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Colonial anxieties and identity formation: Tipu Sultan and British Captives in Mysore

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Abstract

The article explores the captivity of British individuals by Tipu Sultan in 18th century India and its impact on the construction of British colonial identity. It examines the motivations behind Tipu Sultan's actions and the role of captivity narratives in shaping public perceptions about Tipu Sultan/ Mysore. We argue that Tipu Sultan's treatment of his prisoners challenged Euro-centric hierarchies and intensified British anxieties in southern India. The study also discusses the influence of these narratives on contemporary discourses of race and religion, with a focus on Islamophobia. We provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter, drawing on existing scholarship and presenting new insights into the complex dynamics of captivity and colonialism.

Introduction

Tipu Sultan of Mysore (1750 — 1799), along with his father, Hyder Ali Khan (1720 — 1782) troubled the English East India Company (EIC) from 1767 until his death in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War in May 1799. Tipu's nuisance, if we may use that term, was manifold. He matched the EIC in military tactics, as he copied European formations and artillery, but more importantly, he attempted to create his own trading company modelled on the EIC. While Tipu certainly did not comprehend the larger capitalist backdrop to joint stock companies like the Dutch and British ventures, he tried to initiate state-sponsored economic activities. He sought factories (warehouses) in the Ottoman ports of Jeddah and Muscat, offering similar facilities along the southern coast in India where Mysore held suzerainty. Such initiatives would have added to the consternation of the EIC, as the French, British, Dutch and Portuguese had historically outmanoeuvred Indians powers (such as the Mughals) in seaborne actions, whether trade, piracy or warfare. Tipu became an upstart for the EIC on two accounts; his status as a usurper to the throne of Mysore and his political ambitions for his state.

It is pertinent to mention that Hyder Ali Khan was a mercenary soldier who rose through the ranks to command the armies of the Wadiyar Rajas of Mysore (1300 — 1950). This was not a straightforward coup as the Wadiyar's had long lost actual authority to the office of the hereditary military commander called the *dalvoy*. By the time of Hyder's putsch, the *dalvoy* virtually held the Raja in thrall, only as figurehead king of the South Indian kingdom. Nonetheless, Hyder and Tipu kept the Wadiyars confined until their eventual release by the

EIC in 1799. When it came to the EIC, Hyder/ Tipu's forces performed quite well in the first two Anglo-Mysore Wars, 1767 — 1769 and 1780 — 1784. The Battle of Pollilur (1780) became a major setback for the EIC — an 'imperial nightmare' (Colley 2003, 269) — as its forces were routed by the Mysoreans, and a large number of its soldiers and officers taken captive by Hyder/ Tipu. The loss at Pollilur was psychologically devastating as it became the biggest defeat the British had hitherto suffered at the hands of natives in India. Hyder/ Tipu took many of the East India Company's soldiers as captives. Some of these men write memoirs or captivity narratives which provide a fascinating avenue of inquiry from different perspectives.

Methodology

The present article frames itself as an initiatory inquiry into the rich genre of British captivity narratives in India. The present study is situated in the larger backdrop of captivity writings utilising the insights of Vanderbeets (1972), Strong (1999) and Snader (2000). We focus on memoirs/ captivity narratives produced by soldiers and officers of the East India Company in southern India. We consider 'male' narratives while noting that there were at least two narratives by British women taken prisoner in Mysore: Sarah Shade and Eliza Fay (Colley 2003, 277). There is one question we will proceed with in this study: what were the motivations behind Tipu's captivity of British individuals in 18th century India, and how did these motivations contribute to the broader discourse on Orientalism and the construction of British colonial identity? We will demonstrate that Tipu Sultan's (sometimes) eccentric treatment of his British prisoners was an ambitious inversion of Euro-centric hierarchies that intensified British anxieties in southern India. But as we focus on Tipu's motivations, we are drawn simultaneously to the EIC's motivations in publishing, or helping publish, the narratives of the freed captives. We utilise the observations of Hoeveler (2006) and Matar (2014) that captivity narratives contributed to Orientalist discourses about powerful native rulers. As Tipu was defeated and killed by the EIC in 1799, and the British consolidated what came to be known as the Second Empire, the dead Mysorean sultan's treatment of British prisoners substantiated essentialist constructions of identity in retrospect. These constructions, in turn, were part of, and contributed to, emerging ideologies of race and empire-making.

