

## *The Old Sepoy Officer*

### II. THE MUTINY OF THE NINTH BATTALION :

#### MAKHDUM SAHIB

ON 30 January 1775 the Madras council, in reply to an application for assistance from Bombay, decided to send the ninth battalion of native infantry, which was then stationed at Trichinopoly. Instructions were accordingly issued to Colonel John Bellingham, the commanding officer at that station, to instruct Captain Robert Kelly<sup>1</sup> to get his regiment ready to march to Anjengo *en route* by sea for Bombay. The battalion was to march as lightly equipped as possible, and as the men could not take their families, arrangements were to be made with the paymaster to make them a suitable allowance during the absence of the soldiers, which it was supposed would be only for a few months. At the same time Captain William Cooke,<sup>2</sup> commanding at Palamcotta, was asked to arrange with the raja of Travancore for the passage of the troops through his territory. On 6 February Colonel Bellingham reported that the battalion had started. On the evening of 14 February, when Captain Kelly was about to set out from a place called Verdapettah, the acting<sup>3</sup> commandant, Makhdum Sahib, informed him that the men

were clamorous from right to left, saying that they had been deceived, that they understood they were to march by land to Bombay, that they [had] never heard of a whole battalion being ordered to go on board a ship, that it was always customary to take volunteers on such occasions, and that they would not be forced by any means.

Captain Kelly, after consulting with his European officers, harangued the men, explaining that they were honoured by being selected out of their turn for active service, but that he would not use any force to compel them. The men looked sulky and discontented, but they marched. From certain circumstances Captain

<sup>1</sup> Robert Kelly, entered the army 6 October 1760, captain 27 November 1766.

<sup>2</sup> William Cooke, entered the army 6 September 1759, captain 13 November 1765.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Madras Military Constitutions* of 8 May 1775 the name of the actual commandant is given as Noor Muhammad.

Kelly suspected that the native officers were at the bottom of the trouble.

On the 16th at Coilpettah the men again refused to march, and Kelly and his officers were in despair. Kelly wrote to Brigadier-General Smith as follows :

Sir, With sorrow and shame I am now to inform you that the glory of the Ninth Battalion is now totally extinguished. For every method that could be suggested has been try'd to persuade them to go to Bombay by the way pointed out to them by the Governor and Council. But their determined answer is that on board ship they will not go even for one day or an hour. And they not only desire but insist on it that I acquaint the Honourable Board through you, Sir, with this refusal of their orders and that they refuse to stir from this spot until they have your answer.

God knows, Sir, where this will end. I have endeavoured to persuade them to march to Palamcotta, but they will not be brought even there unless I promise them protection against force. And many of them swear that they will not move further southward on any account. However, if nothing else will do I must promise them everything they demand, for here we cannot stay.

There is one expedient, Sir, still left to be try'd at Palamcotta if ever we get there. Some of the Black Officers assure me they may then by gentle means bring over many volunteers to our side, and if all that could be obtained from the Fifth and Seventh Battalions were joined we might make up a respectable body.

I will not longer delay the *Tappel*,<sup>4</sup> for I am really so sick with vexation that I cannot now give you the particulars of this shocking affair, but will undertake that disagreeable task at Palamcotta. In the meantime, I am &c. &c.

This mutiny appears to have been totally unexpected. On previous occasions, as in Clive's expedition to Bengal in 1756, the expedition to Manilla in 1762, and in the dispatch of troops from Bengal to Madras in 1767, no objection had been made by the sepoys to journey by sea. It is true that in all these instances, and especially in the last,<sup>5</sup> the hardships suffered by the sepoys, and more particularly the Hindu sepoys, had been, through bad management, excessive, but it could hardly have been expected that such an outbreak would take place in a battalion the native commandant of which was a Muhammadan and therefore a man not likely to be in sympathy with Hindu prejudices. No secret had been made of their destination, and the sepoys, though they pretended otherwise, must have been aware as soon as they were ordered to march to Anjengo that it was intended they should

<sup>4</sup> *Tappel* or *tappel*, a postal messenger.

<sup>5</sup> In this case the troops insisted on being landed and refused to continue the journey by sea (Wilson, *Madras Army*, I. 290). On their return in 1769 two companies of the third battalion were drowned (Williams, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 180):

go by sea. It would seem, therefore, that the reason why the mutiny did not break out before the battalion left Trichinopoly, was that the instigators wished to get the men away from the other battalions, the soldiers of which would have jumped at the chance of active service in their place. The Madras council received the news without much concern, simply issuing orders to the commanding officers of various military stations to send volunteers to join Captain Kelly at Palamcottah. They did not even take the trouble to give any orders as to the way in which the mutineers should be dealt with.

Meanwhile Captain Kelly managed to bring his men to Palamcottah, where he had the advantage of being able to consult with Captain Cooke and of knowing that he could count upon support should the use of force be necessary. On 18 February, accordingly, he wrote to General Smith in much better spirits :

Sir, I have at length made a considerable party against the mutineers, and have, after consulting with Captain Cooke, determined to treat them with as little ceremony as they did me on the road. I have promised immediate promotion to those who obey orders at the expense of those who do not, for I find nothing else will do.

I am sure the letter I now enclose you, Sir, would hang all the soldiers in the army. It was wrote by their own orders and dictated by their chief Orator, and had there been room on the paper and time they would not have been afraid or ashamed to have signed.

Captain Cooke has promised me all the volunteers I can raise in his battalion, and I have reason to think Colonel Brathwaite\* will send me some from Madura. There is time enough for the assembling of them, for there are not vessels enough at Anjengo to transport the whole at once. I will therefore, as the Travancore Rajah has sent a very gracious answer, send them off by small detachments so regulated as to give the least trouble possible.

I hope by tomorrow night, Sir, to give you a better account of our situation. In the meantime I remain &c. &c.

The 'hanging letter' referred to by Captain Kelly is as follows :

*Address to General Smith from the Sepoys of the Ninth Battalion*

When the battalion was at Trichinopoly an order was given out by Captain Kelly to prepare for marching and everything was got ready for that purpose. A second order was issued directing us to leave our families there and give notice to the Writer<sup>†</sup> of the sum we should chuse to have paid them for their maintenance. Upon this we begged to know

\* John Brathwaite, entered the Company's army as major 21 June 1770, Lieutenant-colonel 22 October 1772.

