry dish, preceded by seven courses and followed by four, featured "a tender spring-chicken for the foundation of the curry, and all the accessories, Bombay Duck, that crumpled in our fingers to dust, paprika cakes, thinner than a sheet of note-paper, and chutnees [sic] galore…was a genuine Indian curry."[205] The author waxes eloquent about the superiority of a genuine Malay curry, "swimming in the delicious semi-liquid, which has the taste of fresh cocoa-nut [served] with half a dozen subsidiary curries" but his intention is not to sway his uncle's curry preference, rather to demonstrate that good curry exists in London's restaurants.[206] The uncle pronounced the curry "'Er, um, yes, good...I don't say as good as we get it at the club…but decidedly good.'"[207] For

---

[203] Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis, Dinners and Diners, (London: pub. unknown, 1899), 59.
[204] *Ibid*, 62.
[205] *Ibid.*, 63, Bombay duck is actually a small fish, salted, dried and then seasoned with asafetida that is used as relish on curry, much like chutneys are used.
[206] *Ibid.*, 64.
[207] *Ibid.*

the cost of the curry, 3s6d, the author came away fully satisfied with his meal and insured that his place in his uncle's will was secure.

Restaurants like these, which serviced the metropole's desire to eat Anglo-Indian curry, supports my insistence about the ownership of curry by the British. While the owners may not have felt that ownership, it is plain to outsiders looking in at the question. The eating establishments that featured curry on their menus knew their audience and knew that the dish would be consumed with enough regularity to support its placement on menus. Before it arrived on the shores of Britain, curry had been tamed to the palates of the Anglo-Indians making it acceptable to British palates with little adaptation. These establishments would continue to propagate the British understanding and craving of curry well into the twentieth century. Indian owned restaurants opened off and on throughout the nineteenth century; however, it not until after World War II did a large number of those establishments open - thanks in part to the British Nationality Act that guaranteed British citizenship to all Commonwealth citizens and Britain's call for workers to bolster post-war rebuilding in the metropole.[208] Up until that point though, Anglo-Indian curry came from home kitchens or, mostly, from the dining rooms of British restaurants, further solidifying the British sense of ownership over curry.

As we have witnessed throughout this chapter, the fate of curry in the metropole was different from India. Once it arrived in Britain, its popularity only grew. Cookery books, social clubs dedicated to Anglo-Indians and restaurants helped with its rising popularity. Not only did the metropole come away from its experience with the dish with a newly nationalized version of the meal, but also plenty of individuals who never had the opportunity to travel outside of the country could share and enjoy the fruits of imperialism with a plate of curry.

---

[208] Christina Hardyment, Slice of Life: The British way of Eating since 1945, (London: BBC Books, 1995), 127-8.

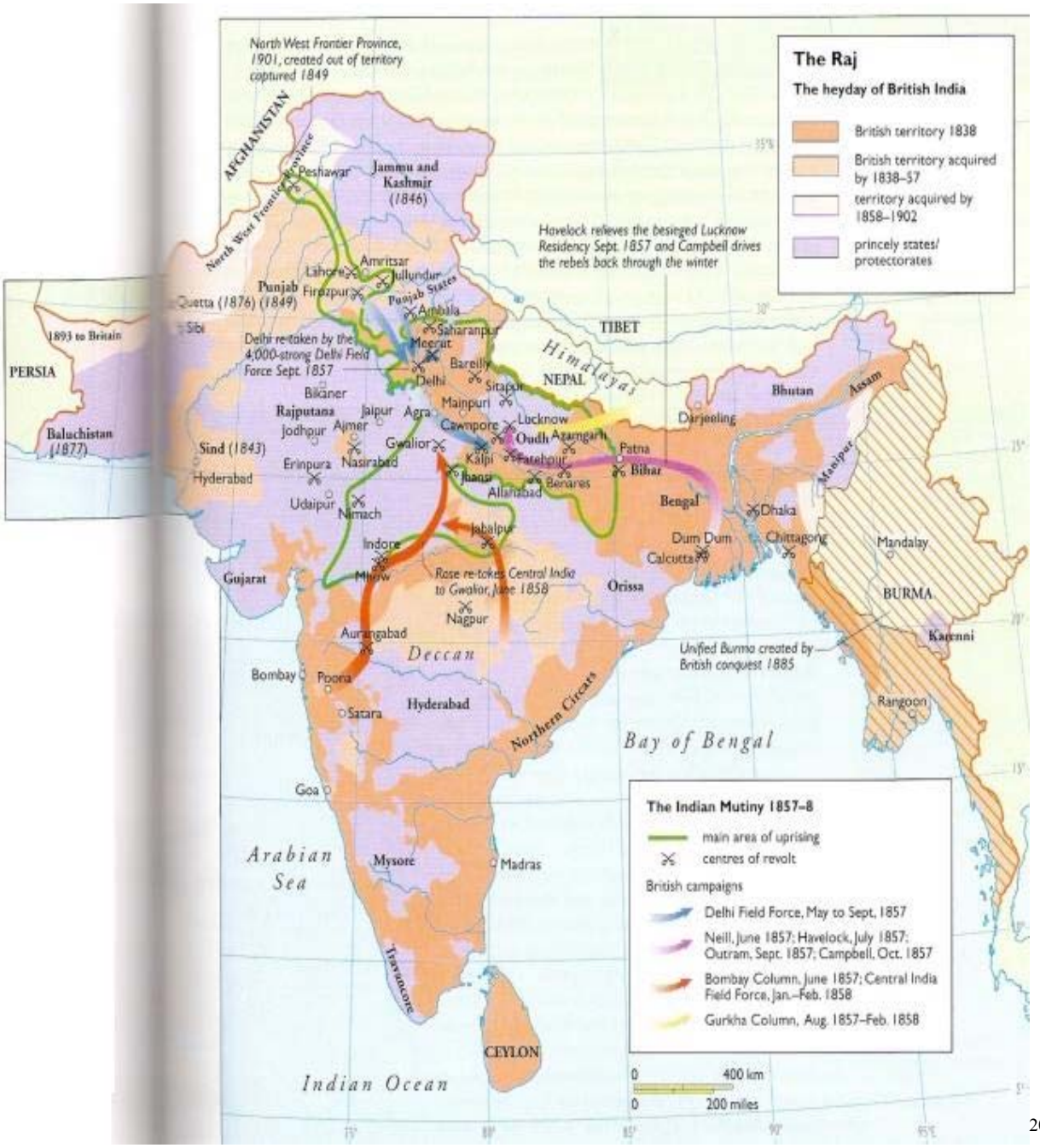
The nationalization of curry provided a means for domestic cooks to combat the popularity of French and Anglo-French foods on the tables of the middle-classes. By asserting power over curry powders, they came away with food preparations that spoke to their dedication to providing economic meals and allowed them to assert a level of exoticness that could rival French cuisine. The creation of British curry, however, did not cause the popularity of Anglo-Indian curry to fail. Indeed a contentious hostess could use both Anglo-Indian and British curry to make as statement if she chose to serve curry to guests. If she decided to have an Anglo-Indian curry prepared she was asserting her worldliness and knowledge of the British imperial ethos; on the other hand, if she chose to serve British curry she was demonstrating her sense of nationalism and middle-class economy.