Significance

One might argue that Tipu Sultan and his captives are figures of the past. What then is the need for another reappraisal of the legacy of the Anglo-Mysore Wars (1767 — 1799 intermittently)? Our response is that one abiding significance of Hyder/ Tipu's actions is in the impact it had on evolving colonial discourses of identity. Relatedly, we maintain that the past is never that far away, since the legend of Tipu Sultan has been kept alive, or continues to mould its own reception ever since its inception. On Tipu's death anniversary on May 4th 2019, Pakistan's prime minister tweeted his tribute to the 'man [who] preferred freedom and died fighting for it rather than live a life of enslavement' (Web Desk The News 2019, n.p.). Just a few months earlier in November 2018, an Indian daily had published an article about (Hindu) villagers in Karnataka who do not celebrate *diwali* as they continue to mourn the killing of their kin at the hands of Tipu in the 18th century (India Today 2018, n.p.). India's ruling rightist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has questioned why Hindu resistance figures who fought the Mughals and the British are not accorded the same posthumous celebrity as Tipu Sultan, seen by many as a Muslim tyrant (Shali 2018, n.p.). The immediacy of these reactions

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lends credence to the continuity of the past, Tipu not merely was, but continues to be something today, even if that meaning is contested.

Add to the point about Tipu's relevance above, the context of captivity narratives and you have another dimension to the significance of initiating this preliminary investigation into the construction of identity discourses in the 18th century. British captivity narratives are important to us today as they help understand the construction of British identity in India while the Empire was consolidating itself. Examining these constructions, we learn that 'Self' and 'Other' were not, and consequently, are not, absolute immutable categories. They are contingent, mutually dependent or mutually evolving, thus giving the lie to essentialist discourses in the age of the rise of the right in Western Europe, the success of Donald Trump and the Migrants' Crisis (2016). There is also resonance with studies on Islamophobia, Islamic fundamentalism and East-West relations in an age when globalisation and immigration have resulted in the ambiguation of East-West divisions. The historical figure of Tipu Sultan himself, we believe, personifies this ambiguity. His efforts to clone European tools and tactics blurred the boundary between East-West. Furthermore, his reported treatment of his White prisoners, some of whom, we learn from the captivity narratives, were encouraged — if not forced — to convert to Islam and go native, also contributed to obscuring divisions between East and West. And, while Tipu was accused of Islamic fundamentalism and bigotry for his treatment of British soldiers (Wilks 1810), his actions primarily undermined essentialist constructions of 'Self' and 'Other'.

Review of existing scholarship

We mention first Snader's work (2000), which explores the British captivity narrative as a genre that emerged during the early modern era. We mention this work first as it provides a scaffolding to organise the kinds of narratives produced by captives. Included in the category of captivity narratives are narratives of British captives held by Native Americans, as well as captives held by other Europeans and Asians. In the American context, Fitzpatrick (1991) has shown how such captivity narratives were politically motivated to elicit support for New England settlers as devout Christians compelled to defend themselves from native Indian depredations.

Derounian's study of the publication and distribution of Mary Rowlandson's captivity memoir (1988) makes some interesting points. The author believes the memoir served as a therapeutic and devotional exercise for Rowlandson herself, as she had faced a traumatic event. But importantly, the narrative was promoted to appeal to both American and English readers, emphasising the religious and historical aspects of the narrative. In other words, the suffering of the protagonist was marketed as a religious experience. However, its popularity was also premised on the contrast the tale would provide between a White Christian woman and the exotic Indian who had captured her, thus both responding and contributing to reified constructions of 'Self' and 'Other'.