† The battalion clerk, who was under the immediate orders of the paymaster. Down to 1769 the accounts of the battalions were kept by *Fachals* (see Wilson's *Madras Army*, I. 329).

the place of our destination and were told Anjengo in the Kingdom of Maliraulam,<sup>8</sup> from whence it would be impossible to send anything ourselves for the sustenance of our families. We therefore agreed to what was proposed in confidence that our masters intended nothing but our benefit. But on our arrival at Madura, we heard a report that we were to be put on board of ship and sent to Bombay, though on being told so we discredited the report as we did not imagine that would be practised upon us of which no instance had been known before, and trusted at all events that no compulsion would be used.<sup>9</sup> In this manner we replied to all that spoke to us on the subject. On our leaving Madura however we found that our Captain and officers had left their horses and superfluous baggage in that place, a circumstance that confirmed what we had heard and increased our apprehensions. These therefore we communicated after the second day's march to our Jemidars and Subidars at a place called Birudapatty,<sup>10</sup> and the Captain upon this ordered us to form the square. He then told us openly that we were to go to Bombay, and, as we were under arms, we thought it an improper time to make any reply. But having left that place and arrived at Salloor, the drum beat at evening for marching and our Subidars and Jemidars ordered us to arms, which however we declined, assigning as a reason our unwillingness to go to Bombay by sea. Our Captain then came and asked us why we refused to take our arms. We told him that hitherto the English had never used compulsion in putting us on ship board and that his intention of doing so was the cause of our present conduct. The Captain upon this drew his sword and swore to us that he would put none on board of ship against their will. Since that on our arrival at Covilpatty the Captain ordered our Subidars and Jemidars with three Havildars, three Naigs and three Sepoys out of each company to come before him, who being again questioned concerning the behaviour of our battalion replied in our names that we were willing to go by land wherever ordered, and that we had never yet hesitated to go to battle, wherever it might be, on the Company's account, but on board of ship we could not go though we were to die for it.

We have therefore made this representation to you, Sir, and shall stay in Palamootta till your answer arrives.

The meeting between Captain Kelly and the representatives of the men, which has been mentioned in the above petition, took place in Captain Cooke's house and in his presence. Captain Kelly called upon all who were prepared to obey orders and go to Bombay by sea to come over and stand by him. All present did so except the commandant, Makhdum Sahib, two subadars, of whom Vencatchellum was one, and two jemadars. Captain Cooke, who knew Vencatchellum personally, asked him by name how he dared to refuse to do his duty. He replied that only one

<sup>8</sup> One of the names for what is known in English as Travancore.

<sup>9</sup> In the Manila expedition a month's pay was advanced to the sepoys as well as four months' pay 'to encourage them the more readily to enter on this service' (Wilson, *Madras Army*, I. 179), but there is no record of any one being unwilling to go, or of any necessity to call for volunteers.

<sup>10</sup> Above called Verdapattah.

man of his company would follow him, and therefore he did not stand up. Captain Cooke then turned to Makhdum Sahib and asked him how it was that he, who ought to be the first to set a good example to the battalion, could refuse to volunteer. As he hesitated to answer, Captain Cooke asked him point blank whether he refused to go to Bombay. His reply was,

'Yes, I am ashamed to be at the head of such fellows, who not only abused me and my family and made use of all the bad names they could invent but drew their bayonets on me at Salloor [this was denied by all the witnesses later on] and would have put me to death had not the Captain galloped up to my relief.'

The meeting had the satisfactory result of separating the loyal from the disloyal, and soon after one of the subadars named 'Fakcer Labeck' (Labbaik) gave Lieutenant Urban Vigors<sup>11</sup> a written statement in which he recapitulated the chief details of the mutiny and ascribed it entirely to the instigation of Makhdum Sahib, whose own company had been the first to refuse to obey the order to march. Makhdum Sahib had told the sepoys that if they were firm in their refusal no one could force them to obey, but that they must not mention his name or disclose the fact that the native officers had anything to do with their action. The worst, he told them, that could happen was that the battalion would be disbanded, in which case he undertook that on offering him a small present the Nawab would take them all into his own service.

This information being confirmed by what was known to all the officers, Captain Kelly arrested Makhdum Sahib, and the circumstances not admitting of the holding of a regular court martial, he, on the advice of Captain Cooke, held a council of war, composed of his own officers and those of Captain Cooke's battalion. This council assembled on 21 February

in order to examine into the cause or causes of the late sedition and mutiny in the Ninth Battalion, and to give their opinion of the punishment necessary to be inflicted on the author or authors of the said mutiny and sedition on full conviction.

Captain Kelly opened the proceedings by briefly detailing, for the benefit of the officers of the 7th battalion, the facts of the case. The statement of Fakcer Labeck was then read and translated by a subadar of the 7th battalion, and was sworn to by Fakcer Labeck and the persons named in it. A number of other witnesses gave evidence incriminating Makhdum Sahib, and even the European sergeants swore that, from all they could learn from the men, Makhdum Sahib was the sole cause of the disturbance, and that the battalion would willingly go to Bombay were it not for him.

<sup>11</sup> Urban Vigors, entered the army 2 August 1770, Lieutenant 17 February 1772.

Makhdum Sahib's defence was recorded as follows :

He says it is well known to all the Gentlemen of the battalion that it is a custom of the Black people if they owe one another any spite to accuse them falsely. 'Now in this battalion I have four enemies. The first and greatest of them all is Fakeer Labeck, Subadar. The second is Meer Jakob, Jamedar, the third Mahomet Hussian, Subadar, and the fourth is all the Sergeants<sup>12</sup> of the battalion, and there are also some Havildars and Naiks because I did not recommend them for promotion when they expected.'

Makhdum Sahib called upon certain of the witnesses to repeat their statements on oath, which they did. He then called upon a few witnesses of his own, but all they could say was that they had not heard him incite any one to mutiny. Captain Kelly pointed out to him that such evidence did not help him, and asked if he could produce any evidence to show that he had done anything to keep the men in order. Four of the havildars, two of the naiks, and two sepoys swore that he had done so, but their evidence was discounted by the fact that some of them had previously given evidence against him, and now, on cross-examination, declared that at one time Makhdum Sahib told the men to be obedient and at another not to obey.

