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## THE CURIOUS EXCLUSION OF ANGLO-INDIANS FROM THE MASS SLAUGHTER DURING THE PARTITION OF INDIA

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### INTRODUCTION

The finding in this article represents one aspect of an oral history project in progress. The purpose of the overall project is designed, firstly, to demonstrate the diversity encompassed within the umbrella definition 'Anglo-Indian'; and, secondly, to record the responses of the communities to the rapidly changing social and political environment in India prior to and following its partition and independence from British rule in 1947. To date, historiography has focussed on the early formation of the community and, more recently, upon contemporary communities of Anglo-Indians who stayed on in Independent India and the resettlement of those who migrated to Australia, Britain and Canada.<sup>[1]</sup> My research focuses on the people who migrated to New Zealand and, in particular, concentrates on the twilight period of British imperialism and the dawn of a new era in India. This period is a pivotal time in the lives of Anglo-Indians, the events of which motivated much of the community to leave the land of their birth.

The oral histories collected in this project demonstrate that the experiences and socio-economic outcomes of the communities who chose to emigrate to New Zealand, vastly differ from contemporary academic accounts of Anglo-Indian communities who remained in India. However, the focus of this paper is a salient finding that emerged from the oral histories, namely, that although Anglo-Indians witnessed the tumultuous events and slaughter during the period of Partition and Independence, they were not the target of these attacks.

Initially, I will identify the Anglo-Indian community, then provide details of the oral history project and discuss the significance of the finding revealed by the project.

This will be followed by an historical outline of the increasingly violent events leading up to Partition. Large extracts of oral history testimonies describing how Anglo-Indians were involved yet excluded from the mass slaughter will be quoted, together with the reasons for their leaving India.

## THE ANGLO-INDIAN COMMUNITY AND ITS STATUS IN BRITISH INDIA

Initially, members of the community were referred to as Eurasians. But by the turn of the twentieth century, the people of mixed European and Indian descent increasingly referred to themselves as Anglo-Indians, a term which had originally applied to the British in India. In 1935 the change in terminology was incorporated in a formal legal definition:

An 'Anglo-Indian' means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India, and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only.[2]

Accordingly, so long as paternal descent was European (not merely British), irrespective of whether the mother was Indian, European or of mixed descent, a person born and permanently resident in India was deemed to be Anglo-Indian.[3] Anglo-Indians were perceived as distinct from the British and local Indians. They maintained a western style of life, perpetuated by Christian religious instruction at schools and wore western rather than Indian clothes. These cultural differences distinguished Anglo-Indians from the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities.

British rulers in India had found it expedient to depend on the burgeoning Anglo-Indian population, employing them as senior police and staff in the administrative services and technological enterprises, such as the railways, post office, telegraph and customs services.[4] Housing amenities were built for these Anglo-Indians, and local industries and businesses mushroomed at these centres. But attempts to determine the actual number of Anglo-Indians have always proved problematic. The 1943 census put the Anglo-Indian population at 140,422,[5] although it was undoubtedly much greater, because not all sections of the wider community identified themselves as Anglo-Indians.

Depending upon their individual employment, the status of Anglo-Indians varied, from businessmen, army officers, senior positions as regional inspectors and auditors in the railways, post office, security, customs and telegraphs, to clerical workers in these essential services. Their rates of pay and conditions did not compare favourably with those of British Government officials, which is why Anglo-Indians have been referred to as Poor Relations[6] and is part of the reason why the leader of the Anglo-Indian Association, Frank Anthony, entitled his book *Britain's Betrayal in India*. [7] With the implementation of the Indianization policies introduced by the British in the early 1920s, Indians became eligible for positions that had previously been the exclusive domain of Anglo-Indians, and Anglo-Indians found their 'privileged' status eroded and needed to find alternative employment. Some took higher education, qualifying as teachers and doctors, others emigrated, whilst many of those who stayed on appear to have suffered diminished socio-economic status because they were unable to compete with Indians who were now also eligible for the jobs. [8]

#### INTERVIEWEES AND SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

To date, the oral history project cohort consists of thirty-eight interviews[9], with a further twelve interviews to be completed. The first eight interviews are taped conversations, the remainder are oral history interviews based on a questionnaire. Thirty of the interviewees fall under the wide legal description of an Anglo-Indian, five are British citizens who spent their youth and working lives in British India, and the remaining three are Indians. Initially, Anglo-Indians who had emigrated to England, Australia and New Zealand were interviewed, but once a sufficient number of Anglo-Indians were tracked down in New Zealand, the research was restricted to individuals and families who emigrated to New Zealand. The interviewees were born in India and the majority were resident there at the time of Partition and Independence in 1947. They range in age from sixty-five to ninety-three.

The oral history questionnaire includes sections on each interviewee's European and Indian heritage, parents' occupations, schooling, employment, further education, socio-economic position in British India, memories of Partition, the reasons for 'quitting India' and migration experiences. These primary historical sources provide information on any number of possible research projects, such as education in India,

race relations, society and the workforce in British India, migration and resettlement.

The oral histories will also provide primary sources for historians who continue to assess the unprecedented violence unleashed during the period of Partition. A recent upsurge in historiography on Partition violence has canvassed various reasons for the cause of the violence and its harmful impact inflicted upon the psyche of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in Northern India and Pakistan today.<sup>[10]</sup> However, no research has yet recorded the position of the Anglo-Indian communities caught up in the upheavals, and the subsequent effects upon them. The extracts included here describe the relatively helpless predicament of individual Anglo-Indians who witnessed the mass slaughters, yet reveal that even in these dire circumstances, Anglo-Indians were physically untouched. The testimonies also demonstrate that Anglo-Indians often assisted Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus to escape attacks by local rival communities.

It could be argued that the omission of Anglo-Indian experiences in contemporary accounts on Partition is because Anglo-Indians were not attacked, therefore, there was no need for their inclusion. I would suggest that this lack of attack is, in itself, a significant finding which merits further analysis by historians because it points to an, as yet, unrecognised empathy that existed between the Indian population and the supporters of the former imperialist rulers. The finding that Anglo-Indians were excluded from violence is significant for historians assessing the negative and positive aspects of colonialism. It is well recognised that pockets of strong regional resistance to British rule existed.<sup>[11]</sup> However, even at a time when law and order were perceived as ineffectual during the mass riots and slaughter in northern India, this grass roots resistance did not take advantage of the disorder to vent their antipathy by attacking the home-grown supporters of British rule, who could easily have become scapegoats for vengeance.