On the other hand, Barbary captivity narratives, which focused on White/ Christian individuals enslaved by powerful African/ Muslim rulers, fueled fears and anxieties about the African "Other" and reinforced racial hierarchies, with White Europeans and Americans seeing themselves as morally paramount (Baepler 1999).

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In 1972, Vanderbeets explored the Indian Captivity Narrative as a ritual for White captives in North America. In the Captivity Narratives, the captives are framed as heroes whose journey's are modelled on the classical pattern of initiation, separation from loved, transformation/ moral uplift, and eventual return. Western protagonists immerse themselves in non-Western cultures (or do so under duress), negotiate with the natives, learn, unlearn, teach, and emerge enlightened, for they have lived in both worlds and returned (largely) unharmed. Joe Snader, mentioned earlier, expands on this particular conceptual node of understanding the captive as hero (2000, 62-93). We discuss this source in some detail here as it contributes significantly to the present study.

Linda Colley's seminal work on captives (2003) explores the history of the British Empire through the stories of captives during the period 1600 to 1850. She dedicates a chapter to British war prisoners in Mysore and offers unique analyses of the experiences of White men (sometimes boys, and even women) in a hostile unfamiliar world. Colley highlights the limitations of British power in India and how the captivity experiences accentuated these constraints (2003, 269-307). Not all conversions to Islam under Tipu were forced, notes Colley, and such conversions undermined British representations of Tipu Sultan and Mysore.

Snader (2000), mentioned earlier, demonstrates, through his discussion of White captives in North America, that White captives demonstrate remarkable endurance, adaptability, and survival skills in the face of captivity. Furthermore, the 'story' also makes a point of stressing their ability to overcome hardships. However, the Western captive cannot be bullied into absolute submission. As a precursor perhaps to an Indian Jones or a James Bond figure caught by cultural 'Others', the captive is bold, assertive and resists their captors. The captive is never reconciled to their situation, longs for a return to 'civilised' society, and thus seeks freedom. The Western captive thus emerges as rebellious and courageous. As is obvious, the captive's heroism in challenging situations contributes to colonial representations of non-Western cultures. The British emerge as believers of individual liberty, fairplay, honour while the natives are often treacherous, bowing to antiquated canons, and subservient to the dictates of tribal chiefs or mercurial kings. We shall shortly see how this is reflected in Mysore captivity narratives.

Who exactly were the captives in Mysore?

In the eighteenth-century, the East India Company's recruitment patterns were not entirely transparent. Young men, or boys, in Britain were often shown inflated images of Eastern riches when recruited. Walter Scott thought the EIC, at least in the early stage, could 'only procure the worst recruits,' these too after its agents had kidnapped or 'crimped' many (2012 [1827], 68). That the EIC did employ boys is borne out by the presence among Hyder's prisoners of a certain Randal Cadman aged twelve (Scurry 1824, 57), while seaman James Scurry was reportedly fifteen when he became Hyder's prisoner (Lawrence 1929, 8). We might surmise then, that the soldiers in Hyder/ Tipu's Mysore were working class Englishmen. Some were teenage boys, who might have been 'ruffians' in English streets had they not shipped out to India. The Company's Highland Brigades included Highland Scots who had been included in the imperial mission after failed uprisings against the Hanoverian dynasty. Shipping out Highlanders to foreign colonial theatres of conflict became more frequent following the last Jacobite uprising of 1745. The Company's forces were officered by English and Scottish men, some of noble birth (buying commissions), and some rankers making their way to positions of authority. There were internal tensions in this seemingly

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unitary 'British' army, but the cultural contrast with coloured natives was often sharp enough to create the image of a homogeneous force. The dividends were distributed between the English and the Scots (the occasional Irish and Welsh too) so that the outward thrust towards Empire was able to plaster over internal fault lines.