The record concludes :

After mature deliberation on the several examinations, the Council of War are unanimously of opinion that Makhdum Sahib, acting Commandant of the Ninth Battalion of Sepoys has been the principal cause and promoter of the late sedition and mutiny in the battalion and that he is guilty of mutiny himself, and that the punishment proper to be inflicted on him for such a crime, in such a person, and on such exigency of service, is Death.

On the afternoon of 22 February Captain Kelly carried this resolution into effect. The manner in which he did so is recorded in the *Military Consultations of Madras* for 6 March 1775 :

Captain Kelly advises us that as the exigency of the case required, in his opinion, the most exemplary and the most striking mode of inflicting the punishment, he had caused the Commandant to be blown away from a gun in the presence of the battalion, which, to the number of nine hundred men, turned out voluntarily to witness the execution. Captain Kelly thinks he will have no occasion for any recruits from Captain Cooke's battalion, and, from the behaviour of the Sepoys at the execution of the Commandant, he hopes there will be few desertions. He has promoted one of the youngest Subadars to be Commandant and altered the dates of rank of the others according to their behaviour. Three Subadars, five Jemadars with several Havildars and Naiks he has dismissed for their bad conduct in the late mutiny.

<sup>12</sup> The position of the commandant with regard to the European sergeants was evidently a delicate one. In fact many of the commandants rose from the ranks, and practically all the rest from the lower grades of native officers.

The Board are well pleased to observe the good effects which the exemplary punishment of the Commandant has had upon the battalion, and it is hoped that the Sepoys will now proceed without reluctance to the service they have been ordered upon. Captain Kelly's conduct in so critical a situation has been highly commendable.

Makhdum Sahib's evil influence being removed, there was no further difficulty about the voyage to Bombay, and so well did the battalion behave on this and subsequent occasions that we find the following passage in the Fort St. George (Madras) General Order of 6 August 1839 :<sup>13</sup>

In consideration of the readiness always evinced by the Ninth Regiment of Native Infantry to proceed on foreign service from the earliest period at which the native troops of this Presidency were required to embark on ship board, the Right Honourable the Governor in Council is pleased to permit that regiment to bear on its colour and appointments, in addition to the word 'Ava', a galley with the motto 'Khooskee wa Turree' [By land and by sea] in the Persian character.

However informal the nature of Makhdum Sahib's trial, the change in the behaviour of the battalion produced by his death leaves no doubt whatsoever as to his guilt. He probably thought that, having only young officers<sup>14</sup> to deal with, he could either outwit or frighten them. In so doing he quite forgot that if he failed he would be dealt with in a prompt and heavy-handed fashion that older officers might have hesitated to employ to a man of his position. It almost takes one's breath away when one remembers that whilst Makhdum Sahib on 5 February was the most honoured man in his battalion, on the 22nd of the same month his nine hundred comrades looked on with indifference to see him die the death of a traitor.

The actual details of the execution are not recorded, but a letter, dated 8 May 1784, from Thomas Ogilvie, paymaster at Vellore, to the governor of Madras tells us how the native soldiery behaved on such occasions :

My Lord,

The sepoy, who attempted to incite the [Fourteenth] Battalion to mutiny, was hung yesterday evening at five o'clock, in consequence of the unanimous voice of the native officers of the battalion. Captain Cuppage<sup>15</sup> called a Council of War, consisting of all the native officers, who gave as their unanimous opinion, that the sepoy was guilty of mutiny and deserved immediate death, and that he ought to be hanged, as shooting was too honourable a death for such a crime.

<sup>13</sup> See Wilson's *Madras Army*, i. 304.

<sup>14</sup> Cooke was not present, so with the exception of Kelly all the members of the council of war were subalterns.

<sup>15</sup> John Cuppage, joined as Lieutenant 4 August 1770, captain 6 July 1779.

The battalion has gained great credit and certainly deserves public thanks for their steady, good behaviour on this occasion. Captain Cuppage, having so good an opinion of the native officers and of the attachment of the battalion in general to the Service, permitted them close to, to see the sentence put into execution. At five o'clock all the sepoys off duty escorted the man to the place of execution, about half a mile from the Fort, where there was a gallows erected. Captain Parr,<sup>16</sup> after reading the sentence to the man and to the battalion, asked him what inducement he had to commit such a crime and if he had any accomplices. He said he was in debt ten Pagodas<sup>17</sup> and that nobody was concerned with him, and that he submitted to God and his officers, and salaamed to Captain Parr and the Adjutant, then submitted to the executioners without another word. Meanwhile a voice or two called out 'Allah! Allah!', one or two desired others to intercede for him, but when Captain Parr called out 'Silence!' not another word was uttered, but they waited with becoming decency and patience till Captain Parr thought proper to march them home again.

### III. THE SERVICES OF TIMMA NAIK<sup>18</sup>

On 11 March 1784 the English made peace with Tippoo Sultan. Though the war had been by no means decisive the Nawab and the Company were so much distressed by the excessive expenditure that, in spite of the risk, they determined to dismiss as many of their troops as possible. In the south of India the duty of actual disbandment fell to the lot of Colonel William Fullarton, who writes as follows :

It now remained for me to undergo a duty more painful than all the embarrassments hitherto experienced. Your Lordship<sup>19</sup> and the Board found it requisite to order a reduction of many thousand Independents and other southern Irregulars who had been raised by his Highness the Nawab Mahomed Ally. During the whole period of misfortune to the southward,<sup>20</sup> they still bore the rigour of distress with a resignation unknown to Europeans. Among these men were the most respectable soldiers of the East; some of them had followed their fathers into the Carnatic in the days of Dost Ally<sup>21</sup> and Anwaradeen Cawn,<sup>22</sup> others had

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Parr, entered the army 5 February 1773, captain 6 November 1783.

<sup>17</sup> The pagoda was worth 42 fanams, 12 of which go to the rupee. At par this would make the pagoda equal to 7 shillings. The pay of a sepoy at this time was about 1½ pagodas *per mensem*. In chapter III it will be seen that the Company owed even its regular troops about a year's pay.

