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HORACE HAYMAN WILSON AND GAMESMANSHIP IN INDOLOGY

NATALIE P. R. SIRKIN

SHORTLY AFTER THE DEATH OF JAMES MILL, HORACE HAYMAN Wilson brought out a new edition of Mill's *History of British India*, in which he footnoted what he thought to be Mill's errors. Reviewing these events in a recent survey of nineteenth-century Indian historians, Professor C. H. Philips comments:

It is incredible that he should not have chosen to write a new history altogether, but possibly his training as a Sanskritist, which had accustomed him to the method of interpreting a text in this way, had something to do with his choice.¹

But why? Professor Philips might as well have asked why he did not write his own books on Hindoo law and on Muslim law instead of bringing out a new edition of Macnaghten; or why he did not collect his own proverbs, instead of editing the *Hindoostanee* and *Persian proverbs* of Captain Roebuck and Dr. Hunter; or why he did not write his own book on travels in the Himalayas, instead of editing Moorcroft's; or why he did not write his own book on Sankhya philosophy, instead of editing H. T. Colebrooke's; or why he did not write his own book on archaeology in Afghanistan, instead of using Masson's materials.

To suggest Mr. Wilson might have written his own *History of British India* is to suggest that he was a scholar and that he was interested in the subject. As to the latter, he never wrote again on the subject. As to the former, his education had not prepared him for it. Educated (as the *Dictionary of National Biography* reports) "in Soho Square," he then apprenticed himself in a London hospital and proceeded to Calcutta as a surgeon for the East India Company. The degrees that appear in some of his later books, M.A.,

¹ C. H. Philips, "James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and the History of India," in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London: 1961), p. 224.

Oxford; Ph.D., Breslau; M.D., Marburg, were all honorary.² Nor do his books reflect scholarship. In his annotations of Mill's *History* made for the purpose of correcting Mill, he gives misinformation on the right of Hindoo women to inherit property, on polygamy, on the purchase of brides in practice and under the ancient law, on slavery, on the right of a Brahman to kill a man of a lower caste, on the eating of animal flesh, on whether or not the Hindoos had a proverb extolling indolence—to cite a few examples from his footnotes in a single chapter. These footnotes are almost totally without documentation. Mr. Wilson was satisfied that his own authority, based on a twenty-four-year residence in Calcutta, was sufficient. Indeed his works generally are written without explicit use of sources. The one outstanding exception was nearly the first thing he wrote, the Preface to the first edition of his Sanskrit-English dictionary. But there, of his nine citations from Dr. Francis Buchanan (later Hamilton's) *Journey to Mysore*, only three³ are correct; he has seven errors, two of them⁴ bearing no resemblance to the original from which they are said to have come.

Similarly his Sanskrit-English dictionary had errors, even in its second edition.⁵ Following the practices of the Hindoo pundits, ignoring the scientific philology that was being developed in Europe, his dictionary was, in fact, not a dictionary at all, but, in the opinion of the world's greatest Sanskrit lexicographers, a collection of words, and "far from the goal which should be attained by every dictionary."⁶

² M.A., 1836, Exeter College, Oxford (C. E. Buckland, ed., *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 455). Ph.D., Hon.—Mr. Wilson always omitted the "Hon."—1838, Breslau (*Verzeichnis der Breslauer Universitaetsschriften* 1811-1885, Anh. 189). M.D., Hon.—although he never practiced medicine—1847; Marburg had a practice of giving an honorary M.D. if the recipient already had received an honorary Ph.D. (Unpublished letter from Dr. Demandt, Director, Staatsarchiv Marburg, Tgb. Nr. II/1249/63 of September 11, 1963).

³ Reprinted in Wilson, *Works*, Vol. V (1865), p. 188, second footnote; p. 189, first footnote; p. 230n. (See footnote 34 below.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227, reference to Buchanan iii 110 (also wrong is reference to Wilks i 511); p. 188n, reference to Buchanan iii 301. The other errors are overgeneralizing (p. 188n, p. 189n); citing as authority a source explicitly said by Buchanan to be unreliable (p. 189n, the Vaishnavam Brahman); two errors in the same note on p. 190n, one on Shankara's dates, the second labeling Malabar, Shankara's "native" country.

⁵ *Biographie Universelle, Ancienne et Moderne*, Vol. XLIV, p. 665. See also Sir Monier Monier-Williams in *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (London: 1894), p. 221; and Mr. Wilson's own preface to the 2nd, (1832) edition of this dictionary.

⁶ Boehtlingk and Roth, *Sanskrit-Woerterbuch in kuerzerer Fassung* (St. Petersburg: 1855-75), Foreword. See also Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (new ed.; Oxford: 1899), p. 11.

Similarly his Sanskrit Grammar was unscientific and inaccurate, and that it reached a second edition is attributed by a contemporary to the fact of its use at Haileybury College, where Mr. Wilson was the outside oral examiner, and also to his assistance from Professor Francis Johnson, a solid grammarian with great learning which he put at the disposal of others.⁷

Though Mr. Wilson was the outside oral examiner at Haileybury in Sanskrit, Bengalee, Persian, Hindi, Hindoostanee, Telugu, Tamil, and Marathi, his knowledge of some of these was "scanty" which, however, he had the "tact" to conceal from the examinees.⁸

His teaching of Sanskrit at Oxford was not noted for its excellence.⁹ Nor for its industry: he arranged his own program, compressing his annual teaching load into three terms of three weeks each, to the chagrin of the authorities.¹⁰

He was more interested in ancient Hindoo religion than modern British Indian History, but he wrote an analysis of the *Puranas* without reading them.¹¹

⁷ Monier-Williams in *Memorials of Old Haileybury College, op. cit.*, pp. 212-13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁹ He was not a popular teacher. He had usually one or two students at a time, never more than three or four, when Sir Monier was one of his students. (*Ibid.*, p. 217). In Parliament he testified his students numbered no more than "seven or eight." The smallness of the number he ascribed to there being no examination in Sanskrit. *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. XXIX (1852-53), p. 14 [*Sixth Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories*]. His merits as a Sanskrit scholar should not be inferred from his position as Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. It was an elected post. Of the 4,000 qualified to vote, only 400 voted, and Mr. Wilson won by a plurality of seven. (*Memorials of Old Haileybury College, op. cit.*, pp. 215-16.)

¹⁰ This he "justified ... on the ground that he had been deceived as to the stipend of the Chair, and so led to give up his valuable appointments at Calcutta." (*Memorials of Old Haileybury ...*, *ibid.*, p. 214n.)

