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# Britain's First War With Kandy: Landscape, Violence, And Conquest In Colonial Sri Lanka

Elizabeth Anne Mjelde

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BRITAIN'S FIRST WAR WITH KANDY:  
LANDSCAPE, VIOLENCE, AND CONQUEST IN COLONIAL SRI LANKA

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

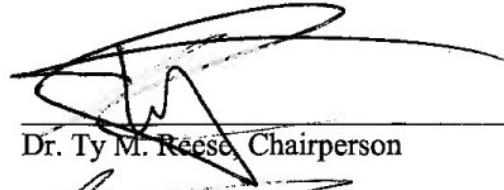
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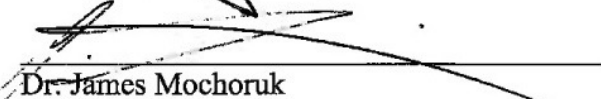
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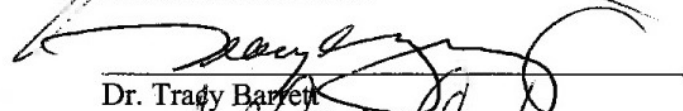
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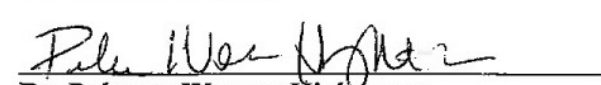
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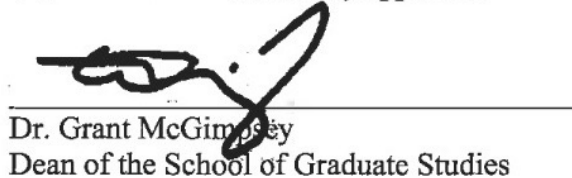


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Dr. Grant McGimpsey  
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

December 12, 2014

Date

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All four of my siblings have helped me throughout college, both by example and in practical ways. At the outset, I followed the path of my sister Jan, relocating to California to work towards a bachelor's degree. She provided me with a much-needed home during my first months as a student in Pasadena. Long before, as a young girl, I watched wide-eyed as my brother Mark left the country to participate in a university study abroad program. He later provided me with funding so I could do the same, and continued to assist me financially throughout my undergraduate education. My sister Dawn, whose academic talents I could never match, made the acquisition of an advanced degree look easy, which it is not. While I traveled abroad to do research, she consistently provided care for our parents, bringing me peace of mind and making it possible for me to be far away for weeks at a time. Importantly, it was the example of my brother Kent that led me to the University of North Dakota, where he pursued an undergraduate degree, as had my uncles, Roger Ophus and Fred Ophus, before him. During those days when I felt like a fish out of water at UND, I took comfort at the thought that you walked its hallways before me, dear Kent, and knew the ins and outs of campus life better than most.

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For Daniel,  
for Mom and Dad,  
and in memory of Kent Anthony Mjelde (1950-2012)

*Thank you for showing me the way.*

## ABSTRACT

Accounts of travel to Sri Lanka published during the period of British conquest (1796 through 1818) reveal a consistent yet problematic tendency: despite ongoing military conflict, visual artists constructed representations of the island as a peaceful and orderly place. The contradiction is heightened when travelers' uniformly tranquil images of Sri Lanka are juxtaposed with documented acts of destruction to land and property, undertaken by troops during Britain's first war with the inland kingdom of Kandy, a conflict which eventually led to the island's complete colonization. The present study reconciles this contradiction through analysis of publications by each of five artists who shared a conception of landscape known as the picturesque, a way of seeing and ordering the natural environment rooted in the art collecting practices of elites.

As the first systematic analysis of picturesque practice and discourse in early nineteenth-century Sri Lanka, this project considers descriptions of the island as a crown colony of Great Britain during the first war with Kandy, a conflict that commenced in 1802 and subsided with the departure of the first British governor, Frederic North, in 1805. Arguing that Frederic North's commitment to the protection and development of Sri Lanka's natural resources spurred him to engage in conflict with the Kandyan kingdom, it is demonstrated that he looked to the practices of metropolitan landowners and to the writings of Adam Smith to shape his approach to colonial governance, and that picturesque discourse, in particular, provided a familiar framework within which to

envision the conquest and ordering of this Indian Ocean polity, considered strategically important to the larger purposes of the British empire.

Fundamental to an understanding of the cultural milieu from which Frederic North emerged is the body of travel literature produced by artists whose conceptions of the island supported imperial conquest: Reverend James Cordiner, Henry Salt, Samuel Daniell, Maria Graham, and Lieutenant William Lyttleton. Analysis of their interests, assumptions, and concerns enlarge the discussion of colonial war, extending it beyond foreign policy and military strategy to a conversation rooted in intellectual history.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Accounts of travel to Sri Lanka published during the period of British colonial conquest (1796 through 1818) reveal a consistent yet problematic tendency: despite ongoing military conflict, visual artists constructed representations of the island as a peaceful and orderly place. The contradiction is heightened when travelers' uniformly tranquil images of Sri Lanka are juxtaposed with documented acts of destruction to land and property, undertaken by troops during Britain's first war with the inland kingdom of Kandy. The present study reconciles this contradiction by analyzing the metropolitan values of each of five artists who shared a conception of landscape known as the picturesque, a way of seeing and ordering the natural environment that was rooted in the art collecting practices of elites.

As the first systematic analysis of picturesque discourse and practice in early nineteenth-century Sri Lanka, this project considers conceptions of the island as a crown colony of Great Britain during the first war with Kandy, a conflict that commenced in 1802 and subsided with the departure of the first British governor, Frederic North (eventually the fifth Earl of Guilford), in 1805. The study extends as well to the nine-year period (from 1806 through 1814) that marked the aftermath of the war, until the Kandyan provinces saw the permanent occupation of British troops in 1815. This conflict has received little scholarly attention within the context of British empire studies or

postcolonial theory. A strong example of guerrilla warfare waged by an indigenous people who successfully resisted European colonization for more than three centuries, the war had profound implications for Sri Lanka politically, socially, and ecologically, as it opened the door to complete colonization of the island and its eventual transformation into a plantation economy.

Close examination of the actions and aspirations of Governor Frederic North is a key element of this study. A singularly prominent decision maker on the island, surviving documents in archival collections in Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom are saturated with his stated hopes, plans, biases, interests, and frustrations, analysis of which allows political struggle, as well as an attending nationalist narrative, always to be within reach. North's decisions not only affected the Kandyan people, against whom he took military action, but those who lived in the island's maritime provinces, allegiant to the British government. This population, composed of soldiers, civil servants, and travelers, as well as Dutch, Lankan, Malayan, and other inhabitants, made up a large political network of colonization and conquest, the maintenance of which was crucial to the course of the British empire in South Asia.

I argue that Frederic North's zealous commitment to the protection and development of the island's natural resources spurred him to engage in warfare with the Kandyan kingdom, an interpretation of the governor that complicates and nuances existing scholarship of Britain's first war with Kandy. North looked to Adam Smith to shape his values regarding land and resources, but the discourse of the picturesque provided an ideological framework within which such an administrator could effect a vision of colonial order. Many of the government's military officers and civil servants, in



addition to metropolitan travelers on the island, participated in picturesque practice when producing descriptions of land and people for official reports or for publication, when writing letters home, or when sketching the island's landscape with the goal of conveying information to viewers in Britain. The picturesque offered Governor North and others in Sri Lanka a familiar framework within which to envision the conquest and ordering of this Indian Ocean polity.

Fundamental to an understanding of the cultural milieu from which Frederic North emerged is the body of travel literature produced by those whose conceptions of the island supported the conquest of Sri Lanka: Reverend James Cordiner, Henry Salt, Samuel Daniell, Maria Graham, and Lieutenant William Lyttleton. Analysis of the interests, assumptions, and concerns of these travelers enlarge discussion of Britain's first war with Kandy, carrying it beyond analysis of foreign policy and military strategy to a conversation rooted in intellectual history.

### **The picturesque**

It is difficult to state strongly enough the degree to which the picturesque shaped the outlook of British domestic and international travelers, as well as colonizers themselves, since the discourse was a means by which to visually order one's physical environment. In the eighteenth century, many British elites purchased Continental landscape paintings by much-lauded seventeenth-century French, Dutch, and Italian artists for their town and country homes. An example of such a painting is Aelbert Cuyp's *Landscape in the Rhine Valley* (fig. 1), produced in the latter decades of the seventeenth century and purchased in 1759 for the drawing room of Kedleston Hall in

Derbyshire, where it continues to hang today. Lady Elizabeth Percy, Duchess of Northumberland, admired it on a visit to Kedleston in 1769, writing of its “spacious lofty & magnificent” drawing room,

hung wth [sic] very fine pictures on blue damask one of wch [sic] over a settee, by Cuyp is the very best I ever saw of that master there is a gold border round the hanging & the frames of the pictures are immensely expensive.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of a strong native school of landscape painting in Britain,<sup>2</sup> this composition by the Dutch artist Cuyp offered residents and visitors to Kedleston Hall with a large and pleasant scene of an unspecified hilly locale, warm with rose-colored sunlight. Cuyp specialized in Italianate landscapes in which the world was ordered by means of three easily defined, receding planes (fore, middle, and background) with strong framing elements such as the large tree at the right to balance the composition’s rocky outcropping at the left, and details of local interest, such as people or foliage, placed in the foreground. The people pictured here are not identifiable and as such cannot demand much attention, but they are well-enough dressed to allow elite viewers to feel comfortable with them, or at least unconcerned by their presence. As a whole, Cuyp’s composition conveyed a world “right-side up” in the eyes of British landowners: a place invariably calm and populated by well-fed animals and people quietly going about their duties.

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<sup>1</sup> “Provenance,” National Trust, accessed September 28, 2016, <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/108881>.

<sup>2</sup> Seventeenth-century British artists tended to excel at portraiture but not landscape or history subjects, which were in high demand in the eighteenth century.



Fig. 1 Aelbert Cuyp, *Landscape in the Rhine Valley*  
Courtesy of the National Trust, U.K.  
© National Trust Images/John Hammond

Paintings such as Cuyp's *Landscape in the Rhine Valley* became so popular as decorations in the homes of the British elite that eventually property owners attempted to remake their estates to resemble such images. Others who possessed not property but leisure—clergymen, for example, or the friends, wives, and daughters of landowners or military officers—began to seek out views in the natural landscape of Britain that recalled such compositions. It became a popular pastime to walk or boat one's way along river valleys such as the Wye in southern Wales for the purpose of sketching scenes in nature that resembled these paintings, hence the term picturesque, or as one writer of the era defined the term, "after the manner of painting, in the stile [sic] of a good painter."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A.P., "On the word picturesque," *The Belfast Monthly Magazine* 6, no. 31 (February 28, 1811): 116.

Picturesque practice began to reach the height of its popularity in the 1780s, coinciding with a taste for neoclassical architecture in the midst of Britain's shifting imperial focus. Having lost the American colonies under the administration of Lord North, Frederic North's father, British architects increasingly bolstered their references to imperial Greek and Roman architecture in their designs for monumental buildings, which included the country houses of British elites. The tranquil world depicted in hundreds of paintings by Aelbert Cuyp and other Continental artists provided eighteenth-century British landowners with a type of imagery within which to reside, a place where the vicissitudes of political and economic reality appeared to matter little.

As amateur and professional British artists incorporated the visual principles inherent in the landscape paintings by Cuyp and others into representations of Britain or Britain's colonies, they purposefully and effectively erased evidence of human struggle or difficulty from the local landscape. In doing so, such artists created versions of rural Britain and the colonies in which social relationships remained hierarchically ordered and the landscape appeared to be productive and well managed. Picturesque practice demanded the covering or elimination of poor or disenfranchised people living in the British countryside, or those in the colony who resisted colonial rule or suffered because of it. For this reason, the present study relies not only upon analysis of travel literature, archival documentation, periodical culture, and military memoirs but also on eighteenth and nineteenth-century texts about aesthetics, for the purpose of offering a culturally comprehensive account of Britain's engagement in conflict in Sri Lanka at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Just as Europeans in the seventeenth century witnessed widespread economic change, Britons experienced a “profound transformation” during the late eighteenth century, including, as Roy Porter has pointed out, the “overthrow of absolutism, accelerating population growth, urbanization, a commercial revolution marked by rising disposable income, the origins of industrialization” and, I will add, warfare on several colonial fronts. Porter posits that, to “make sense” of such changes, “vast intellectual capital was invested in creating sciences of man and society.”<sup>4</sup> The development and practice of the picturesque is explored here as one such “science,” the primary means by which travelers codified their ideas about Sri Lanka, especially in the midst of conflict on the island. The diversity of publication formats in which women and men published their picturesque accounts of Sri Lanka provides fertile ground for studying the values and tensions of a larger British population in transition.

In *The Expansion of England* of 1883, J.R. Seeley relied heavy on picturesque discourse to liken imperial growth to “the acorn spreading into the huge oak, that has hundreds of branches and thousands of leaves.”<sup>5</sup> Constructing a virtual landscape with verbal description, he used elements of picturesque discourse as a corrective, to reorder the priorities of those who write history. Concerned that historians of eighteenth-century

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<sup>4</sup> Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1907), 56. Citations refer to the Little, Brown and Company edition. According to J.R. Tanner, one of his students, Seeley disliked verbal expression that was considered “picturesque”: to “wrap up fallacies in fine phrases, or to use high-sounding terms that had not been defined.” I am suggesting that it is not the rhetorical tendencies of the Victorians but rather the eighteenth-century aesthetic system that Seeley relied upon, likely without realizing it, in this passage. See J.R. Tanner, “John Robert Seeley,” *The English Historical Review* 10, no. 39 (July 1895), 508.

Britain were unnecessarily preoccupied with military history, Seeley determined that it was a “mistake to fill the foreground” of that century with military matters. Rather, he suggested, it was “historians’ business . . . to open a new scene, and to bring into the foreground new actors”. Achieving as much required “much new rearrangement”. Ultimately, determination of “a new standard of importance for events” would bring about “a new principle of grouping.”<sup>6</sup> Seeley advocated for an approach to writing state history that was open to analysis of new subjects, and in doing so compared the historian to a man who experiences the subject of a drawing from different vantage points. “As objects change their outline when the observer changes his point of view, so the history of a state may be made to take many forms.”<sup>7</sup>

This project takes seriously Seeley’s encouragement to “open a new scene,” in that it demonstrates that writing about colonial warfare in the form of state history must be open to analysis of new subjects, each of which necessarily alters the traditional historical narrative. Whether analyzed as the work of individuals or collectively, text and imagery by James Cordiner, Henry Salt, Samuel Daniell, Maria Graham, and William Lyttleton press upon the larger history of colonial conquest a wider range of ideas than has previously been brought to the study of British or Kandyan warfare, with the result that analysis of Britain’s colonization of Sri Lanka cannot be separated from discussion of either landscape or violence.

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<sup>6</sup> Seeley, 120.

<sup>7</sup> Seeley, 141.

The primary sources used in this study include publications by early nineteenth-century travelers to Sri Lanka as well as archival resources related to the first war with Kandy, which are utilized to raise questions, to order, and to interpret events of conflict during this period. These include dispatches, proclamations, reports, letters, and court transcripts produced by Governor North and other members of the civic and military establishment serving the British government on the island, or doing related work in India or London.<sup>8</sup> Also utilized are the memoirs of military officers who served during the Kandyan wars, news items and advertisements from Britain's official newspaper on the island, the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, as well as news items and reviews from the metropolitan periodical press.

What follows is a general literature review followed by a brief summary of each content chapter. The literature review is composed of four sections, each marked by a publication event—in 1808, 1829, 1930, and 1951, respectively—that is not only relevant to the secondary sources discussed but has influenced the methodology of this project, which relies on travel literature, studies of picturesque discourse, scholarship of the Kandyan wars and of Frederic North's governorship of the island, and landscape studies of Sri Lanka.

"Colombo: 1808" explores travel literature as historical documentation, and points to an advertisement published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* in the first decade of the nineteenth century, in which the periodical's editor requested the return of a travel account missing from the Colombo office of the paper, Robert Knox's *An*

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<sup>8</sup> Archival collections utilized for this project include the National Archives at Kew, the British Library in London, the National Archives of Sri Lanka in Colombo, and the National Archives of Sri Lanka in Kandy.

*historical relation of the island of Ceylon*. “London: 1829” considers a work of scholarship that takes seriously the employment of picturesque discourse in a colonial context. This section also recalls a memorial published in *The United Service Journal and Naval Military Magazine* that honored a British soldier and practitioner of the picturesque who served in Sri Lanka during the first war with Kandy.

“Colombo: 1930” contextualizes violent conflict on the island vis-à-vis Britain’s wars with France, and acknowledges major works of scholarship about the Kandyan wars. One military history of the island notes a violent incident caused by Portuguese soldiers marching in the Kandyan provinces early in the seventeenth century, in which the invisibility of the victim was an important factor in its death. “London: 1951” addresses current scholarship about Sri Lankan land and landscape, and includes a synopsis of each of the chapters that comprise this study.

### **Colombo: 1808**

While a handful of British artists and writers generated travel literature about Sri Lanka during the first decade of the nineteenth century, examination of the island’s English-language news instrument, the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, reveals there was at least one substantive collection of travel literature already present on the island. In February of 1808, Frans de Bruin, the editor of the *Gazette*, placed a notice in the paper requesting the return of a book—Robert Knox’s *An historical relation of the island of Ceylon* of 1681—that had been “lent to Major Pollock in 1803 from whose house it was stated to have been taken and never returned”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 328 (24 February 1808).



