



FIGURE 1 Felice Beato
Kashmere Gate, Delhi
Albumen Print, 1858-59, 236 x 305 mm
ACP: 97.02.0005

INTRODUCTION

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The Mutiny

By 1857, the East India Company ruled almost half of the Indian subcontinent, acting as an agent for the British government. States outside the Company's direct rule had Residents or Political Agents attached to the princely courts. There had been one kingdom left in India, the kingdom of Awadh, until the Company annexed it in 1856 and deposed its ruler, the Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Awadh lay to the east of Delhi, the ancient city which also had a king of sorts, Bahadur Shah Zafar, whose remit now extended no further than the city walls of the old Mughal capital.

The East India Company, or the 'Honourable East India Company Bahadur' as it was called by those who sought something from it, had arrived at the end of 1600. It was only one of the several European Companies of the time, set up in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to trade with South Asia, but it became the most successful. Having defeated its most serious rival, the French *Compagnie des Indes*, the English Company expanded rapidly. Territorial gains were made through treaties, through trade, through war, and latterly, as in the case of Awadh, through annexation. There seemed no reason why the English Company should not gobble up the whole of India. By the 1850s, the Company was buying up land to build railways and install the electric telegraph alongside the railway lines. Christian missionaries, who appeared to have the Company's blessing, or at least, its benevolent interest, had set up schools for Indian children orphaned in the great famine of 1837-38, and had trained them to use printing presses and to make military tents.

On the outskirts of many towns, both within the Company's jurisdiction and without, were the cantonments, where British officers lived with their wives and children in bungalows. The largest cantonments had not only the military features of parade ground, barracks, armoury and hospital, but social amenities too, like decent roads, pleasant gardens, a bandstand and a church or chapel. The cantonments were built at a distance from the crowded Indian cities both for pragmatic reasons of health and discipline and less tangible reasons of separation from the native inhabitants. Of necessity, the Indian soldiers, the *sipahi* or sepoys who formed the majority of the Company's three great armies, had to live in the



connected with the Mutiny, and illustrating “the hardships suffered by the glorious Garrison of Lucknow”.

But photographic images of the Mutiny were not in wide circulation in Britain during 1858, so the general public continued to picture it through the available lithographed and painted images. Indeed, had the photographs of 1858 been immediately presented to a British audience, even if that were technically possible, there would have been disappointment that they showed no dramatic battle scenes, nor British women and children being rescued, and nothing of the recapture of Delhi by British and Sikh troops. What they did show, in a series by Dr John Murray, were the ruined streets inside the Delhi walls, with a solitary, turbaned figure squatting outside his looted house (fig. 9). The area between the Ridge and the Delhi walls, the scene of skirmish and counter-skirmish, was shown as an empty, scrubby wasteland with non-photogenic bushes. Lucknow, when Felice Beato arrived immediately after its recapture by the British in March 1858, did, in fact, have some magnificent buildings, but it was difficult to imagine the now-empty streets filled with fighting men and fleeing women, as had been the case only weeks earlier.

British officers involved in the campaign had of necessity to be shown in ‘studio’ portraits (a sheet rigged up as a backdrop, and an ornamental iron table as a prop)

FIGURE 10 Samuel Bourne
Bailey Guard Gate, Lucknow
Albumen Print, Photographer’s
Ref. 1027, 1865, 203 x 288 mm
ACP: D2003.27.0001

FIGURE 11 John Edward Saché
The Mournful Seraph at the Memorial
Well, Kanpur
Albumen Print, Photographer’s
Ref. 144, c. 1860, 285 x 236 mm
ACP: 96.20.0465(a)



rather than at the head of their troops (fig. 10). (The enduring popularity of the print by Thomas Barker titled “The Relief of Lucknow”, with the three generals Havelock, Outram, and Campbell meeting in heroic mode in front of exotic buildings, confirms precisely what the public expected) (fig. 11). Captured rebels like Jwala Prasad, a *risaldar* (cavalry commander), were photographed seated on a wooden chair, their limbs in irons. There are no known photographs of Nana Sahib, of Azimullah Khan, of Begam Hazrat Mahal or the Rani of Jhansi. Only Kanwar Singh, the raja of Jagdishpur whose military adroitness became a serious threat to the British, has been captured by the camera. He sits in a wooden carrying-chair, a helpless old man with a white beard, but surrounded by armed attendants (fig. 12).