¹¹ He himself described his method. It involved having "Several able pundits" make out an index of the contents. He then looked through the index to see what was "useful"—not defined—and examined the useful portions. The *Puranas*, he wrote, were too long for anyone to read were he to give his life to it. Colonel Vans Kennedy, criticizing Mr. Wilson's method and conclusions, said he had read sixteen of the eighteen. "Col. Vans Kennedy on the *Puranas*," *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register of British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia*, Vol. XXII—N.S. (January-April, 1837), p. 241.

"...[I]t is certain that if these details [that Mr. Wilson intimates he will offer the Royal Asiatic Society] are accompanied with such comments as have been already published by Professor Wilson, the analyses will convey the most erroneous notions of what is actually contained in the *Puranas*... [Colonel Vans Kennedy, "On Professor Wilson's Theory respecting the *Puranas*."] Letter No. V, *ibid.*, Vol. XXXIV—N.S. (January-April, 1841), pp. 235-36. See also footnote 53 below.

He had, in short, no spirit of scholarship, and no high opinion of it. He called it "unimaginative" and "uncreative" and contrasted it unfavorably with "embellish[ing] literature."¹²

Why He Had A Reputation

Despite the modesty of his education, despite his indifference to normal scholarly standards, he inherited the mantle of the great Sanskritist H. T. Colebrooke, and from the day of Colebrooke's death in 1837 to the day of his own in 1860, he was the towering figure amongst Orientalists. His bibliography,¹³ which he prepared himself shortly before his death, shows him as a man of great energy; it lists sixteen "original" monographs, seven "edited" monographs, forty-two articles and notes—and even so is not complete.¹⁴

His industry, in the world of books and men, is a partial explanation of his reputation. A fuller account of it is provided by Sir Monier Monier-Williams, Professor of Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindoostanee at Haileybury when Mr. Wilson was the oral examiner there, and Mr. Wilson's successor to the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford:

In reality [says Sir Monier Monier-Williams] Wilson owed his celebrity to his boldness in entering upon investigations which no one had before attempted, to his excellence as a writer, to his faculty of lucid exposition, to the unusual versatility of his genius, including, as it did, poetical, dramatic, and musical powers of a high order, and perhaps, more than anything else, to his untiring industry and the wide range of his contributions to almost every brand of Oriental research.

Doubtless he also owed much to the high opinion formed of his abilities by Mr. Colebrooke, and to the fact that as early as 1811, on the death of Dr. Hunter, he was elected, on Colebrooke's recommendation, to the Secretaryship of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.¹⁵

It is hard to know where ability stops and luck sets in. Mr. Wilson had them both. He had a knack for being at the right place at the right time. He arrived in Calcutta in 1808 at a critical moment in the life of H. T. Colebrooke. Colebrooke had been directing a grand project for a multilingual dictionary of Oriental

¹² H. H. Wilson (ed.), *A Collection of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases in the Persian and Hindoostanee Languages*, "Compiled and Translated, Chiefly, by the late Thomas Roebuck" (Calcutta: 1824), p. 30.

¹³ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. XVIII (1861); *Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Anniversary Meeting of the Society* (perhaps bound at the end of the *Journal*), pp. 6-10.

¹⁴ E.g., it omits a review article which he probably regretted having written on a book on Hindoo law. See footnote 29 below.

¹⁵ Monier-Williams in *Memorials of Old Haileybury . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

languages. He had become dissatisfied with his progress and was giving it up. Here was a young man, eager, enthusiastic, energetic, wanting to learn Sanskrit. Colebrooke handed him the dictionary, then in Sanskrit, Persian, and Bengali. This was the dictionary that, in 1819, became Mr. Wilson's Sanskrit-English dictionary—the world's first. Three years later the Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal died and Colebrooke, then President, made Mr. Wilson the new Secretary, which he continued to be until his departure from Calcutta, early in 1833. Being Secretary apparently gave him control of manuscripts in search of authors. When, in 1836, the Librarian in India House died and he succeeded to that post,¹⁶ he inherited a "scattered mass of priceless . . . manuscripts."¹⁷ "Il fut ainsi placé dans les conditions les plus favorables pour continuer ses vastes et précieux travaux."¹⁸

How He Earned His Reputation

At least as important as his luck was his fearlessness. He was willing to search the graveyards. It was in this way that he came to have publications in such fields as law and archaeology, travel in the Himalayas and Sankhya philosophy, Hindoostanee proverbs and Indian history. Those books, diverse though they seem, had a certain homogeneity. It was that their authors were all dead. Mr. Wilson took their unpublished manuscripts or published and well-established books, arranged for publication or republication, provided a preface, and made sufficient additional changes to justify his claim to their authorship (or, if necessary, co-authorship). The following table lists those works of Mr. Wilson which will be noted in this paper. They are classified by source through which he got them, by whether or not there was a previous author, by whether he considered his role to be editor or author. They include most of his important books.

Consider how he came to co-author Mill's *History of British India*. Mill had published the first edition in late 1817 or early 1818, and in 1820 and 1826 a second and third. He had for twenty years been an executive in the East India Company, when, in 1836,

¹⁶ A less ambitious or more conscientious man might conceivably have turned it down or given up the Oxford job. Mr. Wilson kept them both and arranged his schedule at Oxford to accommodate his new job.

¹⁷ Such was the description of it at the time Reinhold Rost (who collected and edited the first five volumes of Mr. Wilson's *Works* after his death) was Librarian. Rost was the second Librarian after Wilson. He was the first Librarian to organize and catalogue the library. (*Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XVII, p. 291).

¹⁸ *Biographie Universelle* . . . , *op. cit.*, p. 666.