Despite its inclusion in a number of cookery books, like those of Acton and Wyvern, Anglo-Indian curry flourished outside of the homes of the British. Social clubs that catered to Anglo-Indians who returned home from the sub-continent featured dining rooms that served curry and other well beloved Anglo-Indian dishes. In addition to the clubs, a growing number of restaurants featured curry on their a la carte menus. These eating establishments drove home the idea that while it seemed exotic, Anglo-Indian curry belonged to the British; what else would explain its immediate popularity with the dining public?

The differing situations of curry in India and Britain speak to different ideas about Britain's imperial endeavor. In the next chapter, we will see how the British ownership of curry works in a discussion about the wider implications of colonialism and the imperial ethos.

Chapter 5

Curried Imperialism



[209]

[209] Dalziel, 79.

The previous chapters have defined curry and illustrated the Anglo-Indianess and Britishness of curry, especially in the nineteenth century; however, one of the overarching purposes of this work is to illustrate how curry can be viewed as a tool of British imperialism. Essentially, it is a concrete expression of the success of nineteenth century British imperial ethos. Given the sources used elsewhere in this paper, the best way for us to understand this history of curry is through the lens of domesticity. Women's work at home and in the empire provided the framework for the neutralization and naturalization of curry in the Anglo-Indian and British diet. Additionally, looking at curry and its appropriation by the British makes better sense when looked at using the post-colonial trope of incorporation. From that vantage point, curry emerges as a physical symbol for Britain's imperial success in the nineteenth century.

Domesticity arose from the work of Utilitarian and Evangelical philosophies that attached themselves to Britain's middle classes in the early nineteenth century; "the language and paraphernalia of idealized domesticity dominated this era."[210] Historians cite "the rise of industrial capitalism [which] led to the growing separation of home and work, the growth and increasing wealth of the middle class, and an increasing valorization of home," for the popularity of domesticity in Britain.[211] By mid-century, the middle classes' subsequent attachment to domesticity and "the bourgeois ascendancy in Victorian Britain" resulted in the transformation of most middle class values, especially domesticity, into British national values.[212] As angels of the hearth, women in Victorian Britain were conferred the power to nurture the religious and moral

[210] Thomas Nobel, et al., Western Civilization The Continuing Experiment, 4ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005), 785.
[211] Allison Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1999), 424.
[212] Zlotnick, 54.

body from which they could "repair and reform not only their husbands but also the nation."[213] Women dominated the private sphere by "fostering discipline, frugality and cleanliness" in the home while their husbands operated in the public sphere to "earn a living and [advance] his career."[214]

The gendered quality of life at home in Britain echoed to the frontiers of the growing British Empire. However, in the empire femininity and domesticity were two very different things. Historians agree that the language and mentality of early imperialism was inherently masculine; Catherine Hall calls it "frontier masculinity" and describes how the "trope of the sexualized narrative" distinguished the British from the native inhabitants they encountered in the wide world.[215] The nineteenth century imperial ethos espoused by radical imperialists was a means of "celebrating a world of white men, uncontaminated by the dangers associated with female sexuality and the threats which women…posed to men's needful self-restraint."[216] Pro-slavery advocates like Thomas Carlyle identified the black inhabitants of the Empire as feminine because of their inability to control their sexual appetites: they were "pretty, simple affectionate and amenable" and therefore not able to achieve the manliness of liberty.[217] Not all imperialists felt as vehemently as Carlyle did though; Hall points put the Evangelical missionaries working in the Empire on civilizing missions were able to convert "savages" at least to the level of British womanhood. James Mursell Phillippo witnessed the disappearance of "'cunning, craft and suspicion'" and discovered under the auspices of missionaries "'a perfect negro man, combining the independence which was so central to an English conception of manhood with patience and

---

[213] *Ibid.*, 53.
[214] Nobel, 785
[215] Catherine Hall, Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 38.
[216] *Ibid.*, 348.
[217] *Ibid.*, 351.

submission, characteristics more associated with femininity in England.'"[218] Catherine Hall introduces the masculine language of the imperial ethos in response to the British in Jamaica but its truth echoes throughout the empire. We should notice the Carlyle and Philloppo discuss women, females and femininity in the framework of the empire but not domesticity. When women steeped the private sphere armed with their domestic graces entered the empire they became a valuable resource that the Carlyle's and Philloppo's in the empire could never have imagined.

Domesticity provided an army of women who could both mother a nation and an empire. Domesticity became "central to the construction of middle-class identity and the developing national identity as both eminently bourgeois and absolutely imperial."[219] By extending the power of domesticity into the empire, women could "provide 'legitimate and natural homes' for colonists dependant not only on masculine discourses of imperial adventure and energy, but also on more feminized discourses of domesticity."[220] These women traveled in the empire as helpmeets to the Imperial ethos and through their agency women, the British were able to neutralize their thoughts about the masculine implications of their imperial policies. In the nineteenth century "Victorian women were not only 'agents of cultural exchange' but were invested by domestic ideology with the power of moral agency…which allowed them to undertake the ideological work of domesticating imperialism" both at home and in the empire.[221]

The wide empire aside, we are interested in domesticity and its effects between Britain and India. With Queen Victoria at the helm, the women sent from Britain to domesticate India had the most maternal of Queens as an example. Victoria was exceedingly fond of the idea of

[218] *Ibid.*, 189.
[219] Zlotnick, 53.
[220] Blunt, 421-22.
[221] Zlotnick, 52.