None of the thirty-eight interviewees testified knew of any specific Anglo-Indian family members or friends attacked amidst Partition violence, although not all resided in areas where the violence occurred. Extracts of thirteen oral histories of interviewees who resided in areas experiencing Partition violence are included in this paper, with comments on a further five testimonies. The remaining twenty interviews,

while not included, are nevertheless significant because their silence on Partition violence confirms the exclusion of Anglo-Indians from violence.

Long extracts of individual testimonies amidst riots and violence are quoted to convey more than simply the specific incidents. The detailed descriptions demonstrate the value of oral histories which create an immediacy with the reader, hopefully evident in the extracts below.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the risk of over-generalisation of complex issues, a brief outline of the background to the incidents described in the oral history extracts follows. Since the turn of the twentieth century, there were increasing calls on all sides for the withdrawal of British rule in India. The 'Quit India' and civil disobedience campaigns aimed at driving the British, and conceivably also their supporting Anglo-Indian community, out of India, were designed by the politically astute and charismatic leader, Mohandas Gandhi, arousing mass support from all sections of hierarchical Indian society. The interviewees indicate that it was Gandhi's Quit India campaign which first drew their attention to their own ambivalent predicament. Anglo-Indians had not been political activists for or against Independence, although the majority were employed by the British and, accordingly, supported and sought the protection of British law when threatened by civil disorder.

Notwithstanding Gandhi's non-violent ideals, violence constantly followed in the wake of mass rallies, usually blamed on Muslim and Hindu ruffians, 'goondas' (hoodlums), and others taking advantage of the conditions to settle old scores.<sup>[12]</sup> Early attacks against British troops from 1942-46 raised fear amongst the British and Anglo-Indians because these attacks were an assault on the weakening colonial hegemony.<sup>[13]</sup> The British Government used force to control such outbreaks, as will be shown in Bill Barlow's testimony, but prosecution of such cases in the courts was slow and culprits were often allowed to go virtually free.<sup>[14]</sup> This perceived lack of law and order destabilised and revealed the weakness of the British Government to both Anglo-Indians and the general public. This situation arguably provided the incentive that caused many to resort to violent means for revenge, and exploitation for material gain, during the horrendous events at the time of Partition.

The chaotic conditions led to hostility and fear because of the latent animosity between sections of Hindus and Muslims, and in northern India local violence escalated as retaliatory actions took place with greater vengeance.<sup>[15]</sup> Muslims were a minority group of ninety-five million, representing only twenty-two percent in India's overwhelming Hindu majority population.<sup>[16]</sup> Muslim leaders were concerned that Hindu elites would not share power with them, and that Muslims would be marginalized. As divisions between Muslims and Hindus mounted, self-government was advocated in the majority Muslim-populated regions, either within some type of federal state or as a separate nation. Due to the population densities of Muslims and Hindus, a solution was proposed, dividing the western and eastern portions of Punjab and Bengal, respectively, to fall into a new Muslim country, Pakistan. The Sikh population, who historically inhabited the Punjab, saw their sacred homeland being split in two and called for a separate state, Khalistan, which never materialised, but to this day remains a political ideal for some Sikhs.

Amongst the jubilation of Indian Independence and Partition, the extent of the ensuing carnage and tragedy was not fully envisaged. Even those who feared Hindu, Muslim and Sikh reprisals for earlier violence were unprepared for the ferocity unleashed. Motives for the events vary from region to region, and even within communities in the same region, but in the main, violence was instigated due to fear, retaliation and financial opportunism by individuals.<sup>[17]</sup> Information on communal violence was originally sparse, probably deliberately downplayed by nationalist agendas of the time, but recently the pain of the memories have been over-taken by the desire to record the tragedies. Published biographical accounts detailing the horrors endured, and still painfully remembered, depict the terrifying and sordid acts perpetrated against fellow beings, frequently neighbours.<sup>[18]</sup> Statistics on the numbers slaughtered and villages annihilated, in episodes of what essentially constituted ethnic cleansing, are impossible to accurately determine, but it is generally agreed that more than one million people were killed and eighteen million displaced in the forced population movements – Muslims into Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs into India.<sup>[19]</sup>

A pattern of revenge emerges, revealing a pathway of escalating violence. Apart from sporadic outbreaks of violence between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the

Punjab (north-western India), together with rebellions against British rule, the most serious unrest occurred in the central northern region of Bihar in the early 1940s.[20] In neighbouring Bengal, the 'Calcutta Killings' in August 1946 saw at least six thousand Hindu and Muslim men, women and children killed and more than a hundred thousand made homeless, but no British or Anglo-Indian shops or interests attacked.[21] These communal killings exacerbated conditions in Bihar, where radical Hindu activists, aided and abetted by numerous individuals with personal agendas of gain and/or revenge for past injustices, sparked off the communal slaughter of two thousand five hundred Muslims.[22] Stories of atrocities committed by Hindus – and especially Sikhs – against Muslims filtered back to relatives in the north-western provinces, resulting in Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab being attacked, and entire villages burned during the March riots in 1947.[23] The Sikhs swore revenge, and with the announcement of the boundary on August 15, 1947, the exodus of Hindus and Sikhs eastward into India, and Muslims westward into the Punjab, commenced and the catastrophe began to unfold. In Bengal the violence and forced migrations did not reach the proportions in the earlier Calcutta killings, or the slaughter in the Punjab. Instead the troubles continued for decades.[24] The scars incurred by violence between neighbouring communities in all these regions are the bitter source of continued hostility between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh today. What becomes evident is the decrease of law and order, as the scale of violence grew. This appears to result from a perceived impotence of the British forces during the civil disobedience campaigns, the subsequent withdrawal of British troops, and the partisan involvement of local law enforcement agencies.[25]

The extracts below are ordered chronologically, the first testimonies relating to the riots in central and eastern India, in Bihar and Calcutta in 1946. The scene then shifts west to Bombay, moves north to Agra, and on to riots in the north-western regions in March 1947. The extracts conclude with horrific train massacres at each side of the Partition boundary in the Punjab, and events in Karachi after Independence in August 1947.