De Bruin had requested the return of the Knox book two years earlier, as well, at which time he informed the readership that several books had been “borrowed and not returned” from the office of the *Gazette*.<sup>10</sup> On that occasion, in February of 1806, he listed works by English, Dutch, and French writers. In addition to Knox’s account, de Bruin requested the return of the following books: Bartolomeus Ziegenbalg’s *An account of the religion, manners, and learning of the people of Malabar in the East-Indies* of 1717; François Valentijn’s eight-volume *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indien*, published between 1724 and 1726; François Le Valliant’s three-volume *New travels into the interior parts of Africa* of 1796; “John” Splinter Stavorinus’s three-volume *Voyages to the East Indies* of 1798; and Edward Walsh’s *A narrative of the expedition to Holland* of 1800. Spanning more than a century, all six publications feature the observations of Europeans about other Europeans, South Asians, and Africans, and in spite of the difference of approach chosen by the individual authors, viewed as a whole the lot constituted a significant collection of travel writing.

That the *Gazette*’s editor could trace the missing travel account to the residence of an army officer, Captain William Pollock, serves to underscore the value of juxtaposing travel accounts with archival documents, since it is a goal of this project to shine a light on the experiences of powerful colonial agents such as military personnel in the midst of armed conflict. A seventeenth-century employee of the East India Company who found himself in Sri Lanka as a result of damage to his ship, Robert Knox lived in the Kandyan provinces for nearly twenty years as a prisoner of King Rajasinghe II. One of the few British people to visit, let alone live, in the Kandyan provinces prior the British seizure of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 216 (26 February 1806).

the island from the Dutch in 1796, the account provided information about the interior that Captain Pollock likely found valuable, especially Knox's descriptions of the terrain near Kandy itself.

Two anthologies of travel literature about Sri Lanka include portions of Knox's account: journalist H.A.J. Hulugalle's *Ceylon of the Early Travelers*<sup>11</sup> and *The Sri Lanka Reader*,<sup>12</sup> edited by John Clifford Holt. Hulugalle's volume offers an introduction to historically significant moments of travel to the island by Chinese, Muslim, and European visitors (Indian travelers to Sri Lanka are excluded), but it includes as well a rare documented instance of travel by Sri Lankans to Europe, a visit by four ambassadors to the court of the Emperor Claudius, to which Pliny devoted a chapter in his *Natural History*.<sup>13</sup>

Much of Holt's large, five-part reader is comprised of excerpts of writing about ethnic identity, postcolonial struggle, and Sri Lanka's recent civil war; still, the collection commences with twenty "ancient to early modern" accounts of travel to the island followed by the voices of later European travelers, from Baldaeus to Leonard Woolf, in a section designated "The Colonial Encounter". Holt states in his introduction that he sought out "a number of sources focused on the past that have some bearing on understanding aspects of the conflict in the present"—Sri Lanka's civil war had ended not long before publication of his book—yet he devotes more than a third of the anthology to travel writing produced prior to the postcolonial era. Maintaining "that the

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<sup>11</sup> H.A.J. Hulugalle, *Ceylon of the Early Travelers, fourth edition* (Colombo: Arjuna Hulugalle Dictionaries, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> John Clifford Holt, ed. *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Hulugalle, 1-10.

basic causes of the current conflict are comparatively recent” Holt nonetheless finds it compelling that “the distinctive qualities of Sri Lanka’s many communities are evident to the keen observer of the past.”<sup>14</sup> There is a fine line between what Holt does and does not write about the relevance of historical travel literature to analysis of contemporary events, but such comments provide an impression that he is suggesting that there is much to be mined about pattern and continuity in Sri Lankan history from the accounts of outsiders who have visited or lived on the island, and whose experiences and observations may yield ways to consider recent conflict in Sri Lanka.

A third writer whose work raises awareness of historical travel to Sri Lanka is print antiquarian R.K. de Silva. In *Early Prints of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1800-1900*, de Silva published high-quality reproductions of dozens of images produced by nineteenth-century travelers to the island.<sup>15</sup> Less an anthology than an attempt at a complete catalogue of mass-produced images published by European, British, and Commonwealth artists who used sophisticated printmaking techniques, from aquatint to lithography, to represent landscapes and people on the island, de Silva supplies biographical sketches of the artists, bibliographic information about publication of the images, and extensive information about land and people pictured.

De Silva includes reproductions of works by three of the five artists featured in this study: Henry Salt, Samuel Daniell, and Lieutenant William Lyttleton. Salt, a professional artist who had trained at the Royal Academy in London, was one of South Asia’s first documented British tourists in the modern era. Samuel Daniell, a professional

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<sup>14</sup> Holt, 7.

<sup>15</sup> R.K. de Silva, *Early Prints of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1800-1900* (London: Serendib Publications, 1985).

landscape artist initially based in London, drew a government salary in Sri Lanka as the island's first forest ranger. Lieutenant William Lyttleton, an amateur artist, participated in the occupation of the inland capital in 1815 while serving as an officer in the British army. De Silva's book does not include discussion of works by two additional artists vital to this project: Reverend James Cordiner, an amateur artist who was garrison chaplain at Colombo and who traveled extensively on the island while making a survey of its schools, and Maria Graham, an enthusiast of Orientalism and an amateur artist who traveled to port cities along the Indian Ocean littoral, visiting Sri Lanka twice in 1810. Each of these five artists not only constructed imagery for their respective books based on firsthand observation, but published written descriptions of the island. Their ideas, both textual and visual, indicate concerns they shared with British residents in Sri Lanka, as well as with other travel writers and artists more generally, and with their readers in the metropole.

While the office of the *Ceylon Government Gazette* in Colombo contained several impressive volumes of travel literature in the early nineteenth century, writers of such texts generally assumed a metropolitan rather than a colonial readership. As with texts produced by travel writers, colonial landscape imagery was largely "the work of imagining, producing, and consuming" within Britain. "It was there," suggests colonial discourse theorist Robert Grant, "that a market was addressed and strategies conceived to convey specific meanings to an imagined audience."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as spectators of

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<sup>16</sup> Robert D. Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), xiii.

colonial wartime violence, the individual concerns of each raise to the surface of the archive specific incidents of violence that might otherwise go overlooked by historians.

Never discussed systematically by scholars, accounts by nineteenth-century British travelers and artists to Sri Lanka must be examined closely not only because such works linked metropolitan and colonial concerns but because they represent a range of producers: a clergyman, two professional artists, a female orientalist, and a soldier. Todd Porterfield's study, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836*, shares a period of inquiry and similar thematic concerns with those explored here, but Porterfield, an art historian, considers how different forms of "official culture"—from paintings of conquest for public exhibition to museum practices and city planning—stimulated foreign policy in France.<sup>17</sup> The artists and designers whose works Porterfield explores seldom strayed from mainstream centers of production and consumption, where mechanisms for display and marketing remained solidly in place. Conversely, the narratives produced by early British artists and writers who traveled to Sri Lanka differ thematically from each other as a result of their varied social milieus, and reflect diverse subcategories of colonial travel literature, from the travel survey to analyses of Sri Lankan society to imagery portfolios with extended text description. While colonial travelers generally adopted attitudes about colonial government and militarization that were in keeping with the stated aims of Sri Lanka's governors, they generated both formal and informal observations about land and people in the midst of registering discomfort, fear, relief, or delight in the course of their journeys. As legitimate

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<sup>17</sup> Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5.

chroniclers of Britain's imperial presence in Sri Lanka their texts and images betray a stirring combination of vulnerability and confidence. Viewed individually or collectively, their publications also bring compelling voices to a discussion of violence on the island.

*An historical relation of the island of Ceylon*, Knox's account of captivity on the island still missing from the *Gazette* office as of February, 1808, offers a clue about how to unify this body of travel literature theoretically. Knox referred to his own manner of communicating about travel as a discourse. He returned to Britain after nineteen years on the island to find that

my friends and acquaintance, in our converse together, have been inquisitive into the state of that land in which I was captivated: whose curiosity I endeavoured to satisfy. But my relations and accounts of things in those parts were so strange and uncouth, and so different from those in the Western nations; and withal, my *discourses* seeming so delightful and acceptable unto them: they very frequently called upon me to write what I knew of that island of Ceylon, and to digest it into a *discourse*, and make it more public.<sup>18</sup>

In this passage from Knox's introduction, he utilized the word discourse in two ways. He initially used it to describe the act of speaking effectively about "the state of that land" to "friends and acquaintance" with a particular effect upon listeners: they found his "discourses . . . delightful and acceptable unto them". A few lines later he used the word differently. Upon deciding to "write what I knew" he anticipated having to "digest it into a discourse, and make it more public." Both uses of the word pertained to knowledge about the island, and to communication of that knowledge, but the act of shifting modes

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Knox, *Nineteen Years' Captivity in the Highlands of Ceylon, March 1660 – October 1679* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1681; Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1903; New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2004), 298. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition. Emphasis added.

of communication from speaking to writing added a new component of discourse, and the process of making private knowledge public added still another component. The second version of discourse, which was written and public, required him to digest his knowledge, an expression that suggests an act of breaking down knowledge to make it more easily understood.

Knox's two uses of the word discourse remains consistent throughout his narrative. He used the first version of the word upon describing the way Kandyans spoke with each other, as when they

travel together, a great many of them, the roads are so narrow that but one can go abreast. And if there be twenty of them, there is but one argument or matter *discoursed* among them all from the first to the last. And so they go talking along, all together: and every one carrieth his provisions on his back, for his whole journey.<sup>19</sup>

Here the practice of discourse is informal and used among people who are familiar with each other, the way Knox applied it to himself when he shared information about the island with his friends.

Instances in which Knox used the word to describe formal knowledge such that which might have import to the public, includes his general description of Kandyan social characteristics—he wrote that “in discourse, [they are] courteous but full of flatteries”<sup>20</sup>—or when he witnessed but did not comprehend a conversation between the king and another prisoner at the inland capital. Knox referred to a verbal exchange between the two as a discourse because he sensed that their conversation contained

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<sup>19</sup> Knox, 313. Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Knox, 313.

valuable information intentionally kept from him.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, when Knox and a compatriot, Stephen Rutland, worked as traders in the Kandyan provinces, they “used to often entertain discourse with the country people” in an attempt to acquire valuable information about the environment for the purpose of planning an escape.<sup>22</sup> When referring to the king’s treatment of, and attitude towards, Europeans in general, Knox acknowledged that the monarch considered Europeans “more faithful and trusty than his own people. With these he often discourses concerning the affairs of other countries.”<sup>23</sup> Here, too, it is regarding information of a political nature that Knox found merited the use of the term. Knox’s primary employment of the word carried an association of knowledge he deemed important—knowledge that might bring about his safety or lead to liberation, or knowledge that he and others found to be significant.

In the analysis of travel literature, scholars have, like Knox, broken down and communicated colonial ways of knowing gleaned from text and imagery, but with an eye to the ramifications of such knowledge. Such studies include works of critical theory such as *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* by Mary Louise Pratt,<sup>24</sup> as well as James Clifford’s *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*.<sup>25</sup> Both authors position travel as a discourse of imperial domination and privilege, to the extent that Clifford questions whether the word travel, within a colonial context, can ever apply

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<sup>21</sup> Knox, 344.

<sup>22</sup> Knox, 374.

<sup>23</sup> Knox, 426.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997).



to those without power, from bearers and guides to the translators who keep colonizers mobile, comfortable, and safe.<sup>26</sup> Indira Ghose assigns significant agency to travel texts in themselves, maintaining that “travel writing is implicated in the reproduction of colonialism” by means of “producing knowledge about the other and circulating colonial stereotypes”.<sup>27</sup> If travel literature generates knowledge that in effect colonizes, as Ghose argues, then it would follow that significant authority is attached to such knowledge. Pradeep Jeganathan, in *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*, proposes that “we must write the history of such authoritative fields of knowledge” in order “to unmask the constructed nature of authoritative knowledge”.<sup>28</sup>

Pratt, Clifford, and Ghose rightly bestow agency upon travelers and their work. In spite of the relative freedom of British artists and writers who traveled to Sri Lanka to develop their projects as individuals, each was wholly tied to metropolitan concerns. The opportunities for James Cordiner, Henry Salt, Samuel Daniell, Maria Graham, and William Lyttleton to overwrite Sri Lankan people and land with interposition of an imaginary British landscape was vast, hence each wielded, with their respective publications, the potential to erase and misrepresent.

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<sup>26</sup> Clifford, 33-34.

<sup>27</sup> Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail, eds. *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association, 1995), 108.

## London: 1829

The travel writers whose works figure prominently in this project were bound by discourse, which, to use Knox's second version of the word, means that they produced written texts to communicate important and public knowledge about the places they had visited or lived during their travels. More specifically, they shared an approach to travel discourse that did not yet exist in Knox's day: the picturesque, which developed in the eighteenth century. Consider a letter sent to England from Sri Lanka by Captain Herbert Beaver, an officer in the British Army, after he arrived on the island in 1802. He included in his letter copious description of the island's landscape observed from the various residences in which he stayed, at one point exclaiming: "Woods, water, and mountains,— woods, water, and mountains! Adjoining to the verandah, before my room at the Governor's, is the garden—all verdure."<sup>29</sup> Revealing the scene in verbal tiers, so that his readers could visualize an image of the landscape in their own minds' eyes, he continued:

At the bottom of it, is a sheet of water, varied in its form by luxuriant groves stretching into various part of it, which render its irregularities lovely. At about forty miles distance, a hilly range arises, sometimes below, sometimes above the clouds; and at seventy miles, the majestic Adam's Peak rears its lofty head. . . .<sup>30</sup>

But concerned that such "tame description" did not provide "an idea of the magnificence of the prospect which I command, by only taking my eyes off this paper" he turned to another view, this one from the front of Governor North's residence, "where we breakfast every day" and again he constructed the verbal equivalent of a landscape painting, complete with water, land at varying distances, and "verdant shores . . . fringed to their

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<sup>29</sup> "Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver," *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine* 2, (1829): 437.

<sup>30</sup> "Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver," 437.

very edge with such shrubberies as are not to be conceived by those who have not seen them.” To complete his picturesque description, Captain Beaver acknowledged the presence of “continual groups of natives and cattle, passing and repassing and beyond it small craft of all sorts are sailing about.” Lest his readers assume that only the governor’s house offered its guests such views, he claimed that, to the contrary, “here are many finer situations, and more enchanting views: indeed, there are few that are not equally beautiful.”<sup>31</sup>

Herbert Beaver’s recognition of and appreciation for the views at his visual “command” from North’s house, as well as his ability to articulate them for his readers, indicates his participation in the immensely popular discourse of the picturesque, wherein travelers ventured beyond mere description of a site, to identify and value a viewpoint in nature for its similarity to landscape paintings. Picturesque enthusiasts who went so far as to reproduce such a view in the form of a sketch acquired a memory aid based on a real place but treasured because it recalled the calm, classicized versions of the natural world made popular by seventeenth-century Continental artists. British literary theorist Kim Ian Michasiw calls the picturesque “an Enlightenment game—a series of decomposings and recomposings that amuse according to an arbitrary set of rules.”<sup>32</sup> Given Herbert Beaver’s purpose on the island as a military officer and the inevitable violence attending his colonial mandate, it is important to consider how his knowledge of military matters may have been woven into his use of picturesque discourse, and vice versa.

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<sup>31</sup> “Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver,” 437.

<sup>32</sup> Kim Ian Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” *Representations* 38 (Spring 1992), 94.

Access and predisposition to travel as well as a taste for classical Baroque landscape painting were requisite to the officer's enthusiasm for picturesque discourse. As the second son of an Oxfordshire clergyman who, in spite of demonstrating an affinity for the study of classics during his school years, accepted the gift of a commission into a local militia at age sixteen,<sup>33</sup> Herbert Beaver eventually served as an officer in the 48<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> regiments of the British Army, in which capacity he was posted to Antigua (from 1789), Holland (from 1793), and Sri Lanka (from 1802). Of the latter—"Ceylon"—the officer wrote that "it really is so charming, that I think it worth any one's while to come from England merely to spend a month on it, and then go back again."<sup>34</sup> Today this comment from a military professional might go unnoticed, since it is more likely than not that an American soldier posted to Oahu, for example, would encourage friends or family members to plan a vacation on the island, a major component of which would involve sight-seeing. What was significant about Herbert Beaver's comment was that at the time of his writing, in 1802, there was no practice of British tourism to South Asia. The officer's conception of an individual travelling to Sri Lanka "merely to spend a month on it" because "it really is so charming" reflects a moment in which metropolitan ideas about leisure and colonial projects requiring militarization coexisted.

One scholar who explores such intersections is Allaine Cerwonka, whose *Native to the Nation: Disciplining Landscapes and Bodies in Australia* takes seriously the imposition of metropolitan institutions and discourses upon geographies far from

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<sup>33</sup> Herbert Beaver studied classics in Hereford with Reverend Dr. Napleton, "a literary relation of his mother's". Lord Charles Spencer purchased a commission in the Oxford Militia for Beaver in 1780. See "Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver," 431.

<sup>34</sup> "Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver," 437.