India and she saw herself as a mother to "her dark-skinned children."[222] When she had herself crowned Empress of India in 1876 - she did not participate in the direct ruling of India – her actions were regarded as "vulgar and unBritish" by her Parliament. But by bending to her wishes they effectively "brought the Queen back into public life after her long mourning and thereby revived the popularity of the monarchy…it also helped turn British attention towards India."[223] This attention to India made the efforts of memsahibs returning to Britain much easier. In order to complete the work of domesticating empire, they brought elements of India home popularized them. .

Memsahibs famously rejected Indian culture while living in the subcontinent, but when they returned to Britain they dropped their ban on eastern goods and embraced what they distanced themselves from while living in India;

> in order to confirm their identity and sense of purpose the Anglo-Indians in Britain reversed their technique of creating little Englands in India and tended to create little Anglo-Indias in their British homes. They attempted to reproduce the distinctive curry and rice, and chutneys and pickles of Anglo-India, and collected around themselves the souvenirs of their past life in the form of Indian carved furniture, hunting trophies, cloths, rugs and photographs.[224]

In addition, memsahibs found that their time in India and the items they accumulated while there were valuable commodities in the metropole. From shawls to jewelry to curry powder, memsahibs could sell their Indian goods for money or trade them for the things that they needed to survive or just be happy in Britain. They created opportunities for themselves by getting money and products that could make their lives easier and created an environment where imported goods, items regularly too expensive for thenworking and lower middle classes were

---

[222] David Gilmour, The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 5.
[223] *Ibid.*, 3.
[224] E. M. Collingham, Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947, (London: Polity, 2001), 210.

suddenly affordable across the class divides.[225] In this environment, we concentrate on curry stuffs with the idea that "diffusion of a subordinate, not to imply inferior, culture into a dominant one is a major effect of colonial rule."[226]

At home, part of that domestication of empire included the appropriation of curry into the national diet; "as figures of domesticity, British women helped incorporate Indian food into the national diet and India into Britain…early Victorian cookery books attest to the important ideological function women performed in the construction of Victorian imperialism."[227] As noted in previous chapters, curry came to the metropole with returning EIC and crown officials, however its arrival in mainstream British society did not occur until much later, when, as Chaudhuri posits, memsahibs used curry as a way to influence the tastes of British society at home. Like shawls, jewelry and other artifacts, curry powders and pastes became a tradable commodity for returning memsahibs.[228] Many recipes for curry, curry powder, curry pastes, and other Anglo-Indian favourite foods were discussed in the popular nineteenth century press with "many of the recipes used…obtained from memsahibs who often sent their favourites for publication in *Queen* and other magazines."[229] Memsahibs adapted or mentioned adaptations for curry making in the metropole indicating that they "transformed as well as transmitted Indian culinary culture."[230] Their information about adapting curry recipes helped "their sisters at home to adapt a culinary culture from the colony."[231] Through the work of memsahibs who acted as "agents of cultural exchange between colonizers and the colonized," British "middle-class

[225]Nupur Chaudhuri, "Shawls, Jewelry, Curry. And Rice in Victorian Britain," in Nupur Chaudhuri and M. Strobel, Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992),234-236.
[226] *Ibid*., 232.
[227] Zlotnick, 65.
[228] Chaudhuri, 240.
[229] *Ibid.*, 239.
[230] *Ibid.*
[231] *Ibid.*, 240.

women, as morally regenerative and utterly domestic figures, could take into their homes a hybrid like curry, the mongrelized offspring of England's union with India, and through the ideological effect of domesticating it, erase its foreign origins and represent it as purely English."[232] From this angle, it is easy to see that "curry belongs to the Victorian interior as much as tea and crumpets; and that belonging points to ways in which the Victorians understood India to be theirs."[233]

The domestication of the empire helped support the sense of entitlement that British felt about the power they welded in the world. The imperial ethos, that feeling of privilege, imbued the metropole, supported as it was with events like the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886 and the nationalization of curry; however, with that power also brought fear. In our post-colonial world, we tend to view colonialism in tropes. When discussing curry as an example of the success of the British Empire we will use the trope of incorporation, as discussed in Zlotnick's article about curry. Victoria's Britain, "in which national identity struggled with imperial ambition, contained a dialectical tension always in play between eating and the fear of being eaten."[234] At "the early moment of Victorian imperialism…Britain could fearlessly imagine assimilating India and Indians."[235] Before the First for Indian Independence and the establishment of the British Raj - the period of eating empire - curry was a delightfully exotic meal enjoyed by all classes in the metropole. Cookery authors and memsahibs touted curry as an Indian food or by the name of a famous Indian or Anglo-Indian, like Selim's or Capt. White's curry powders in Eliza Acton's book. In addition, curry was implicated as health food, after a fashion, because its inclusion of turmeric which "was generally perceived as having anti-bilious

[232] Chaudhuri, 232; Zlotnick, 54.
[233] Zlotnick, 64.
[234] *Ibid.*, 56.
[235] *Ibid.*, 57.

properties…thus, both curry powders and curried foods were regarded as nutritious as well as economical."[236] While we know that the curry they spoke of was already Anglo-Indian and only bore a resemblance to the Indian food it was based upon, for those in the metropole it was the embodiment of India on a plate.