THE SOURCES OF SOME OF MR. WILSON'S PUBLICATIONS

Mr. Wilson As:	Materials Obtained in His Capacity As				Materials Obtained Unofficially	
	SECRETARY OF ASIATIC SOCIETY		LIBRARIAN OF INDIA HOUSE		Original Author Dead	Other
	Original Author Dead	Other	Original Author Dead	Other		
AUTHOR		1817— "Historical Sketch of the First Burmese War"	1841— "Ariana Antiqua" [Masson]		1937— Sankhya Karika [Colebrooke] 1844-48— Continuation to Mill's History	1819— Sanskrit-English Dictionary [Colebrooke] 1841— Sanskrit Grammar 1855— Glossary of Indian Rev. & Judicial Terms
EDITOR	1824— Persian & Hindoostanee Proverbs [Roebuck, Hunter] 1841— "Travels of Moorcroft"				1840— Mill's History Vols. 1-6 1860— Hindoo & Muslim Law [Macnaghten]	

Totals:
Original author dead: 6
Other: 4

he died. At the same time Sir Charles Wilkins, Librarian of the E. I. Company, died. And Mr. Wilson moved into the Library, perhaps next door to Mill's old office, which was now occupied by John Stuart Mill. Undismayed by the proximity of the son, Mr. Wilson proceeded to "correct" the father. In 1840 appeared the fourth edition of the *History of British India*, now by Mill and Wilson. It had a Preface by "editor" Wilson prefacing the Preface by the dead author. (His usual method was replacing, not supplementing, the original preface.) It had footnotes correcting the original author, many in the section on Hindoo character and civilization, few in the Muslim and the British sections. These volumes of "corrections" were followed in subsequent years by three new volumes which continued the history from Mill's cut-off date of 1805 through 1835. The continuation is, unlike Mr. Wilson's prefaces, dull and difficult to get through. It remained unnoticed by most of the periodicals of the day and has not since been taken seriously. It was also unreliable. For example, not once in his seven-hundred-word summary of the Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy did he mention Macaulay by name,¹⁹ without which such a summary cannot fairly be written; and it is so unobjective that a later survey of education in India can quote it in full as a statement of the Orientalist side of the Controversy.²⁰

It is in the case of Charles Masson and the coins he collected in Afghanistan that one learns in detail how Mr. Wilson operated. He tells the story himself. Mr. Wilson "offered [his] services," and what was to have been Masson's show ends up as Wilson's with a single chapter by Masson. Masson was in no position to protest, had he so desired.^{20a}

¹⁹ Wilson in James Mill, *History of British India*, Vol. IX (5th ed., London: 1858), pp. 213-15.

²⁰ Syed Mahmood. *A History of English Education in India, 1781-1893* (Aligarh: 1895), pp. 54-56.

^{20a} Having been frequently robbed from 1826 to 1838 on his travels through Afghanistan and Northwest India, he could not have been much disturbed at still another robbery. (See his *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, and the Panjab, including a Residence in Those Countries from 1826 to 1838*, London: 1842, 2 vols.) Having then arrived in Khelat, he was arrested by the Company on suspicion of being a Russian Agent. (*Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* ... Vol. XXXIV—N.S., 1841 Part II, pp. 23-24, 197, 194, 301.) By the time he had extricated himself from this situation and arrived in Bombay (dressed as a Turk), the book was already in print. (*Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* ... Vol. XXXV—N.S. 1841, Part II, pp. 94, 286.)

Masson, whose work is credited with opening up a whole new chapter in the history of Greek Art,²¹ excavated stupas and collected, on behalf of the Company, 40,000 Indo-Greek coins. Mr. Wilson recounts the early part of the story in a letter to his friends in the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, who publish it in their *Proceedings* for 1838:

The Secretary communicated the following extract from Professor Wilson's last letter on the subject of the MASSON collection of coins.

"I have been lately occupied rather industriously with Masson's coins. We received those of 1833-34 in the summer; those of 1835 only about three months ago. After inspecting the first batch I proposed to the court [of Directors] through the chairman and several of the directors to give a lecture upon them; but this was thought an unadvisable innovation and the measure was abandoned. I WAS DETERMINED HOWEVER NOT TO DROP THE SUBJECT, and therefore GAVE MY LECTURE IN THE FORM OF A MEMOIR, which was received very graciously. I suggested at the same time the advisableness of publishing a book with plates, and offered to prepare the materials if the court would bear the expenses, proposing that after taking such number of copies as the court may require, to make over the rest to Mr. Masson's family and their benefit. There seems to be a disposition to accede to the arrangement, or at any rate to give to Masson or his family some further remuneration for the coins as their pecuniary value is much beyond what they cost. [all caps supplied]"²²

The Court of Directors did agree to finance the publication, and the second source of information is Mr. Wilson's Preface in the resulting volume. There he justifies the volume on the grounds that (1) notices of Masson's work had been originally presented by Masson and by the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* at different times and some were not easily accessible in England, and (2) additional information had since been come-by.

I accordingly [continues Mr. Wilson's Preface] *offered my services* to the Honourable the Court of Directors to prepare such an account. . .

The emphasis is added. It is a phrase Mr. Wilson was to use again and again; and if this case is typical, it conceals a wealth of material on Mr. Wilson's behind-the-scenes operations.

The account needed a preface, which (he continues in the Preface) he undertook to prepare. Having thus noted his own efforts on behalf of this new dissemination of Masson's knowledge in reorganized form, he suddenly transformed his own role from foot soldier to commanding officer. There was (he said) no detailed description of Masson's excavations of stupas, so

²¹ F. R. Allchin, "Ideas of History in Indian Archaeological Writing: A Preliminary Study," in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, op. cit.*, p. 245.

²² *Journal of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VII (May, 1838), p. 457.

I therefore required him to favour me with a more particular report of his operations; and the circumstantial description which was in consequence received from him, and which occupies the second chapter, together with the sketches of the Topes[stupas], which are here engraved, cannot fail to enhance the use and interest of the work.

What was to have been a collection of Masson's own writings and other descriptions of his work, in English, and under one cover, now finds its interest enhanced through the addition of a chapter by Masson.

The rest is all Mr. Wilson's show, and he does not fritter away a serendipitous opportunity for laying claim to succeeding Major Rennell as the outstanding contributor to geography:

In the third chapter [he continues]... I have endeavoured to supply materials for a more accurate comparison than has yet been instituted in this country between their present and past topographical distribution. We have had no systematic attempt to verify the ancient geography of this part of Asia since the writings of Major Rennell. Without detracting in any degree from his just claims to distinction as a classic geographer, it is undeniable, as he himself admits that the means at his command were in this instance wholly incapable of leading to safe and certain conclusions....

Major Rennell had spent fifty years doing research in geography; Mr. Wilson was writing a chapter on that subject. But Mr. Wilson was alive, and Major Rennell dead. Major Rennell had died ten years before, and lay buried, in Westminster Abbey. The publication emerges as

ARIANA ANTIQUA, A descriptive Account of the Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan. With a memoir on the buildings called Topes, by C. Masson. [and, in big letters] by HORACE HAYMAN WILSON, M.A., F.R.S., 1841.

In his bibliography, Mr. Wilson lists himself as sole author without even a mention of the name "Masson."

The case of Moorcroft is instructive, though what it illustrates is unclear.