## ORAL HISTORY TESTIMONIES

Bill Barlow begins within the environs of Calcutta during and after the Calcutta killings of 1946:

While the riots were on, in Calcutta, the police sergeants were all Anglo-Indians, the constables and sepoy or whatever you call them (were Indian). And when the riots came, the Anglo-Indians were there and they shot to kill. *The Anglo-Indians shot the Indians to kill?* Yes. That or get killed yourself, because there were so many thousands of them.

*Do you know any Anglo-Indians who were killed?* No I don't know of any who were killed. But I certainly do know one or two from school who joined the police, who were senior to me, they were on the front line and they had to do this to let the folks know that they were serious. Firing over their heads is one thing, but to shoot! *So they actually did shoot under orders to keep the peace?* Yes.

*But you don't know of any incident when they were attacked?* No they were never attacked. There was an [another] incident I do remember in Kharagpur, I think it was before Independence. There had been a lot of trouble leading to Independence. Once, about early morning, 10 or 11 o'clock, the apprentices were all told to meet at the time office. And they told us all to get ourselves down to the armoury and get equipped with rifles. There was trouble in the workers' area[...]there was a square, an open space, and one mob standing on one side, and another on the other, with all the weapons they had fashioned in the workshops.

*So you had rifles, and they didn't, they just had implements?* Yes, well they had long iron bars which they had sharpened into points like spears. We drove into the middle of it and they saw us and dispersed. There were only a handful of us and there were thousands of them but this is the respect for us, the Anglo-Indians. *So the whole problem stopped?* Oh no. They saw us and thought, well, no point in carrying on. But in any case, they weren't doing anything, just screaming at each other across the space, and when we got there it quietened down. And then they dispersed to their quarters.

In the evening was the problem. And, like I said, we had this old bus and some of us got off and stayed in the market square, and the rest stayed on the bus and of course they kept going round giving the impression that there was more than one truck. But it was just one damn truck. But the evening was the worst. At one end of the street there was the Hindu temple and you went along the street for 200 yards, and on the other side was a [Muslim] mosque, and they were actually facing each other. We were to patrol in between the mosque and the temple, and it was all right, they never bothered with us, but they were taking pot shots at each other over us. The funny part of it was, we would be marching up and down this street and we would get to the mosque and the fellows in the mosque would say, "Sahib, come into the mosque and have something to eat." And they would give us kedgeriee and we'd have a damn good feed there, then march back and get to the temple and they would say, "Sahib, come and have some meethai (sweets)" so we would have our dessert at the temple.



And that is how much they were interested in us, they were not interested in us.[26]

As amusing as this incident appears, it was associated with the violent riots besetting Bihar and Bengal, but Bill's experiences demonstrate the friendliness of the Muslim and Hindu Indians towards Anglo-Indians. Daphne Pugh-Stemmer recalls the same period from her home in Calcutta:

Prior to Partition I can remember a lot of riots and trouble. *Is this a year before, or a few weeks prior?* I am not sure, could have been a couple of years before Partition actually took place. There was a lot of antagonism towards the British by the Indians because they wanted Independence and [the British] to quit India. I can remember Gypsy and Peggy, my other aunt, her younger sister, they worked at the telephone exchange. It wasn't safe to go on the public transport so the telephone exchange organised transport with the taxis. When they saw a crowd, the taxi drivers used to say, get down, hide yourselves because you don't want to show a white face.

*Did you hear of anyone who was attacked?* I think there was. *Was it the British being attacked?* Yes, British people. At that time a lot of Europeans left India and they sent their women and children back. *This is roughly a couple of years before Partition?* Yes.[27]

Daphne's view that many Europeans left India is corroborated by two interviewees. Joan Flack was married to a British Indian Civil Service administrator in the Bihar region where early brutal massacres occurred.[28] Joan and her children were sent by her husband to England in 1946 because he feared for their safety.[29] However, after the British withdrawal from India, the Flacks did not enjoy the post-war conditions in England and emigrated to New Zealand. Christene Evans, a British interviewee who has written her memoirs, confirms that because of the violence associated with the Quit India campaign and especially the killing of two British soldiers on a train[30], her family became fearful and decided to emigrate to the safer living conditions offered in New Zealand.

Daphne Stemmers continues with her experiences in Calcutta in 1947:

At Partition it [the violence] was mainly between Indian against Indian. The Muslims against the Hindus. *What you are saying is that before the Government had agreed to quit India, the British and Anglo-Indians were the focus of attack, and then it changed once they agreed?* They were not the targets. It was between themselves [Hindus and Muslims].

*Do you know of any British or Anglo-Indians who were killed?* I think there were instances but I can't really remember, we were still at school. But I am sure some Anglo-Indians were caught in the cross fire. *But you don't know any friends or family who were attacked?* No. *See any violence on the streets?* You would see a lot on the streets, people with sticks beating, then the Police would be out. *No bodies?* Yes, there would be bodies lying.

*Was there a curfew?* Yes there was a curfew from about six o'clock onwards. You would have to have a pass that you would have to show to get through. My father had to do shift work with the customs and he would have to show his pass. *How long did the curfew last?* Weeks, months? I don't really know, Dorothy, it varied according to the time of the violence. When the violence quietened down or started up again.<sup>[31]</sup>

Bill Barlow recalls visiting Calcutta shortly after Partition in August 1947:

We hopped on the train, got to Calcutta and got off at Howrah station, which was always a very very busy station, scores of people lying on the platform. But anyway, when we got there, there wasn't a soul on the platform, it was absolutely dead. It was frightening, silence can be quite frightening, especially in a place like that. Anyway, we got off the train and there couldn't have been more than us few apprentices going home on leave, we must have had the train to ourselves.

*So when you left you never suspected there would be any problems?* No, not at all. We just thought it would be like any other day except for celebrations. Anyway, we got off the train, walked to the end of the platform. The platform was raised from the road and we had to go down steps to get to the road. From the top of the platform you could see (below), there was a wall either side of the road, and over the walls you could see the (Hooghly) river. And you could see the big barges of hay floating down the river and numerous bodies. But when we got down on to the road, there wasn't a tram or a bus, or taxi or vehicle of any sort on the road, nor were there any people. It was frightening, not a sound, especially for a place like Calcutta where you usually can't hear yourself think.