The desire to incorporate India into Britain, that "cheerful and unclouded vision of the Anglicized Indian fades after the Indian Mutiny, which marks the turning point in the discourse of incorporation."[237] Following the 1857 War for Independence the optimism of eating empire was replaced with the fear of being eaten. The betrayal that the British felt in the wake of "the Sepoy Rebellion" effectively turned the Indian into cannibals and marks a separation between imperial desires for incorporation and those for domination; "a momentary confusion that allows the imperial state both to acknowledge its own cannibalistic desires and transpose them onto an Other."[238] After the establishment of the Raj curry in the metropole became a British dish. Thanks to the works of the returning memsahibs and cookery authors of the time, curry powder and curried dishes were added to British ingredients to further adapt it for the metropolitan palate. Additionally, Anglo-Indian curry became Anglo-Indian instead of Indian in the eyes of the metropole; no longer were its exotic antecedents celebrated. The appearance of Madras and Bengal curries in cookery books seem to hint at exoticism, however the locations where these curries reportedly came from were areas long ago tamed by the British and since they controlled those areas, the fear of the Indian infiltrating the metropolitan diet was allayed. This effectively allowed Anglo-Indian and British curry to exist side-by-side in the metropole without fear.

---

[236] Chaudhuri, 241; articles recently published in USATODAY and the Guardian Unlimited also find that curry and curry leaves can help ward off cancer, Alzheimer's and may help patients suffering from diabetes.
[237] Zlotnick, 58.
[238] *Ibid.*

To say that domesticity worked differently in India would be an understatement. Like the trope of incorporation previously mentioned, the 1857 War for Independence denotes the point of demarcation between Indian or Eurasian domesticity and that practiced by British memsahibs. Before 1857, Indian or Eurasian mistresses were a common feature in Anglo-Indian life.[239] Even though "sexual relations between the races were common right across the social scale," these mistresses proved more than sexual gratification for the EIC; they "looked after [their paramours], ran his household and tried to teach him erotic techniques."[240] Their work involved, as we saw in chapter three, domesticating Indian foods as well as Indian cultures for their British lovers. Cohabitation was widespread, thanks in part to the belief that British women could not survive on the subcontinent because of the weather and widespread disease. However, after the War for Independence "open cohabitation was largely restricted to remote areas on the fringes of the Empire in Burma and Assam."[241] The Indian Civil Service (ICS) officially discouraged the practice of mistress keeping during the British Raj and their discouragement was met with agreement; most of their employees were steeped in the Utilitarian, Evangelical and Imperial philosophies that taught that the governors should be morally above the governed.[242] For the new ICS workers, as opposed to their EIC brethren, "Hinduism was too benighted to reform – or even to tolerate- and must give way to Christianity," furthermore, "'Utilitarians hoped to improve morals by reforming society; Evangelicals hoped to improve society by improving morals.'"[243] The result of this new way of thinking became "the vigorous lack of sympathy with

[239] Eurasian here denotes a woman born of one British and one Indian parent.
[240] Gilmour, 284.
[241] *Ibid.*; Gilmour goes on to say that the climate in Burma caused the continuation of mistress keeping – English women often could not survive in the climate so were rare.
[242] *Ibid.*, 284-5.
[243] *Ibid.*, 12.

Indian culture that propelled them [and] prejudiced British rule for the rest of the century"[244] Therefore, instead of coupling or marrying Indian or Eurasian women, the men of the ICS generally wanted to have British wives or no wives at all.

Upon their arrival to the subcontinent, the imperial ethos charged memsahibs with replicating home in the Empire, knowing all the while that "home is imagined as a unique and distant place that can neither be discovered nor reproduced elsewhere and thus remains a site of continual desire and irretrievable loss."[245] India then was never home. Gilmour contends that it was not even a colony because "the Subcontinent was a career…place to work and move around rather than to settle in and put down roots."[246] Nevertheless, the imperial ethos charged these women with creating as close an approximation of home in India as possible. The War for Independence changed the condition of the Indian in the eyes of the British; the governors viewed the actions of the Sepoys during 1857 as treacherous. Additionally, their actions left a legacy proclaiming the domestic vulnerability of women, which led to "a discourse of chivalrous protection in which ideas of racial and gendered identity and propriety were intimately connected."[247] Furthermore, there was a renewed belief and drive for the establishment of a strong imperial rule reinforced by domestic imperialism.

In India domesticity became a "nexus of imperial power relations that existed within British homes."[248] By domesticating the empire, memsahibs could provide homes that felt genuinely British, additionally they illustrated that the imperial adventure was not merely a

---

[244] *Ibid.*, 13.
[245] Blunt, 421.
[246] Gilmour, 301.
[247] Blunt, 427.
[248] *Ibid.*, 425.

masculine job.[249] In their domestic roles, memsahibs "reproduced imperial power relations on a household scale and the political significance of imperial domesticity extended beyond the boundaries of the home."[250] A bulk of household management books printed for new memsahibs reiterated the need for memsahibs to assert domestic imperialism in their homes because it mirrored and reinforced the imperial arrangements in society. For example, the placement of servants' quarters away from the main house mimicked the placement of native communities on the edges of British settlements. Furthermore, the advice that memsahibs travel to and inspect servants' quarters reinforced the movement of the rulers amongst the ruled and visa-versa. Additionally, the memsahibs strengthened the imperial ethos by viewing their army of servants as child-like outsiders who never changed; official thoughts about the colonized included the ideas that the East was a static environment that produced childish subjects who, because of these two disadvantages, would always be Indian and never British. Edward Said's Orientalism lends understanding to this idea: the British Raj had a "proclivity to divide, subdivide, and redivide its [imperial ethos] without ever changing its mind about the Orient as being always the same, unchanging, uniform and radically peculiar object."[251] For an example of this manner of thinking comes this anecdote about coffee making:

> "Boy, how are master's socks so dirty?"
> "I take, make e' strain coffee."
> "What, you dirty wretch, for *coffee*?"
> "Yes, missis; but never take master's *clean* e' sock. Master done use, then I take."[252]

[249] *Ibid.*, 421-22.
[250] *Ibid.*, 423.
[251] Edward Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 98.
[252] Lady, 68.

This often recited tale of the coffee strainer, it appears in many of the nineteenth century domestic management manuals, demonstrates the British conception of the childlike simplicity of Indian servants and the static quality of their lives.