“home”. In her analysis of “a destructive British imperialism that reshaped the Australian national environment for a European agricultural economy and to suit the picturesque aesthetic of British colonials”,<sup>35</sup> Cerwonka explores the relationship between the practices and policies of a police station and a garden club in Melbourne. In doing so she uproots “state geography” from the realm of nature and replants it in the category of history for the purpose of exposing not only its hegemonic roots but also the ways that Anglo-European settlers conceptualized their claims to land.<sup>36</sup> Just as the police in a Melbourne suburb “created social order” out of an Enlightenment conception of the individual who (it was assumed) could be “produced and monitored through seemingly banal bureaucratic technologies,”<sup>37</sup> imperialists transferred metropolitan gardening practices to the colonies, along with “promises that the garden creates respectability and morality, at the same time as it preserves class relations.”<sup>38</sup>

Like Cerwonka’s examination of closely linked metropolitan and colonial practices, this study focuses on an institution closely tied to the metropole—Sri Lanka’s government under Frederic North. Analysis of North’s documented projects and priorities leading up to and throughout the first war with Kandy demonstrates that, just as picturesque practice in Australia had material consequences, the residue of which directly comments on misuse of power, the picturesque in Sri Lanka was politically efficacious as well as complicit in the matter of wartime violence. This is not surprising, given the

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<sup>35</sup> Allaine Cerwonka, *Native to the Nation: Disciplining Landscapes and Bodies in Australia* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Cerwonka, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Cerwonka, 165 and 178.

<sup>38</sup> Cerwonka, 65.

variety of discourses useful to political maneuverers today. Feminist and postcolonial theorist Neferti Tadiar has identified “fantasy-production” as a discourse that enables “a common imaginary geography and history—that of the Free World—as the ground of their operation.”<sup>39</sup> The picturesque served much the same function during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries in a colonial context.

At the heart of picturesque discourse there is not only aesthetic taste bred by particular forms of education, and travel necessary for locating and describing views, but land itself. (“Woods, water, and mountains,—woods, water, and mountains!” exclaimed Herbert Beaver upon arriving on the island.) Land is an impossibly rich subject for analysis within a discussion of Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century, or with regard to the heavily forested colony of Sri Lanka, from which London hoped to extract significant revenue from natural resources. The writer who contextualized and submitted Captain Beaver’s remembrance to *The United Service Journal and Naval Military Magazine* in 1829 conveyed dual perceptions about the island, suggesting a compatibility between picturesque discourse and political economy. The author, who, like Beaver, clearly had visited or served in the British military in Sri Lanka, recalled that “the beauty of the prospects around baffles description” to the extent that the natural elements converged into a picture-like scene:

. . . suffice it to say, that an intricate and dazzling display of water and vegetation is intermingled with hill and dale; . . . A succession of undulating eminences, separated by delicious dells, recede in varied and broken perspective, till the whole melts gradually under the airy outline of Hamalal, or Adam’s Peak: and harmoniously blends to every combination

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<sup>39</sup> Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 20.

of form, from the solid effect of massy foreground, to the wild magnificence of retiring distances.<sup>40</sup>

The anonymous writer follows this description with claims of Sri Lanka's importance to Britain's "Oriental policy" because of "its commanding geographical position, its fertility, its products, and its harbours".<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding the rapture with which writers of picturesque discourse produced description about the island, they understood what Edward Said called the "evident historical realities" that made such a colony fiscally valuable.<sup>42</sup>

Specifically, it was a military journal based in London that printed Captain Beaver's remembrance in 1829. What is of note here is the chief characteristic for which the officer was remembered: as a picturesque adept. Picturesque discourse was out of vogue in Britain by the 1820s, but it remained a useful way to represent the colonies throughout the nineteenth century, hence the attachment of military personnel and others engaged in colonial conquest to this form of discourse. In *The Rhetoric of Empire*, colonial discourse theorist David Spurr acknowledges that criticism alone, or "the interpretation of cultures as criticism, will not free us from the relations of power inherent in all discourse, but at least they may help us to know the consequences of that power."<sup>43</sup> It is for this purpose that the travel discourse of the picturesque is explored here: as a means to identify "relations of power" in order to "know the consequences of that power."

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<sup>40</sup> "Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver," 438.

<sup>41</sup> "Sketch of the Services of the Late Major Herbert Beaver," 438.

<sup>42</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 89.

<sup>43</sup> David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 12.

This study cannot provide exhaustive biographical material about Frederic North, Herbert Beaver, or any other colonizer, but offers enough information about each of the prominent historical subjects to keep stereotypes about colonizers at bay. As Alastair Pennycook remarked nearly twenty years ago, in spite of progress made by scholars of colonial discourse to “redress the nature of the images of the colonized and the nature of colonial histories, the rather limited stereotype of the colonizer often remains in tact.”<sup>44</sup> One of the aims of this project is to analyze the decisions and actions of colonizers rather than to uphold stereotypes about them, as “advanced, superior, modern, civilized, masculine, mature, and so on”.<sup>45</sup> Frederick Cooper addresses the heart of this matter in his essay, “How global do we want our intellectual history to be?” when he identifies that it is an “important problem”

to figure out what intellectuals’ frameworks were, with their openings and closures, linkages, and dead ends. Unless we give more than a nod to the plurality of universalisms, to the time depth of connections, and to the ways in which different frameworks combine and conflict, we will be extending our twenty-first-century parochialism.<sup>46</sup>

“Accordingly,” he adds, “we should be asking who talks to whom and what they say, not presuming that even the most widespread and effective technology spreads a web of interaction or shared ways of thinking.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Alastair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 29.

<sup>45</sup> Pennycook, 129.

<sup>46</sup> Frederick Cooper, “How Global Do We Want Our Intellectual History to Be?” in *Global Intellectual History*, Samuel Moyn and Andres Sartori, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 291-292.

<sup>47</sup> Cooper, 292.



## Colombo: 1930

Britain's ongoing conflicts with France placed pressure upon Sri Lanka's colonial governors during the twenty-two year period designated here for discussion, from the acquisition of the maritime provinces in 1796 through the occupation of the inland capital in 1815 and the quelling of subsequent resistance actions by the Kandyans through 1818. As "Ceylon," Britain considered Sri Lanka indispensable to the course and health of empire, and carefully guarded it against the possibility of French occupation. Writing from the Cape of Good Hope in 1798, the Earl of Mornington (later the Marquess Wellesley) communicated concern to Secretary of State Henry Dundas about the island falling into French hands or those of "her bondslave Holland", since the acquisition of Sri Lanka would bolster French power in India, allowing the French to "rise within a very short period to the degree of formidable strength, never before possessed by them."<sup>48</sup> "Ceylon", wrote Mornington, "is universally held to be indispensable to the preservation both of our power on the continent and of our commerce on the seas of India."<sup>49</sup>

The end of the Peninsular War in 1814 largely muted the threat of France, at which point Britain "could celebrate an astonishing, indeed providential, recovery of fortunes."<sup>50</sup> Since 1815 marked the year British troops began permanent occupation of the Kandyan provinces (until decolonization in 1948), external pressures lessened, potentially decreasing conflict on the island. But after 1815 violence on the island

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<sup>48</sup> Edward Ingram, ed. *Two views of British India: The private correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1801* (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970), 41.

<sup>49</sup> Ingram, p. 41.

<sup>50</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 3.

increased because of internal concerns, as Kandyan resisters tried unsuccessfully to regain control of the inland capital in 1817 and 1818.<sup>51</sup>

Two book-length studies explore warfare between Europeans and Kandyans. In 1973, Colonel Geoffrey Powell, a decorated British army officer who served in the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment, published *The Kandyan Wars*. The 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment was posted to Sri Lanka in the early nineteenth century, making Powell's narrative of Britain's wars with Kandy a history of action seen by an earlier incarnation of his own regiment. As a military professional, Powell both valorized and criticized his narrative's personae, and at times he applied terminology in a manner better suited to military memoir than history. But Powell left no archival stone unturned in his attempt to produce accurate, extensive, and detailed campaign narrative. *The Kandyan Wars* demonstrates careful consideration of extant military and government sources regarding Britain's conflicts with Kandy.

Of particular significance to the project at hand is how Powell moved beyond the act of chronicling particular incidents of conflict to providing summary commentary about violence. He confidently ascribed to the British military establishment on the island a brutal punitive culture in which, “[f]or all but minor offenses, the punishment was flogging, administered in installments if the attendant surgeon feared for the victim's life.”<sup>52</sup> Moreover, he characterized the atrocities of “small parties of troops . . . burning and despoiling as they went” about the Kandyan provinces as “terrorism”.<sup>53</sup> Yet Powell's tendency was to humanize soldiers:

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<sup>51</sup> The final chapter of this study acknowledges these post-1815 years of conflict.

<sup>52</sup> Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803-1818* (London: Leo Cooper, 1973; New Delhi: Navrang, 1984), 185. Citations refer to the Navrang edition.

<sup>53</sup> Powell, 144.

When men are opposed by an enemy too elusive to catch, when they are embittered by cruelties perpetrated against their comrades, and when they are worn down by fatigue and disease, atrocities are often the unhappy concomitant to such a campaign.<sup>54</sup>

A strength of Powell's text is that he addressed matters of social class explicitly, as when he reminded readers that "the officers of the British Army were recruited from the landed classes" but that "all but a handful of the men came from the opposite end of the social spectrum".<sup>55</sup>

A more recent study is Channa Wickremesekera's *Kandy at War: Indigenous Military Resistance to European Expansion in Sri Lanka*, published in New Delhi in 2004. Wickremesekera's approach represents the *longue durée* of Kandyan-European warfare, including armed conflict between the Kandyans and the Portuguese, Dutch, and British governments that controlled the coastal perimeter of the island. Organizing his project thematically, Wickremesekera dispenses with details of campaign narrative that might otherwise distract from his larger goal, which is to argue for a view of Kandyan warfare as a "unique case of indigenous military resistance to European expansion in South Asia",<sup>56</sup> representing not only "the longest struggle for supremacy between a South Asian polity and European powers" but also one fought by "a small population of peasants living on subsistence agriculture" within a "landlocked kingdom of rugged highlands".<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Powell, 146.

<sup>55</sup> Powell, 185.

<sup>56</sup> Channa Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War: Indigenous Military Resistance to European Expansion in Sri Lanka, 1594-1818* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Wickremesekera, 17.

*Kandy at War* explores the outcomes of warfare with all three colonial powers in a chapter designated “The Toll,” where Wickremesekera offers a sample of quantifiable violence: population counts, sizes of armies or detachments, percentages of soldiers ravaged by disease in a particular year, and the estimates (published by Dr. John Davy, a British army surgeon) of Kandyans killed during the resistance movements of 1817 and 1818: “10,000-15,000 dead, a massive loss to a small population”.<sup>58</sup> Wickremesekera includes destruction of property and provisions in his enumerations: in December of 1803, for example, a detachment under the command of Captain Robert Blackall destroyed “93 villages and 80,000 parras of rice in 8 days.”<sup>59</sup> The latter set of numbers he uses as evidence to suggest the effectiveness of utilizing “smaller detachments simultaneously in different parts of enemy territory”,<sup>60</sup> which was the practice of the Dutch and the British but not the Portuguese military. Wickremesekera uses the former number, Dr. Davy’s estimated loss of Kandyan lives during the post-1815 resistance actions, to call attention not only to those killed in the course of battle but to suggest the adverse effects of the British campaigns of destruction of Kandyan property upon the health of the population. Linking Dutch and British military practices, he writes that, in

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<sup>58</sup> Wickremesekera, 196; J.W. Bennett, *Ceylon and its capabilities* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1843), 421.

<sup>59</sup> Wickremesekera, 197; Powell, 145; James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Aberdeen: A. Brown; 1807; New Delhi: Navrang, 1983), II:256-257. Citations refer to the Navrang edition.

<sup>60</sup> Wickremesekera, 197.

1764 and 1765, the Dutch had “reduced many parts of the Kandyan territory . . . into wastelands, their fruit trees cut down and their fields destroyed.”<sup>61</sup>

Wickremesekera works from Portuguese, Dutch, and English-language documents from the respective periods of the island’s colonization to provide evidence to support each of his thematically-based discussions, which include Kandyan military organization, weaponry, and tactics. This results in specific incidents of violence described episodically within the overall narrative. But his choices are compelling. Wickremesekera includes an account of Portuguese troops who struggled to make their way through the island’s interior in 1603, known to the author by means of a government-funded English-language translation produced in 1930 in Colombo by Jesuit priest S.G. Perera: Fernão de Queiros’s *Conquista Temporal e Espiritual de Ceilão*. Firing their weapons blindly through the woods at unseen Kandyan soldiers, the troops discovered that they had shot a deer, “found riddled with nine bullets.”<sup>62</sup>

Proceeding with this account in mind, it should be stressed that the animal was invisible to the Portuguese soldiers who killed it. This begs the question, What invisible or less visible victims of violence must be listed among the casualties of Britain’s conquest of the island?

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<sup>61</sup> “A captured Kandyan woman told the Dutch in June 1765 that the people of the two aforementioned Korales had complained to the king about the hardships they were facing. SLNA 1/4944, pp. 14-15.” See Wickremesekera, 196 (n. 104).

<sup>62</sup> Wickremesekera, 141. Recounted from Fernão de Queiros, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, trans. S.G. Perera (Colombo: A.C. Richards, 1930). P.E. Pieris first published de Queiros’s account in Colombo in 1919, but the original manuscript, housed in the National Library of Rio de Janeiro, appears not to have been the basis for his publication. See Ana Cristina Cardoso da Costa Gomes, “Sources for the History of Macau in the National Library of Rio de Janeiro (16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Century), *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 17 (2008), 9-20.

In their analysis of British colonial expansion, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker demonstrate how attempts on the part of individuals with power to impose order led to violence upon people largely invisible to history.<sup>63</sup> They explore the colonial worlds occupied by expropriated laborers who made the “rise of capitalism and the modern, global economy” possible.<sup>64</sup> The study at hand is also concerned with visibility and points to a particular kind of colonial ordering rooted in elite culture and practiced as a popular travel discourse. Because the employment of picturesque principles superimposed metropolitan ideas onto the observed colonial landscape, it effectively decreased the visibility of Lankan people and land as well as evidence of the violence perpetrated against both by colonial rule. Within the scope of this project, picturesque discourse necessarily serves as a form of epistemic violence since it was used to communicate information about the colony but in fact misinformed metropolitan readers and viewers about Lankan people and land.

Also important to the body of literature about the Kandyan wars is the work of three scholars whose published doctoral projects about the earliest years of the British conquest of Sri Lanka aided me in forming an understanding about the decisions made by Frederic North and others to engage in and sustain a war with Kandy. As early as 1931, Colin R. de Silva published his study of the “political, administrative, and economic development” of Sri Lanka during the initial years of British rule: *Ceylon under the*

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 6-7.

<sup>64</sup> Linebaugh and Rediker, 7.

*British Occupation, 1795-1833*.<sup>65</sup> De Silva, who served as a Marxist member of Sri Lanka's parliament, advocated for a view of Britain's war with Kandy as a "dramatic chapter" in the island's history. Working primarily from Colonial Office documents in London, he explored the commencement of North's diplomatic relationship with the Kandyan government, in the end characterizing the Kandyan prime minister, Pilime Talaewa, as a traitor, yet more or less "in line with a fateful Kandyan tradition—calling in the foreigner to settle domestic disputes but discarding him on attaining that object."<sup>66</sup> De Silva pointed to North as a governor who was "guilty of a somewhat cynical disregard of morality in international relations" and an "amateur" diplomat,<sup>67</sup> at best. At worst, North was "certainly accessory to [the prime minister's] treason."<sup>68</sup>

U.C. Wickremeratne, in *The Conservative Nature of the British Rule of Sri Lanka*,<sup>69</sup> also explores the period immediately leading up to the war with Kandy but addresses systematically and even regionally particular aspects of social organization and economic practice on the island, from land tenure and labor to taxation to agricultural practice. Working primarily from documents now in the National Archives in Colombo, he compares North's policies with those of earlier colonial governments, concluding that

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<sup>65</sup> Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795-1833: Its Political, Administrative, and Economic Development*, vol. 1 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1953) and vol. 2 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1962).

<sup>66</sup> Colvin de Silva, I:82.

<sup>67</sup> Colvin de Silva, I:83.

<sup>68</sup> Colvin de Silva, I:84.

<sup>69</sup> U.C. Wickremeratne, *The Conservative Nature of the British Rule of Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1996).

North's efforts at change or reform were often largely ineffective due to an insufficiently staffed British colonial system wherein "pragmatism" regularly trumped "theory".<sup>70</sup>

Alicia Schrikker's impressive *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka, 1780-1815*, is first and foremost an analysis of colonial policy, in which she analyzes both Dutch and British rule on the island. Schrikker's exploration of the initial years of British conquest is the most comprehensive to date, skillfully intertwining discussion of policy at the local level with insights about Sri Lanka's place within the larger British empire. As for Frederic North, he fares poorly in this account, as well. Schrikker characterizes his policies as "spread too thin over too many issues" to be effective, and in spite of North's attempts to institute greater accountability among the local overseers and native headmen, they "were acting at their own discretion" towards the end of his governorship.<sup>71</sup> Schrikker devotes a portion of a chapter, "The Colonial Project Completed: The Fall of the Kandyan Kingdom," to Britain's first war with Kandy, positioning "an attack on certain areca nut merchants whom the Kandyans considered spies" as North's justification for war.<sup>72</sup>

### **London: 1951**

A necessary component of calling out different forms of colonial violence is to come to terms with the nature of colonial conquest. In what ways does violence define conquest, or, alternatively, in what ways does conquest define violence? In the case of Sri

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<sup>70</sup> Wickremeratne, 50.

<sup>71</sup> Alicia Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 158.

<sup>72</sup> Schrikker, 200.



Lanka, military strategy, diplomatic policy, or practices of trade did not define the process of Britain's conquest. Instead, conceptions of land largely defined conquest.