William Moorcroft and an assistant had been traveling in the Himalayas. He had died there, as had his assistant. His papers, or many of them, were recovered and brought to Calcutta, where they appear to have come into the possession of the Secretary of the Asiatic Society. The Secretary patiently sat on them for ten years until his chief competitor for editorship had died.

In his Preface to the volume of Moorcroft's travels, which he then edited, he maintained that the possibility of finding anyone else to edit them was so small that, being interested in the public

good, he had no alternative but to edit them himself. Yet a casual riffling of the pages of the Asiatic Society's *Proceedings*, together with a list of Moorcroft's works in the *British Museum Catalogue*, reveals there were six people known to have had an interest in Moorcroft's papers and four of them were at least as well-qualified as Mr. Wilson to be editor.

One Lieutenant Joseph D. Cunningham, Engineer, actually published a pamphlet of notes on Mr. Wilson's edition in Calcutta in 1844.

The Royal Geographic Society, in the first volume of its *Journal* in 1832, had published "Papers of the late Mr. William Moorcroft—Notice on Khoten." One Lieutenant Brand had organized the papers,

altogether gratuitously, and they have been since revised and arranged by the Honorable Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone, who has added some explanatory notes where they appeared wanting.²³

Elphinstone had traveled in Kabul and had written a book about it in 1815. He had left the Company service, to retire to England and to write.

Mr. Wilson must have known about that article, whether he knew of Lieutenant Cunningham or not.

Yet there was still another article. The July, 1838, issue of the *Journal* of his old Asiatic Society records that one Mr. Lord produced an account book and map belonging to Moorcroft, recovered along with fifty other volumes. And Captain Burnes, traveling to Toorkistan, sent (according to this same journal) to the Governor General more books and papers of Moorcroft's. Captain Burnes had recovered these on his own travels through some of the same territory; he had offered a reward for possessions of Moorcroft (double, for all things in Moorcroft's hand.)²⁴

This information Mr. Wilson certain must have read. It is in the *Journal* of the Society whose Secretary he had been for twenty-two years, and whose "European agent" he then was, and in an issue of two months earlier had appeared the extract from Mr. Wilson's letter about Masson's coins.

But if, perchance he missed it, he knew of Captain Burnes and his qualifications. He knew that Captain Burnes had traveled in Moorcroft territory, and that Captain Burnes could write.

²³ *Journal of The Royal Geographic Society*, Vol. I (1832), p. 233.

²⁴ *Journal of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, *op. cit.* (July, 1838), pp. 665-66.

In 1835 Burnes had published a book, *Travels into Bokhara...* 1831, 32 and 33, by Lieut. Alex^r Burnes. Mr. Wilson had himself illustrated some coins in that book (for which the Captain, who lived to see his book through the press, gave due acknowledgment in the Preface, though no mention on the title page).

Both Elphinstone and Burnes were public-spirited and no doubt would have been willing to edit Moorcroft's papers. Mr. Lord, Lieutenant Brand, and Lieutenant Cunningham were three additional possibilities. And still a sixth was H. T. Colebrooke, who wrote from England to Mr. Wilson, his protégé, in Calcutta, in June, 1826:

I would recommend that Mr. Moorcroft's papers should be sent home, with a suggestion for their being entrusted to me for publication in the most advisable manner, on the ground of my having been the editor of the account of his previous journey. I well know how much the pruning knife is required. Until we have seen his MSS., there is no judging whether it will be best to make a separate publication, or insert it in the Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society. I am disposed to make an offer of my services, knowing how likely these curios and valuable materials are to be neglected at the India House, if they come home in the crude and unprepared state they are sure to have been left in.²⁵

Mr. Wilson's answer, if any, does not appear. Eighteen months later came a renewal of the Colebrooke offer, with his right to be editor a little more forcefully presented:

Having been the abridger of Moorcroft's former narrative, I am familiar with his manner, and could more easily select what is worth publishing than anyone else. I hope therefore the government abroad will either consign his papers to me, or send them open, when the East India Company (I mean the Court of Directors) would most likely do so.²⁶

Mr. Wilson's answer to this second appeal, if any, does not appear. Colebrooke died in March, 1837. Mr. Wilson's Preface to this volume is dated September, 1837, six months later, although the book was not published for another four years. Can it be that Mr. Wilson set to work at it as soon as Colebrooke died, that he was waiting for him to die before beginning? It was not a Preface he would have written had Colebrooke been alive, for his words were,

To say the truth, Mr. Moorcroft's writings were so voluminous, and so discursive, that the chance of meeting with any person willing to undergo the labour of examining them, and reducing them to a moderate compass and methodized order was considered by persons most competent to judge, exceedingly remote. In order, therefore, to secure the publication, it was necessary for the present Editor to undertake the task for the performance of which he had at least

²⁵ Sir T. E. Colebrooke, *Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol. I, *The Life of H. T. Colebrooke* (London: 1873), p. 354.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, letter of December 24, 1827, p. 357.

the advantage of some experience, having carefully digested some of Mr. Moorcroft's rambling epistles for the public press of Calcutta, and the use of the Asiatic Society.

Why was Mr. Wilson willing to engage in this "terminological inexactitude"? Was it because he wished to establish his authority in this new field? Because he wished to hurt Colebrooke, or to deny him an opportunity for adding to an already large stature, the better to compete with it? Or was it that Mr. Wilson had no predisposition against terminological inexactitudes? The published record is not clear.

It will have been observed Mr. Wilson was unkind to Moorcroft. Besides condemning his style, he neglected to defend Moorcroft against a charge of poor judgment, for which he was taken to task by a contemporary reviewer.²⁷

On the title page, Mr. Wilson gives the title as

Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir ... by Mr. William Moorcroft and Mr. George Trebeck from 1819 to 1825. Prepared for the Press ... by Horace Hayman Wilson, M.A., F.R.S.

but in his own bibliography he lists it as simply, "Travels of Moorcroft," giving the impression, intended or not, that it is Mr. Wilson's book about Moorcroft's Travels rather than Moorcroft's about his own.