Finally, the success of domestic imperialism depended on the actions and behaviour of the memsahibs. Cookery books/home management guides were dedicated to directing the right and honourable imperial behaviour of the memsahibs. Their ultimate success came from "constructing and maintaining a position of power and authority within the household."[253] While it sounds simple, the forthright behaviour sometimes left the memsahibs when the reality of their situation hit them. Upon their arrival in India, a new memsahib was expected to settle into a routine that required:

> They had to make a home, run a household, supervise the health of the children and servants, and assist their husband's career by accompanying him on tour (if possible) and entertaining his colleagues in the station. Wherever they were, they had to adapt to the routine of the province and the climate.[254]

Additionally, they lived at the mercy of their husband's employer, usually the ICS, which required that they be able to move with little notice, possibly to very remote areas. Loneliness often overcame them when their husbands left them at home while they traipsed around the country making their tours of duty. Possibly the most detrimental effect of living in India was when the memsahibs had to send their small (six or seven years old) children back to Britain to attend school until they were teenagers. The loneliness that resulted from the living conditions on the subcontinent made upholding the imperial ethos in the domestic space difficult for some memsahibs who indulged in behaviours not condoned in the household management guides. Most often those memsahibs were accused of engaging in extramarital affairs with ICS

[253] Blunt, 431.
[254] Gilmour, 297.

employees or Royal Military soldiers, or, in extreme circumstances, leaving their husbands in India while they returned home for good. For that reason, many household management guides outlined ways to keep on the right side of social and moral expectations. For instance, A Lady Resident recounts the way one is introduced into society upon their arrival at station so that the rules of society are maintained: "if Captain and Mrs. A- arrive in a station, the captain is expected to call upon all the ladies, who then return the visits with their husbands, and finally Captain and Mrs. A- make another call."[255] By reiterating the rigid manner in which Anglo-Indian society operated in the lives of the memsahibs, the authors hoped to help preserve the right behaviour of the memsahib for the success of the imperial adventure.

Plenty more can be written about the memsahibs and their support of domestic imperialism, but our express interest is their treatment of food while on the subcontinent. In creating little islands of Englishness in a sea of Indianess, the memsahibs used food to define domestic space and power. In order to project domesticity into the colonial situation memsahibs decided they must ban as many Eastern products from their homes as possible in order to set the Anglo-Indian body apart from the Indian body. This "rejection of things of Eastern manufacture was part of the process of throwing off the taint of indianization which had characterized the habits of the nabob."[256] Many of the household management guides suggested that British foods should replace as many Indian products as possible because British food, whether tinned or prepared in a British style, accorded to ones placement in Anglo-Indian society and had a "symbolic resonance" indicating the "body as an active agent of change" in the colonial environment.[257] Sidney Mintz's study on food in relation to power describes this activity as a

[255] Lady, 40.
[256] Collingham, Imperial, 69.
[257] *Ibid.*, 71.

meeting of meanings that accompany the consumption of foodstuffs – it is also a starting point to discuss knowledge and power - for memsahibs in India the consumption of curry at home, or the "inside meaning" connected with the larger "outside meaning" of imperialism. Since the mass arrival of women in India after the establishment of the British Raj, the ability to order a curry and understand what they were asking for was a process of: "integrate[ing] what are newly acquired behaviors into daily or weekly practice, thereby turning the unfamiliar into the familiar, imparting additional meaning to the material world, [and] employing and creating significance at the most humble levels."[258] In doing so, these memsahibs recreated the nature of imperialism within their homes. They were exhibiting knowledge about curry, and therefore the Indian, from which they could draw power. That power was the structural power that Mintz hinted at when he spoke about the meeting of inside and outside meanings. As he says:

> it is easy to see how structural…power aligns the institutional framework that set the terms by which people get food, maintain or change their eating habits, and either perpetuate their eating arrangements and the associated meanings, or build new systems, with new meanings, in those arrangements.[259]

This is exactly what happened in India with the British. Food practices, which began even before 1857, constructed an Anglo-Indian body more in harmony with the new ideology of rule which cast the British as carriers of western civilization to India."[260] Despite their efforts to mirror the consumption patterns of home, "Anglo-Indian food was monotonous, while its authenticity tended to be undermined by an underlying Indian flavour."[261] In practice it was difficult to shun all Indian foodstuffs, especially since tinned foods from Britain were very expensive and never tasty. Soon practicality won out over the guides who proposed diets based

---

[258] Sidney Mintz, Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 20.
[259] *Ibid.*, 29.
[260] Collingham, 71.
[261] *Ibid.*, 159.

solely on British foodstuffs. Besides, "Anglo-Indian eating habits were never simply a pale reflection of the eating patterns of British middle-class society…they retained a distinctive, partially indianized character of their own."[262] As active participants in the imperial endeavor of Britain, memsahibs found through the knowledge and power that they gained from cookery books and experience they could neutralize the Indianess of Indian food and make it British, or at least Anglo-Indian.

In order to justify their imperial power and stance, the Anglo-Indians appropriated Indian foods – curry especially– demonstrating their imperial power and transported that cuisine all over the subcontinent and the Empire. By doing so, "the continued incorporation of Indian foodstuffs into the Anglo-Indian diet, as well as a continuing preference for abundance, ensured that the British body in India remained distinctively Anglo-Indian…the Anglo-Indians made certain Indian dishes their own."[263] The appropriation of Indian cuisine before the War for Independence meant that when the crown took over the ruling of India, certain aspects of the cuisine had already been interwoven into the fabric of the Anglo-Indian lifestyle. Like the division of the races, insiders and outsiders, curry as appropriated by the Anglo-Indians became something that traveled inside the racialized boundaries. By the mid-nineteenth century they had made it understandable and naturalized its "otherness" to make it Anglo-Indian. Other reasons for the continued consumption of Indian products and the growth of Anglo-Indian cuisine came about from the pragmatism of the memsahibs.