<sup>18</sup> Though the word *naik* has always been used to denote the lowest non-commissioned officer in the native regiments, it was commonly used merely to denote the military profession; thus Hyder himself was long known as Hyder Naik.

<sup>19</sup> Lord George Macartney, governor of Madras 22 June 1781 to 8 June 1785.

<sup>20</sup> Fullarton refers to the general distress experienced in southern India owing to Hyder's invasion in 1781 and to the misgovernment of the Provinces subsequent to the capture of Madras in 1764.

<sup>21</sup> Killed in battle at the pass of Damakcherry in 1740 by the Marathas.

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remained in the service since the days of Chunda Sahib and the deposed Ranees or Gentoo Queen of Trichinopoly.<sup>23</sup> Many of them had continued since the campaigns of Lawrence, Clive and Yusuf Cawn<sup>24</sup> in a constant series of military duty. To these wretched adherents an average of twelve months' pay was due. The misfortunes of the times rendered it impossible to discharge their claims, for the regular corps of the army was not less in arrears. Under such circumstances to turn them loose to misery, while the country was in a state that could afford them no relief, would have distressed the most unfeeling mind. They assailed me daily with their sufferings, and the only expedient was adopted that promised to combine the duties of obedience with the obligations of humanity, by directing the officers commanding the Corps of these Irregulars to furnish me with Rolls containing the names of each Black Officer and Sepoy under their command, specifying the length of service and arrears of pay; in order that each of them might receive a certificate of his demand on the Company, to be countersigned by the officer and by the Commandant of the garrison with which the Corps corresponded; and at the same time desiring a particular recommendation of every individual who had any pretension to indulgence.<sup>25</sup>

The rolls prepared by Fullarton's order would be invaluable if they were in existence, but I am afraid they have disappeared. There is, however, one case on record in which Fullarton himself pleaded for indulgence, viz. that of Timma Naik, whose petition to the Madras council, rewritten for the sake of intelligibility, runs as follows :

To the Honourable General [John] Dalling, Commander-in-Chief.

The humble petition of Timma Naik, Commandant of the Twelfth Battalion of Sepoys at Trichinopoly, who has been thirty-eight years in service.

That in the time of Governor John Hinde<sup>26</sup> at Fort Saint David your Petitioner entered the Honourable Company's service under the command of Captains Gardner, Holland, Ogilvie and Hallyburton,<sup>27</sup> officers of the Cavalry and Sepoys.

When Admiral Boscawen landed with 5,000 King's troops at Fort

<sup>23</sup> Chanda Sahib treacherously seized Trichinopoly from Manka (or Minakshi) Rani in 1736. According to the native accounts he was himself put to death in 1752 in the Duiwai Mundup, where he had sworn on the Koran to do the Rani no harm. See Miles's translation of Kirman's *History of Hyder Naik*, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Fullarton probably refers to the campaigns around Trichinopoly between 1751 and 1754. Clive's first service was at the siege of Madras in 1746; Lawrence arrived in India in 1748; Yusuf Khan joined the Company's army in 1751.

<sup>25</sup> *A View of the English Interests in India*, by William Fullarton, pp. 201-2.

<sup>26</sup> John Hinde, as deputy-governor of Fort St. David, became governor of Madras when the town of that name fell into the hands of the French in September 1746. He defended Fort St. David against three attacks by the French and died on 14-15 April 1747, being succeeded by Charles Floyer.

<sup>27</sup> Hallyburton, as has been mentioned *ante*, p. 273, note 40, was a civilian. George Gardner, captain 28 September 1750; Captain John Holland, appointed captain-commandant 24 October 1748; John Ogilvie, ensign 6 November 1753.

Saint David in the time of Governor Floyer, Captain Dalton<sup>28</sup> commanding the Grenadier Company and Captain Kilpatrick<sup>29</sup> five Companies of Sepoys,<sup>30</sup> in which your Petitioner was doing duty, were ordered to the siege of Pondicherry in the year 1748, but after some months news of Peace was received from England and the army retired from Pondicherry and took possession of Madras from the French.<sup>31</sup>

Afterwards the army went against Devicotta, first under the command of Captain Cope and then of Major Lawrence, and took it. Later on the Petitioner's company was sent under Captain Cope to Trichinopoly, when Captains Gingens<sup>32</sup> and Maskelyne<sup>33</sup> joined us at Uttatoor, where the French army was under Monsieur Law<sup>34</sup> and Chunda Sahib. The French advanced against us and erected batteries against Trichinopoly. This campaign lasted eight months, during which the King of Mysore sent his Dalaway<sup>35</sup> with ten thousand horse and twenty thousand Poligars and Sepoys to assist us. Soon after the French received news of this and surrounded Kistnaporam, Carapatore and Collabeau,<sup>36</sup> where Captain Cope was with a large detachment, and an engagement took place. Captain Cope having been killed by a musket shot, Captain Dalton took command, and advancing smartly against the enemy, the latter retreated and fled. The King of Mysore's army then came to Trichinopoly.

After this your Petitioner was ordered to proceed to Arcot and Kavery-paukram under the command of Colonel Clive, where Chunda Sahib's eldest brother Mahomed Ally<sup>37</sup> and his son Raza Sahib<sup>38</sup> were. We fought against them and took Arcot,<sup>39</sup> when your Petitioner's company with Captain Clive were ordered to Trichinopoly under the command of Major Lawrence and encamped at Golden Rock, where in a battle

<sup>28</sup> John Dalton came out with Commodore Bernet in 1746. He was an excellent officer, but retired from the service in 1753. The historian Robert Orme made much use of his Narrative in dealing with the years 1751-3.

<sup>29</sup> James Kilpatrick, captain- lieutenant 24 October 1748. This is the earliest instance I have found of a British officer detailed to command the sepoy companies. No European commissioned officer is mentioned in the *List of the Peons, Sepoys, Arabians and Horsemen in Fort St. David, January the 31st 1748/9*.

<sup>30</sup> The *List of the Peons, Sepoys, Arabians and Horsemen at Fort St. David, January the 31st 1748/9* under 'Sepoys' gives five native officers in command of numbers varying from 22 to 247, so at this time the term 'Company' must have been used very indefinitely.