Moorcroft's travels, Masson's coins, Mill's history, were not isolated cases. Early in his career he came into the possession of an unpublished manuscript of proverbs which appeared, with him as its editor, in 1824: *A Collection of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases in the Persian and Hindoostanee Languages*. He contributed the Preface. What more he did is obscure. The book is insufficiently edited. It has no index, no table of contents, no organizational criteria implicit or explicit, not even an indication at the head of each page whether it is the Hindoostanee or the Persian section. If one wishes to look for a particular proverb, he must start looking from the beginning. In the Preface it is told that a

²⁷ *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* ..., Vol. XXXIV—N.S. (1841), *op. cit.*, p. 242: "The judgment and the prudence of Mr. Moorcroft have, indeed, been called in question and possibly with some reason; for we find Mr. Wilson, who cannot be suspected of an adverse feeling towards one for whom he seems to have entertained a personal regard, does not vindicate him upon those two points ..."

Captain Roebuck prepared the list of proverbs, and died (1819). One learns further something of the short-comings of this Captain Roebuck :

He was not endowed with a lively imagination nor creative faculty... [He had no] extensive erudition ...[H]is powers were better calculated to assist research, than to embellish literature ... As a teacher his exactness was occasionally irksome to his class.

In the Preface it is noted that Captain Roebuck wrote an earlier work which was received badly by the critics, but unjustifiably, in the opinion of the editor. Why the gratuitous insults to a dead man? The published record gives no indication. In his bibliography, Mr. Wilson refers to this book, and to his role in it, as

A large collection of Persian and Hindustani Proverbs, with translation, commenced by Dr. Hunter, continued by Capt. Roebuck, but finished by me...

Dr. Hunter's name does not appear on the title page. Dr. Hunter was Mr. Wilson's predecessor as Secretary of the Asiatic Society. He had died.

A few years later Mr. Wilson talked his way into the authorship of an "original" monograph which he lists in his bibliography as "Historical Sketch of the First Burmese War" (1827). The Government in Calcutta had decided to publish documents on the War. Mr. Wilson convinced them to permit him to provide an accompanying text (as he later writes in his Preface to the subsequent edition), and the book was published, apparently under the title of *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War*. In 1852 he republished this book under a different title—*Narrative of the Burmese War in 1824-26, As Originally Compiled from Official Documents*—without the original documents; without, indeed, even a list of them.

Macnaghten died, leaving behind two well-established texts in law.

W. H. Macnaghten had been a judge (and, by avocation, a Persian scholar) in Calcutta. He had written books on the principles and cases of Hindoo law and the principles and cases of

Muslim law. They were influential (unfortunately).²⁸ Mr. Wilson, no more the jurist than the historian or numismatist or geographer or Himalayan traveler, but not more shy of becoming one, undertook in 1860 (the year of his death) to bring Macnaghten back on the market. He dealt with the problem of updating the cases by omitting them. What remained, the principles of Hindoo and of Muslim law, he published in a single volume, supplying an occasional footnote and substituting his own preface for that of the author. What is further interesting about this endeavor is that he took this opportunity by a few words of praise to right a wrong he had committed against Macnaghten's father thirty-five years earlier, when, as a young man, he had written an intemperate and unfair review of a book on Hindoo law by the elder Macnaghten.²⁹ (He did not, however, refer to that earlier review.)

The Sanskrit-English dictionary was Mr. Wilson's early contribution and possibly his most important, since, for many years, it remained the only Sanskrit-English dictionary. Its originator, H. T. Colebrooke, was still alive.

The dictionary had its beginnings under the guidance of Colebrooke, who, though fully occupied as a judge in Calcutta, put the pundits of Fort William College to work compiling and alphabetizing words from existing written Sanskrit vocabularies. Though the pun-

²⁸ J. Duncan M. Derrett, "The Administration of Hindu Law by the British," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* ..., Vol. IV, No. 1 (November, 1961), p. 34. English judges tended to look to these textbooks for guidance in making their decisions. This was grievously misleading procedure, given the wish of the British to govern the people by their own law: its tendency was to unify Hindoo law, thus to establish the concept of "precedent" where this concept was alien, and thus to govern the people by the laws of some other caste in some other place.

Traditionally, there was no single Hindoo law on any one subject. The law was custom—the custom of the caste in that place. The most important thing to an ancient Hindoo was *dharma*: "righteousness," "virtue," "duty," i.e., duty to one's caste, i.e., caste custom, and commonly translated "sacred law." The *shastras* (sacred books, also translated "sacred law") themselves recognize their inferiority to caste custom in any conflict. (*Yajnyavalkya*, I 56, 7; *Manu* ii, 12; viii, 41; *Narada* I 40; *Artha Shastra*, Book III, i, 150, last paragraph. See Derrett, p. 24; also N. Chandrasekhara Aiyar (ed.), [John Dawson] *Mayne's Treatise on Hindu Law and Usage* (11th ed.; Madras: 1950), Chap. III, sec. 33, and p. 8. It is not clear Mr. Wilson understood this point.

²⁹ E.g., "The learned judge...begins with considering a case which he admits he does not know ever to have occurred, the right of a great-grandmother to share with her great-grandsons, on which after a discussion, which appears to us very unprofitable, and very unnecessary, he allows the old lady a share...It is scarcely worth while to discuss the case..." Review of "*Considerations on the Hindoo Law, As it is Current in Bengal* by the Honorable Sir Francis Workman Macnaghten ..." reprinted in Wilson, *Works*, Vol. V (1865), p. 25, from the *Quarterly Or. Magazine*, 1825.

dits needed more supervision than he had time to give them,³⁰ eventually there was produced a four-volume set of Sanskrit-Persian-Bengalee words. Colebrooke then requested Company servants in various parts of India to make corrections or additions in the vernaculars with which they were familiar from their occupational or regional experience. Only one, Dr. Francis Buchanan (later Hamilton), ever cooperated.³¹ It was at this point that the young Mr. Wilson arrived in Calcutta. Colebrooke, disheartened, gave him the dictionary.³² Mr Wilson had someone put in the English equivalents. Ten years later the thing had become

A Dictionary in Sanscrit and English, translated, amended, and enlarged, from an original compilation, Prepared by Learned Natives.³³

Colebrooke's initial ambitious Sanskrit-Persian-multivernacular plan (the idea had actually been Sir James Mackintosh's) had been redesigned by Mr. Wilson into something simple and workable, with Mr. Wilson as its sole author, though the title of the book indicates that it was "translated . . . from" an earlier, unnamed, work.