To begin with "it was probably easier to prepare Indian food than European dishes, if for no other reason than that indigenous ingredients were readily available and their kitchen

---

[262] *Ibid.*, 72.
[263] *Ibid.*, 71-2.

implements better suited to Indian cooking."[264] Secondly, newer Anglo-Indian cookery books "normalize[ed] the apparently exotic cuisine of Britain's empire in India." Many of those books "urged the British in India to eat more 'of the country' – in other words eat 'native' fruits, vegetables, fish, and meat - and to avoid tinned products imported from Europe, both for reasons of health and of economy."[265] Anglo-Indian cuisine- curry – and its appearance on Anglo-Indian tables, "denotes one of the many ways in which imperialism operated simultaneously to integrate and subordinate indigenous culture." Anglo-Indian cookery books were just one more way that the British tried to know the Indians. Through cookery:

> The British simultaneously constructed an India that comported with their own aspirations and expectations for the empire. By categorizing and classifying the various aspects of the subcontinent, including its cuisine, the British could both effectuate and justify their rule in India. Anglo-Indian cookbooks, as tools in the colonial construction of knowledge, allowed the British to know and understand what they were eating, and through this knowledge to maintain the illusion of control and dominance in a realm – the domestic arena – otherwise marked by ignorance and indifference.[266]

Elsewhere, cookery books deflated the exoticness of India, they "gave names to unknown ingredients and demystified the secrets of the kitchen by explaining preparation of rice, curries, chutneys, and other unfamiliar items that regularly appeared on Anglo-Indian tables."[267] Of four household management guides published after 1857, each featured a section dedicated to "native cookery." The dishes featured in those sections were pulled from popular Anglo-Indian favourites, dishes that a new memsahib would not yet be familiar with and that the old hand would appreciate. From meat curry, kedgeree and dumpoke to chutneys and pilau, the household

---

[264] Mary Procida, "Feeding the Imperial Appetite: Imperial Knowledge and Anglo-Indian Domesticity," Journal of Women's History, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), 141.
[265] *Ibid.*
[266] *Ibid.*, 141-2.
[267] *Ibid.*, 142.

management guides helped new memsahibs appropriate Indian cuisine into their homes.[268] A well-informed memsahib, acting as an imperial power:

> armed with her cookbook, could confidently mention a pilau as a substitute, this clarifying her position as the ultimate arbiter of culinary decisions, however infrequently she chose to exercise this power … likewise, cookbooks presented women with enough information to prevent their being set up as an object of ridicule by their Indian servants.[269]

Finally, as a further indication of the power of the colonizers, memsahibs often disparaged Indian attempts to make English cuisines: "few cookbook authors or Anglo-Indians doubted the technical ability of Indian cooks to produce European dishes under the supervision of Anglo-Indians…it was only when Indians attempted to usurp the supervisory role themselves that Anglo-Indians deemed the cultural differences irreconcilable."[270] Instead, authors often proposed that Indian dishes, even though they were "inordinately greasy and sweet," were easy to ask for because "your native cooks invariably know how to make them fairly well" but insisted that "the whole secret of curry-making, however, lies in time…no good curry was ever made in under two hours."[271] Pragmatism supported by the imperial ethos provided an environment where curry became Anglo-Indianized and therefore not a threat to the power structure of the British Empire.

The trope of incorporation works when we discuss curry in India as well as it did when we spoke about Britain. Before the War for Independence the EIC and Royal Military stationed in India enjoyed the fruits of empire, especially the food they called curry. Served at company messes, on the dinner tables of other Anglo-Indians and especially in the homes of their

---

[268] Steel, 368-9; Dawe, 55-65; Anonymous, Indian Domestic Economy and Receipt Book, (Madras: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1860), 373-377.
[269] Procida, 142.
[270] *Ibid*.
[271] Steel, 368.

mistresses, curry, essentially, was Indian food. It became one of many forces that Indianized early British travelers. Over the years, the Anglo-Indians appropriated curry and tempered it to their palates, for like the Indian people, curry too could become British in the era before the War for Independence.

Following 1857, however, the situation for the Indians changed significantly. They were a conquered people whose culture and cuisine became less a novelty and more an annoyance to the governing powers. Curry had already become an Anglo-Indian by the time of that transfer. While Britain was busy domesticating Anglo-Indian curry into British curry, memsahibs were further domesticating curry and other Anglo-Indian cuisine to fit into their unique recreation of home in the empire. The recipes already adapted to the palates of the colonizers traveled across the subcontinent with ICS and Royal Military and their wives. Try as they might to distance themselves from the rest of India, memsahibs used the power of their bodies and their designations of imperial and domestic space to make curry more Anglo-Indian, thereby removing most of its Indian origins. In the end, the domestication of curry can be seen as an outward symbol of the success of the imperial ethos.

The domestication of empire in the later half of the nineteenth century became the work of British memsahibs. Through their roles as domestic angels, they were charged with recreating home in Indian and neutralizing the exoticness of India at home. Curry became one of the tools they used to accomplish both tasks. In the metropole they demonstrated and suggested adaptations for curry which eventually led to the nationalization of the meal. In India the memsahibs used their tables and even their bodies as a site and means for neutralizing any residual Indianess of the curry and completed the appropriation of curry as Anglo-Indian. As an

arm of the imperial system, domestication provided memsahibs with the power to decide how curry would be presented, preserved and transported throughout the British Empire.

In terms of the trope of incorporation, curry remains a symbol of imperial success in India. From the eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth, the imperil ethos taught that Indians could be incorporated into the empire with a little work. This early period saw the inclusion of so-called Indian curries in British cookbooks. Even as memsahibs began directing adaptations of the meal, marking the nationalization of curry, the 1857 War for Independence caused the outlook for Indians to change. Working at a time when the British were afraid of being consumed by their imperial dreams, memsahibs continued their work neutralizing curry in Britain and in India. Their skillful work of adaptation resulted in the incorporation of curry into the British national diet. Without their works, curry would have languished as the British Empire did in the twentieth century. Instead, curry remains a symbol of the success of at least on part of the imperial endeavor.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to define curry and ultimately to illustrate how it was a tool of imperialism in the nineteenth century. Throughout this work, we have asserted that curry is a British construct. That is not to diminish the role of Indian cuisine in the creation of curry. Curry is a British expression of Indian masala mixtures. Like other methods used by colonizing forces, curry became a means for the British to know the Indians that they colonized. Eventually it became a physical symbol of the success of British Imperialism in India. However, it was not a swift process; the interactions of the British with the Indians began over four-hundred years ago. Throughout the years, curry took a curious path leading ultimately to its place in the national cuisine of Britain. That trek makes up the bulk of our investigation.