<sup>31</sup> Boscawen's actual force in the attack on Pondicherry was 3,720 Europeans, 300 topasses, and 2,000 sepoy (Orme's *History*, I 98).

<sup>32</sup> John Rudolph de Gingens, a Swiss officer. See *The East Indian Chronologist*, App. III, note.

<sup>33</sup> Edmund Maskelyne, brother-in-law of Clive.

<sup>34</sup> The Chevalier Jacques Law, younger brother of Jean Law and nephew of the financier, John Law. The original has 'Lass', which corresponds to the French pronunciation 'Lass'.

<sup>35</sup> Nandara, the prime minister of Mysore.

<sup>36</sup> I have made no attempt to identify these places. Orme (*History*, I 207) says Captain James Cope was mortally wounded at Kistnavoram.

<sup>37</sup> This prince is also mentioned in the French accounts of this period, and must not be confused with Muhammad Ali, nawab of Arcot, the rival of Chanda Sahib.

<sup>38</sup> Raza or Raza Sahib later on joined Hyder, and still later went to the Marathas.

<sup>39</sup> Arcot was captured in 1751. The battle of Kaveripauk took place in 1752.

against the French Allum Cawn,<sup>40</sup> commander of four thousand horse was killed and his head cut off, and our army made its way to Trichinopoly. Monsieur Law and Chunda Sahib then retreated to Seringham and in a short time, after some smart fighting had taken place, Monsieur Law capitulated and gave up his sword<sup>41</sup> and Chunda Sahib's head was cut off at Circarpollam.

The Mysore army<sup>42</sup> now came and encamped at Trichinopoly, the commander of the garrison being Captain Dalton. Major Lawrence and Captain Clive marched to Trivedi Pancraty, where the Mysore army and the Marathas, under Morari Rao and Bushenga Rao,<sup>43</sup> advanced against the English army, firing smartly. In that battle Bushenga Rao was killed by a musket shot. Major Lawrence and Captain Charles Campbell took the enemy's camp and marched to Trichinopoly. The whole army of the enemy was encamped at Golden Rock, and our Grand Army giving battle, Major Lawrence was wounded in the arm,<sup>44</sup> and leaving Captain Kilpatrick in command of the garrison, retired to Coiladdy. About this time the French attacked Dalton's Battery<sup>45</sup> with a thousand Europeans. We beat them and killed [and took prisoners] eight hundred of the French and the rest ran away. Your Petitioner was then promoted by Major Lawrence to be Subadar, and our army leaving Coiladdy beat the French and Mysoreans. Then the enemy made peace for eighteen months and Major Lawrence went to Fort Saint David leaving Colonel Heron in command of Trichinopoly. This was in the time of Governor Saunders, who succeeded Governor Floyer.<sup>46</sup>

When Captain Clive took fourteen companies of sepoy<sup>47</sup> on Admiral Pocock's<sup>48</sup> fleet to Bengal, your Petitioner went with him. On the arrival of the army in Bengal we took Calcutta.<sup>49</sup> The Commanders of the sepoy<sup>50</sup> were Major Kilpatrick and Captain Fraser,<sup>50</sup> and we took all the places round Calcutta, viz. Chandernagore, Hughli and Chinsura.

<sup>40</sup> Alam Khan was killed in March 1753 whilst opposing Lawrence's march to the relief of Trichinopoly.

<sup>41</sup> Law surrendered on 3 June 1753.

<sup>42</sup> The Mysoreans turned against the English because Muhammad Ali now refused to keep his promise of making over Trichinopoly to them.

<sup>43</sup> Timma Naik possibly refers to the man whom Orme calls Basimrao, Morari Rao's nephew, killed on 1 April 1753 (Orme's *History*, I. 279).

<sup>44</sup> Lawrence was wounded in the battle of the Sugarloaf Rock, 21 September 1753 (Cambridge's *War in India*, p. 53). He retired to Coiladdy in October.

<sup>45</sup> Dalton's battery was one of the defences of Trichinopoly. This attack took place on 27 November 1753. It was a well-planned attempt, which failed only owing to the impatience of the French themselves. The French loss is much exaggerated.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Floyer had succeeded John Hinde as governor by seniority, but the orders sent from home nominated Mr. Thomas Saunders, who took over charge on 19 September 1750.

<sup>47</sup> See Wilson's *Madras Army*, I. 373, return dated 7 April 1757, for the names of the subadars.

<sup>48</sup> The naval commander in the Bengal expedition was Admiral Charles Watson; Admiral George Pocock was only second in command.

<sup>49</sup> 2 January 1757.

<sup>50</sup> John Fraser, captain 1757, a Madras officer. This statement does not agree with Broome's statement that the Madras battalions were usually commanded by native officers (Broome's *Bengal Army*, p. 211).

The Nawab Siraj-ud-daula was at Murahidabad. Mr. Watts<sup>51</sup> came from Cossimbuzar, spoke to Colonel Clive and guided the army against the Nawab's army, which consisted of sixty thousand men. We took our opportunity and beat them and plundered their camp.<sup>52</sup> The remainder of the Nawab's army retreated and the Nawab Siraj-ud-daula embarked on a boat and fled, but his grandfather Mir Jafar's people caught him at Rajmehal and brought him back to Murahidabad. On his arrival there our people cut off the Nawab's head.<sup>53</sup>

Receiving intelligence of the French<sup>54</sup> being at Patna, General Coote, who commanded the Grenadier Company, and your Petitioner acting as Commandant,<sup>55</sup> was sent with six companies of sepoys and two of Europeans to seize Patna and Bankipur. We took these places, and after staying there six months returned to Cossimbuzar and joined our army.

Afterwards Colonel Forde<sup>56</sup> with two battalions of sepoys, four hundred Europeans and Captain Knox's battalion proceeded by sea to Vizagapatam and marched towards Masulipatam. The French army, commanded by the Marquis de Conflans, came to Rajahmundry to meet us and there we gave battle. The French army retreated to Masulipatam and ours followed. Arriving at Masulipatam we took the place by storm, and there your Petitioner was wounded in the thigh. Colonel Forde ordered us to proceed to Madras whilst he embarked for Bengal.