In 1951, *The Geographical Journal* published the proceedings of a meeting held in London by members of the Royal Geographical Society who gathered to hear a paper, "The Changing English Landscape," by Henry Clifford Darby, Professor of Geography at University College, London. During the discussion that ensued, Professor W.G. East mused about the paucity of writing by historians about "a country as an area of land" in spite of "bookshelves . . . heavily weighted by histories of countries of the world." Historians, he proposed, either forgot or overlooked land as a subject of inquiry, and in any case

did not conceive it as necessary; and yet the history of our countryside is an essential part of our history. Therefore, because of the lapse on the part of the historians, it has tended to be the work of historical geographers and a definition of their craft might be 'the history of landscape.'<sup>73</sup>

Recent contributors to the historiography of the Sri Lankan landscape that recall Professor East's acknowledgment of scholars trained primarily in geography-based disciplines include Nihal Perera and James Duncan. Along with the work of historian Sujit Sivasundaram, these scholars represent a range of interests and approaches that, when viewed collectively, yields a small but complementary body of scholarship about the Sri Lankan landscape. In addition to relying on the precedents they set in the employment of terms such as land, landscape, space, and place, this study requires an understanding of the site of Kandy itself, which eluded would-be European colonizers for more than three centuries.

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<sup>73</sup> Harry Lindsay, et al. "The Changing English Landscape: Discussion," *The Geographical Journal* 117, no. 4 (December 1951), 397.

A distinctive characteristic of “Sketch of the Island of Ceylon” (fig. 2), a map included in Reverend James Cordiner’s *A Description of Ceylon*,<sup>74</sup> is a clear indication of two separate zones of habitation. The maritime provinces are largely blank, where the inland provinces indicate mountainous elevation. But did the Kandyans conceive of divisions and borders between the provinces? In *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka*, Nihal Perera, a practitioner of urban planning and a historian of Sri Lankan urban spaces, issues a warning of sorts about analyzing the island’s landscape. He insists that, as a colony, Sri Lanka was a “construction” that should be defined not in terms of “the people within it, or in relation to its simple territorial self” but with regard to its position vis-à-vis the metropole.”<sup>75</sup> Perera draws upon political economy, the history of architecture, and cultural studies as he characterizes the Kandyan provinces prior to colonization as organized into three regional “metropolitical” tiers with “fuzzy” boundaries: a “cluster of center-based, overlapping societies” transformed by the British into “a boundary-based society”. At the point that British troops occupied Kandy in 1815, however, the provinces became a “single socio-political entity.”<sup>76</sup> To Perera, after 1815 and until 1972 the island “was essentially a nineteenth-century British construction. The British colonization of the island was a much deeper and momentous process than the mere annexation of another colony to the Empire.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon*, I:xiv.

<sup>75</sup> Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder, Colorado and Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 38.

<sup>76</sup> Perera, 41.

<sup>77</sup> Perera, 2.



Fig. 2 “Sketch of the Island of Ceylon,”  
 from James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon*  
 Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania

“Sketch of the Island of Ceylon” confirms as much, wherein tiny lines indicate British travel routes. One delineation runs along the island’s inside perimeter while another extends from the southwest to the northeast, meeting at a center point labeled “Candy.” Cordiner titled these two routes as “the course of the tour in 1800” and as “marches of the troops in 1803”, but a reader unacquainted with events on the island in the first decade of

the nineteenth century might question which route signified Cordiner's "tour" and which demarcated the route of troops. Even so, the lines that lead to (and from) the center offer a hint, in the form of the repetition of a symbol Cordiner would use elsewhere in his account to indicate the presence of British military dominance: flags that stretch inland from Colombo and Trincomalee, and outward from "Candy" to the coasts. The only "lines" of activity that the mapmaker acknowledged to exist on the island in 1803 was movement by the British, for purposes of conquest and purposes of information gathering, activities here which are barely distinguishable from each other.

Geographer James Duncan, in his essay "Re-Presenting the Landscape: Problems of Reading the Intertextual," generally defines landscape as "a text in the language of built form which is explicitly read or subconsciously apprehended by those who live and work within its presence."<sup>78</sup> Reading a landscape "may constitute . . . 'discursive knowledge', or it may, more commonly be a form of 'practical knowledge'," but while "there are no limits to the number of different readings of a given landscape, in practice limits are established within cultural systems."<sup>79</sup> Duncan's work shares a good deal with Perera's conception of Sri Lankan land in that both scholars consider land as an entity that is first and foremost "related to the social structure . . . [and] cannot be studied effectively apart from it."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> James S. Duncan, "Re-presenting the Landscape: Problems of Reading the Intertextual," in *De la beauté à l'ordre du monde: paysage et crise de la lisibilité*, Lorenza Mondada, Francesco Panese, and Olá Söderström, eds. (Lausanne: Institut de Géographie de l'Université de Lausanne, 1992), 81.

<sup>79</sup> Duncan, 81.

<sup>80</sup> Duncan, 81.

Parsing the physical geography of the precolonial Kandyan capital, Duncan finds that various sections of the city represented the “four quarters of the world” and that the temple complex and its association with the tooth relic of Buddha and the Bo tree represented “a cosmic axis that unites heaven and earth”.<sup>81</sup> The city, he suggests, was “written” and “read” to the extent that, “wherever Kandyans looked” they glimpsed messages of the king’s power.<sup>82</sup> Duncan admits that the archaeological evidence to support his claims date only to the early British colonial period and the reign of Sri Vickrama Rajasimha, but within those parameters his research is directly relevant here.

Duncan argues that in an attempt to “demonstrate both to his supporters and his enemies alike that he was a great king”, Rajasimha engaged in a mass building program from 1809 to 1812 that included the construction of the large lake now at the city’s south end.<sup>83</sup> In spite of overextending his labor supply, he justified the rebuilding of Kandy as an act that conformed with similar projects of earlier kings.<sup>84</sup> Yet Rajasimha’s cabinet criticized him for neglecting particular religious components in the redesign, for appropriating land that belonged to the clergy, and for forcing peasants to work as laborers.<sup>85</sup> Of two models of kingship that Rajasimha espoused, his neglect of one was taken up against him, a struggle, writes Duncan, “over the correct reading of the

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<sup>81</sup> Duncan, 85.

<sup>82</sup> Duncan, 87.

<sup>83</sup> Duncan, 87-88.

<sup>84</sup> Duncan, 89.

<sup>85</sup> Duncan, 88-89.

landscape changes that took place.”<sup>86</sup> Within such a context, “no reading of the landscape is innocent; each has a political agenda.”<sup>87</sup>

Unlike Perera and Duncan, who work directly from the built or natural forms of the socialized landscape, Sujit Sivasundaram utilizes palm leaf texts produced by inhabitants of the inland provinces to interpret Kandyan perceptions of land and power. Perera and Duncan write history by way of the geographical sciences but Sivasundaram does the reverse: he produces a history with a sensitivity to matters of geography. Like Duncan and Perera, Sivasundaram uses the term land to connote the idea of the island’s “simple territorial self”. All three utilize the term landscape to indicate land that is observed. Geographer and historian Tim Cresswell would agree with this usage: “We do not live in landscapes—we look at them.”<sup>88</sup>

In *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka & the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony*, Sivasundaram works “to avoid the rigid dichotomies of the *kingdom* and the *colonial state*, the *indigenous* and the *colonial*, and the *highland* and the *coastal*.”<sup>89</sup> His reason for eschewing the binaries of colonizer and colonized is rooted in the texts he studies, which Sivasundaram characterizes as counter-hegemonic when juxtaposed against the colonial narrative. For example, a nineteenth-century palm leaf manuscript in the collection of the University of London, the title of which translates to “The Laying of a Road from Colombo to the Great City,” reveals a writer who took in stride Britain’s newly

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<sup>86</sup> Duncan, 90.

<sup>87</sup> Duncan, 90.

<sup>88</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 11.

<sup>89</sup> Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka & the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 5.

constructed road through the Kandyan provinces. Despite organized resistance in 1817 and 1818, many Kandyans worshipped “peacefully” as pilgrims in the inland capital, regarding the British, who controlled the tooth relic of Buddha, as “doing things surpassing the achievements of ancient kings.”<sup>90</sup> In this way, British colonizers filled the vacancy left by the absence of Sri Vickrama Rajasimha upon their occupation of the capital in 1815. It was certainly a perception the British “were willing to cultivate for the political legitimacy it provided.”<sup>91</sup> Eventually, many Kandyans conceived of themselves as unified with the British rather than divided from them, hence Sivasundaram’s decision to turn away from colonial categories.

Sivasundaram finds that Kandyans conceived of three distinct territories, possibly a response to earlier Portuguese practices of boundary making,<sup>92</sup> but both he and Duncan maintain that the Kandyans did not view their kingdom as a whole as “bound,”<sup>93</sup> another means by which Kandyans may have been able to absorb conceptually the presence of Britons in the capital. Even so, physical markers existed in the landscape, including carved pillars and natural formations that were read by Lankans for “historical and religious meaning”.<sup>94</sup> Kandyan boundary books demonstrate that geographical knowledge was linked to piety, that an understanding of it was widely accessible, that it possessed oral components, and that at times it could encompass copious information.

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<sup>90</sup> Sivasundaram, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Sivasundaram, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Sivasundaram, 215.

<sup>93</sup> Sivasundaram, 7.

<sup>94</sup> Sivasundaram, 216; H.A.P. Abeyawardana, *Boundary Divisions of Mediaeval Sri Lanka* (Polgasovita: Academy of Sri Lankan Culture, 1999), 219-222.

One book references the region's "resources, religious statutes, towns, population, natural features, and boundary pillars. It is not too dissimilar from the colonial travel journal."<sup>95</sup>

The colonial travelers who desired to access Kandy but could not visit it before 1815 knew nothing of what Perera, Duncan, and Sivasundaram know about the inland capital as a result of recent geographical and historical inquiry. As for British colonizers, they regarded the inhabitants of the Kandyan provinces as descending from a great people, due to impressive archaeological ruins found on the island. British colonizers believed that Kandyans had fallen into a low state over the course of centuries. For the British government to gain control of Sri Lanka's perimeter at the end of the eighteenth century, that is, in the full fervor of the Enlightenment, meant that with the arrival of each East Indiaman colonizers disembarked carrying a taste for the cult of knowledge. With regard to the landscape, the preferred way of producing knowledge was by means of picturesque discourse, a far cry from current projects of geography and history that attempt to understand knowledge of the island in Kandyan terms.

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The organization of the distinct chapters that follow brings to the forefront the work of artists and writers who traveled to Sri Lanka during the early British period of Sri Lanka's colonial history. Chapter two, "A Very Pretty Talent for Drawing': Reverend Cordiner" explores the mobilization of British troops and the occupation of the inland capital in 1803, as well as the destruction of land, property, and provisions in the Kandyan territories, through documents produced by Governor Frederic North's administration, news items published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, and description

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<sup>95</sup> Sivasundaram, 217-218.



and analysis of the war by James Cordiner, garrison chaplain at Colombo from 1799 through 1804. The clergyman took seriously the task of describing the island's landscape and he supported North's administration and legacy, constructing his ideas about Britain's first war with Kandy in the form of a historical account.

Cordiner organized *A Description of Ceylon* to read not only as history but as a travel account. His primary narrative device is in the form of a "tour" around the island in 1800. Cordiner produced original landscape drawings that he turned over to a professional printmaker to be published as aquatints and bound in his book, in which he relied on picturesque discourse to evaluate the island's landscape for aesthetically rewarding views. His practice of viewing the island in picturesque terms likens him to his father, Reverend Charles Cordiner, as well as to the popular metropolitan travel writer Reverend William Gilpin, whose travels within the domestic British landscape led Gilpin to muse about British history. In *Flag Staff at Point de Galle*, James Cordiner used the woods, water, rock, and ground of Sri Lanka to serve as an ode to British nationalism.

Chapter three, "Mr. Salt's 'Perfect Tropical Scene'" commences with an analysis of conjoined travel accounts produced by George Annesley, the Viscount Valentia, and Henry Salt, his assistant and draughtsman. Salt's training as an artist deserves acknowledgement because it points to the growing popularity of landscape representation as a metropolitan aesthetic practice. Salt desired to train as a portrait painter but constantly found his tutors developing practices as landscape artists.

Purportedly the first tourists to visit South Asia in the modern era, Salt's and Valentia's visual and written perceptions facilitate a closer examination of Frederic North's government in Sri Lanka. Their comments as to the improvements necessary for

Sri Lanka to fulfill its potential in the service of imperialism are coupled with an aquatint by Salt, *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*, which Valentia called “a perfect tropical scene.” The image demonstrates the colonial priorities of Governor North, who was a disciple of Adam Smith’s ideas about political economy. North attempted to align his land management practices in Sri Lanka with Smith’s prescriptions for a beneficent system of division of labor and thoughtful taxation. Among other documents explored in chapter three, special attention is given to an essay written by North, “Considerations on the Wood of Ceylon,” in which the governor outlined his plans for curating this valuable resource on the island. North’s emphasis on the value of natural resources is situated as the defining factor that led him to send troops to occupy Kandy in 1803.

Chapter four, “Samuel Daniell’s ‘Exquisite Taste and Fidelity,’” relies in large part on analysis of imagery produced in the aftermath of Britain’s first war with Kandy. Daniell lived in the woodlands of the British provinces and drew a salary as the government’s first forest ranger. His representations of contested and colonized sites shares a great deal with work by wartime artists who used the conventions of the picturesque to instill a sense of order upon places that had witnessed immense conflict. This becomes clear when comparing Daniell’s aquatints of the island’s prominent fortresses, such as *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee*, with works by artists who traveled with troops or directly participated in the Mysore Wars in South India at the end of the eighteenth century. Viewed as a body of postwar imagery, such representations feature landscapes that hold remnants of warfare such as weaponry, forts, or other references to militarization yet are largely emptied of people.

Daniell's verbal descriptions of these sites call attention to the natural elements that positioned each landscape to be viewed as habitable and valuable as private property. For this reason, ideas about private property espoused by metropolitan landowners who authored books about the picturesque, including Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, factor into the analysis of Daniell's work. Both writers applied picturesque principles directly to land to enhance their estates. North himself eventually inherited two estates; as an aesthete, a humanist, and a man of property, picturesque discourse played a fundamental role in his outlook in the colonies, especially with regard to his desire to create, maintain, or restore Sri Lanka to a state of "tranquillity".

Chapter four also discusses Daniell's aquatints of the island in the light of two military memoirs published about the first war with Kandy. Captain Arthur Johnston led a detachment to the capital in 1804 only to retreat as quickly as possible. Bombardier Alexander Alexander, a non-commissioned officer, was stationed at the fort of Trincomalee during Johnston's march and retreat. Both writers described the suffering experienced by British troops in the course of the war, as well as acts of violence enacted upon Kandyans and their property. Documents from North's administration provide additional testimony as to the campaigns of destruction enacted against Kandyan property, from buildings and crops to stores of areca nut. A document of interest here is the testimony of a Malayan priest, Kar Bocus, who marched with the British army but for a time lived in the inland capital as a prisoner and witnessed the extent of suffering experienced by Kandyans as a result of punitive expeditions.

Chapter five, "Maria Graham's 'Extensive Burned Forest'" considers the years following Britain's first war with Kandy, characterized here as a period during which the

islanders as well as those who visited Sri Lanka were preoccupied by conflict among European powers battling for dominance in the Indian Ocean. Metropolitan publications from the period, including a new translation by William Vincent of the *Periplus Maris Erythrae* in 1800, Thomas and William Daniell's *A picturesque voyage to India by the way of China* of 1810, and Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in India* of 1812,<sup>96</sup> all situated India (of which Sri Lanka was considered a part) within the larger economic context of the region spanning Cape Town to the Malay Peninsula. These publications point to a growing perception in the metropole of the importance of maintaining political control of the Indian Ocean region as a whole.

The period associated with the aftermath of the first war with Kandy also saw publication and critical reviews of the books of Valentia, Salt, Cordiner, Daniell, and Graham. Like Henry Salt, Maria Graham included a single representation of coastal Sri Lanka in her account of travel on the island. The etching, *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen*, is based on an original drawing by Graham produced at Beruwela, on the island's west coast. The picturesque landscape is considered here in relation to observations of port cities she visited, and for comparison with the work of Samuel Daniell, whom she met while traveling in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka. Both artists produced descriptions of people and land for publication that relied upon, yet extended beyond, picturesque discourse. Natural history informed Daniell's approach to

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<sup>96</sup> Maria Graham, *Journal of a residence in India* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 2000). Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

representation while Graham invested in an illusion of completeness of information verging on encyclopedism.

Since Graham and Daniell attempted to contribute substantively to what was known in the metropole about Sri Lanka, it is important to question the limits of colonial knowledge. Both subscribed to stereotypes about people on the island, and as such facets of their work, as well as the projects of Salt and Cordiner, are explored from the standpoint of race, class, and gender. Within this discussion, North's governorship of the island is revisited for the purpose of analyzing instances during the first war with Kandy in which epistemic violence in the form of stereotypes ran parallel with incidents of material violence, highlighting the vulnerability of the island's non-white, impoverished, or female inhabitants. Reconsidered in this light are the memoirs of the retreat from Trincomalee by Johnston and Alexander, as well as reports in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* of disappeared or abducted women in 1804. Featuring prominently here are court proceedings that demanded significant attention from North shortly before his permanent departure from the island in 1805, a case that called into question issues of race and class amidst an accusation of attempted theft of firewood from the property of an inhabitant.

Finally, chapter six, "Lieutenant Lyttleton's 'Delightful Valley'" acknowledges disparate moments of conquest that made it into print after the final British occupation of Kandy, and addresses the relative lack of such accounts. Special attention is devoted to the large-scale aquatint project of Lieutenant William Lyttleton, an amateur artist and military officer who participated in the final occupation of Kandy in 1815. As a visual narrative of conquest, Lyttleton's *The Summit of the Balani Mountains* is useful in determining the manner in which picturesque imagery not only orders but provides a

perception of control over the newly colonized landscape. The latter pages of chapter six address the afterlife of picturesque practice in Sri Lanka and Britain. The discourse continued to be popular in the colonies throughout the nineteenth century. As the picturesque waned in popularity in the metropole it transformed into subtle and useful versions of itself.