In chapter two we attempted to piece together a definition for curry from which to begin our investigation. We discovered that the authorities on the subject pointed to the Anglicization of an Indian word for pepper to describe all Indian cuisine; that term was curry. From that point, we turned to cookery books to see when and where we could locate curry in the history of British cuisine. By assigning themes of authenticity, provenance and ownership to certain recipes, we came away with a scheme to compartmentalize those receipts into three different themes: proto-curry, Anglo-Indian curry and British curry. The proto-curries, examined with an eye at provenance, helped explain how curry entered the British diet. While the themes of authenticity

and ownership helped explain the arrival of Anglo-Indian curries in the metropole and their adaptation into British curries in the nineteenth century.

The most important findings came when we traced the transformation of curry recipes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through several British cookery texts. The evidence indicated two dimensions for curry in Britain. Initially we thought that the desire to reproduce authentic Indian curry that catered to the British palate gave way under the force of the Anglo-Indian curry; however, further investigation uncovered that the nineteenth century understanding of curry was adapted and transmitted through Anglo-Indians. Authentic Indian curry recipes were never authentic but always Anglo-Indian conceptions. Anglo-Indian curries then became British curries through further adaptations.

Economic-minded cookery book authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, like Glasse and Acton, wanted to provide cookery that matched the values of the middle classes, which in turn were accepted as British values. Both Acton and Glass embraced the idea of ownership when transmitting curry recipes. By recognizing that curry is British in conception, we can understand why the nineteenth century witnessed the disappearance of most of the Indian provenance and an increase in the number of British ingredients being curried.

The question then became, how did the Anglo-Indians adapt curry. The notions of authenticity and provenance introduced in chapter two dropped away while the concept of ownership grew for the Anglo-Indians living in India. Indian food was first adapted into curry by nabobs who wished to compete with local Indian elites. From this point, curry was purely British construct marking our designation of the Anglo-Indian curry phase. In this era before the First War for Indian Independence, curry, like other Indian cultural and traditional aspects, enjoyed a prominent place in the minds of Anglo-Indians. Curry regularly featured on their

tables and often appeared at EIC dinner parties. Between 1757 and 1857, the years between the Battle of Plassey and the War for Independence, curry became a common meal for Anglo-Indians; they felt a sense of ownership over it since they adapted it to their palates and ate it on a regular basis. However, they still contributed an Indianess to it. The British victory in the First War for Indian Independence brought about changes for India and for Anglo-Indians. In the wake of 1857 and the creation of the crown colony of India (the British Raj), the Anglo-Indians, the women especially, took their ownership one-step further in the nineteenth century by further adapting curry to their palates and to their ideas of regionalism. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, curry could mean Anglo-Indian curry whose flavours had been regionalized into the four locations where the British had large holdings. The final step completing the ownership of curry by the British resulted in a decline of the dish's popularity in India due to the power of memsahibs who set about domesticating India in the British fashion. However, even as its popularity on Anglo-Indian tables was waning, its status on British tables was growing.

Once curry arrived in Britain, it became famous. Cookery books, social clubs dedicated to Anglo-Indians and restaurants helped with its rising popularity. Curry provided many things to many different types of people in the metropole. For returning Anglo-Indians, a restaurant or club that served curry became a haven, a place where they fondly reminisced about their years in India. For cookery authors, helped along by memsahibs, curry became a meal that could be further adapted for the British palate and finally emerge as a new national dish. Finally, curry became a way to share and spread the imperial ethos; people who never left British could enjoy the fruits of imperialism with a plate of curry. The sense of ownership and pride in the imperial endeavor allowed Anglo-Indian and British curry to exist side by side on the tables of the British and in their cookery texts from the nineteenth century onward.

In the end, curry emerges as a tool of imperialism. The familiarity and ownership the British felt with curry allowed it to play a part in the work of the nineteenth century memsahib - the domestication of the empire. As domestic angels, they were charged with recreating home in Indian and neutralizing the exoticness of India at home. Curry became one of the tools they used to accomplish both tasks. In the metropole they demonstrated and suggested adaptations for curry which eventually led to its nationalization; in India they used their bodies as a means for neutralizing any residual Indianess of the curry and completed its transformation to a purely Anglo-Indian meal. As an arm of the imperial system, domestication provided memsahibs with the power to decide how curry would be presented, preserved and transported throughout the British Empire.

Looking through the lens of a post-colonial trope, the British were interested in incorporating India into Britain, and curry became a symbol of their imperial success. This trope accounts for the curious history of curry. From the eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth, the imperial ethos taught that Indians could be incorporated into the empire with a little work. During this period cookery books tried to include authentic Indian curry recipes for their readers, even though those recipes were Anglo-Indian in origin. The changing environment in India, namely the War for Independence, caused the British to fear their own consumption by their imperial dreams. However, memsahibs continued their work domesticating the empire and neutralizing curry in Britain and in India. The successful adaptation of curry into something the British owned caused it to become a symbol of successful incorporation.

What exactly is curry? Curry is a meal. It is the result of over four hundred years of British interaction with India. It is a way that the British made Indian cuisine understandable in their minds and on their palates. Curry is made up of a mixture of spices that come from India -

but have been in Britain since the Romans arrived on its shores- and any other ingredient the cook feels like including. There is more to it though; curry is also an idea. It is a symbol of the success of British imperial endeavors. It illustrates that even though the medals of imperialism have become tarnished in the post-colonial world, the British were successful in possessing, converting and incorporating an object of the Indian Other into their world.

The research presented here would generally fall under the heading of culinary history; however, the connection made between curry and imperialism illustrates the usefulness of food history in wider historical studies. After all, the need for foodstuffs has spurred on revolutionary actions just as political unrest has. From this study of curry, we could continue in several different directions. Thinking back to chapter one, we know that curry is still considered a part of the British national identity. Following curry into the twenty-first century would allow us see the transformation of curry from a symbol of imperial success to one of congratulatory multiculturalism. We could also follow it further into the British Empire. Curry is available in many forms across the world thanks to the breadth of the British Empire: from Japan to Jamaica and many places in between. Finally, we could use this discussion of curry to further illustrate the active role of women in the British imperial endeavor. Culinary history, like the study presented here, reveals just a few of the possibilities where the history of food its consumption could support our deeper understanding of the past.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

A Lady Resient. The Englishwoman in India. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1864.