Immediately after our arrival in Madras General Coote<sup>57</sup> arrived from England. We at once marched to Wandiwash against Mons. Lally and beat him, and then, having laid siege to Pondicherry and taken it, your Petitioner was ordered to march to Thiagar and Gingee,<sup>58</sup> under the command of Major Preston. We took these places and returned to Trichinopoly under the same officer.

Major Preston delivered over command to Colonel Monson, and after some time Colonel Monson delivered over command to Colonel Charles Campbell, under whose command Major Preston was killed. Some time after Colonel Campbell took Madura.<sup>59</sup>

Later on your Petitioner was ordered to proceed to Trichinopoly under

<sup>51</sup> William Watts, the Company's agent at Cossimbazar near Murahidabad, where the English factory was situated.

<sup>52</sup> This refers to the celebrated battle of Plassey, 23 June 1757.

<sup>53</sup> Mir Jafar, whom the English placed on the throne in place of Siraj-ud-daula, had married an aunt of the latter. It was his son Miran who ordered Siraj-ud-daula to be put to death.

<sup>54</sup> This was a small body of French under Jean Law, the chief of the French factory at Cossimbazar.

<sup>55</sup> The original has 'as a last Commandant'. The advanced guard was certainly commanded by one Mooten Beg, possibly he means he was senior sepoy officer in the main body or the after-guard. The expedition lasted only a few weeks.

<sup>56</sup> Francis Forde. His expedition started in October 1758. He beat Conflans at Condore near Rajahmundry on 8 December 1758 and stormed Masulipatam on the night of 7-8 April 1759. See his letter of 19 April to the Madras council (Wilson, *Madras Army*, I. 129).

<sup>57</sup> Eyre Coote, then colonel, arrived at Madras on 27 October 1759. He beat Lally at Wandiwash on 22 January 1760 and took Pondicherry on 15 January 1761.

<sup>58</sup> Thiagar surrendered to Major Achilles Preston in February 1762, and Gingee to Captain Stephen Smith on 5 April.

<sup>59</sup> The expedition to Madura has already been described, *supra*, pp. 277 ff.

the command of Colonel Wood, where your Petitioner was promoted to be Commandant in the Twelfth Battalion of the Honourable Company's army.<sup>60</sup>

Some time after your Petitioner was sent into the Mysore country under the command of General Wood, and under Captain Johnson's<sup>61</sup> command took Dalampory, Fort Erode and Carroovore. When Hyder Gomasta<sup>62</sup> and Muzaffer Cawn came with a large force and encamped before Dalampoory, then in obedience to the written order from Colonel Frischman<sup>63</sup> your Petitioner returned to Trichinopoly with five companies of sepoy, fighting the enemy continuously during some seven days' march. Then the Nawab Amir-ul-umra,<sup>64</sup> being pleased with the Petitioner's conduct, presented him with a horse &c. and spoke to Major Flint<sup>65</sup> at Trichinopoly, and took your Petitioner into his own service, but your Petitioner did not desire to leave the Company's service, but the Nawab asked Major Flint to spare him the services of so good a soldier and Major Flint ordered your Petitioner to go.

And your Petitioner has always been very punctual in the discharge of his duty, and he received a commission from Governor Palk,<sup>66</sup> and when General Lally besieged Madras and was encamped in the Black Town, your Petitioner's brother was killed by a musket shot, and your Petitioner's two brothers-in-law, both Jamadars, were killed by musket shots in the Company's service.

Therefore your Petitioner takes the liberty to lay before your Honour all the service of thirty-eight years, with the hope that your Honour will take it into consideration, and that your Honour will order your Petitioner to whatever place may be for the good of the Service, and, out of pity for your Petitioner's long service, will be pleased to grant him full pay during the remainder of his life as Colonel Fullarton has recommended.

For which act of Favour your Petitioner will ever pray, &c. &c.

TIMMY (sic) NALK, Commandant.

<sup>60</sup> In the original it is not clear whether Timma Nalk means that he was made commandant of the 12th battalion or a commandant in that battalion. The apparent confusion between this statement and the claim of Mir Sahib to have been appointed commandant of this battalion may be accounted for in the following manner. It is clear, from Mir Sahib's statement that his battalion was under Captain Mathews, that he refers to the 16th battalion formed in 1767. In 1769 (Wilson, *Madras Army*, I. 329) this became the 13th battalion, and in 1770 it became the 12th Native Infantry. Timma Nalk's 12th battalion is therefore a quite different regiment from that of Mir Sahib.

<sup>61</sup> 'The only officers left by Colonel Wood who succeeded in bringing off their men were Lieutenants Johnson and Byrne. The former fought his way from Darapooram to Trichinopoly, although closely followed and harassed by superior numbers' (Wilson, *Madras Army*, I. 272). This occurred in 1768. Apparently he was Andrew Johnson, who obtained the rank of Lieutenant on 30 November 1765.

<sup>62</sup> It is not clear in the original whether Timma Nalk uses the term 'Gomasta' or agent contemptuously or whether he means 'Hyder's Gomasta Muzaffer Khan'.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Frischman, Lieutenant-colonel 11 November 1765.

<sup>64</sup> Amir-ul-umra, second son of the Nawab Muhammad Ali.

<sup>65</sup> William Flint, major 12 November 1765.

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Colonel Fullarton supported this petition with a strong recommendation that, as one of the oldest commandants in India, Timma Naik should be granted pension at the rate of the full pay of that rank.

The petition was accordingly forwarded to the 'Committee for Invaliding and Pensioning', which pointed out that Timma Naik had long ceased to be an officer of the Company, and, moreover, that he had never been the actual commandant of the 12th battalion but only a subadar, whatever the rank may have been which he had held in the Nawab's service. As regards the former objection, to grant a pension at all was to create a new precedent, as regards the latter it might be considered in the amount of pension granted. At the same time the committee recommended that his case should receive favourable consideration. In all probability, though the wording of the petition was misleading, Timma Naik only meant to emphasize the fact that he had served in the 12th battalion, and was at the time of his petition holding the rank of commandant in the Nawab's service. The inaccuracy was therefore ignored, and, as the committee concurred in Colonel Fullarton's estimate of Timma Naik as a brave and faithful soldier, he was on 13 December 1786 granted a pension of 15 pagodas.