In the title Mr. Wilson gave the pundits a collective mention, but in the Preface to the second edition (1832) he condemned them for their errors and in the Preface to the first edition he rebuked them for a "delay more than commensurate with the extent and value of the work."³⁴ But the value of the work to Mr. Wilson was enormous. It was the cornerstone of his career. It was also his chief claim to the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford. His reason

³⁰ Colebrooke, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 355.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

³² Perhaps because almost no work has been done on Mr. Wilson, the link between Colebrooke's and Wilson's dictionaries seems not well-known. Two sources which are definite on this point are Wilson himself, in "Notice of European Grammars and Lexicons of the Sanskrit Language (1843)" in *Works*, Vol. V, *op. cit.*, p. 302; and *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society . . . , Proceedings . . . , op. cit.*, p. 3. See also Mr. Wilson's Preface to his 1819 edition, Colebrooke's letters in his son's biography (*op. cit.*), *Biographie Universelle . . .*, and the obituary notices of the various Asiatic Societies.

³³ This is the title of the second edition. The first edition was apparently called simply "A Dictionary, Sanscrit and English." (*British Museum Catalogue*)

³⁴ Reprinted in *Works*, Vol. V (*op. cit.*), p. 162. This Preface would have been lost but for the assiduity of Mr. Wilson's friend and editor, Reinhold Rost, who states that "not only did he let the second edition (Calcutta: 1832) appear without the Preface, but even long subsequently, when he was asked to allow it to be reprinted for the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* he declined to give his permission." (*Works*, Vol. III, 1864, pp. 12-13).

for preparing a second edition seems to have been chiefly the setting forth of this claim.³⁵

Though Colebrooke was still alive and a patron to whom Mr. Wilson owed his rapid rise in the profession, Colebrooke gets less acknowledgment than the pundits. The second edition is dedicated to him for his "aid and encouragement" in its publication, but nowhere does it specifically appear that the "original compilation, Prepared by Learned Natives," which Mr. Wilson "translated, amended, and enlarged," was in fact Colebrooke's. It would seem rather he went out of his way to conceal it. He says only that a copy of the "compilation" "came into my possession shortly after I commenced my Sanskrit studies,"

and I anticipated the most valuable assistance to them [the Sanskrit studies] from such a source. I found however, that it comprehended ... much more than I then required, and that from its unwieldy size it was inconvenient and embarrassing in use. I therefore effected its conversion into a more commodious form, and prepared a translation of its abbreviated contents for my private reference...³⁶

(The title says the "original compilation" was "enlarged," this passage that it was diminished; the conflict is not explained.) He credits Colebrooke with handing him *Amara Kosha* [Amara Sinha's Vocabulary] with an English translation, and commentaries upon it.³⁷ (Colebrooke had had *Amara Kosha* printed because it was the single most important source for his "original compilation.") All this Mr. Wilson wrote in the Preface to the first edition, but none of it appears in the second, except for the dedication. A decade later it is the "Bengal Government" that gets the credit (for encouraging him to publish the dictionary).³⁸

It may be wondered whether, in Mr. Wilson's day, it was the custom to give acknowledgments. It was.³⁹ Mr. Wilson himself

³⁵ Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* . . . , op. cit., p. 9. See also *Memorials of Old Haileybury* . . . , op. cit., p. 215.

³⁶ *Works*, op. cit., Vol. V, pp. 161-62.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

³⁸ "Notice of European Grammars (1843)," op. cit., p. 302.

³⁹ His colleagues gave it, before him and after him. Colebrooke, who prepared four of Dr. Francis Buchanan (later Hamilton's) articles for publication in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Vol. I, 1826 and Vol. II, 1830), listed Buchanan as the author. (David Prain, "Sketch of the Life of Francis Hamilton [Once Buchanan]," *Annals of the Royal Botanical Garden*, Vol. X, 1905, p. 58.) Sir Monier Monier-Williams has two long pages in his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (first published 1872) entitled "Acknowledgment of Assistance Received" (1899 ed. op. cit., pp. 30-32).

occasionally did it, and the two occasions which have come to my notice are to Dr. Leyden for encouragement in learning Sanskrit (in the same 1819 Preface) — Dr. Leyden was his chief in the Calcutta mint — and to Professor Johnson for help in his Sanskrit Grammar (in the Preface to the Grammar). Mr. Wilson recognized the obligation as it devolved upon others.⁴⁰ He also objected to the giving of credit where credit was not due.⁴¹ And he did not shrink from giving discredit, where due, and by name.⁴²

Colebrooke died. Before his death he had finished translating, and was preparing for publication, a manuscript on Sankhya philosophy. But he was ill at the time, and Mr. Wilson offered his services to see the translation through the press. After Colebrooke's death (according to Mr. Wilson's account of it in the Preface of the resulting volume) two other translations of the Sankhya manuscript appeared, one in Latin and one in French, and to give Colebrooke's English edition a distinguishing "novelty," he volunteered to supply a translation of a Sanskrit commentary, on the Sankhya material, to which he offered to add his own explanatory comments.⁴³ All this he did without knowing anything about Sankhya philosophy.

Not having made Sankhya philosophy a subject of study in India [he continues], I have executed my task without the advantage of previous preparation.

⁴⁰ "That the translation made by Mr. Wilkins in 1787 was of essential service to the present translator is fully acknowledged by him." "Review of Bhagavad Gita of August William Schlegel," reprinted in *Works*, Vol. V (*op. cit.*), p. 102.

⁴¹ "The credit of this enactment [to employ Indians in the administration] has sometimes been given exclusively to Lord W. Bentinck; but this is an injustice." Wilson in Mill's *History*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 184.

⁴² See his Preface to his *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms* ... (1855). Just as Colebrooke had sought the assistance of Company servants in the field to enlarge and improve his multilingual dictionary, so Mr. Wilson tried the same technique with the *Glossary*, compiled when he was Librarian, but with the same unsatisfactory results. "More than one, indeed, in Upper India, turned to Shakespeare's dictionary, and deliberately covered the blank pages of the Glossary with words taken at random from the Lexicon. The practice was too glaringly obvious to be doubted; but it was confessed to me by one of the perpetrators, Mir Shahamat Ali, whom I taxed with it when in England ... (p. iii)" "Mr. C. P. Brown embodied the Madras returns in one compilation but with many errors and it arrived too late for use (p. iv)."

⁴³ I trust the following comment found by chance is not typical. "The Vedas are inefficient from their inhumanity in prescribing the shedding of blood... (p. 15)" This is Mr. Wilson's explanation of the Sanskrit commentary which says, "He who offers the aswamedha [horse sacrifice] conquers all worlds, overcomes death, and expiates all sin, even the murder of a Brahman (p 13)."

Such much is clear from the Preface, where Mr. Wilson also declines responsibility for typographical errors. In his bibliography Mr. Wilson lists this as an "original" monograph:

"Sankhya Karika... A small part translated by Mr. Colebrooke..."