The image of Tipu in the narratives

The captivity narratives, as a whole, present Tipu as a sanguinary despot. A frequent British charge against Tipu is that of infringing peace terms (see Oakes 1785), which would echo in later writings (Malleson 1876, 36 for example). An instance of the dishonourable conduct and unreliability of Tipu during the Second War (1778 — 1782) is the recapture of Bednore by the Mysoreans (1782-83) in which Brig. Gen. Richard Mathews was taken prisoner. Tipu had agreed to let the capitulating British proceed back to base on the condition that they restored the plundered treasury. Tipu is then accused of going back on his word, the British marched to Mysore, and Mathews poisoned at Tipu's behest (Oakes 1785, 61). The image of a murderous despot resonates across the soldiers' stories and campaign accounts of said war between Mysore and the EIC (see for instance, Bristow 1793).

Other than the usual tales of miserable living conditions, withholding of civility and medical aid, there runs through most stories, a deep frustration at being at the mercy of 'blacks'. The captivity narratives note a peculiar antic of Tipu's, which seems to have heightened racial anxieties: (some) captives were circumcised, converted to Islam, married to local women, and conscribed to Mysorean service. Tipu is also accused of making the youngest of his European/ EIC captives dress up as girls and dance for the court (Bristow 1793, 56). While the EIC's officers would often solicit *nautch* girls for pleasure, Tipu, it seems, effectively reversed the dichotomy by forcing 'England's boys' to dance to his tunes, severely denting British masculinity.

Tipu's motivations

Colley (2003, 282) notes that Tipu would have wanted to keep his European prisoners for the value they had in negotiations with the EIC. The captives were thus bargaining chips in Tipu's dealings with the British. But more importantly perhaps, the presence of White prisoners was a constant reminder of British vulnerability to the EIC and native powers in India. The considerable expense in feeding and clothing the captives must have been borne with such considerations in mind. But on closer inspection, we note that there was more.

Linda Colley (2002, 290) observes that the Battle of Pollilur (1780) mural that Hyder commissioned in the Lal Bagh palace in Seringapatam, shows British soldiers as clean shaven and pink faced to a man, while the charging Mysoreans are whiskered or intimidatingly bearded. The moustache, as Pfluger-Schindlbeck notes, has historically symbolised masculine courage and virility in Turkic/ Muslim cultures (2006, 79). In this backdrop, the 'fair' English in Hyder's mural could have been framed as effeminate in contrast to macho Mysoreans (Colley 2002, 291). We must note though that the Muslim beard could also be viewed as an 'Islamic infiltration of English manhood', particularly when coupled with the news of forced circumcisions of Britons (Rycroft 2018, 76). Colonial officials, moreover, had their own forms of facial hair considered pragmatic and masculine. But for Hyder/ Tipu's propaganda purposes, the 'fair' British, such as Col. Baillie biting his nails in the mural, may well have been less-than-male. Such portrayals collated with the presence, in captivity, of these

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'effeminate' White soldiers and officers in Tipu's dungeons. The captives thus performed an important function in Mysore's propaganda campaign against the EIC.

As Teltscher (1995) notes, it was Mysore's power to transform the identities of its British prisoners which left the deepest impression on colonial historiography dealing with captives. Leask (1993) has posited 'imperial anxieties' unleashed by the encounter between Europe and its 'others'; a pathological fear that the (constructed) 'Otherness' of the Oriental might creep back into the Self, often taking the shape of (the fear of) venereal disease in Romantic writers. In Teltscher, Tipu's military/ economic plagiarisation of the EIC effects a 'blurring of the distinctions between East and West' (1995, 238). If, for Leask (1993), the Eastern Other has managed to contaminate the Western Self, our interpretation is that the Other disrupts the sense of Self through bodily appropriation. In this sense, the power that Tipu had over his captives stems from the inversion of (emergent) racial binaries which that same power enables Mysore to exercise. Note that the author of *The Journal of an officer of Colonel Baillie's Detachment* is particularly disturbed at the sight of a European soldier being flogged for striking a 'black man of the Negroe or African kind' (Anonymous 1929, 125). The captive Charles Bristow claims to have witnessed four British women separated from their husbands and given to Mysorean notables and 'abominable Abyssinians' on Tipu's orders (1793, 72). He also adds that these women were good-looking, thus compounding the tragedy of being subordinated to Europe's 'abominable' Others. Being exposed to Mysore, Scurry was unable to resume English table manners and adjust to life even on his return to Britain (1824, 252).