#### IV. THE MUTINY OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH BATTALION<sup>67</sup>:

##### SHAIK IBRAHIM

In June 1795 news arrived in Madras of the outbreak of war with Holland, and expeditions were immediately planned against Ceylon, Malacca, and other Dutch possessions. That against Ceylon was commanded by Colonel James Stuart of his majesty's 72nd regiment. In 1796 he received reinforcements, amongst which was the newly raised 35th battalion. On 20 March it broke into sudden mutiny as described in the following letter, dated Colombo, 21 March 1796, from Colonel Stuart to the commander-in-chief, Sir Alured Clarke.

Sir, It is with much concern I inform you that it will not be in my power at present fully to comply with the instructions of Government as signified to me by Mr. Deputy Ince's letter of the 13th instant, owing to an unlooked for event which took place here yesterday by the Thirty-fifth Battalion mutinying. They assembled in a riotous, mutinous manner, beat and abused their officers, knocked down Captain Kenny<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> This battalion was afterwards known as 'Kenny's Battalion' according to the usual custom of naming a regiment after its first commanding officer. Colonel Wilson notes (*Madras Army*, II. 257) that (with the exception of the sappers) it is the first and only corps of the Madras army which has served in Europe.

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who commands the Corps several times, whom they afterwards made prisoner.

The mutinous state of the Corps being reported to me, I immediately marched part of the Seventy-third Regiment and Bombay Grenadiers Battalion with two six-pounders to the ground where they were encamped. There I found the battalion under arms, without their European or Native officers, who with the non-commissioned [officers]<sup>\*\*</sup> had been made prisoners by them. Several small parties were advanced in their front and on their flanks, who seemed determined not to allow any person to pass them. The Grenadier Battalion, finding it necessary to force some of these parties, were obliged to make use of their bayonets. One man of the Thirty-fifth being killed and several wounded, we soon surrounded them and obliged them to pile and quit their arms.

Captain Kenny and his officers having pointed out one man who was particularly active in heading the mutiny, and who had knocked the former down several times, I thought it necessary to make an immediate example and ordered him to be blown away from one of the guns, but owing to the artillerymen's not tying him properly to the gun or to some other cause which I cannot account for, the man was only stunned, and in a short time afterwards showed signs of life. As the troops had been convinced of my determination to make an example of this man, although he had escaped the punishment which I intended he should suffer, I did not think it necessary to carry it into further execution, but ordered him when the troops moved off to be carried away and taken care of. It has been reported to me this morning that he will probably recover.

All the sepoys who were found under arms were brought prisoners to the Fort last night, where they still remain, and it is my intention to select eight or ten of those whom the officers may point out to me as having been most active in the mutiny and consequently most guilty to be tried by a General Court Martial. Until this is done the whole must remain in confinement.

I sent the Adjutant-General this morning to the mutineers to learn from them, for my information, whether they had anything to complain of which had occasioned their behaving in so irregular and unsoldierlike a manner, but I do not find that they have any well grounded complaint. They pleaded their inexperience, being young sepoys, and that they were told before they left Trichinopoly that they were only going upon the service against Colombo and would be back in three months, and in consequence that they had taken little pains to settle and provide for their families who were now in distress at that place; but they did not say that they were told or had a promise of this kind from any good authority.

The battalion is chiefly composed of boys. The European officers, though fine young men, are in general very young soldiers and the Native Commissioned and non-Commissioned officers were recently drafted from various Corps in the Carnatic. Thus formed, they were sent on

<sup>\*\*</sup> As in the case of Makhdam Sahib, who bade the sepoys conceal the share of the native officers in the mutiny, so here it is quite possible that the native officers required the sepoys to put them in confinement in order to clear them later on.

service without a knowledge of or confidence in each other, and, these circumstances considered, I think I may safely say that the selection of such a battalion for foreign service was rather unfortunate. Should they now see the impropriety of their late conduct, they would still be, in my opinion, unfit for active or actual service, but I would by no means recommend their being, for some time, recalled to the Carnatic,<sup>70</sup> for so much do our native troops dislike this island and so desirous are they of returning to both Coasts<sup>71</sup> that it is difficult to say how the conduct of other native Corps might be affected were the mutiny of the Thirty-fifth Battalion to be followed by an event so desirable to the whole as a return to their native country.

As things are now situated I shall be obliged to detain the Ninth Battalion for the present at Point de Galle instead of sending them to the Coast as I intimated was my intention in my letter of yesterday to Government.

Of the Thirty-fifth Battalion one hundred and fifty sepoy are reported missing, some of whom may be in the neighbourhood but at present afraid to return.

To this letter the Madras council replied, saying that the displeasure of government must be shown in the most marked manner; that the battalion should be disbanded, the privates drafted into other battalions, and any native officers declared guilty dismissed with ignominy. Colonel Stuart was, however, to use his own discretion in carrying out these orders.

The court martial met upon 23 March, but before it delivered its finding Colonel Stuart received a letter from Captain Kenny in which he said that, though he doubted whether it would be possible to secure sufficient evidence against the native commissioned officers, he had absolutely no doubt that some, if not many of them, had been guilty of inciting the men to mutiny, and he mentioned especially some five of them, including Subadar Shaik Ibrahim and Jemadar Shaik Muhammad, but in favour of the latter he said that, when the mutiny actually broke out, he exerted himself

in endeavouring to quiet the men, frequently throwing himself between me and danger as well as remaining with me to the last.

With the exception of this man, he requested Colonel Stuart to report those he had mentioned to the commander-in-chief for punishment. On the 27th the court martial delivered its finding in reference to eight men whom Captain Kenny had pointed out as the ringleaders. It recommended that two men should be shot, three receive 1,000 lashes, one 800, one

<sup>70</sup> The Carnatic is here used as equivalent to the Madras presidency.

<sup>71</sup> The east and west coasts of the Indian peninsula were often referred to as the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. 'The Coast' as used in the next paragraph means Madras as opposed to 'the Bay', which meant Bengal.