This project is not a study of violence per se, but it began as one. Some time ago I raised questions about Reverend James Cordiner's aestheticization of Sri Lanka's landscape even as troops were destroying it in a paper I delivered at an interdisciplinary conference at Marquette University.<sup>97</sup> During the discussion that followed, a member of the audience asked, "What happened in Sri Lanka? How extensive was the violence?" At the time I did not have answers for these questions and readily admitted as much, as the project was still fairly new to me. Privately, I assumed that I would acquire the answers after spending more time with the source literature on Sri Lanka's colonial history, so that I could address the matter of violence on the island more explicitly. Upon returning to these questions some time later, I found that scholars had not explored systematically the matter of colonial violence during the British period of Sri Lanka's history, nor had they dealt with the employment of picturesque practice and discourse by the earliest English-language visitors or residents on the island. After a full examination of the primary and secondary sources I realized that there was much that could be done in these areas.

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<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth Mjelde, "The Colonialist Picturesque, or, Gilpin in Sri Lanka" (conference paper, International Conference on Romanticism, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, November 14, 2003).

Towards that end, in the conclusion I provide a recap of the ground covered by this study and offer a consideration of these questions—“What happened in Sri Lanka? How extensive was the violence?”—by revisiting the accumulation of large and small moments of conflict presented throughout this project.<sup>98</sup> Much of the violence that occurred in the course of Britain’s first war with Kandy and which is made visible through archival study and analysis of travel literature was manifest in material terms upon people, animals, land, and resources in Sri Lanka, but discussion of epistemic violence is a factor as well, enabling an account of warfare in which death, suffering, and damage extended beyond those wounded and killed in battle to one in which violence was multifarious and multivalent, located in sites of action as well as inaction, and meaningful within a wide range of situations, in battle spaces as well as outside of them.

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<sup>98</sup> See Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 25-28. Mbembe conceptualizes all forms of colonial violence, from “founding violence” to violence tied to “legitimization” or “maintenance” as marked by “miniaturization”, that is, violence “in what might be called the details” and which “tended to erupt at any time, on whatever pretext and anywhere” and “in segmentary fashion.” The process of capturing incidents of violence and analyzing them as micro-actions, to use Mbembe’s word, echoes Michel Foucault’s practice of identifying and assembling units of “linguistic performance” in the archive. When viewed as a collection, these micro-actions or units emerge as a web of violence that reflects culture and informs about power. The methods of Mbembe and Foucault intersect at an important point—in the details—and embracing this aspect of their work has been vital to this project, since some incidents of violence described in archival and published sources occupy a prominent place due to their perceived relevance to matters of political importance while others are all but hidden in the shadows, overlooked or deemed irrelevant for analysis or even acknowledgement by the historians, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, and political theorists whose scholarship has defined Sri Lanka’s history. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1972; New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 107. Citations refer to the Vintage edition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “A VERY PRETTY TALENT FOR DRAWING”: REVEREND CORDINER

Reverend James Cordiner’s two-volume account of travel in Sri Lanka, *A Description of Ceylon*, is a comprehensive record of picturesque practice on the island in the early nineteenth-century. During his tenure as garrison chaplain at Colombo from 1799 to 1804, Cordiner maintained a close professional relationship with Governor Frederic North. While Cordiner’s intention was to provide metropolitan readers with a sense of the island’s landscape, he collected and interpreted accounts of conflict between the British government and the Kandyan kingdom, ultimately producing “Candian warfare: A narrative of the campaign in 1803” for inclusion in his book.

This chapter situates James Cordiner’s *A Description of Ceylon* within the patterns of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century metropolitan writing about the British landscape, with the goal of demonstrating his commitment to conceptualizing Sri Lanka as a polity sufficiently linked to Great Britain to be worthy of contestation. Cordiner was an heir not only to a practice of visual and verbal landscape representation advanced by his father, Reverend Charles Cordiner, who valorized sites in Great Britain regarded as nationally significant, but also the approach of landscape representation practiced by Reverend William Gilpin, Britain’s most popular writer of picturesque tours.



Cordiner's account of Britain's first war with Kandy is analyzed here in relation to surviving documentation. Particular attention is devoted to the cause of the conflict, since, as it is demonstrated in chapter three, North's motives for engaging the Kandyan kingdom in warfare have not been adequately analyzed by scholars. A campaign narrative of the 1803 occupation of the inland capital ensues, for the purpose of situating Cordiner's verbal and visual descriptions of the Sri Lankan landscape in relation to key moments of colonial conflict: the governor's decision to send troops to occupy Kandy and his declaration of war; the experiences of British government troops inland and the subsequent offensive campaign; and North's eventual determination to achieve an "entire accustomation" of the Kandyan provinces. A self-appointed narrator of military action on the island, Cordiner characterized Kandyan soldiers as treacherous and barbaric while he portrayed British troops and those who fought on behalf of North's government as motivated by valor, vindication, and justice.

Running parallel with Cordiner's account of the war are descriptions of military action published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, the public mouthpiece of the British government on the island. The colonial press was an effective way to link metropole and colony, but in Sri Lanka the *Gazette* was also a repository for landscape description due to the range of its uses by the English-language population; advertisements of rental properties comingled with re-printed news articles regarding events of the Peninsular War and reports of the victories or difficulties of British troops fighting in Sri Lanka's interior provinces. Necessarily dense with details of violent exchange between British

and Kandyan troops, this chapter documents a nineteenth-century war of resistance that is little known,<sup>99</sup> an instance of sustained and successful guerilla warfare against Britain.<sup>100</sup>

The analysis of Cordiner's *A Description of Ceylon* provided in this chapter leads to *Flag Staff at Point de Galle*, an aquatint Cordiner included in this book that was constructed by means of picturesque principles. The image does not depict Kandyan subjugation but instead recalls Britain's conquest of the island in 1796, when Dutch colonizers relinquished the maritime provinces. If viewed in light of the events narrated by Cordiner, especially the occupation of the Kandyan capital by British troops in 1803, the raised Union flag over a diminutive Dutch structure offers a conception of British

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<sup>99</sup> Channa Wickremesekera has identified the Kandyan polity's ability to eschew colonization by the Portuguese, Dutch, and the British as "a remarkable record of successful resistance", but Thomas Gallant encouraged scholars to "exercise care" within discussions of colonial "resistance" due to the "layers of power . . . that may achieve an even deeper stratigraphy in colonial situations". Archaeologist Michael Given might agree; he describes resistance as "multifaceted and complex, more a range of decisions and negotiations than a single activity." Sujit Sivasundaram has no trouble with the term, using not only "resistance movement" to characterize the Kandyans' organized attacks against the British but also "counter-invasion". See Channa Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War: Indigenous Military Resistance to European Expansion in Sri Lanka, 1594-1818* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 17; Thomas W. Gallant, *Experiencing Dominion: Culture, Identity, and Power in the British Mediterranean* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), ix; Michael Given, *The Archaeology of the Colonized* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 11; and Sujit Sivasundaram, "Tales of the Land: British Geography and Kandyan Resistance in Sri Lanka, c. 1803-1850," *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 5 (September 2007), 931.

<sup>100</sup> That is, if guerilla warfare may be characterized by difficult terrain, reliance on local knowledge, support within a remote population, an ability to be more mobile than opponents, and employment of hit-and-run techniques. See Ian F.W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 1. John Ferris writes that guerilla warfare was "uncommon during the heyday of Britain's imperial supremacy" since it "required forces and peoples that were too weak to avoid occupation yet too strong to be defeated when occupied"—exactly the situation of the Kandyans. See John Ferris, "Small Wars and Great Games: The British Empire and Hybrid Warfare, 1700-1970," in *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 208.

nationhood in which colonization of an island in the Indian Ocean is expressed through the more familiar lens of dominance over a European polity. Reverend Cordiner consistently likened Sri Lanka's landscape to Britain, encouraging readers to think of it as "home".

### **View from a garrison**

Garrison chaplain in Colombo and the island's sole Church of England clergyman, James Cordiner first met Frederic North in Chennai, where Cordiner, an ordained deacon and divinity student from the University of Aberdeen, superintended the Military Male Orphan Asylum. Upon accepting North's invitation to serve as the chaplain in Colombo, Cordiner also became principal of the island's schools and conducted Sunday services. Throughout his five-year tenure in Sri Lanka, Cordiner compiled documents and drawings for a book, *A Description of Ceylon*, which he published in 1807, three years after returning to Scotland.

In 1804, North wrote a letter of recommendation on behalf of the chaplain, who had been "ousted," in North's words, "by a pious arrangement to get a living of £300 for some friend of Lord Hobart's . . ." <sup>101</sup> In the letter, which North sent with Cordiner to present to his brother-in-law, Lord Glenbervie, he described Cordiner with affection and concern:

He is the best natured, and worthiest of men, who does not want abilities in information in his way, but having twice as much simplicity as Parson Adams with full as good a heart, is not likely to make his way in the world without the assistance of friends. <sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> North to Glenbervie, 4 March 1804. Add MSS 88900/1/70, British Library, London.

<sup>102</sup> North to Glenbervie.

North requested that Glenbervie find a new post for Cordiner, in Britain or abroad. North suggested Trincomalee, on Sri Lanka's northeast coast, since the priest who had been posted there, Reverend T.J. Twiselton, was not on good terms with the island's chief military officer. North also asked that his brother-in-law help Cordiner publish his book.

Cordiner's account of the island continues to be impressive; the only comparable book, *An Account of the Island of Ceylon*, had been published in 1803 by Robert Percival, an officer who served in the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Upon reading a draft of Cordiner's text, North found it to be "accurately true which is by no means the case with Percival's."<sup>103</sup> The governor also found that Cordiner possessed "a very pretty talent for drawing" which would enable him to "furnish his work with several interesting prints."

Cordiner's overarching goal for *A Description of Ceylon* was to provide extensive description of the island's landscape. This is especially apparent in his account of conflict with Kandy, which, in his words, "claims no attention as a detail of military operations; but it throws some light on the nature of the country through which the various detachments had occasion to pass . . ."<sup>104</sup> Cordiner appears to have taken every advantage of opportunity to travel on the island to write about scenery. He undertook a tour in 1800 with North, visiting the island's schools. Throughout the book Cordiner was unequivocal about the beneficial nature of North's character and the positive effects of the governor's

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<sup>103</sup> North to Glenbervie.

<sup>104</sup> James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Aberdeen: A. Brown; 1807; New Delhi: Navrang, 1983). Citations refer to the Navrang edition.

<sup>104</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:155.

administration upon the island's inhabitants. In spite of the chaplain's clear bias in North's favor, his attentiveness to the governor as a subject provides useful information about North's decisions.

While *A Description of Ceylon* is largely an account of travel, Cordiner also conceived it as a work of history. His method was to acquire information from a range of sources and then order and interpret events, often in light of outcomes or ramifications. While he placed his narrative of Britain's first war with Kandy at the end of his book, similar to an addendum, he positioned it to point readers back in time rather than forward. The account, "Candian warfare: A narrative of the campaign in 1803," is the first in the book's final sequence of chapters about significant political events on the island, which Cordiner addressed in reverse chronological order, extending back to 1681. By inverting the order, Cordiner elongated the island's history with Britain, thereby enlarging its importance with readers. It is difficult to estimate the impact of *A Description of Ceylon* upon metropolitan readers, but Cordiner's was the first substantive narrative to be published about the first war with Kandy, and his contemporaries in the metropole relied heavily on his account of the conflict as they sought to reconstruct its events.

As with most Enlightenment-era accounts of travel, *A Description of Ceylon* is broad in scope, that is, designed to satisfy a desire for a wide range of information about Sri Lanka, but in the matter of description of landscape, and military sites, in particular, Cordiner largely recast the island's fortresses to satisfy a taste for the picturesque. When he visited Tangalle, for example, he wrote that the fort possessed "a small bay and good anchoring ground, forming itself a fine picture, surrounded by romantic scenery, extensive woods, and ranges of lofty mountains". The "fortress of two bastions,

containing the ruins of three large houses, is erected on the summit of a hill” and a nearby Buddhist tomb had become sufficiently taken over by foliage to increase “the picturesque appearance of the place.”<sup>105</sup> Cordiner viewed the site from the northeast (“elegant and striking”) and from the southwest (“not well seen . . . on account of the quantity of large trees and thick underwood by which it is in great measure concealed”).<sup>106</sup> His readers not only acquired information about the fortress but experienced it aesthetically.

At Trincomalee, the island’s most important harbor, Cordiner described its two forts by painting a word picture to help readers evoke a virtual landscape painting, beginning with a glimpse of Trincomalee Fort from Back Bay (“striking, beautiful, and sublime”). He then produced framing elements on each side, including “an immense projecting cliff”, and finally three planes: foreground (a flag staff and barracks), middle ground (native villages “amidst groves of cocoa-nut trees”), and background (“Fort Ostenburg . . . at a distance of three miles”).<sup>107</sup> Lest he appear to have forgotten the strategic importance of the harbor, Cordiner wrote that it was “the safest and most spacious on the confines of the eastern ocean . . . an acquisition of intrinsic value”.<sup>108</sup> Still, he could not help but add that the site offered “the richest prospects” with its “winding creeks, in which the water becomes tranquil”.<sup>109</sup> For Cordiner, such details

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<sup>105</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:211.

<sup>106</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:211.

<sup>107</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:268.

<sup>108</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:270.

<sup>109</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:270.

created “pleasing pictures”: “a few ornamental islands, dispersed through the wide expanse, add to the picturesque appearance of the scene. . . .”<sup>110</sup>

James Cordiner’s father, Reverend Charles Cordiner, was an amateur artist who had published accounts of travel in the late eighteenth-century, including *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland* in 1780 and *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain* in 1795.<sup>111</sup> Writing about the landscape of Dildred (Dirlet) Castle in Scotland, Cordiner senior called readers’ attention to “several exceedingly picturesque and rugged cliffs, which bound the course of the river to a considerable distance on either hand,” an example of his employment of this discourse from his first book.<sup>112</sup> An early picturesque adept, Charles Cordiner valued “venerable and ancient monuments” within the landscape of northern Britain as examples of “the nation’s former grandeur.”<sup>113</sup> He felt that associating his studies with nationhood lent his efforts dignity and seriousness.<sup>114</sup>

Heir to his father’s appreciation of sites of national importance and the practice of travel for the purpose of sketching and seeking out views, it must also be acknowledged that, as a clergyman and educator, James Cordiner also embraced the example of Reverend William Gilpin, who published illustrated tours of picturesque sites in Britain from 1782. By the time James Cordiner departed for India, William Gilpin had already shepherded one of his most popular accounts of picturesque travel, *Observations on the River Wye*, into its fourth edition. To a greater degree than any other traveler in Sri Lanka

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<sup>110</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:270.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities & scenery of the North of Scotland, in a series of letters to Thomas Pennant* (London, 1780).

<sup>112</sup> Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities*, 83.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities*, 3

<sup>114</sup> Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities*, 3.

in the early nineteenth century, Cordiner imitated Gilpin's verbal and visual approach to describing landscape.

William Gilpin comprehended the domestic landscape of Britain in regional allotments, producing his observations in a linear progression, from site to site. Gilpin's friend, the poet Thomas Gray, referred to the Wye river valley, which would grow to become a popular destination for picturesque tourism in Britain, as "a succession of nameless wonders", an indication that it was not so much individual sites as the act of moving through the landscape to connect them into a sequence of scenes that satisfied Gilpin and his followers.<sup>115</sup> Art historian Ann Bermingham writes that Gilpin taught tourists "to look at the national landscape as an ordered, coherent pictorial whole rather than as a chaotic collection of bits and pieces."<sup>116</sup>

William Gilpin trekked and boated through the hills and river valleys of England, Scotland, and Wales for the purpose of "examining the face of a country *by the rules of picturesque beauty*."<sup>117</sup> The views he sought resembled Italianate Baroque landscapes similar to the painting by Aelbert Cuyp discussed in the introduction of this study, a type of art acquired by British elites to decorate their town and country residences. As a member of the Anglican clergy, Gilpin grew to appreciate landscape paintings by European artists in the collections of gentlemen he had occasion to dine with or visit. He

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas Gray quoted in Stephen Hebron, *The Romantics and the British Landscape* (London: British Library, 2006), 3.

<sup>116</sup> Ann Bermingham, "System, Order, and Abstraction: The Politics of English Landscape Drawing Around 1795" in *Landscape and Power*, W.J.T Mitchell, ed., (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 86.

<sup>117</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. Relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the summer of the year 1770*. 3rd ed. (London: R. Blamire, 1792), 1.



collected inexpensive reproductions of such works in the form of prints: etchings and engravings of well-known compositions which, though reproduced monochromatically, retained the desirable compositional elements of three receding planes oriented horizontally, with groupings of trees, foliage, or buildings on the left and right sides to frame and balance the scene, and people or objects of local interest in the foreground. He located viewpoints in nature that matched this formula, then sketched them and directed others to those spots to do the same. So influential were Gilpin's books of picturesque travel among late eighteenth-century Britons of leisure, and so pervasive was the picturesque as a discourse, that one scholar refers to the picturesque as "the English way of seeing."<sup>118</sup>

Well versed in Gilpin's approach to landscape representation, and perhaps with an eye towards following in his father's footsteps and publishing an account of the "antiquities" and "scenery" of Sri Lanka upon his return to the metropole, James Cordiner's aesthetic treatment of military sites on the island drew upon comparisons with landscape elements that he associated with home. Writing about the diminutive buildings that made up the Dutch fort at Pooneryn, Cordiner commented that, "if exhibited in England, [they] would convey no other ideas but those of wretchedness and penury". But the

surrounding lands are beautiful, and well cultivated: . . . No hills are to be seen in this direction, but gentle undulations in the ground gratify the eye, and exhibit a pleasing resemblance to the wide extending fields in the plains of Great Britain. The groups of trees seem as if they had been planted and arranged merely to ornament the face of the country.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Giles Tillotson, *The Artificial Empire: The Indian Landscapes of William Hodges* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 29.