We had to walk home so we walked over the Howrah bridge, over the river. When we got the other side, the Strand Road, on our right, down the road was the docks with all the warehouses and the docks and what have you, and on the other side were the houses, and you could see all these people standing above, on the roofs of the houses, shouting and screaming, celebrating I suspect, but frightening nonetheless because we didn't know who they were shouting and screaming at. Anyway we decided we had to walk, and as we walked down the road you could see the bodies lying on the side of the road in the gutters, with their throats cut and various other things.

*Both men and women?* Mostly men. Thrown into the big dustbins which they had in Calcutta, bodies chucked into them, and it was frightening. But we got home unharmed. They for some reason never bothered with the Anglo-Indians. *And no one accosted you on the way walking home?* Nothing, we were left entirely to ourselves.[32]

Cecil Anderson completed his medical training in Calcutta during that period and he confirmed Anglo-Indian exclusion from the street violence:

They attacked each other, Muslims and Hindus, right in front of us, but they never touched us. [...]We used to go out and see them on the street, dead. Yes, Muslims and Hindus. *How long did that last?* Several months. I must say they left us alone.[33]

What becomes evident is that not all the interviewees feared for their safety as the violence escalated across northern India. Despite curfews, they continued working and were not attacked.

Beryl MacLeod was living in Bombay during the time of Partition violence, and although Bombay did not experience anywhere near the massacres of the north, random incidents and mob intimidation occurred:

There was a Muslim mosque up on a little hill not far from our bungalow, about half a mile away. We were in the district of Suri, Bombay. To the right of us was a Hindu quarter for Hindus to live in, and for some reason or another one night they decided that they would go and burn the mosque. We heard a mob of Hindus down the road, and as they came closer and closer the Gurkha (Nepali) watchman at the gate came over to the bungalow and told the bearer these men had lighted flame torches, an oil-soaked rag on the top of a stick of wood. [...]It was frightening. [...]They could easily have got in if they had wanted to.

We saw the procession and the chanting[...]but luckily the Muslims had heard about this and they'd gone up and defended it (the mosque). So they actually did not get together. The Hindus turned around and came back. [...]And the terrible thing was that the newspaper, *The Times of India* in Bombay, was at one stage printing "last night in Bombay 30 Hindus were killed". The Muslims had read this and the Hindus had read this, and the next night they would go and kill more Muslims in retaliation. The Press did this for about a week, and the numbers went up and up and up, and then somebody had the sense to say, "For God's sake stop this because they are just trying to race each other and kill more of the other." *So it wasn't worth having a free Press at that time?* No, definitely not.

[[...]]there was the curfew and we were not allowed to leave our

bungalows after six at night[...]but all the European staff had to man the petrol tankers[...]to deliver the petrol and oil because the drivers wouldn't. A Muslim driver would not go to deliver anywhere in Bombay because he would be driving through either Muslim or Hindu areas. [...]The company armed them in case they were attacked. But as soon as they saw a white face driving there was no problem. In fact, they salaamed and waved them through the gates of the factories. They knew the fuel had to get through or they had no work to go to. *Did you hear of any Anglo-Indians or British people who were attacked during this time?* No. *Or anywhere else where they were attacked?* No, I can't. No I don't think we knew anyone.[34]

George Henderson's encounter with Partition violence around the famous city of Agra, not far from the Punjab Partition boundary, depicts an example of the ferocious violence that occurred between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.[35] The interviewees frequently witnessed the aftermath of such violence, by their testimonies of dead bodies lying in the streets, but George's testimony is the only detailed eye-witness account of an incident.

One Thursday, aged about thirteen, I was going with my bearer to buy some magazines at a bookstore on Tundla Junction platform, not far from Agra. A Muslim girl, probably fourteen or fifteen years of age, was walking along carrying her baby brother, when four Sikhs carrying swords came down some steps in the opposite direction. The girl tripped and said something like 'Aai Allah', a distinctively Muslim expression. The Sikhs snatched the baby, decapitated it, ripped open the girl's belly and put the baby into it.[36]

George did not know any more details about the incident because he was rushed home. Another time, upon returning from the movies, he and his father were approaching Agra station but found it in darkness and all they could hear was a buzzing noise, which got louder as they got closer. The station was deserted but littered with bloodied bodies, over which countless flies buzzed. George knew of Anglo-Indians involved in incidents during the Partition troubles. His cousin, Melville Killoway, was taken off a train and stripped to examine whether he was circumcised, denoting that he might be a Muslim. When the mob found he was circumcised, he then had to recite the Lord's Prayer to prove he was a Christian, otherwise Melville would have been killed. A train driver, Ginger Cracknell, was caught by rioting Indians and made to don a Gandhi cap and wave the Indian national flag, but was otherwise unharmed. George also heard about two Anglo-Indian nurses, the William sisters, being thrown off a train. The latter is the only instance known by any of the

interviewees of Anglo-Indians being harmed. But the details are insufficient to significantly alter the overwhelming evidence that Anglo-Indians were excluded from direct Partition violence.

It was in the Punjab that the wrath of the Sikhs was unleashed against Muslims during Partition. Tommy Walker was a turbine engineer from Durham County in North England, married to a Domiciled European. At the time of Partition, Tommy was in charge of an oil refinery near Rawalpindi and witnessed the savage massacre of large numbers of Sikh and Hindu workers by Muslims. He recalls that, prior to the annual celebration of Holi, traditionally a joyous festival where red water was poured on all and sundry, the leader of the Sikhs, Tara Singh, publicly broadcast that “the festival of Holi would be celebrated with the blood of Muslims”.<sup>[37]</sup> The memoirs of Randolph Holmes confirm he heard this proclamation by Tara Singh over the wireless in his home in Peshawar.<sup>[38]</sup> Tommy said that he slept with a pistol under his pillow for fear of an attack, although none ever came. He said that all the Sikh and Hindu employees of the oil company either left or were killed, but no Europeans working for the company were attacked. In fact, many Anglo-Indian and British employees protected their Hindu servants from Muslim attacks and assisted them to cross to safety over the new border. In another example, a Hindu doctor had taken refuge under the bed of a British employee before being evacuated.<sup>[39]</sup>