700, and one man it acquitted. Colonel Stuart accepted these recommendations, and ordered the punishments to be carried out. On the 28th he forwarded a copy of the proceedings of the court martial to government, with the remark that it appeared to him from these papers :

that the native officers have had no inconsiderable share in occasioning the late mutiny in the Thirty-fifth Battalion. Indeed I do not see how it could possibly happen that a native Corps should mutiny without the previous knowledge of the native Commissioned and non-Commissioned officers, who are closely connected with, and often nearly related to the sepoys. In the present instance it is certainly evident that the native Commissioned and non-Commissioned officers, the Adjutant<sup>72</sup> excepted, did not exert themselves in any shape to prevent or put a stop to the mutiny, which it was their duty to do. . . . The conduct of Subadar Shaik Ibrahim (confined by the Court for perjury) and of Subadar Golam Moodeen and of Jemadar Chutter Singh appears to me to have been so reprehensible that I beg leave to recommend their being punished in the most summary manner.

Government having signified its assent, on 1 May Colonel Stuart issued a General Order in which he stated that the sentences pronounced by the court martial having been carried out, and it being his opinion that the men had been led astray by ' designing villains ', he would make use of the discretion allowed him by government and refrain from disbanding the battalion.

The representations however which have been made to Colonel Stuart against Subadar Shaik Ibrahim, Subadar Golam Moodeen, Jemadar Chutter Singh and Naik Nagapah, place their conduct as soldiers in so infamous a point of view that he directs their Regimentals to be stripped off their backs and every exterior ornament which distinguishes them as officers to be taken from them and destroyed in front of the Thirty-fifth Battalion and the other Corps ordered to be paraded this morning, after which they are to be kept in close confinement in the Common Gaol, till an opportunity shall offer of sending them with those sepoys who have been punished as partners, or rather as instruments of their guilt, to the Coast, where they will be considered totally unworthy of being employed again, in any military capacity whatever, in the Honourable Company's service.

The exact crime of which Shaik Ibrahim was held guilty is not known, as the proceedings of the court martial have not been preserved, but it is fairly clear that he did not exert himself to assist the European officers when they were roughly handled by the men, and it seems from the mention of ' perjury ' that he probably was not only of no assistance during the court martial

<sup>72</sup> Probably the Shaik Muhammad whom Captain Kenny mentioned as the only native officer who stood by him. The native adjutant was always a jemadar selected for promotion to the first vacant subadarship (Wilson. *Madras Army*, i. 228).

but actually tried to obscure the facts—possibly to save some friend or relative—which must have strengthened any suspicion already existing in the minds of the officers against him. However improper the conduct of the native commissioned officers was on this occasion, the incident illustrates the chief difficulty which would be likely to arise in consequence of the abolition of the native commandants, viz. the want of a native officer whose position would enable and require him not merely to set an example to the men but also to the native officers themselves, at times when their sympathies with their countrymen might come into conflict with their duty towards their masters. In nine cases out of ten, the native commandants, however unsatisfactory they had proved, might have been relied upon to save such a situation, but, with all the subadars on an equal footing and none of them acquainted with the European officers, one can imagine a tough old soldier like Shaik Ibrahim shrugging his shoulders at what was not peculiarly his own business, and saying to himself that he would like to see what these new officers of his could do by themselves, and so standing by until, to his horror, he found he had allowed things to go too far, and that he had, in a moment of carelessness or pique, destroyed a long record of good service by connivance at mutiny. Some such considerations must have moved his old friends amongst the British officers when Shaik Ibrahim arrived at Madras a disgraced and ruined man. At the time nothing could be done for him, and I cannot trace any representations to Sir Alured Clarke in his favour, but on General George Harris succeeding Sir Alured as commander-in-chief it is evident that private representations were made to him, for we find the following interesting entry in the *Madras Military Proceedings* of 23 May 1797 :

Such information regarding the former character of Shaik Ibrahim, late Subedar in the Thirty-fifth Battalion, has been laid before the Commander-in-Chief as to induce him to recommend to the Board<sup>73</sup> that he be placed on the Pension List.

Though it appears that the Subedar fully merited that punishment of dismissal which General Stuart thought proper to inflict upon him, yet his former services are of a nature which give him a claim to consideration and mercy. Many respectable officers have given the strongest testimonials both to his general and particular conduct during a very long course of service. Among other gallant actions which he has performed there are two which draw the Commander-in-Chief's attention :

1st. his returning, after a storming party was repulsed from a Fort to the southward during Hyder's war, to bring off his Captain, who had fallen mortally wounded in the Breach, in which brave attempt he succeeded.

<sup>73</sup> The board was the council sitting in the military department.

2nd. the swimming the ditch at the second siege of Pondicherry.<sup>74</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief has been particular in relating these circumstances as he assures the Board such pretensions alone could induce him to recommend to their favour a man in Shaik Ibrahim's predicament.

Resolved, in consideration of the former gallant and meritorious conduct of Shaik Ibrahim, late Subadar of the Thirty-fifth Battalion, Native Infantry, that he be reappointed a supernumerary Subadar upon the Establishment from the 1st June 1797.

There are other references in the Madras records to the gallantry of native officers bearing the same name as Shaik Ibrahim. One, under Captain Dalton, distinguished himself at Trichinopoly in 1783,<sup>75</sup> and another, a subadar of the governor's bodyguard, was killed in battle in 1801,<sup>76</sup> of whom, in a General Order, dated 15 April 1801, it is stated :

A rare combination of military talents has rendered the character of Shaik Ibrahim familiar to the officers of the army. To cool decision and daring valour he added that sober judgement and those honourable sentiments which raised him far above the level of his rank in life ; an exploit of uncommon energy and personal exertion terminated his career and the last effort of his voice breathed honour, attachment and fidelity.

Unfortunately the records, voluminous as they are, are still too fragmentary to enable me to identify either of these men with the subadar who was broken for mutiny in the 35th battalion.

S. CHARLES HILL.

\* I cannot find any other mention of these exploits in the records, but it may be assumed that the commander-in-chief had good authority for his statements. As a matter of fact the native battalions were left very much to their own officers, and a native soldier's exploits, though well known in military circles, might never be officially reported or publicly acknowledged.

<sup>74</sup> *Madras Military Consultations*, 26 March 1783.

<sup>75</sup> The commander-in-chief, Major-General John Brathwaite, in a letter dated 10 April 1801, says the bodyguard under Lieutenant James Grant charged 'a solid column, superior in numbers of men, who had firmness to stand, for a while unmoved by the shock, to meet the charge with the points of their pikes'.