<sup>119</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:304.

At Beschutter, Cordiner and his traveling party “passed by a small stone redoubt” he believed to be “one of the most ancient European fortresses in the island”.<sup>120</sup> He was struck by the ruined state of the structure, its walls “now overgrown with flourishing trees”.<sup>121</sup> Transported into an aesthetic trajectory by these ruins, which brought about “solemn contemplations,” Cordiner pondered that, “In the midst of a wide and once cultivated country, no other monument of human labour is to be seen; but the grandeur of aged trees, and the tasteful disposition of woods and lawns, incline the eye to look for some other vestiges of ancient art.”<sup>122</sup>

Given that the trees at Pooneyn appeared to Cordiner as if they had been planted for the purpose of ornamenting the landscape, and that at Beschutter he found the “disposition of woods and lawns” to be “tasteful”, indicates that the chaplain understood and appreciated the practices of metropolitan landowners, who tended to reorganize or otherwise alter elements of landscape on their estates in the name of improvement.

Perhaps most telling in this regard is Cordiner’s description of the landscape of the fort at Negombo, which he observed from the

mansion of the commandant . . . opposite to the fort, in a cool and delightful situation between the sea and the river. From the windows and the porch the light fishing boats are seen scudding along with surprising swiftness, under their large sails, at the distance of only twenty yards.<sup>123</sup>

Viewing this scene from the windows of Captain Robert Blackall’s “mansion”, Cordiner positioned himself to take in the prospect like a landowner. (Indeed, Robert Blackall

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<sup>120</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:318.

<sup>121</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:319.

<sup>122</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:319.

<sup>123</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:342.

came from a prominent landowning family in Ireland.) Upon visiting the site of Governor North's new residence at Arippu, Cordiner gushed that it was "undoubtedly the most beautiful building in the island, and almost the only one planned according to any order of architecture".<sup>124</sup> Importantly, from its terraced roof

there is a most extensive prospect of the level country in three directions, and in the fourth of the open sea, and a fine view of the line of boats, when they are returning from the banks of oysters. The house is pleasantly situate on an elevated bank, about a stone's cast from the sea; and the apartments are delightfully cool, being completely surrounded by venetian doors, or windows reaching to the floor, and constantly fanned by a regular succession of land and sea breezes.<sup>125</sup>

Viscount Valentia, a traveler to Sri Lanka whose book is discussed in chapter three, visited Arippu in 1803 and found nothing to praise about the landscape near North's "Doric" mansion, but Cordiner optimistically pointed out that the residence was built on a natural elevation near the ocean, that it was amply fenestrated, and that it offered regular views of the oystermen at sea.

When describing the island's forts, Cordiner's method was to situate military structures within a landscape that was in turn described according to picturesque principles. This was clearly the tendency of some of the officers whose reports of the interior Cordiner used to construct his narrative of the war with Kandy. After the troops departed from Colombo and submitted to inspection by the governor, they marched for several days towards, and then into, the Kandyan provinces, reporting that the "frontiers appear to be intentionally neglected, but the interior is highly cultivated, and exhibits

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<sup>124</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:37.

<sup>125</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:38.

striking marks of industry.”<sup>126</sup> Eventually the soldiers traversed “country . . . extremely fruitful, and very beautiful. Several remarkable rocks presented themselves on this march curiously shaped, towering aloft, and richly ornamented with foliage.”<sup>127</sup> Major-General Hay MacDowall’s detachment set up camp “upon a hill . . . and the prospects around it were highly picturesque and delightful. On each side below the camp were pleasant vallies, terminated by a range of mountains.”<sup>128</sup> It is possible that MacDowall himself furnished such description, employing the word picturesque. In a later publication Cordiner recalled that the major-general was an enthusiast for views.<sup>129</sup>

Dating from the earliest months of Frederic North’s administration, the governor’s correspondence with the Secret Committee of the East India Company’s Court of Directors reveals that, in military matters, the island’s landscape was a constant matter of discussion, due to the difficulty of penetrating the inland provinces. In April of 1800, as Major-General MacDowall and “an escort of about eleven hundred men, with six, six pound field pieces” planned a ceremonial march into the Kandyan territories, they determined that “the cannon should proceed covered with a white cloth,” yet “twelve miles behind the frontier” advancing with heavy guns became impossible. “General Macdowal [sic] found the roads so bad, that he had doubts whether they could be rendered sufficiently practicable for cannon by his pioneers, to enable him to arrive

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<sup>126</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:174.

<sup>127</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:174.

<sup>128</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:175.

<sup>129</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 205. Returning from diplomatic meetings in Kandy in May of 1800, MacDowall reported that he had been “highly delighted with the rich and romantic country which he had seen.”

before the monsoon.”<sup>130</sup> Robert Percival, who served as a member of MacDowall’s escort to Kandy, observed while marching that “[t]he country along the banks of the Mutwal for many miles is extremely picturesque and delightful”, adding that troops had found a practical way to take advantage the river: they used it to carry “ammunition and stores” by boat while the soldiers themselves trekked “thirty-five miles . . . along the beautiful banks”.<sup>131</sup>

Upon becoming a crown colony, meticulous description of the island’s landscape would become a military mandate. In 1802, Hay MacDowall used the *Gazette* to publicize an order requiring officers in command of corps or detachments to “remark” on “the nature and distance of the roads from one station to another”:

Whether good or bad, gravelly, stoney, or clayey, their general breadth; what considerable waters they cross, whether by good bridges, fords, or ferries, whether such waters are deemed passable at all seasons; if not, by what circuitous route, or routes, such difficulty is to be avoided.<sup>132</sup>

Additionally, officers were required to comment on whether the landscape was “in general cultivated, or waste; open, or inclosed; level, or hilly”, as well as the time it took “in performing the march” and the distance traversed each day.<sup>133</sup> A graph accompanied the order, a template for officers to follow to insure they produced adequate description of the landscape when engaged in action in the inland provinces.

A similar mandate had been instituted in India two years earlier, as soldiers in the

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<sup>130</sup> North to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 4 April 1800. CO 54/2, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Percival, *An account of Ceylon, containing its history, geography, natural history, with the manners and customs of its various inhabitants; to which is added the journal of an embassy to the court of Candy. Illustrated by a map and charts* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1803), 37.

<sup>132</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 11 (24 May 1802).

<sup>133</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 11 (24 May 1802).

Deccan Plateau had been required by Colin Mackenzie, the head of the Mysore Survey, to provide written comments on “the aspect of the country in general, including sketches of the general outline of hills and ridges,” adding “names and completed distances” as well as information pertaining to “local lore” and a list of references to “books and depositories of native learning”.<sup>134</sup> A noted Orientalist, Mackenzie presumed the presence of local texts at sites penetrated by British soldiers. MacDowall, on the other hand, requested information based entirely on the observations of the troops themselves, possibly due to a perceived lack of native texts in Sri Lanka. North’s government regarded Sri Lanka as civilization that had fallen into cultural decline.<sup>135</sup> William Knighton, a nineteenth-century British planter on the island, would go so far as to align the rise of arts and sciences in Europe with their decline in Sri Lanka:

In the early ages of the history over which we are traversing, we have seen abundant proofs that this island must have been great and flourishing, prosperous and happy. The picture is miserably reverse, when we survey it under the blighting influence of European rapacity. . . . The decline, however, we have also seen, is not solely to be attributed to the arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch. The seeds of dissolution had long been sown, and that event but accelerated their growth. . . .<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Edney, 45.

<sup>135</sup> Sujit Sivasundaram has interpreted Kandyan palm-leaf manuscripts that yield information about the ways in which Kandyan administrators conceived of the inland territories. See Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka & the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>136</sup> William Knighton, *The history of Ceylon from the earliest period to the present time; with an appendix, containing an account of its present condition* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans; Smith, Elder, & Co. and Madden & Malcolm; and Edinburgh: Bell & Bradforte, 1845; Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993), 283. Citations are taken from the Sri Satguru edition. Also, John D. Rogers notes that, “In the early and middle nineteenth century British writers developed an historical framework that included two assumptions: that in ancient times there was a great Sinhala civilization, which later went into decline; and that distinct and often antagonist groups existed throughout the island’s long history.” See John D. Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” in *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, Jonathan Spencer, ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 87.

Major-General MacDowall's insistence that soldiers carefully document the island's landscape was followed by efforts to secure similar information by Joseph Eudelin Jonville, Sri Lanka's surveyor general, who proposed a project towards the end of 1802 that he described as "... a general map of the Island of Ceylon with that exactness which can alone render it useful to government & at least interesting to individuals fond of the arts & sciences."<sup>137</sup> Jonville completed *Memoir of the sketch of a map of the Island of Ceylon* from measurements made with his own instruments as well as information from and comparison with surveys produced by the former Dutch government on the island, as well as from native accounts. He also used measurements made during military campaigns, via field reports, and the verbal recollections of officers and soldiers. In the *Memoir*, Jonville acknowledged that he had incorporated accounts by Major-General MacDowall (from Dambadeniya to Kandy); by Captain Vilant of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment (from Kandy to Trincomalee); and by Captain Herbert Beaver (in Sabaragamuwa).<sup>138</sup> Even so, Jonville determined that military marches generated data of uneven accuracy due to the different instruments used, and in some cases journals had been lost and data furnished through recollection.<sup>139</sup> Jonville found that he could not use all data available to him, and rejected, for example, maps made by the Dutch, which he characterized as "drawn by eyesight evidently incorrect".<sup>140</sup> In spite of Jonville's fairly strong knowledge of "the provinces depending upon the English government" he claimed

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<sup>137</sup> Jonville to Arbuthnot, 22 November 1802. CO 54/8, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>138</sup> J. Jonville, "Memoir of the sketch of a map of the Island of Ceylon," January 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>139</sup> J. Jonville, "Memoir".

<sup>140</sup> J. Jonville, "Memoir".

that, of the Kandyan provinces, “it is the most, if we know their names: we have no knowledge of their boundaries.”<sup>141</sup>

### **The “areca nut” war**

Most nineteenth century publications produced by colonial travelers on the island included discussion of Sri Lanka’s natural resources, and Cordiner’s was no different in this regard. Moreover, Cordiner was equally inclined to enlist Sri Lanka’s resources in the service of picturesque description and to discuss their economic benefits to the government of Frederic North. Of areca nut, for example, he noted the following: that in 1802 more than six hundred vessels “cleared out from the port of Columbo” carrying goods for trade, and the duty collected for the export of areca nut constituted nearly sixty-five percent of all duty paid that year.<sup>142</sup> Of all the fruit or nut bearing trees on the island, areca nut merits special acknowledgement in the context of North’s administration, since, more than fine wood or timber, the areca nut trade, as noted by Cordiner, generated significant revenue for the British government in Sri Lanka. The seeds of areca palms serve as a stimulant when dried and wrapped in betel leaves for chewing.<sup>143</sup>

Upon visiting Puttalam, Cordiner described how Kandyans carried down to the coast not only areca nut but cardamom, pepper, and coffee, “which they exchange for calicos, muslins, salt, and dried fish” in a “trade carried on chiefly by moor-men, or

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<sup>141</sup> J. Jonville, “Memoir”.

<sup>142</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:17. The total duty collected at the customs house was £19,160, of which £12,268 was collected for areca nut.

<sup>143</sup> Nor did North intervene in the production of arrack, a liquor comprised of the fermented sap of coconut flowers. Of areca nut, historian P.E. Pieris has described the areca nut tree as “the most graceful of the country’s palms, whose nuts taken with the *bulat* leaf is to the Sinhalese what the cup of coffee is to the Desert Arab. See Pieris, *Tri Sinhala*, 284.



natives converted to the Mahometan faith.”<sup>144</sup> Five pages later, Cordiner mentioned areca nut again, as he described traveling back to Colombo “through a deeply shaded avenue, equal in beauty and elegance to any combination of which the vegetable kingdom is capable of exhibiting;”

and the whole country displays the most magnificent and most luxurious garden which a fertile imagination can picture. The jack, the bread-fruit, the jamboo, and the cashew tree, weave their spreading branches into an agreeable shade, amidst the stem of the areka and cocoa-nut.<sup>145</sup>

Noticing how pepper vines and betel wound around the trunks of the trees, and remarking on the coffee, cinnamon, and flowering plants growing in between them, Cordiner exclaimed, “the mass of foliage is blended together with a degree of richness that beggars description.”<sup>146</sup>

Civil servant Anthony Bertolacci, who had served the crown with Frederic North in Corsica, and who held several important posts in Sri Lanka, described the areca nut trade as follows: “We have . . . a kind of monopoly in this article; and, consequently, can ask a very high price, without prejudice to the trade . . .”<sup>147</sup> Kandyan cultivators “were compelled to sell to us, and to purchase [salt and cloth] from us. We, on the contrary, neither bought from them, nor sold to them, unless we could gain considerably.”<sup>148</sup> The

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<sup>144</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:338.

<sup>145</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:344-345.

<sup>146</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:345.

<sup>147</sup> Anthony Bertolacci, *A view of the agricultural, commercial, and financial interests of Ceylon. With an appendix; containing some of the principal laws and usages of the Candians; port and custom-house regulations; tables of exports and imports, public revenue and expenditure, &c.* (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 161.

<sup>148</sup> Bertolacci, 164.

British exported the nuts to coastal India, “a luxury in which the natives . . . can indulge themselves at a very trifling expense”.<sup>149</sup>

In March of 1802 an incident occurred within the Kandyan provinces regarding the intra-island trade of areca nut. North would learn of the conflict three months later, in June, when his secretary, Robert Arbuthnot, learned from Lieutenant Maurice O’Connell of the 51<sup>st</sup> Regiment about an attack upon Muslim traders based in Puttalam. O’Connell reported that Kandyans assaulted these traders and detained their cattle in the inland provinces:

. . . six men, who have been detained in Candia for 3 or 4 months, came to me this day to inform me that there are 33 others detained there (at a place called Cancunocollet) 7 leagues from Putland—and 400 bullocks, including the 100 bullocks already mentioned; and 200 more are also detained farther in the interior of Candia . . .<sup>150</sup>

O’Connell added that “they were also robbed of all the merchandize they carried to Bodee in that country”

and that one man of a neighboring village was murdered by them—whose son (a little boy) came to complain to me of the murder of his father—they say—that every road leading out of the country is strictly guarded by armed men;—those men say that they have been very ill treated and beat—and that those who are detained are also very ill used.<sup>151</sup>

To North, reports of harm to merchants who transported areca nut on behalf of the British government constituted an act of violence against his own subjects. More than this, it was an act of aggression upon merchants that had long been singled out for recognition for their contributions to the British colonial economy.

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<sup>149</sup> Bertolacci, 161.

<sup>150</sup> O’Connell to Arbuthnot, 26 June 1802. CO 54/10, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>151</sup> O’Connell to Arbuthnot.

Earlier colonial governments on the island had forced relationships with local land holders in villages where areca nut grew. Portuguese governor Jerónimo de Azavedo had paid a “moderate fixed rate” to landlords,<sup>152</sup> but individual tenants were “compelled to obtain the nut for the landlord’s benefit—at any inconvenience to himself, often requiring travel.”<sup>153</sup> P.E. Pieris found that it was “common occurrence for men to pawn their own persons or sell their children to enable them to obtain a necessary amount.”<sup>154</sup> The Dutch continued the Portuguese method of paying a fixed amount for the nuts, but any shortfall in meeting expectations of quantity were brought forward to the subsequent year. Some landlords preferred to “abandon their lands and flee the country” rather than trying to meet the high expectations of Dutch officials.<sup>155</sup> By 1778, the Dutch government began employing middlemen, resulting in increased profits.<sup>156</sup> But Dutch colonial officials had to compete with the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) for access to the nuts:

forestallers waylaid the men from Sinhale who brought it and forced them to sell it at low figures, or harassed them from place to place; vessels calling for cargo were supplied with their goods while the company’s property rotted in the godowns and had to be buried.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese, 1505-1658* (Tellippalai: American Ceylon Mission Press, 1920; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1999), 186. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>153</sup> Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese*, 259.

<sup>154</sup> Additionally, Pieris noted “a case . . . where a Portuguese had one of his tenants crucified on the ground for failing to supply the quantity which had been demanded of him.” See Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese*, 259.

<sup>155</sup> P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders, 1658-1796*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd.; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1999). Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>156</sup> Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders*, 100.

<sup>157</sup> Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders*, 32

At times, Kandyan landlords allowed the nuts in excess of VOC quotas to rot. The company eventually allocated collection of areca nut to Muslim traders, with the understanding that delivery of any quantity beyond that which had been exacted by the VOC would be compensated for amply.<sup>158</sup> Still, the Kandyan king could intervene when dissatisfied about trade restrictions, and cut off the supply. At one point the king demanded free trade of the nuts at Puttalam, which the Dutch government refused.<sup>159</sup> “The threat of closing his frontiers . . . became a powerful weapon in the King’s hands.”<sup>160</sup>

Under the British, the “native merchants”—that is, the Muslim traders—“who were few, on account of the jealousy with which the Prince who governed that country” regarded them,<sup>161</sup> understood the important role they played as go-betweens, in a situation that was, at best, a delicate one economically and culturally. Bertolacci all but credited these traders with the high profits that the government sustained for the sale of the nuts at the island’s ports.<sup>162</sup> Even before Sri Lanka was administered as a crown colony, East India Company officials had argued that “the valuable contribution, which [Muslims] made to the economy should exempt them from [the capitation] tax.”<sup>163</sup> Frederic North considered the island’s Muslims “an industrious and respectable class of

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<sup>158</sup> Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders*, 37.