During the March riots in the north-western provinces, Esmee Cloy, at the nearby hill station of Murree, saw whole villages in flames and determined to leave as soon as possible after Independence.<sup>[40]</sup> Betty Doyle, who also lived near Rawalpindi, recalled the vicious violence engendered by the Sikh community’s vows for deadly revenge, but did not feel personally threatened, although she felt there was no future for her family after Independence.<sup>[41]</sup>

The massacres in the Punjab reached new depths after the Partition boundary was announced. A forced migration of more than four million Sikhs and Hindus set off eastward from west Punjab, and nearly six million Muslims moved in the opposite direction, by foot, cart and train, the more affluent managing to board the few small planes available.<sup>[42]</sup> Trains between Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and Lahore on the Pakistan side, and Amritsar – just across the border from Lahore in India – were filled with families fleeing each way. On both sides, trains were stopped, and the

passengers butchered and murdered. Despite the detailed historiography and horrific literature recently published, no reference has been made to violence against the Anglo-Indian train drivers and staff caught in these catastrophic circumstances. Three of the interviewees personally experienced traumatic episodes amidst the violence involved with railways, and six of the interviewees talked about the experience of their fathers who worked for, or were associated with, the railway services in 1947. Yet, significantly, none of these interviewees experienced or even knew of any violent attack on Anglo-Indians.

Dick Cox, whose father was the North-Western Railways District Commercial Officer, recalls:

My father was in Lahore, and Lahore was only twenty odd miles from Amritsar, which was the Sikhs' holy city, this is where they had their golden temple. My father told me that one day, when he was at the railway station, there were all these heads hanging up from the rafters. They were all Sikhs' heads, there must have been about fifty or sixty heads just left hanging. [...]there were Indians, Hindus, in Lahore and that area who wanted to go to India. And my father organised their going over to India from Pakistan. They were the special people, I suppose one would call them. *The more privileged ones?* Yes. The more privileged.

*What about the ordinary people trying to flood across?* The ordinary people were put on trains, there were massacres on the trains, and lots and lots of people were killed. *Did you hear any stories about the Anglo-Indians who were train drivers or guards on those trains?* Not really. All I got was from my father, what he told me. He would have known about it. He would have known quite a bit. Like people who have gone through traumatic experiences, I don't think they like talking about them too much.[43]

Ken Blunt, a sergeant in the railway police in Punjab, recalls:

We used to have a compartment reserved for the police force and I used to move around[...] One day I was with an escort going down to Lahore, and they pulled me off at Jhelum and said I was being relieved by another sub-inspector. I was damn glad I was relieved, the bloody train was wiped out, just outside Lahore. [...]they arranged that because the police were definitely in that. [...]they probably thought I would be a fly in the ointment or something. *What did they do to the train? Blow it up, de-rail it?* They stopped the train and then they just attacked the people by rifle fire, swords and God knows what. *How was it that the people were killed or attacked, but the trains still rolled into the stations with all the dead bodies?* They never harmed the driver or the guard or anything like that. They let them be. *Who were the drivers*



*and guards then?* Mostly Anglo-Indians.[\[44\]](#)

Dick and Gene Leckey were on their way to boarding school in Murree with their father, a train driver, when their train was held up. Dick recalls:

Dad must have been aware of the troubles, but he was such a type of man that it didn't matter. If we had to go to school it didn't matter that there was a bloody war on, we still went to school. As we got towards Multan, dad got information that there was fighting at the station and he was a bit concerned if the train would stop. The train went through a cutting and on either side of the cutting were Sikhs who had raised themselves there with guns, stones and all sorts of missiles that they could lay their hands on. *Did you know all this?* No, but as we approached the cutting and the front of the train went into it, we could hear the shooting going on. *The cutting means a hill with a cutting through it?* Yes for the train to go through.

My dad looked out of the window, then he quickly shut the windows, pulled the shutters down and told us to get down on the floor under the sleeping bunks. We went through and there was a hell of a lot of shooting, noise, yelling and screaming and thuds against the sides of the carriages. As far as Gene and myself were concerned this was great. Hey, did you hear that one, and all. We were only kids, eight and ten roughly. All of a sudden everything stopped and dad opened the window and we had gone through. Looking back, we stuck our heads out and the whole section was on fire. Multan station was on fire. People were fighting with swords. You could see crowds of people fighting there. We could see it all, it was disappearing pretty quick but we could see it.

Gene and myself were very excited. Being young, although you were a bit frightened, you didn't realise it all and we were excited. *Your sisters were with you?* Yes, our sisters were with us. Then we pulled up at Lahore and the train was put on a siding because there was fighting again. Dad told us it would be quite a few hours before the train left again but we had to leave the track open in case another train came through in a hurry. Because the waiting time was quite a few hours, Gene and I got restless. We hopped off the carriage and there was another train on the siding at the side of us. Gene and myself climbed up and opened the door and were confronted with millions of flies buzzing. We had a closer look and the whole compartment was full of dead people who had been hacked to pieces. Men, women and children, blood all over the place. This of course was quite a shock for us to see, so we hopped down and ran back to our carriage and said, 'Dad, dad, there are a whole lot of dead people in that train over there.' Dad realised that it was a train which had been attacked and they could have been all Sikhs attacked by Muslims, or all Hindus, or all Muslims

attacked by Sikhs. We didn't try to find out who they were. [...]we still had to wait there and dad told us to stay in the carriage and stop mucking around. So we stayed where we were and just kept looking out the windows.[45]

Brian Birch was about thirteen living in Rawalpindi, and remembers his father returning from work, regularly in the depths of despair, having been the helpless train driver of special trains carrying refugees assigned from Peshawar via Rawalpindi to Lahore to assist with the exodus of Hindus and Sikhs.[46] Brian explained the details as follows:

*So how many trains do you think were attacked?* Every train, during that period, every train that went and brought Indians from Peshawar and from all that way to Lahore, every train... *How long did that go on?* Till I think the army had to step in and try and guard the trains. *So was it weeks or months?* I think it went for a few months. I know my father just coming back distraught. Just didn't want to go to work. He couldn't do anything[...] I think the railways tried to help look after their own people. I think my father said they had wagons where they could lock the doors, so that the people could lock it from inside, but the guys just smashed the windows and got them out.