In addition, at least some of the EIC's 'boys' were handpicked for 'instruction' as Muslims under royal tutelage (Bristow 1793, 52), an act in which Tipu seems to have prefigured Macaulay in reverse — a class of persons English in blood, but Mysorean in taste, in manners and in morals. From the captives' reactions, it emerges that for circumcised Britons, the Other has more than just 'crept in'; the anxiety is acute because disease, in theory, can be treated, but even the freed circumcised captive now carries the irreversible mark of Otherness. The self has not been merely infected but seized, subjugated, and appropriated, with European epidermal hierarchies turned upside down.

The possibility of Britons 'going native', or more perversely, of captives beginning to admire their captors — the ultimate colonial nightmare of 'the coloniser colonised' to borrow a phrase from Dalrymple (2019, 256), is a distasteful, unacceptable, unfathomable, yet real and recurrent anxiety in British accounts/ captivity narratives. Lieutenants James Speediman and Richard Rutledge of the Royal Artillery apparently joined Mysorean forces (Oakes 1785, 61). The Irish Sergeant Dempster — a former chaplain to a regiment in Gibraltar (Scurry 1824, 68) — switched sides (too often for his own good), having offered himself up for circumcision to Tipu's prison barbers (Bristow 1793, 21). Not to be outdone entirely by their captors, some prisoners circumcised stray dogs and rats, in the process violating the sanctity of the Islamic purification ritual by practising it on an animal generally considered impure in Muslim cultures (Lawrence 1929, 12). We see in all of this, how Mysore could not only imprison Britons, but change their identities and enlist at least some Europeans to Tipu's cause. Tipu, for his power and tactics, argues Teltscher, had to be distanced 'by re-erecting the barriers of difference' (1995, 10). This would account for some of the demonisations of the Mysore sovereign.

The Company strikes back

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In later works by colonial officials following the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan (1799), the image of the sanguinary tyrant found frequent and ample consolidation. Like most Oriental despots, Tipu is fond of procuring fair women to his seraglio. Captain Thomas Marriott reported finding 333 of Tipu's women out of a total of 601 after his death (Brittlebank 1997, 24). Some of these women are depicted in Charles Turner's print after Thomas Stothard, *The Surrender of the Children of Tippoo Sultaun (1800)*, on their knees, hands stretched out, throwing themselves at the mercy of Maj. Allen, who was charged with securing the palace after the Fall of Seringapatam (1799). An all too obvious trick here is that a lady in the foreground is on a level with, and seems to be beseeching the groin of the British officer, indicating perhaps a change of masters if not of fortunes. If the object of the painting was to present monogamous Britons as morally superior to the lascivious tyrant, the courtesan's appeal must be considered to have been miscalculated, reflecting on her inability to comprehend that the civilised Western force did not partake of the lecheries of the East, officially at least. Such is the Tipu of the prisoners' stories.