Achaya, A.T. A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Acton, Eliza. Modern Cookery for Private Families. London: Longman, 1865.

Anonymous. Indian Domestic Economy and Receipt Book. Madras: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1860.

Anonymous. London at Dinner, or Where to Dine. London: Robert Hardwick, 1858.

Atkinson, George F. Curry and Rice: The Ingredients of Social Life at "Our Station" in India. Bangalore: Rupa & Co., 2001.

Beeton, Isabella. The Book of Household Management. London: Ward, Locke, and Tyler, circa 1860.

Bradley, Richard and Caroline Davis ed. The Country Housewife and Lady's Director. Reprint. London: Prospect Books, 1980.

Burton, Richard F. Goa and the Blue Mountains; or, Six Months of Sick Leave. Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1991.

Carter, Charles. The Complete Practical Cook or, a New System of the Whole Art and Mystery of Cookery. Reprint. London: Prospect Books, 1984.

Day, Harvey. The Complete Book of Curries. Aylesbury, Bucks, England: The Cookery Book Club, 1970.

Dawe, W.H. The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery. London: Elliot Stock, 1888.

Eden, Emily. Up the country; letters written to her sister from the upper provinces of India. London: Oxford University Press, 1930.

Fane, Isabella. Miss Fane in India. London: Alan Sutton, 1985.

Fernandez, Rafi. Great Indian Dishes: Easy, Authentic and Deliciously Aromatic Cooking. London: Hermes House, 1998.

Forbes, James. Oriental Memoirs: Selected from a Series of Familiar Letters Written During Seventeen Years Residence in India. Vol.1. Reprint. Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1988.

Forrest, Denys. The Oriental: Life Story of a West End Club. London: B.T. Batsford LTD, 1968.

Gaffney, Helen. "Heritage Dish…Kedgeree." The British Food Trust. Eating History. http://www.greatbritishkitchen.co.uk/eh_kedgeree.htm.

Glasse, Hannah. The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy. Facsimile. London: Prospect Books, 1983.

Glendinning, Lee. "Curry Leaves may help control diabetes, scientists say," 09/30/04, Guardian Unlimited, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1315804,00.html.

Hieatt, Constance B. and Sharon Butler. Curye on Inglysch: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century (Including the *Forme of Cury*). London: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Jaffrey, Madhur. From Curries to Kebabs: Recipes from the Indian Spice Trail. New York: Clarkson Potter, 2003.

Katz, Solomon H.,ed. Encyclopedia of Food and Culture. Vol.1. New York: Scribner, 2003.

Kellet, Susanna. A Complete Collection of Cookery Receipts. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: T. Saint, 1780.

Law, John. Glimpses of Hidden India. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., date unknown.

Lyall, Sarah. "Glorious Food? English Schoolchildren Think Not." *The New York Times*. 10/18/2006, A4.

Macdonnell, Anne. The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby Knight Opened: Newly edited, with introduction, notes, and glossary. London: Phillip Lee Warner, 1910.

Newnham-Davis, Lieut.-Col. Dinners and Diners. London: pub unknown, 1899.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, accessed online through Galileo, http://callisto.gsu.edu/cgi-bin/homepage.cgi.

Parks, Fanny. Begums, Thugs and White Mughals. London: Sickle Moon Books, 2002.

"Pop Goes the World Cup," BBC News, 05/22/98, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/sport/football/98838.stm.

Prospect Books. "A glossary of cookery and other terms." Scholarly Section. http://www.greatbritishkitchen.co.uk/eh_kedgeree.htm.

"Robin Cook's chicken tikka masala speech," Guardian Unlimited, 04/19/2001, http://www.guardian.co.uk/racism/Story/0,,477023,00.html.

Steele, Flora Annie and G. Gardner. The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook. 12th ed. London: William Heinmann, 1921.

"Tasty Curry might have a fringe benefit,: USA Today, 01/07/2007, http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-01-07-curry-cover_x.htm.

Thackery, William Makepeace. Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero. New York: Modern Library, 2001.

Twigger, Robert. "Inflation: The Value of the Pound 1750-1998," British House of Commons Research Paper 99/20, 02/23/1999, http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp99/rp99-020.pdf

W.M. The Complete Cook and A Queens Delight. Reprint. London: Prospect Books, 1984.

Warner, Richard. Antiquitates Culinariæ or Curious Tracts relating to the Culinary affairs of the Old English. Reprint. London: Prospect Books, 1982.

Wyvern. Culinary Jottings for Madras. Reprint. London: Prospect Books, 1994.

Secondary Sources

Blunt, Allison. "Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 24/ 4 (1999), 421-440.

Brewer, John. Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997.

Burton, David. The Raj at Table: A Culinary History of the British in India. Eastbourne, England: Faber and Faber, 1994.

Chaudhuri, Nupur and M. Strobel. Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Collingham, E.M. Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947. London: Polity, 2001.

Collingham, Lizzie. Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Dalziel, Nigel. Historical Atlas of the British Empire. London: Penguin Books, 2006.

Ferguson, Niall. Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Hall, Catherine. Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Fielding, Helen. Bridget Jones's Diary. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

Gilmour, David. The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

James, Lawrence. Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.

Lauden, Rachel. "The birth of the modern diet," *Scientific American* (August 2000)

Lehmann, Gilly. The British Housewife: Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain. London: Prospect Books, 2003.

Lynch, Michael. The British Empire. London: Teach Yourself, 2005.

Mennell, Stephen. All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present. Urbana, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Mintz, Sidney. Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Monroe, Jo. Star of India: The Spicy Adventures of Curry. Chichester, England: Wiley, 2005.

Noble, Thomas, et al. Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005.

Procida, Mary. "Feeding the Imperial Appetite: Imperial Knowledge and Anglo-Indian Domesticity," *Journal of Women's History*, 15/2, (Summer, 2003),123-49.

Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Spear, Percival. The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Strobel, Margaret. European Women and the Second British Empire. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Taddei, Antonia. "London Clubs in the Late Nineteenth Century," University of Oxford, *Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, no.28, 04/1999.

Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne, trans. Anthea Bell. A History of Food. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.

Zlotnick, Susan. "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*,16/2/3, Gender, Nations, and Nationalisms, (1996), 51-68.