*Was everybody killed apart from him?* The train driver and the guards were okay, but all the passengers, whoever[...] I don't know how they identified them, I suppose they realised they were Hindus, they just took them out and killed them. *So the Muslims were not attacked?* No. The Christians, they wouldn't attack. So therefore not everyone was killed necessarily. Not necessarily. As long as they thought they were Hindus, didn't matter if they were children or[...] Didn't matter, they just killed them. And it happened the other way as well.

*Your dad used to go to work every day during this period?* Yes, he was away for a week. *And how many trains?* Well he had one train that he had to take from Rawalpindi to Peshawar, and I think he stayed the night there. Then he took it all the way to Lahore and then back again, all the way. It was quite a distance. *So would that train be stopped just once?* Well it depends if[...] If it was stripped clean and all killed, then he used to just take it into the next nearest railway station and ring up for instructions what to do. It would be awful. It was terrible.

*So they didn't use guns?*No, just knives and sticks. I can remember the blimming barbed wire wrapped on the end of the sticks. *It's an awful question, but what happened with the state of the trains?* No, they took them out. *So there wasn't a mess in the trains?* They stopped the trains, got them all out and then just killed them. Because one or two experiences...related to seeing a train, peeping inside and seeing bodies. My father said they just took them all out of the train and just left them by the side of the train, killed them. Looted them, got all the



jewellery off them, and whatever valuables they were carrying they took.

*So why do you think they left the Anglo-Indian drivers and Anglo-Indians?* I think they felt it was because it was nothing to do with them, it wasn't their country. *But the Anglo-Indians had even better jobs.* Yes you would think they would. They never went into any churches, to do any damage. *Did your father ever think he was going to be attacked?* Whenever the train was stopped, he thought, 'Oh, this is it.' But no, they just left him. *And his own workmen with him?* Yes they left the workman because they knew they had to move the trains. And the guards were okay. But everybody else who was Hindu, or the other way around, Muslim, they just took them.

*And how did the control come in?* I think the railways felt [it was time]. I can remember my father saying that the railway would either stop all the trains, so there would be no more trains, or they would have to get army protection. Because you know, the drivers couldn't handle this any more, this killing, they just couldn't. Then although the trains were loaded with guards, and I think that eased it a bit, but there was still people being killed. Waiting on the platforms, they would come up and kill them. Even when the train arrived. So they had to get guards or military on the stations as well.

*So where you were living, what were the riots around that you say you saw?* Where we were living [Westridge cantonment], there was nothing [no violence] there, but you could see the city. *You mean 'Pindi?* Yes, see the city burning, for hours, just out of control[...] We were able to get onto the roof of the house because it was all flat roofs. And after the Partition we could look and see the smoke coming from the city, where they were just burning anything that belonged to the Indians [Hindus and Sikhs] they just burnt it.[47]

Brian said the trains were stopped by logs placed across the tracks, and when the killing was over, the attackers would remove the logs to allow the train to continue.[48] The bizarre and idiosyncratic stories on Partition by Saadat Hasan Manto include a description, reminiscent of Bill Barlow's experience in Kharagpur, about the friendliness of Muslims and Hindus towards him whilst they shot at each other. Manto writes:

Rioters brought the running train to a halt. People belonging to the other community were pulled out and slaughtered with swords and bullets. The remaining passengers were treated to halwa, fruits and milk.[49]

The incongruity of Partition violence is exemplified by this excerpt, and is evident in the testimonies provided in my oral history project. The trauma and helplessness of

Brian's father led him to ask for a transfer to Karachi because he did not want to continue working in the north-western region.

Following Indian Independence, another interviewee, Connie Grindall, moved from Calcutta to Sukkur, because her father had taken a position with the Post and Telegraph services in Pakistan. Connie, aged sixteen, her mother, six siblings and another Anglo-Indian couple, embarked on a three-day train journey, crossing the newly created Partition boundary into Hyderabad, Sind. During the oral history interview Connie merely said 'I went in [to Pakistan] unhappy, but I don't want it to record.'<sup>[50]</sup> Later she recounted the circumstances, unembellished, because she prefers not to think about the incident. Connie only remembers a man with a sword outside her train compartment window saying, "You're all dead." She and her sisters had been giggling on the bunk and her mother told them to remain quiet. They heard a lot of noise for a long time, but stayed in their compartment. The train eventually moved off and reached its destination. Connie's father was awaiting its arrival, and had been told that everyone except the driver and guard had been killed. He was astonished when his family and the other Anglo-Indian couple disembarked unharmed. Everyone else on the train had been massacred. Connie Grindall's account is an extraordinary one, demonstrating that, even as passengers, Anglo-Indians were excluded from violence in which all the other passengers, presumably Muslims entering Pakistan from India, were slaughtered.

Tony Mendonça lived in Karachi, which did not experience the extreme violence further north in the Punjab. Nevertheless his family witnessed the exodus of Hindus departing and the influx of Muslims who were lucky enough to survive crossing the border. Random riots and revenge killings occurred on the streets in Karachi. Tony recalls:

I saw very little of it. I was kept at home during that time, my Dad made sure. But I remember my [elder] brothers talked about seeing people being just[...] *Did the violence occur during the day?* Day or night, anytime. In fact there were groups of Muslims going out finding Hindus, even though they were neighbours, just attacking them. Some of them helped some of them to escape, but others joined in the fray for fear or what...I don't know. I remember the priests in church telling us to remember to carry a prayer book or a rosary to let them know that we weren't Hindus. And I know of people who were stopped and were saved by the fact that they said "No, I am a Christian." And they

actually made them recite from the prayer book and then they wouldn't be killed. *So they didn't attack the Christians?* No they didn't. I can't recall any of them being attacked.[51]

The fact that during this period Anglo-Indians and Christians, even Indian Christians, were not attacked is ironic, because recent press reports indicate that in independent India and Pakistan, Christian minorities have since been attacked and marginalized.