Captivity narratives, some of which were published in Tipu's lifetime, present the Company's soldiers as braving the ravages of desolate confinement among 'barbarians'. The men come across as miserable, sometimes having been abandoned to their destiny. The British editor of James Scurry's memoir notes that the story may have been just slightly coloured in order to elicit (financial) sympathy for the unfortunate captive. Taken collectively, these narratives show British soldiers as far from confident in their racial or technological superiority over the natives (Hyder and Tipu). A definite class element to the EIC's recruitment patterns also emerges in these texts. Some of the Company's youngest soldiers were aged twelve, having been shown colourful images of eastern riches when recruited in Britain, often using less-than-fair means. Patterns of internal colonialism also emerge, as EIC battalions form a motley of working class English, Highland Scottish and impoverished Irish 'lads'. These soldiers led, for certain periods, rather precarious lives at the whims of mercurial tyrants, whom they also praise intermittently for a solitary virtue. In Tipu's case, it is the efficient running of the prosperous kingdom. Some soldiers note feelings of being physically violated by Tipu's forced circumcisions.

Overall, the captivity narratives served not only to demonise Tipu but to restore the Company's reputation. Soracoe (2013) had demonstrated how the Anglo-Mysore Wars between Tipu Sultan and the EIC were utilised to divert attention from the excesses committed by the Company in India, and from its financial misdemeanours in Britain. The image of the tyrant who forcibly circumcised British men and lusted after White women was a convenient foil for the dubious conduct of the EIC. Eastern excess, sexual promiscuity and sundry vices could be associated with Tipu and thus 'distanced'. Miscegenation came to be looked down upon as the corrupting influence of the East. The British victory against Mysore (1799) was seen as an affirmation of the British way; the victory of right over wrong. Tipu's motivations in keeping his White captives in Mysore, and converting some of them to Islam, were used to construct and consolidate the image of the Muslim tyrant after his death. The EIC's success was seen as Great Britain's success in southern India, which gradually paved the way for the conquest of the Maratha Confederacy in 1818, and the Sikh kingdom in 1849.

Tipu Sultan and contemporary discourses of race/ religion

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While a direct relationship between British portrayals of Tipu Sultan and recent issues like Muslim migration to Western societies may not be immediately apparent, some connections and resonances can be drawn. The Migrants' Crisis of 2016, characterised by a large influx of refugees and migrants into Europe, particularly from Muslim-majority countries, triggered racial anxieties and fears in many European societies. Islamophobia and xenophobia played a significant role in shaping public opinion and political discourse surrounding the crisis. In this context, the historical portrayals of Tipu Sultan as a Muslim ruler and the negative associations attached to him can have an impact on contemporary attitudes towards Muslim refugees and migrants.

The relationship between British portrayals of Tipu Sultan and contemporary Islamophobia is complex and multifaceted. British portrayals of Tipu Sultan during the 18th and 19th centuries played a part in constructing him as a "Muslim tyrant" and reinforcing Orientalist discourses. These portrayals aimed to demonise him and his actions, emphasising his perceived fanaticism, Islamic fundamentalism, and cruelty towards British captives. Such representations perpetuated stereotypes and prejudices against Muslims in general.

These historical portrayals, rooted in the British colonial era, had long-lasting effects on public perception and contributed to prevailing narratives about Muslims. The stereotypes associated with Tipu Sultan became part of a broader perception of Muslims as inherently violent, intolerant, and oppressive. These negative portrayals of Tipu Sultan, alongside historical events and political developments, have contributed to the perpetuation of Islamophobic attitudes.

Contemporary Islamophobia, fueled by various factors such as globalisation, immigration, terrorism, and political discourse, can draw upon and reinforce these historical stereotypes. The negative portrayal of Tipu Sultan as a Muslim ruler serves as a convenient reference point for those who hold Islamophobic beliefs, as it reinforces preconceived notions of the perceived threat posed by Muslims. Specifically in India, the enduring legacy of Tipu Sultan, with differing interpretations, provides a backdrop for Islamophobic narratives in the present day. In debates surrounding his legacy, discussions often revolve around his religious identity and actions, reinforcing the stereotype that Islam and Muslims are somehow incompatible with democratic values.

