

COMMUNICATIONS

Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*

Dear Sir:

Professors Holden Furber and Kristof Glamann are to be congratulated for discovering John Wood's eyewitness account of Robert Clive's victory at Plassey (*JAS*, Feb. 1960). In their commentary upon this account they have raised a number of interesting questions. May I comment upon a few of them?

(1) Who was this John Wood? Furber and Glamann have tentatively identified him to be the future Colonel John Wood who was defeated by Hyder Ali in 1768. Some of the difficulties in identifying the author Wood with the future Colonel Wood have already been mentioned by the commentators (*ibid.*, pp. 186-87). It seems to me there is another serious difficulty. The John Wood who wrote the account was in all probability a *subordinate* to Quartermaster Knox, who called Wood from his post and ordered him to prepare a plan of the enemy's camp. On the other hand, the future Colonel Wood was an officer *senior* to Quartermaster Knox. Wood was commissioned Ensign November 4, 1753, Knox on June 17, 1754; Wood was promoted Lieutenant August 1, 1756, Knox on February 7, 1757; Wood was promoted Captain August 17, 1758, Knox on September 1, 1758 on the eve of his transfer to the Bengal establishment. Contrary to the evidence of incomplete musters which make no mention of the future Colonel Wood's presence at Plassey, even if we accept his presence, can we be further led to believe that he could have been ordered around by a subordinate officer like Knox? One wonders.

(2) It seems to me that our commentators place much too much emphasis on the testimony of Wood on two minor points. Was Clive

asleep when Kilpatrick advanced? Wood says nothing one way or the other. He could not have said anything because he was not near Kilpatrick or Clive when the event took place; he was sitting on the roof of the Plassey House. It would, therefore, be an unwarranted exaggeration to assert that Wood's account should "for ever lay the story [of Clive's sleep] to rest."

Likewise it makes little difference whether the shower of rain lasted fifteen minutes, as Wood would have us believe, or sixty minutes as some other accounts would say. The crucial point is that even a fifteen-minute shower could have drenched Sirajuddaullah's gunpowder since his forces were camped in the open. On the other hand, under the protection of the Mango grove, even a sixty-minute torrential rain could not have much damaged Clive's powder.

My comments should in no way minimize the value of Wood's account which "gives corroborative evidence on several points." It raises, as the commentators have remarked, the baffling problem of its authorship. And this problem is still with us.

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April 21, 1960

CORRECTIONS, VOLUME XIX, NUMBER 3

Page 347, left column, lines 36-37: "Harmonious Reverend" should read "Harmonious Reverence."

Page 349, right column, line 35: change "set" to "vet."

Page 369, left column, lines 45-46: "from liberalism and platitudes" should read "from literalism and platitudes."

Page 318, two characters are misprinted: for 衛 read 衛; for 纜 read 纜