And in the *Proceedings* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal:

Read a letter from Professor Wilson, presenting copy of *his* translation of "The Sankhya Karika" or memorial verses on the Sankhya philosophy.⁴⁴

The title page of the book, which Mr. Wilson also wrote before his memory of the event faded, lists Colebrooke as author, himself as co-author.

As he grew older, he became more unkind to the dead Colebrooke. Commenting parenthetically upon Colebrooke's essay on the *Vedas*, he wrote,

The notice was avowedly of a general nature, and the materials were in some instances admitted to be imperfect, but the result was a distinct appreciation of the character of the four works known as the *Vedas*...⁴⁵

There was apparently no more provocation for putting Colebrooke on the defensive by "avowedly" and "admitted" than there had been for putting Major Rennell, "classic geographer," on the defensive, in a claim to supercede him.

In another instance Mr. Wilson charged that the *Rigveda* "had been either purposely or accidentally wrongly read" [by Colebrooke].⁴⁶ The disputed passage concerns suttee. Mr. Wilson attempted to translate one phrase in a way which made it appear that the women being discussed were not widows and that therefore suttee was not involved. From this he concluded that, "The text of the Rig Veda cited as authority for the burning of widows" by Colebrooke in fact "directs them to remain in the world..."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Emphasis added. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VII (January, 1838), p. 87.

⁴⁵ "Review of Professor Max Mueller's 'History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature,'" in *Works*, Vol. V (*op. cit.*), p. 309, reprinted from the *Edinburgh Review*, 1860.

⁴⁶ "Remarks by Rájá Rád'hákánta Deva ... with Observations," in *Works*, Vol. II (1862), *op. cit.*, p. 293, reprinted from *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* ..., *op. cit.*, 1859.

⁴⁷ "On the Supposed Vaidik Authority for the Burning of Hindu Widows ...," in *Works*, *Ibid.* p. 271, reprinted from *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* ..., *op. cit.*, 1854.

But, since the disputed phrase is part of a set of instructions to the widow on precisely what she must do and say before throwing herself upon her husband's funeral pyre,⁴⁸ it is impossible to make sense of Mr. Wilson's interpretation. Moreover, this translation which he now charges Colebrooke purposely misdid, he five years earlier wrote was "no doubt correct."⁴⁹ The only fact which emerges from the incident is that Mr. Wilson, in a futile effort to cast doubt on the existence of scriptural sanction for suttee,⁵⁰ did not hesitate to offer Colebrooke a gratuitous insult.

Mr. Wilson's ungentlemanly treatment of Colebrooke seems all the odder because he owed Colebrooke so much. This was "le grand Colebrooke" who had taken him "sous son patronage" and who "le poussa à l'étude du sanskrit"⁵¹ by making him Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and by handing him his dictionary.

In his Preface to Moorcroft he had argued that there was no point to his trying to find an editor because the chances of success were infinitely small. At about the same time in another preface — the Preface to his own Sanskrit Grammar — he argued that he actually tried to find someone to write an elementary Sanskrit grammar and failed, and was therefore reduced to writing one himself. It was, however, not as if there were no other Sanskrit grammars. There were several Mr. Wilson dealt with them in his Preface :

Of the Sanskrit Grammars published in Calcutta, the works of Mr. Colebrooke, Dr. Carey, and Mr. Forster are too voluminous and difficult for beginners. The Grammar of Mr. Yates is better adapted to such a class of students, but it is not readily procurable in this country. The Grammar of Professor Bopp, being composed in German and in Latin, is not universally acceptable to English students; and the only grammar within their reach, therefore, has been that of Sir C. Wilkins. This work, however admirable in many respects, is exceptionable in some parts of its arrangement, and is inconvenient in use from its extent; it is also growing scarce.

⁴⁸ H. T. Colebrooke, "Duties of a Satí or Faithful Widow," reprinted in Colebrooke, *Miscellaneous Essays* Vol. II (*op. cit.*), p. 134. This article contains no interpretations and therefore does not permit of a wrongful reading. It is simply a set of a dozen quotations from a dozen scriptures describing suttee. The disputed words from the *Rigveda* are found in the final paragraph of a long selection from it.

⁴⁹ "On the Supposed Vaidik Authority..." *op. cit.*, p. 274. Here Mr. Wilson says he is translating from a different version from the one Colebrooke used.

⁵⁰ "Remarks by Rájá Rádhákánta Deva..." *op. cit.*, p. 305: "Of course I never intended to deny, that there were numerous texts in the Sútras and law-books, by which it [suttee] was enjoined. I restricted my argument to the individual text quoted from the *Rigveda*..." In fact he ignored the "individual text quoted" and restricted his argument to three words in its final paragraph.

⁵¹ *Biographie Universelle*... *op. cit.*, p. 665.

The obvious logical conclusion for a man devoted to the public interest was to reprint Yate's. Mr. Wilson concludes, somewhat illogically,

A new Grammar, therefore, on a somewhat different plan, had become necessary; and as I found no one disposed to engage in its preparation, I have thought it incumbent upon me to undertake the task.

These professions of devotion to the public weal could surely have blinded none of Mr. Wilson's colleagues, though they do not seem to have commented in print.

Conclusion

Colebrooke's reaction to having received not even a proper acknowledgment in "Mr. Wilson's" Sanskrit-English dictionary, is unpublished. Colebrooke's son's reaction to Mr. Wilson's having absorbed *Sankhya Karika* after the death of his father, is also unpublished. In his biography of his father he maintains a dignified, respectful attitude toward Mr. Wilson (himself by then dead). John Stuart Mill made no complaint about Mr. Wilson's attack on his father's "candour" in the footnotes to Mill's *History of British India*, and only indirectly, in his Autobiography, protested that his father was a man of "perfect candour."⁵² Sir Monier Monier-Williams states that Mr. Wilson's "inaccuracies of scholarship" were often censured by his European colleagues, but seldom are they to be found in print.⁵³

⁵² New York: Columbia University Press, 1924, p. 20. On another occasion, John Stuart Mill had protested on behalf of his father. The *Edinburgh Review* had reviewed Bowring's edition of Bentham, and had repeated an unflattering remark from that work about James Mill. The *Edinburgh Review* published J. S. Mill's protest. However, neither the *Edinburgh Review* nor any other important review ever reviewed Mr. Wilson's editing of Mill's *History* or his continuation to that *History*.