Living conditions in Karachi changed with the influx of millions of refugees, all rivalling for local jobs, whilst the poor and homeless built tin and cardboard shack homes on every green space available. Tony left Karachi to seek employment opportunities abroad. He later joined relatives in northern England, then moved to London where he and his friend, Brian Birch, mentioned above, met their prospective New Zealand-born brides and later emigrated to their wives' home country because living conditions for their families were easier and, they thought, healthier than London.

#### MIGRATION AND QUITTING INDIA

The participants in this research were obviously enormously affected by the violence they witnessed and/or heard about during the period of the Quit India campaigns and Partition. Bewildered by the incomprehensible violence of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs against each other, who had only months before lived relatively peacefully together as neighbours, they were also haunted by the spectre that circumstances might arise in which Anglo-Indians could in turn become victims of such sudden and devastating violence. The partisan involvement of Hindu and Muslim law enforcement agencies, such as that described by Ken Blunt, did not encourage them to feel adequately protected or secure, if circumstances creating serious antipathy arose. Emigration emerged as the favoured option to eliminate any risk.

Nevertheless, it is curious that less than half of the interviewees considered leaving India within the year following the Partition violence in 1947. It was not until the 1950s that the majority of Anglo-Indians emigrated. In fact, several of the interviewees indicated that they felt quite safe and not threatened by any local antipathy, and it was not until the 1960s that they felt it necessary to emigrate – more than ten years after Independence and Partition.

The main reason the interviewees left was because they felt native Indians, rather than Anglo-Indians, would in future receive preferential treatment for job opportunities and promotions. This appears more so in India than in Pakistan. The testimony of several of the interviewees indicated that jobs were available in Pakistan because Hindus and Sikhs who had held many of the senior positions had fled, or been killed, and these jobs were made available to Anglo-Indians who stayed on after Partition. Connie Grindall's father moved from India to Pakistan because employment was available. In due course, the interviewees who stayed on in Pakistan also emigrated because of rising political Islamic agendas. The interviewees realised that Christians would probably be marginalized in favour of Muslims, which subsequently proved to be the case.

Noelyne Graham, who lived in central India, explained the reason her parents left India:

My father was in the police. He was RI, Reserve Inspector, in the police lines[...]in Allahabad District. It was a reasonably good position[...].Then of course the Raj left. It was over. It was Indians in those positions[...]. He was demoted to a small district[...]. he was very bitter about that of course[...]. from Allahabad he was sent to Aligarh, which was much smaller than Allahabad, and then from Aligarh he was sent to Khasgunj, which was even smaller. So it was steadily downhill.[52]

These conditions induced Noelyne's parents to consider emigration soon after Independence. They applied for information on various countries, and the brochures for New Zealand appealed to them because of the sunshine hours in Nelson, milk at schools and free medical care, so they migrated in 1949. Only seven of the interviewees migrated directly to New Zealand from India, motivated by what they'd heard of the bad English weather and difficulties in getting jobs and accommodation in England due to the post-war depression. The majority of the interviewees originally went to England, but the better weather and outdoor lifestyle for their families prompted them to move to New Zealand. The majority of the participants paid their own fares, although some were eligible for free passages provided by the British government or their future employers.

Immediately after Independence, Norman Barnett and Cecil Anderson – who had both qualified as medical doctors in Calcutta – were told they had no employment

prospects in India. Both recognised this inequality, but considered that it was only natural for Anglo-Indian privileges to end and that the community would pay the price. Cecil remarked:

The Indian said you will have to take your place with the Indians. If you wanted a job you didn't get it unless you were better qualified than the Indian who applied for it. A lot of them [Anglo-Indians] weren't. They couldn't stay on. As I said we hadn't mixed enough.<sup>[53]</sup>

Unbeknown to each other at the time, Cecil and Norman both chose New Zealand as a destination because it offered equal job opportunities and good prospects for their children. Coincidentally, they both became Public Health Officers, and Norman went on to receive an OBE for his services.

Despite Anglo-Indians having been born and bred in India, they felt vulnerable to exclusion by future local governments because they had previously supported and received privileged positions from the British. With the withdrawal of the British, many Anglo-Indians felt the tables were turning and emigration offered escape from possible marginalisation.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS :

The salient contribution in this paper, that Anglo-Indians were exempt from the horrific violence surrounding them during the period of Partition, raises the question: why were they exempt? An immediate answer is found in Bill Barlow's testimony, describing the overt friendliness towards his patrol sent to control and prevent armed Hindus and Muslims from attacking each other, to the extent that the patrol was offered food by each of the opposing camps. The patrol obviously did not represent 'the enemy' to Hindus and Muslims, despite local support to rid India of British rule. This research indicates that although Indians perceived Anglo-Indians as the privileged, and, perhaps, somewhat resented them as 'lackeys' of the British, nevertheless the level of goodwill towards Anglo-Indians was such that it exempted them from becoming targets of attack.

The testimonies of Brian Birch and Beryl MacLeod demonstrate that Anglo-Indian train and petrol-tanker drivers were employed to keep essential services open

because they would not be attacked, pointing to a recognised lack of animosity. Such an amiable relationship is supported by the fact that the main exodus of Anglo-Indians from India did not occur until the 1950s onwards, that is, not immediately after Partition when the memories of violence and risk would have been greatest.

An insightful review of Partition violence and its literature, by Jason Francisco, points out that the recent resurgence of literary interest in Partition and all its ugliness would perhaps go 'some distance in sussing out the psychology of the upheaval' in the hope that 'a just remembrance' would mandate a better future.<sup>[54]</sup> It is suggested that the finding in this paper offers a new aspect to attaining a 'just remembrance' within Partition narratives. The outgoing British imposed Partition upon the Indian sub-continent, yet the atrocities committed and attributed to their Partition of India did not include violent acts against the British, reflecting a low level of antipathy, even friendship, towards the British and their supporting Anglo-Indian communities. This curious exclusion offers fresh insights into colonial and local relationships in one of the many hybrid communities that evolved during the former colonial world.

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[2] As set out in the Government of India Act 1935, Article 366(2).

