Route to British India: Mid-Nineteenth Century

For this project, I’ve divided my work into three sections. The first is a recruitment poster calling on young me to enlist in the East India Company (EIC). This poster would be directed by the Governor General of India, Charles Canning, who would later be the de facto leader of the EIC during the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. The second piece is a set of annotated maps describing the journey between London and India, with noted stops along the way pointed out. I marked important places and pictures on the map and wrote about those features in the following text. However, I made the artistic choice to make the annotation shapes in bright and contrasting colors. I tried out using ink-like annotations, yet those were difficult to differentiate against the backdrop of the map and the brown-paper background. The third item is a sample postcard, in this case written in the perspective of Lady Cooper from the *Lady’s Escape from Gwalior* reading. Postcards in this time period (1850s) were rather undecorated and were used by people who had just arrived in India and needed to send a quick message to relatives back in Great Britain. In context, new EIC employees would send postcards upon their immediate arrival to India. Once they got settled in their new residence, they would be in a position to write full letters.
BMBD Project Bibliography


ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY REGARDING NEW RECRUITMENT ON THE BRITISH ISLES, AND CHANCE TO RECEIVE A PROMOTIONAL BROCHURE

THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY HUMBLY REQUESTS THE SERVICES OF QUEEN VICTORIA’S, HER MAJESTY, FINEST YOUNG MEN TO CONSIDER EMPLOYMENT UNDER THIS ROYAL CHARTER. OUR ORGANIZATION HAS TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIX YEARS OF EXPERIENCE CHARTING AND DIRECTING THE RICHES OF THE FAR EAST, AND NOW WE PRESENT AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE THIS TRADITION.

TO SEND AN INQUIRY OR TO RECEIVE FURTHER TRAVEL INFORMATION, PLEASE WRITE A CORRESPONDENCE TO THE EAST INDIA HOUSE: 12 LEADENHALL STREET, LONDON, ENGLAND. TO SEND AN APPLICATION, PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR FULL NAME, TITLE, OTHER HONORIFICS, PAST WORK EXPERIENCE, AND AT LEAST TWO REFERENCES FROM KNOWLEDGEABLE AND WELL-REGARDED MEN.

Charles Canning, 1st Earl Canning, Viscount
CHARLES CANNING, 1ST EARL CANNING, VISCOUNT GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA
ROUTE TO INDIA, FEATURES OF THE EUROPEAN LEG
1. NEWLY-EMPLOYED MEN OF THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY WILL REPORT TO THE LOBBY OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE OF LONDON AT THEIR DESIGNATED APPOINTMENT TIME. THIS TIME WILL BE APPROXIMATELY ONE FORTNIGHT AFTER YOU RECEIVE A LETTER CONFIRMING YOUR ENTRY INTO THE COMPANY, AND THIS INTERVAL SHOULD GIVE SUFFICIENT TIME TO PACK YOUR BELONGINGS, CONCLUDE ANY PERSONAL BUSINESS AT YOUR LOCAL TOWN, AS WELL AS WISH LOVED ONES A FAREWELL FOR YOUR TIME IN OUR SERVICE.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THEN CATCH A CARRIAGE OR BOAT TO LONDON. THE ADDRESS OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE IS 60 SAINT MARTIN’S LE-GRAND, LONDON, ENGLAND. LATECOMERS AND NON-ATTENDEES MAY BE BARRED FROM CONSIDERATION FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES WITH OUR COMPANY, EXCEPT UNDER EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES.


THE ROCK OF GIBRALTAR HAS BEEN OF BRITISH POSSESSION SINCE 1713, AND THE ISLAND OF MALTA HAS BEEN A BRITISH CROWN COLONY SINCE 1814. PAPERWORK TO ENTER THESE PORTS WILL THEREFORE BE MINIMAL FOR BRITISH NATIONALS. ENTRY INTO THE PORT OF ALEXANDRIA IN TURKISH EGYPT MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT, BUT WE WILL PROVIDE THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION AND PERMISSION.

3. PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT WE WILL SWITCH FROM A STEAMBOAT ON THE MEDITERRANEAN SIDE OF THE SINAI PENINSULA TO A SAILING VESSEL ON THE RED SEA SIDE. WHILE PLANS FOR A CANAL NEAR SUEZ ARE ABOUND, FOR THE TIME BEING WE WILL TRANSPORT CARGO AND PERSONS VIA CAMEL CARAVAN. THIS OVERLAND DISTANCE IS HISTORICALLY THE MOST
DIFFICULT PORTION OF THE VOYAGE TO THE ORIENT. AS A RESULT, WE EXPECT EAST INDIA COMPANY EMPLOYEES TO BE PHYSICALLY FIT AND MENTALLY DETERMINED IN THE DRY DESERT AIR AND UNDER TEMPERATURES EXCEEDING NINETY FIVE OR ONE HUNDRED DEGREES.

4. FOLLOWING A NICE CRUISE THROUGH THE RED SEA, YOU WILL ARRIVE AT THE WESTERNMOST OUTPOST OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY PROPER, THE ADEN SETTLEMENT IN THE SOUTH OF ARABIA. WE WILL AGAIN CHANGE SHIPS TO ACCOMMODATE PASSAGE ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN. IT IS AT THIS POINT WHERE YOU WILL ASSIGNED TO THE THREE PRESIDENCIES OF INDIA: BOMBAY, MADRAS, AND CALCUTTA. YOUR CHOSEN ASSIGNMENT WILL BE FINAL.

5. EACH OF THE THREE PRESIDENCIES (BOMBAY, MADRAS, AND CALCUTTA) HAVE THEIR OWN ARMIES. COMMANDED BY ENGLISHMEN BUT STAFFED WITH CONSCRIPTS FROM TRAINED MEN OF THE NATIVE INDIAN TRIBES. THESE ARMIES ARE MAINTAINED TO PRODUCT OUR COMPANY’S PRODUCTIVE FACTORIES AND TRADING INTERESTS. IN ADDITION, THE CENTRAL CITY OF EACH OF THESE THREE PRESIDENCIES WILL CONTAIN ENGLISH NEIGHBORHOODS. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU ARE ENTERING OUR COMPANY AS A BUREAUCRAT, A MERCHANT, OR A MILITARY OFFICER, YOU WILL SPEND THE MAJORITY OF YOUR TIME IN INDIA STATIONED AT YOUR PRESIDENCY’S NAMESAKE CITY.

WE HAVE TAKEN MEASURES TO ENSURE OUR COMPANY EMPLOYEES’ SAFETY DURING THEIR TENURES IN INDIA. THE NATIVE ARMIES OF THE PRESIDENCIES HAVE SWORN AN OATH OF SERVILITY FROM THE CROWN, AND INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS ARE ONLY RECRUITED FROM THE MOST LOYAL CASTES AND TRIBAL GROUPS AVAILABLE. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE MADE SURE THAT ALL INDEPENDENT NATIONS OF INDIA HAVE BEEN EITHER SUBJUGATED OR RENDERED ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT ON OUR TRADE GOODS. HENCE, THEY WILL RECOGNIZE THE EAST INDIA COMPANY AS A PRIMARY ADMINISTRATIVE BODY IN THE RELEVANT REGIONS.
On the Port of Calcutta, 1855

Past few days spent in Calcutta was wonderful. Very busy, but this country is slowly becoming like a second home. Wishing everyone back in England a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

-R.M. Coopland