⁵³ I have come upon only three. (I.) Monier-Williams: "... For instance, Pandu [in the *Maha-bharata*] is described [by Mr. Wilson] as incapable of succession to the throne: whereas it will be seen from my Summary (p. 96) that he not only reigned, but extended his empire in all directions. Again ..." (*Indian Epic Poetry*, London: 1863, pp. 4-5) (II.) An attack on Mr. Wilson's chronology of the kings of Kashmir and his contradictory statements on the value of the Buddhist (as against the Brahminical) chronology of those kings, by George Turnour, "Buddhist Chronology," *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register...*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXIII—N.S. (May-August, 1837), pp. 186-97. (III.) The Vans Kennedy attack in 1837 (note 11 above) and another in five letters in 1840-41: without having read the *Puranas* and without any evidence whatever. Mr. Wilson labeled them modern forgeries because (according to Vans Kennedy) they did not deal with the subjects he had thought they would or should. *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register...*, *ibid.*, Vol. XXXII—N.S. (September-December, 1840), pp. 171-78 and 262-73; Vol. XXXIV (January-April, 1841), pp. 119-26, 143-48, 230-37. See also Mr. Wilson's brief reply refusing to join in the argument, Vol. XXXV (May-August, 1841), pp. 41-44.

One is tempted to conclude Mr. Wilson's uniqueness lay in his bad manners. Worse, that Mr. Wilson was aggrandizing himself with the works of his friends. If Mr. Wilson never did another reprehensible thing but what has already been described in this paper, he has established himself as the sort to whom one should not lend his unpublished manuscript and the sort one should try to outlive.

But, for whatever it may mean, it is desirable to reiterate that Mr. Wilson's works have not been completely surveyed in this paper; nor has any been omitted because it does not substantiate the conclusion of this paper; nor has any evidence been found that he gave to some as he took from others. Almost nothing has been written on Mr. Wilson. There must be unpublished material, perhaps his diary, perhaps still his letters which Sir Monier Monier-Williams reported seventy years ago were in the hands of his children; and these may alter the conclusions of this paper and help to restore him to the position he would have liked to know he was forever occupying. The picture here drawn should show that his Sanskrit-English dictionary was an important contribution, even if it was not a good dictionary, for it was the only dictionary and it helped generations of students of Sanskrit. And his *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, which, according to his preface, was assembled from existing published dictionaries and from the contributions of some of the E.I. Company servants in India, is considered by an anthropologist of our time to be the single nineteenth-century monograph most useful for research today. (One hopes anthropologists who use it will seek outside corroboration.)

Mr. Wilson made many claims to fame, some of them unreasonable. History has not heeded his claim to be the successor to Major Rennell in geography nor in any of the other fields in which he wrote one book each. A graduate student in Sanskrit can get a Ph.D. today without ever having heard his name, yet that is where he made multiple contributions—a dictionary, a grammar, translations of dramas, comments on the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. But in the field of Indian History his name is still one to reckon with. His criticisms of Mill have been accepted uncritically by generations of historians (though they have not accepted his implicit

claim as Mill's successor).⁵⁴ Some take each others' word for it. One of Mr. Wilson's passages in his Preface to Mill, that

There is reason to fear...that a harsh and illiberal spirit has of late years prevailed in the conduct and councils of the rising service in India, which owes its origins to the impressions imbibed in early life from the *History* of Mr. Mill....

historians have frequently quoted but without realizing that his definition of "illiberal" was the same as theirs of "liberal," and that he was referring to the social and economic reforms of the Bentinck administration. One historian quotes his next sentence, which he offered up with no documentation whatever:

It is understood, that had he [Mill] lived to revise the work, he would probably have modified some of the most exceptionable passages in this part of ti [Hindoo Manners]..⁵⁵

though this "confession" contradicts the most obvious evidence: that in fact Mill lived an additional twenty years and saw the book through an additional two revisions without changing a word except to drop the Appendix to the chapter on Hindoo manners of the first edition. Why Mr. Wilson's allegations about Mill should have persisted among Indian historians when others in other disciplines seem not to have heard that Mill was "wanting in industry" and "wanting in candour" is curious. For one may glance merely at Mr. Wilson's footnotes in the chapter he considers the most objectionable, Hindoo Manners, and realize at once that his is a point of view, and he pursues it, not like the impartial editor which historians have accepted him as, but like a poor lawyer who does not concede a single blatantly obvious point, like a shifty debater who sets one criterion for one purpose, abandons it for the

⁵⁴ Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, Vol. II James Mill (London: 1900), p. 23: "A later editor [H.H. Wilson in his preface to the edition of 1840] has shown that it led to some serious misconceptions..."G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (2d ed. reprinted. Boston: 1959), p. 287. Thomas Preston Peardon, *The Transition in English Historical Writing 1760-1830* (New York: 1933), pp. 269-70. Duncan Forbes, "James Mill and India." *The Cambridge Journal*, Vol. V (October, 1951), p. 23. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: 1959), p. 49. C. H. Philips, *op. cit.* Herbert Butterfield, review of Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon*, in *History*, Vol. XLVII (1962), supports Professor Philips's "re-consideration" of Mr. Wilson's appraisal of James Mill (p. 160). Professor Percival Spear accepts Mr. Wilson's word over that of H. T. Prinsep as "evidence" that the students in Calcutta were really learning the English that they were studying. "Bentinck and Education," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. VI (1938-39), p. 28.

⁵⁵ Preface to James Mill's *History of British India*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I p. xliii.

next. And it is when one starts checking—no historian has done it—that one finds Mr. Wilson fabricates evidence. He illustrates Mill's "partial quoting" from Mill's source material by tearing passages from context (in Tytler, Dubois, Heber, Hastings, Sydenham, Malcolm—six out of nine of his own "witnesses") and even, in one case, from a book which did not exist at the time he accused Mill of not citing from it comments favorable to Hindoo manners (Dubois, *A Vindication of the Hindoos*).

To those who are even casually aware of Mr. Wilson and the way he operated, it comes as no surprise that he should have foot-noted Mill instead of writing his own *History*. There is the judgment of Colonel Vans Kennedy that

When, therefore, Professor Wilson has so misunderstood and misinterpreted a passage in a *Puran* which he has himself translated, it must be evident that no reliance can be placed on the correctness of the opinions which he expresses with respect to the age, and the scope and tendency of the eighteen *Puranas* . . .⁵⁶

It suggests the less original work he did, the better.

⁵⁶ "On Professor Wilson's Theory respecting the *Puranas*," Letter No. V. *op. cit.*, p. 235.