<sup>159</sup> Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders*, 35.

<sup>160</sup> Colvin de Silva, I:5.

<sup>161</sup> Bertolacci, 164.

<sup>162</sup> Bertolacci, 164.

<sup>163</sup> U.C. Wickremeratne, *The Conservative Nature of the British Rule of Sri Lanka with Particular Emphases on the Period: 1796-1802* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1996,) 33; Alexander’s minute, Proc. of Comm. Inv. 10 November 1798, Factory Records, Ceylon, Vol. 2, 135.

inhabitants” and agreed it would be an “injustice” to impose a tax “which must be grating to their feelings as it is certainly oppressive and disgraceful.”<sup>164</sup> After all, these merchants paid “a much greater proportion of the public revenue than any other class of inhabitants of the same number.”<sup>165</sup> This was due to the sheer quantity of goods that passed through the hands of Muslim traders living and working along Sri Lanka’s southwest coast, who not only dominated the island’s export trade but performed “diplomatic service” to local rulers.<sup>166</sup>

By July of 1802, the British government had in hand testimonies from eleven witnesses, with claims that forty-six Muslim traders had been targeted by Kandyan aggression, resulting in a combined loss of 602 head of cattle or bullocks, and 2,375 ammonams of areca nut.<sup>167</sup> North concluded on the basis of the traders’ testimonies that they had “purchased at a fair & open market and according to long established custom, a considerable quantity of areka nut, for the purpose of conveying it into the British Territories” but had been “despoiled of the article; by a violent and arbitrary act of the offices of the Candian government”.<sup>168</sup> He communicated as much to the Court at Kandy in September—that the “most unjustifiable proceedings” had been enacted “on the part of

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<sup>164</sup> Wickremeratne, 166; North to the Court of Directors, 16 February 1799, Factory Records, Ceylon, Vol. 52, 41.

<sup>165</sup> Wickremeratne; North to Hobart, 15 December 1801, Proc. of Pub. Dept., 19 Dec. 1801, Factory Records, Ceylon, Vol. 7, 878.

<sup>166</sup> Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833-1886* (Colombo: Lake House Investments Ltd; Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 53.

<sup>167</sup> W. Boyd, “Names of the Persons . . . with the quantity of areka nuts which they lost respectively, and the number of cattle they each had charge of,” 24 July 1802. CO 54/10, National Archives, Kew. Anthony Bertolacci calculated one ammonam as ranging from 24,000 to 30,000 ripe nuts, the smaller lot weighing around 290 lbs. English weight. See Bertolacci, 159.

<sup>168</sup> North to the Court of Candy, 7 September 1802. CO 54/6, National Archives, Kew.

some of the principal agents of the court towards certain merchants . . . lately employed in conveying a trade in Candian dominions.”<sup>169</sup>

North received a conciliatory response from the Kandyan government, and on November 21 he communicated to Robert Hobart, the secretary of state for war and the colonies, that the matter had been resolved as “perfectly satisfactory” . . . and was “entirely and favourably settled” as a result of a plan that had been set in place for reparation.<sup>170</sup> North expressed discomfort, however, about the relationship between the British and Kandyan governments, to the extent that

I think it right not to enter into any farfetched negotiations till I have a moral certain of its success. But your Lordship may rest assured that I will not neglect any fair opportunity of establishing on solid grounds, without violence, injustice, or expence, our influence on a government so intimately connected with and so naturally dependent on, ours, as that of Candy.<sup>171</sup>

North displayed a tolerant, paternal attitude towards the Kandyan court throughout 1802, inasmuch as he understood that the inland provinces were indeed dependent on the maritime provinces for access to the coast. Upon arriving in Sri Lanka, at which point North was accountable to the East India Company, he had attempted a treaty with Kandy for the purpose of placing British military personnel in the inland capital for the “protection of the [Kandyan] king’s person and government, which we should guarantee and defend against all pretenders”, as well as to maintain the “security of the first adigar”<sup>172</sup>—that is, the Kandyan prime minister. North expressed hope that

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<sup>169</sup> North to the Court of Candy.

<sup>170</sup> North to Hobart, 21 November 1802. CO 54/6, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>171</sup> North to Hobart, 21 November 1802.

<sup>172</sup> North to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, 4 April 1800. CO 54/2, National Archives, Kew.

securing a treaty with Kandy would result in greater access to the resources of the interior, especially in the form of “an exclusive monopoly of cinnamon and the right of cutting wood throughout the king’s territories”.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, “. . . [t]rade between the two countries should be opened and all frontier duties abolished”.<sup>174</sup> The sovereign, Sri Vickrama Rajasimha, rejected North’s offers of “protection.” The Kandyan polity had avoided long-term European military occupation since the Portuguese arrived on the island.

Rajasimha did not make good on the offer of reparation, and in a letter of January 30, 1803 to Robert Clive, then governor of Fort St. George in Chennai, North suggested that the entire incident had been orchestrated by the Kandyan prime minister, Pilime Talauve. North communicated to Clive that the “direct attack on the person and property of some British subjects, inhabiting these settlements” was Pilime Talauve’s attempt to provoke the British to attack Kandy, overthrow the king, and place the prime minister on his throne.<sup>175</sup>

A few days later, North published a proclamation in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* in which he presented a narrative of his attempts to acquire reparation from the Kandyan king for “violence committed against inhabitants of these settlements”.<sup>176</sup> Therein North stated that, for its part, the British government had demonstrated a “system of kindness and indulgence” in its dealings with the Kandyan polity throughout many “disturbances in these settlements” which “obliged us to complain and demand

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<sup>173</sup> North to the Secret Committee.

<sup>174</sup> North to the Secret Committee.

<sup>175</sup> North to Clive, 30 January 1803. CO 54/10, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>176</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48 (2 February 1803).

satisfaction.” He cited specific attempts at restitution for the goods seized, agreements obtained for restitution from the Kandyan government, and the subsequent delays. Upon receiving yet another proposal from Pilime Talauve for full restitution after a further delay of two months, North informed the public that he had demanded instead immediate payment for the full quantity of areca nut stolen or destroyed at ten rixdollars per ammonam,<sup>177</sup> but the prime minister had refused these terms. “In the meanwhile,” he added, “preparations and assemblies of a menacing appearance have been formed in various places on the Candyan frontier, an act of apparent hostility which the minister of Candia has not scrupled to avow on pretences wholly unfounded.”<sup>178</sup>

It was therefore under “circumstances of aggravated injury and insult” that North informed the *Gazette’s* readership that the British government had decided to

send troops into the Kandian territories to enforce our just claim to full indemnification for the expense to which our government has been put by the iniquity of the Court of Candy, and to exact sufficient security against the repetition of similar outrage.<sup>179</sup>

North assured the public that what would further be required from Sri Vickrama Rajasimha was “moderate” and “beneficial” and would afford the king “security” and “dignity” and ensure the “tranquillity and happiness of his subjects”.<sup>180</sup>

North’s proclamation, published in the February 3, 1803 edition of the *Gazette*, projected that military action against Kandy would result in “tranquillity and happiness” for the Kandyans. It also served to inform the inhabitants of the maritime provinces that

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<sup>177</sup> A rixdollar was a unit of silver coinage. An ammonam was a unit of measure for dry goods.

<sup>178</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48.

<sup>179</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48.

<sup>180</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48.



British troops had been sent to occupy Kandy and had been ordered to observe “the most exact discipline . . . in the Kandian territories”, to the extent that

the temples, priests, and religion of the inhabitants be respected, and that the persons and property of all individuals not employed in arms against the British troops be protected, that all supplies which may be furnished be regularly paid for, and that no disorder be allowed.<sup>181</sup>

North expected local civilians to assist the British army in every way possible; that they remain “peaceable”; that they continue with their day-to-day work; and that they submit to the authority of the British commanders, who had been directed to protect them “from injury and oppression.”<sup>182</sup>

In a letter to Clive about the mobilization, North enclosed copies of “the Proposals of Reconciliation” he had sent to Rajasimha, and communicated that his primary problem with the Kandyan government was its “various signs of insincerity” resulting in a delay in the “performance of the reparation” for the crimes enacted against the Muslim merchants. North reasoned that without reparation, perceptions of his authority could weaken, resulting in a diminishing of “confidence in its protection . . . and which I would never allow to be relaxed”.<sup>183</sup> North also informed Clive about the “menacing assemblies which were forming in their territories, on the Frontier of Matura”.<sup>184</sup>

North indeed planned to depose Rajasimha and replace him with Muttusami, a relative of the Kandyan queen already living under the protection of the British

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<sup>181</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48.

<sup>182</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48.

<sup>183</sup> North to Clive, 30 January 1803. CO 54/10, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>184</sup> North to Clive, 30 January 1803.

government. Pilime Talaewa conveyed his support for this plan, having long encouraged North to take action against the Kandyan sovereign. North prepared to send seventeen hundred troops to Kandy from Colombo under the command of Major-General MacDowall, and twelve hundred additional troops from Trincomalee under Colonel Barbut. North believed his army “tolerably well appointed in every thing” except carriage bullocks, and requested of Clive “one or two thousand of those useful animals, to be landed on any part of this coast between Manaar and Colombo”.<sup>185</sup> North anticipated little need for additional troops

unless we are obliged to make a second campaign, which, considering my present force, the moderation of my views, and the disposition of the principal head men, and the people in general in the Candian territories, (who are desirous of cooperation with us, or at least of not acting against us) is I trust not probable.<sup>186</sup>

MacDowall’s detachment had set out for Kandy on January 31, 1803.

### **“A clap of thunder”**

The value of providing a campaign narrative within an academic study may be debated, but it is offered here for three reasons. The events which comprise Britain’s first war with Kandy are not well known. Just as importantly, the nationalist tendencies in Cordiner’s work become clearest when interwoven with other forms of documentation, including North’s proclamations and reports of military action published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*. Further, campaign narrative is deployed here to give voice to individual soldiers, prisoners, and others who figured prominently in Cordiner’s account.

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<sup>185</sup> North to Clive, 30 January 1803.

<sup>186</sup> North to Clive, 30 January 1803.

As Wayne E. Lee suggests in *Barbarians and Brothers*, “The politics and the generals cannot be ignored,”

but the experiences, expectations, and choices of junior officers and soldiers were critical to defining the nature of wartime violence. Their choices were profoundly affected by the strategic vision of their superiors, but they had their own cards to play. . . .<sup>187</sup>

“Narratives are the best way to convey those feelings and choices,” he writes.

Cordiner was not a soldier, but as a military chaplain he was invested in the physical and moral well-being of the troops that ascended to Kandy to effect its occupation. He worked meticulously from reports that officers sent back to government and military officials in Colombo, ultimately producing an account that reflected his own values as well as those of Governor North and some of the troops, many of whom did not survive the action inland. “Academic history,” writes Lee, “rarely does justice to the blood, sweat, fear, and voided bowels of war’s violence. On the other hand, mere stories rarely convey the complexity of the situations in which humans find themselves willing to kill or forced to die.” As with Lee’s account of British soldiers in Ireland, Britain, and North America, “what follows combines story and analysis, respecting the sources and conveying what was, in the end, a human experience.”<sup>188</sup>

Reverend Cordiner helped readers of *A Description of Ceylon* visualize the departure of the British troops, writing that “[t]he streets of the fort, pettah, and suburbs of Colombo, through which they passed, were lined with spectators.”<sup>189</sup> He described the

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<sup>187</sup> Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>188</sup> Lee, 11.

<sup>189</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:168.

display of colors of the 51<sup>st</sup> Regiment, the regimental music that “animated the march”, and the demeanor of the troops, “full of cheerfulness and joy,” having “discovered all the spirit of chosen heroes rushing on to victory.”<sup>190</sup> Cordiner proceeded to track the progress of soldiers who occupied and eventually retreated from Kandy from reports “compiled at Colombo from the information of the principal civil servants of government, and an extensive correspondence with respectable officers in the field.”<sup>191</sup> Since many of the soldiers who departed from Colombo and Trincomalee at the end of January died in the field or from illnesses contracted while in the Kandyan provinces, Cordiner found it suitable and respectful to characterize them as possessing the spirits of “chosen heroes.”

North and his staff informed the public by means of the *Ceylon Government Gazette* that by February 24 the troops had advanced to within ten miles of the inland capital and taken possession of a post, losing one officer in the conflict and reporting the injury of a private. Loss to “the enemy has not been ascertained.”<sup>192</sup> By the next day

the king of Candy & the first adigar had abandoned the capital & fled to the province of Ouva, after having set fire to the palace & several temples. General Macdowall had placed a guard upon the palace, & by the exertions of the British soldiers the fire had been extinguished . . .<sup>193</sup>

Two weeks later the *Gazette* published a chart of the stores and ammunition captured by the major-general’s detachment.<sup>194</sup>

Cordiner ascertained that the troops became fraught with illness and unease upon arriving in Kandy, which, as noted in the *Gazette*, had been abandoned in anticipation of

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<sup>190</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:168-69.

<sup>191</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:vi.

<sup>192</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 53 (24 February 1803).

<sup>193</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 53.

<sup>194</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 55 (9 March 1803).

their arrival. Three hundred men from the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment had escorted Muttusami to the capital to serve as the new sovereign, but no Kandyan came to pay their respects. Attempts by British soldiers to penetrate the woods in the vicinity of the capital resulted in the locals fleeing “in all directions”.<sup>195</sup> A soldier from the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment found several non-European troops and porters employed by the British government “mangled in a most cruel manner in the environs of the capital. The wife of a Malay soldier met with a similar treatment.”<sup>196</sup>

Muttusami had agreed to North’s terms: once placed in power he would acquire “Candy, and all the possessions dependent on it” except the province of the Seven Corles, two forts, and enough land within the Kandyan territory to build a road from Colombo to Trincomalee.<sup>197</sup> Further, under his rule the British would acquire rights to gather cinnamon; “to cut wood in all his forests;” and “to permit our government to examine the rivers and watercourses in the Candian territories” for the “purposes of trade”.<sup>198</sup> In return, North’s government would supply the new king with a Malayan army composed of residents of the island, “to maintain his authority.”<sup>199</sup> Moreover, the governor demanded that Muttusami allow the continual export of areca nut from the interior to the

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<sup>195</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:186.

<sup>196</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:188.

<sup>197</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:187.

<sup>198</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:187-88.

<sup>199</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:187.

maritime provinces.<sup>200</sup> Indeed, Muttusami's 30,000 rixdollars per annum stipend would be paid out of an annual delivery of 20,000 ammonams of areca nut.<sup>201</sup>

But Muttusami acquired no "adherents" in the abandoned capital except his own servants.<sup>202</sup> Instead, Kandyans harassed the troops guarding the capital "and whenever any unfortunate stragglers fell into their hands, they put them to death in a most barbarous and shocking manner".<sup>203</sup>

Cordiner eventually learned that the prime minister, Pilime Talaewa, had encouraged the British to advance from the capital to Hanguranketa, where Sri Vickrama Rajasimha was thought to be residing at a subsidiary palace. Two smaller detachments, under Colonel Charles Baillie and Lieutenant Colonel Logan succeeded in taking the palace, but the king had fled. Upon arrival, Logan's detachment "found a gateway and the road chocked [sic] up by trees felled from the banks on its sides and thrown into it" and Kandyan soldiers had fired upon the British pioneers charged with clearing the gateway.<sup>204</sup>

In *A Description of Ceylon*, Cordiner reported that during the Hanguranketa action a few "native soldiers had deserted to the enemy" and one of the deserters, a "sepooy belonging to the Ceylon infantry, was seen hanging on a tree."<sup>205</sup> The Kandyans

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<sup>200</sup> Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795-1833: Its Political, Administrative, and Economic Development*, vol. 1 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1953) and vol. 2 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1962), I:99.

<sup>201</sup> Colvin de Silva, 106.

<sup>202</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:188

<sup>203</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:188

<sup>204</sup> Logan to Baillie, 16 March 1803. CO 54/10, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>205</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:190

allowed a deserter from the Malay Regiment to join their ranks and he “was several times observed to level his piece at Colonel Baillie, which circumstance excited great indignation in the little army.”<sup>206</sup> The likelihood of locating the king faded, and “the palace was set fire to, and burned down, after which the troops set out upon their march,” reaching Kandy the following evening. During the action nineteen bearers were killed and numerous others wounded.<sup>207</sup> Further attempts to persuade local headmen to recognize Muttusami as the new Kandyan sovereign proved futile.<sup>208</sup>

Back in the maritime provinces, Lankans inspired by a Kandyan government official, Leuke Ralehami, staged an uprising at Attagalla, requiring a detachment of soldiers from the 65<sup>th</sup> Regiment to confront “a tumultuary force of several thousand men”. Troops quelled the uprising and the *Gazette* reported that Leuke Ralehami had retreated into the interior.<sup>209</sup> Even so, by April North was committed to the idea of a full-blown war. He communicated to Hobart that he was not willing to split hairs over whether further justification was needed. He had demonstrated to the secretary that he could justify the war for nominal reasons permissible by the crown:

the words ‘aggression’, and ‘intended hostility’ under which His Majesty’s instructions authorize me to make war, extend, in the opinion of my council, and of my advocate fiscal, as well as in my own mind, to the denial of justice in a case of acknowledged breach of right; to the instigating the native officers and people under my authority to acts of sedition and revolt, and to the formation of armed assemblies on the frontier of the most exposed provinces of my government.