[3] Earlier works by the author expound the wide implications of this umbrella term. See Dorothy McMenamin 'Identifying Domiciled Europeans in Colonial India: Poor whites or privileged community?' in *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.3, No.1. June 2001, pp. 106-127, and in 'Questioning the stereotype: Anglo-Indian communities in New Zealand' in the Proceedings of Conference, Melbourne, *Who are the Anglo-Indians*, August 2002, view at [www.alphalink.com.au/~agilbert/confer~1.html](http://www.alphalink.com.au/~agilbert/confer~1.html).

[4] *The Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. I, Simon Report, 1930, p. 401 states that in 1878 these services were entirely staffed by the community later legally defined as Anglo-Indians.

[5] Government of India, *Census of India*, I, Part I, Table 13, 1943, pp. 98-99.

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[7] Frank Anthony *Britain's Betrayal in India: The story of the Anglo-Indian community*, Bombay, Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1969.

[8] McMenamin 'Domiciled Europeans', Caplan 'Cupid' p. 2, Abel, p. 6 and Younger p. 40.

[9] The oral histories filed at the Alexander Turnbull Library were conducted with the assistance of an Award, gratefully, received from the Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust. The oral histories are those of Bill Barlow, Norman Barnett, Dick Cox, Jeanne Dever, Bob Hanson, Renee Hart, Neale Hewett, Dick Leckey, Tony Mendonça, Beryl MacLeod and Daphne Pugh-Stemmer. The remaining interviews and oral histories are, or will be, filed at the McMillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.

[10] Some of the major recent academic works are Mushirul Hasan (ed.) *Inventing Boundaries:*

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[11] Examples of such resistance can be found in Stephen Henningham 'Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces: The Dual Revolt' in Ranajit Guha, ed. *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983.

[12] D. A. Low 'Digging Deeper: Northern India in the 1940s' in *South Asia* Vol.XVIII, 1995, pp. 5-6, and see also Patrick French *Liberty or Death: India's journey to independence and division*, London, Flamingo, 1998, p. 252.

[13] Vinita Damodaran "Bihar in the 1940s: Communities, riots and the state" in *South Asia*, Vol. XVIII, 1995, p. 157-60.

[14] Damodaran pp. 158 and 160.

[15] Such episodes are detailed by Andrew J. Major 'The Chief Sufferers: Abduction of women during the partition of the Punjab' in *South Asia* Vol.XVIII, 1995, pp.57-72 and Damodaran pp. 153-176.

[16] Ayesha Jalal *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 2 and map 1.

[17] Low, pp. 5-9.

[18] An example of such accounts is Alok Bhalla 'Objectifying troubling memories: An interview with Bhisham Sahni' in *Inventing Boundaries* pp. 338-350.

[19] Gyansh Kudaisya 'The demographic upheaval of partition: Refugees and agricultural resettlement in India 1946-47' in *South Asia*, Vol. XVIII, Special Issue, p. 73.

[20] Damodaran pp. 169-172.

[21] French, p. 252 and testimonies in this oral history project.

[22] Damodaran pp. 169-170.

[23] Swarna Aiyar ' "August Anarchy": The partition massacres in Punjab, 1947' in *South Asia*, Vol.XVIII, Special Issue, 1995, p. 14.

[24] Mahbubar Rahman and Willem van Schendel 'I am NOT a refugee: Rethinking partition migration' in *Modern Asian Studies*, 37, 3, 2003, pp. 551-584.

[25] Aiyar, p. 25.

[26] Bill Barlow, Interview 21.2.2001, Transcript pp.18-19.

[27] Daphne Pugh-Stemmer, Interview 15/25.5.2001, Transcript p. 19.

[28] Joan Flack's life story is discussed in detail in my article 'Identifying Domiciled Europeans in Colonial India' pp. 112-26.

[29] Joan Flack, Interview 29.5.1997 and 11.6.1997, Transcript 2: p.2.

[30] This incident is reported by Damodaran p. 157.

[31] Daphne, pp. 19-20.

- [32] Barlow, p. 17.
- [33] Cecil Anderson, Interview 12.11.2001, Transcript p. 17.
- [34] Beryl MacLeod, Interview 24.4.2001, Transcript pp. 9-10.
- [35] Instances of such brutal attacks are given by Ian Talbot in 'Literature and the human drama of the 1947 partition' in *South Asia* Vol. XVIII, 1995, pp. 41-47 and also Major pp. 57-63.
- [36] George Henderson, Conversation, oral history to be recorded.
- [37] Tommy Walker, Interview 10.12.1996, Transcript p. 4.
- [38] Private papers of Randolph Holmes filed at the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.
- [39] Walker, p. 5.
- [40] Esmee Cloy, Interview 17.6.1997, Transcript p. 6.
- [41] Betty Doyle, Interview 5/25.5.1997, Transcript pp. 30-31. See details of Esmee Cloy and Betty Doyle's experiences in McMenemy 'Domiciled Europeans' pp. 111 and 124-6.
- [42] See cynical oral history snapshots by Sanjeev Saith 'Freedom' in *Granta 57: India The Golden Jubilee*, London, Spring 1997, pp.23-38, and also Aiyar, pp. 13-14.
- [43] Dick Cox, Interview 24.5.2001, Transcript pp. 10-11.
- [44] Ken Blunt, Telephone conversation 14.11.1996, Transcript pp. 5-6.
- [45] Dick Leckey, Interview 18.5.2001, Transcript pp. 14-15.
- [46] Aiyar's research points out the predicament on these special refugee trains pp. 24-26.
- [47] Brian Birch, Interview 2.8.2003, Transcript pp. 4-6.
- [48] Swarna Aiyar confirms that trains were stopped by means such as trees placed on tracks, see p. 23.
- [49] Saadat Hasan Manto 'Black Margins' in Mushirul Hasan (ed.) *Inventing Boundaries*: p. 295.
- [50] Connie Grindall, Interview 13.11.2001, Transcript p. 2.
- [51] Tony Mendonça, Interview 26.4.2001, Transcript p. 29.
- [52] Noelene Graham, Interview 11.8.2003, Transcript p. 5.
- [53] Anderson, p. 13.
- [54] Jason Francisco 'In the heat of fratricide: The literature of India's partition burning freshly (A review article) in Mushirul Hasan (ed.) *Inventing Boundaries* p. 372.

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