At the same time, it is essential to recognise that the relationship between British portrayals of Tipu Sultan and contemporary Islamophobia is not a direct cause-and-effect relationship. Instead, it is a combination of historical representation and current societal factors that contribute to shaping contemporary attitudes towards Muslims. In other words, Muslims themselves are partly responsible for current Islamophobic trends. For instance, violence in Muslim societies, whether it is against religious or racial minorities, is a real concern. Islamic fundamentalism has claimed both Muslim and non-Muslim lives, and is not, a figment of the Orientalist imagination. There are some very acute problems in Muslim societies, which make many Muslim countries unsafe or unpleasant even for Muslims. Recognising and making room for nuances in such complicated relationships, we might state with a measure of confidence that understanding the influence of historical portrayals helps to contextualise and shed light on Islamophobia prevalent in the world today.

Conclusion

This article has explored the motivations behind Tipu Sultan's captivity of British individuals in 18th century India, and how these motivations contributed to the discourse on Orientalism and the construction of British colonial identity. We have discussed the motivations of the East India Company in publishing or helping publish the narratives of the freed captives. We have argued that Tipu Sultan's treatment of his British prisoners challenged Euro-centric hierarchies and intensified British anxieties in southern India. But after his death, his 'cruelty' towards his prisoners was used to reify the image of the Muslim tyrant of the South.

Tipu Sultan's actions contributed to the construction of British colonial identity and the ideologies of race and empire-making in several ways. Firstly, his treatment of British prisoners challenged British notions of masculinity and superiority. By forcibly converting some prisoners to Islam and encouraging them to adopt native customs, Tipu blurred the boundaries between East and West, undermining essentialist constructions of identity. This forced British captives to question their own cultural and racial superiority, challenging their preconceived notions of themselves and the people they considered "Others."

Additionally, Tipu's actions can be seen as a response to the larger political and economic ambitions he had for his kingdom of Mysore. His attempts to create a state-sponsored trading company and establish economic ties with other regional powers threatened the EIC's monopoly on trade in the region. By capturing and potentially leveraging British captives, Tipu aimed to gain leverage over the EIC in negotiations and trade arrangements.

Thirdly, Tipu's actions intensified British anxieties in southern India and highlighted their vulnerability in a foreign land. The presence of White prisoners in Mysore served as a constant reminder of British captivity and showcased the potential threat posed by native rulers. This heightened British anxieties about their own security and power, reinforcing the need for the British Empire's presence and control in India. Furthermore, Tipu's actions and the subsequent captivity narratives played a role in justifying British imperial expansion and the colonisation of India. The narratives depicted Tipu as a cruel and immoral ruler, reinforcing Orientalist discourses of powerful native rulers. This portrayal helped legitimise the British Empire's mission to elevate and control the East, while portraying themselves as the forces of progress and enlightenment.
The captivity narratives served as a tool to demonise Tipu Sultan and restore the reputation of the East India Company (EIC). The narratives portrayed Tipu as a tyrant who forcibly circumcised British men and lusted after White women. By creating this image of a cruel and immoral ruler, the narratives aimed to divert attention from the excesses and financial wrongdoings of the EIC in India. They associated Tipu with Eastern excess, sexual promiscuity, and vices, effectively "distancing" these aspects from the EIC. The British victory against Mysore in 1799 was seen as an affirmation of the British way. Overall, the captivity narratives played a significant role in shaping public perception and justifying the actions and reputation of the East India Company.

Tipu Sultan's legacy and the debates surrounding his actions continue to impact discussions of race, empire, and identity today. The ongoing controversy and differing interpretations of his character reflect the complexities and contested nature of colonial history, shaping contemporary debates on Islamophobia, Islamic fundamentalism, and East-West relations. The construction of Muslims as a threat or a danger can reinforce existing biases and contribute to the perception of refugees and migrants from Muslim-majority countries as inherently problematic or potentially dangerous. By examining Tipu's actions and their

impact on British colonial identity, we gain insights into the broader ideologies of race and empire-making that characterised the expansion of the British Empire in India, and continue to find resonance today.

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