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<sup>206</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:191.

<sup>207</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:191.

<sup>208</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:192.

<sup>209</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 58 (30 March 1803).

That all these acts have been systematically committed by the Court of Candy, the documents which accompany this dispatch, will afford sufficient proof.<sup>210</sup>

But North claimed that even without exercising “justificatory reason, drawn from the sense of words”, that is, the exercise of justifying the war on the basis of a pre-determined set of criteria established by the crown, that

the peculiar situation of my government, which, bearing no analogy whatever with any other under the crown, cannot be regulated by the letter of instructions drawn up for those, whose relations are totally different, and of course, defective in many points which require peculiar specification and detail.<sup>211</sup>

On April 20, 1803, North wrote to Hobart to characterize the situation on the island as a “time of war”, a period during which

it is impossible to make calculations on future prosperity. Every nerve must be strained, and every resource consumed in the object immediately before us. All that I can promise therefore is that no opportunity shall be neglected by me of bringing to a speedy, advantageous, and honourable termination, the hostilities which I reluctantly began.<sup>212</sup>

However, both Major-General MacDowall and Colonel Barbut grew ill in the inland capital and returned to their respective garrisons. MacDowall recovered but Barbut did not. In June, reports reached Colombo of the increasing vulnerability of the British troops who continued to occupy Kandy, dozens of which had been hospitalized with an illness resembling yellow fever and which “had produced considerable alarm; and it was

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<sup>210</sup> North to Hobart, 14 April 1803. CO 54/10, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>211</sup> North to Hobart, 14 April 1803.

<sup>212</sup> North to Hobart, 20 April 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.



determined by government that measures should be taken for the speedy evacuation of the Candian country.”<sup>213</sup>

Late in June, a severely wounded soldier, Corporal George Barnsley of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment, made his way through the Kandyan territory to Fort MacDowall, near Trincomalee, with news that “the Kandians commenced an attack on the hill guard in the rear of the palace at Kandi, & took it.”<sup>214</sup> The testimony of Barnsley became crucial to the narrative that unfolded, since he was one of the few British soldiers to survive the occupation. According to Barnsley, Kandyans had charged the “Eastern barrier” of the city and killed Lieutenant William Blackeney in an attempt to “take a gun which was there posted”. Barnsley recalled

an incessant fire kept up on both sides until about two o'clock in the day, when as the enemy were breaking in at the back of the palace, Major Davie sent out a flag of truce offering to surrender the palace on being permitted to march out under arms.<sup>215</sup>

According to the corporal, Major Adam Davie, who commanded the troops in the absence of MacDowall and Barbut, disabled the guns in an act of capitulation, and marched with his men as far as the Mahaweli River, where they spent the night.<sup>216</sup> The next day four Kandyan officials approached the major with a request to give up Muttusami in exchange for help in crossing the river. Major Davie refused, then complied, later to receive word “that there were plenty of bamboos and other materials . .

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<sup>213</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:206.

<sup>214</sup> “Voluntary Declaration of Corporal Bainsley [sic],” 27 June 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>215</sup> “Voluntary Declaration”.

<sup>216</sup> “Voluntary Declaration”.

. [to] make the rafts.” But the troops “could not get a rope across . . . from the depth & rapidity of the stream.”<sup>217</sup>

The following morning Captain Richard Humphreys succeeded in this but then “the Malays & gun lascars began to desert to the enemy in small parties”, at which point

Major Davie ordered the remainder to ground their arms & follow him with all the officers back into the garrison. As soon as they had proceeded about two hundred yards on their way thither, the Kandians stopped them, took the officers on one side & kept them prisoners for half an hour, when this declarant says he heard a shot in the direction of the place where the officers were, which he supposed to be the execution of Major Davie.<sup>218</sup>

Two of the officers were spared execution, but Kandyan soldiers led Barnsley and the other “European” troops in pairs “a few yards along the road” and administered blows to their heads with “the butt-end of their firelocks”. The corporal “received a blow under the right ear & a wound with a sword on the back of the neck, which the enemy conceiving to be mortal proceeded to the murder of the remainder”.<sup>219</sup> Barnsley claimed that he

lay as dead for some time & in that situation, when all the men had been killed, he distinctly heard a firing & shouting at the place where the officers were confined which he supposed to be the putting them to death. That while this was doing [sic], he took an opportunity of [slipping] into the jungle, where he lay during the day [and then] proceeded in the night time to Fort Macdowall where he arrived on the 27<sup>th</sup> to give information.<sup>220</sup>

A deposition by Sub-Assistant Surgeon Greesring of the Malay Regiment, who had marched with Major Davie out of Kandy and also escaped execution, confirmed what Corporal Barnsley suspected: the Kandyans executed the officers “some distance from

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<sup>217</sup> “Deposition of Mohamed Gani,” 11 July 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>218</sup> “Voluntary Declaration”.

<sup>219</sup> “Voluntary Declaration”.

<sup>220</sup> “Voluntary Declaration”.

the European troops”. They had been brought “to one side of the mountain too away from every thing . . . and having beheaded them cast them from the mountain.”<sup>221</sup> The assistant surgeon witnessed the deaths of Lieutenants Fantome and Gorepitt, but then “took Captain Humphreys by his arm & rolled down from the mountain” into “the same hole they cast all those that were killed”.<sup>222</sup> Kandyan troops had not executed Major Davie but took him to Kandy along with Captain Edward Rumley on the orders of the prime minister.<sup>223</sup>

A Malayan lascoryn, Milihanage Joannes, also witnessed the event and gave a deposition to North’s secretary, Robert Arbuthnot, in which he confirmed that the Malays, once separated from the British troops at the village “where the two cannon were placed”, continued towards Kandy, but the “native officers” had been kept back with Major Davie.<sup>224</sup>

Soon afterwards all the prisoners were taken two by two & were delivered over to Kandians who took them to a little distance & cut their heads off, that they were likewise going to kill the women but this was put a stop, to, [sic] by order of the Adigaar.<sup>225</sup>

Milihanage Joannes told Arbuthnot that the Kandyan soldiers did not execute the sepoy or Bengal lascars. He saw

the two English officers & was told they were to be carried to Hangaroonkette where the king was. In the evening of that day, the

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<sup>221</sup> “Deposition by Greesring,” 19 June - 27 August 1803. CO 54/12, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>222</sup> According to Cordiner, Humphries died a prisoner in Kandy. See Cordiner, *Description*, II:214.

<sup>223</sup> “Deposition by Greesring”.

<sup>224</sup> “Deposition of Milihanage,” 6 July 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>225</sup> “Deposition of Milihanage”.

Adigaar collected all the effects which the English had left & ordered the cannon to be fired without ball as a mark of rejoicing.<sup>226</sup>

Kandyan troops released the bearers and native troops who served the British government, including Milihanage Joannes, who returned to Colombo.

Depositions in hand, North forwarded Milihanage Johannes's testimony to Hobart. The governor summarized the event in the following terms: in spite of a negotiated truce, Pilime Talaewa had directed the Kandyans to attack the capital during the occupation by the British, who relinquished the fort and departed, after which "all the English soldiers who accompanied him were treacherously murdered in cold blood."<sup>227</sup>

North understood that the prime minister had tricked him but he had difficulty comprehending why Davie would relinquish his arms

when he must have felt that the person who insisted on such an infraction of the agreement, could have no other design but that of murdering him and his men. And when he must, in common with all the army, have known that a corps of forty Europeans in good health and of two hundred Malays might cut their way through any army of Candians to any part of the island.<sup>228</sup>

Writing to Hobart on the heels of obtaining Milihanage Joannes's deposition, and having had Barnsley's account in hand for some time, North perhaps forgot that the latter stated that it was only after a number of Malay soldiers and gun lascars began to desert the British army that Davie commanded the troops to "ground their guns."<sup>229</sup> At any rate, North requested that Hobart "send me succours" in the form of one thousand men, since with a total of three thousand troops, "chiefly Europeans, a full and perfect revenge may

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<sup>226</sup> "Deposition of Milihanage".

<sup>227</sup> North to Hobart, 8 July 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>228</sup> North to Hobart, 8 July 1803.

<sup>229</sup> "Voluntary Declaration".

be taken of the Candian government, and that revenge will I think not admit of a question, either in a moral or a political point of view.”<sup>230</sup> North communicated to Hobart that he was aware that the troops of the Continental Presidencies were “all employed” but he nevertheless expressed hope that “the importance of this island and the atrocity of the act which had prevented tranquillity in it’s [sic] interior” would “induce them to strain every nerve” to supply them.<sup>231</sup> A larger military force, North reasoned, would make it possible to prevent the Kandyans access to the coast, thus keeping them from salt and salt fish, and “make a cultivation of areca nut an object of less ordinate profit to them than it is now”. North was “connecting the idea of their suffering with our indignation.”<sup>232</sup>

James Cordiner constructed his account of the war with Kandy to read as a fairly linear series of events, not unlike the manner in which the *Ceylon Government Gazette* issued regular updates about the conflict. But he occasionally allowed his readers a glimpse of information he held in his mind’s eye, with the goal of providing foresight to a perceived outcome. Relatively early in his account of the Kandyan campaign of 1803, Cordiner recounted a meeting between Frederic North and Pilime Talaewa during which the prime minister had been “observed to tremble,”

which circumstance was at that time attributed to fear; but it has since been proved that he then meditated to make Mr. North a prisoner, and was only deterred from the attempt by the force of his escort, and the unexpected arrival of the strong detachment of Malays under Colonel Barbut.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> North to Hobart, 8 July 1803.

<sup>231</sup> North to Hobart, 8 July 1803.

<sup>232</sup> North to Hobart, 8 July 1803.

<sup>233</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:201.

In this way Cordiner revealed to readers that the governor had experienced a close call. Faced with knowledge of the mass executions of the British troops at the Kandyan capital, Cordiner used this story of North's encounter with the prime minister to prepare readers that some kind of treachery would ensue.

According to one of the island's headmen, Rajakaroene, the British were accountable for grave wrongdoing, since

two generals and an army and Moottoo Sawmy (who was the enemy of our Lord the King's Crown) came to the capital and did many things against the great command of the king and which are to be looked at as very improper matters against the law of the world.<sup>234</sup>

He narrated the "massacre" as follows: having been allowed to leave the capital, British troops

marched so far as the bank of the river and remained there, then the troops (the Kandians) and chiefs who were there, asked for Moottoo Sawmy who was dangerous for both sides, as they (the English) have made some false and deceitful excuses not to deliver him, and such mischief happened to some of the (English) soldiers, by the (Kandian) soldiers who were enraged about it, but the officers and some of the soldiers are still alive having received favour and help from our Lord the king.<sup>235</sup>

Rajakaroene explained that, since the British had been deceived by the prime minister "with false & cruel assurances of treaty, and put to death by the said adigar (which is a matter that was never done by any government or nation) therefore can not enter into any treaty" while Pilime Talaewa "is not deposed of his power in Kandi". He added, "besides there were also mentioned some other matters which were all considered."<sup>236</sup> Identifying

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<sup>234</sup> Rajakaroene, "To the Great Dessave of Galle & Matura," n.d. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>235</sup> Rajakaroene.

<sup>236</sup> Rajakaroene.

the Kandyan prime minister as an enemy to both the British and Kandyan governments, the headman anticipated a stalemate until Pilime Talaewa could be removed from power.

After North notified Hobart of the mass execution but before he reported it to the public, “a free Malay, and late a servant to Ensign Robert Barry of the Malay Corps” named Mahomed Gani offered testimony to the effect that the day before the attack, “Candians, in numbers, began to assemble near [the retreating British army], and many also, on the other side of the river,” making it unlikely that the British would have been able to proceed after crossing it.<sup>237</sup> Mohamed Gani confirmed the deaths of the British officers and troops, adding that “some of the Bengal lascars & pioneers were also killed along with them, and some got off into the woods.”<sup>238</sup> Upon being asked what had happened to those hospitalized in Kandy, too sick to retreat with Major Davie, Mahomed Gani replied: “I heard that their brains were beat out with stones.”<sup>239</sup>

When news of the mass executions reached the garrison at Colombo, “it produced universal consternation” that Cordiner likened to a storm: “it was like a clap of thunder, which had been for some time portended by a dark and gloomy sky; and was followed by an awful and overpowering calm.”<sup>240</sup>

### **“Vigour, unanimity, and spirit”**

Cordiner’s narrative of the first war with Kandy offered metropolitan readers a carefully ordered version of events four years after its commencement, but it was the

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<sup>237</sup> “Deposition of Mohamed Gani,”

<sup>238</sup> “Deposition of Mohamed Gani.”

<sup>239</sup> “Deposition of Mohamed Gani.”

<sup>240</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:218.

*Ceylon Government Gazette* that served a key role in the production of information for islanders during the conflict. Commencing publication in March of 1802, the same month that the Muslim traders from Puttalam had been detained and beaten, the paper afforded North's governorship a public platform and a vehicle to disseminate information.

The stated aim of the paper was to “contain proclamations, general orders, government advertisements, judicial & all other notifications that may be deemed beneficial for the public to be informed of”, including,

advertisements of individuals announcing public or private sales, notices of lost goods, arrival & departure of ships, births, marriages, & deaths; & all other matters, that may, with propriety, come under the name of public advertisement.<sup>241</sup>

Art historian Julie Codell identifies colonial periodicals as “the most popular and powerful determinant for bridging ‘home’ or ‘mother’ country and its colonial peripheries”.<sup>242</sup> In light of the manner in which editors patched together such publications from a variety of sources, Codell credits the colonial press with the ability to produce “[n]ew, unstable, and destabilized” national identities, a function not unlike Cordiner's patched together account of the war, which also appropriated and subsumed narrative by multiple authors. Because the *Gazette* served a number of different roles, and because it commenced publication just before the outset of the war, accounts from its pages are useful in a determination of North's stated aims regarding the progression of the war and the ways in which land was described within Sri Lanka's English-language population.

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<sup>241</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 1 (15 March 1802).

<sup>242</sup> Julie F. Codell, ed. *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (Madison and Teaneck, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses 2003), 16.



The *Gazette* afforded North a means by which to effectively control practical information in Sri Lanka's British territories. And since gazettes are both provincial and plural in nature, assuming a readership much larger than a single polity,<sup>243</sup> the governor's proclamations and instructions to military officers became woven into the larger narrative of the Peninsular War. The *Gazette* included articles reprinted from other government papers, from Chennai to Martinique, hence participating in co-creation of a "scope of national interest."<sup>244</sup> Benedict Anderson found that a colony's gazette often served to create communities "apolitically", with overt political elements entering its pages over time,<sup>245</sup> but this was not the case in British colonial Sri Lanka. North's administration used the *Gazette* for direct government intervention and to communicate wartime campaign narratives based on dispatches sent from the field, mostly in real time. As such, politics and public information shared the paper's pages from its first months.

On July 13, 1803, North reported "the massacre of the British troops" in the *Gazette*. He framed the mass executions in terms of an infraction upon an agreement of capitulation, which had stipulated that the troops "should proceed with arms and ammunition, and without molestation, to Trincomalee; and also that the sick should be taken care of and carried down to Colombo after their recovery."<sup>246</sup> Given "other proofs

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<sup>243</sup> Benedict Anderson, 62.

<sup>244</sup> Benedict Anderson, 63.

<sup>245</sup> Benedict Anderson, 62.

<sup>246</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 73 (13 July 1803). One soldier is documented as surviving the attack upon those hospitalized in Kandy. "Thorn", as he is referred to by Captain L. De Bussche in *Letters on Ceylon*, "was left for dead, but contrived to crawl to a neighbouring thicket, where he was discovered the following morning." De Bussche suggested that the soldier's survival was due to the superstitions of the Kandians, who allowed him to become a part of their community because he outlived both "sickness and the sword." He added that "Thorn, is living with his wife, a Kandian Moor woman, by whom he has had a child at Point de Galle, where he fills a

of the inability of the Candians to oppose the progress of any collected European or Malay force, however inconsiderable”, North rendered the act “difficult to account for.”<sup>247</sup> As he had reported to Hobart by private correspondence, he used the *Gazette* to communicate to the public his plans to withhold salt and saltwater fish from the Kandyans. Yet in spite of North’s projection that Kandyan troops would be unable to withstand pressure from the British army, the paper began to print reports of difficulties experienced by British troops in the aftermath of the “massacre”.<sup>248</sup>

The British soldiers protecting the maritime provinces knew little of guerrilla tactics. This is borne out not only in the pages of the *Gazette* but by North’s dispatches to Hobart and the intra-island military correspondence from the latter months of 1803. The Kandyans who “slaughtered in the highlands” the British forces under Major Davie continued to execute well-coordinated attacks on many fronts of the maritime provinces. On August 29, North himself characterized the British territory as “invaded”, parts of which were “now actually occupied by the Candians, enemies of our Lord and King, and as evil disposed”.<sup>249</sup> Moreover, he reported that “disorderly persons have taken advantage of the present emergency to commit outrages & offences to the prejudice and terror of

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subordinate office in the ordinance store department.” See Captain L. de Bussche, *Letters on Ceylon; particularly relative to the Kingdom of Kandy. Illustrated with a survey of Kandy* (London: J.J. Stockdale, 1817; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1999), 62-63. Citations are from the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>247</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 73 (13 July 1803).

<sup>248</sup> North to Hobart, 8 July 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew

<sup>249</sup> Frederic North, “Proclamation at Colombo,” 29 August 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

His Majesty's loving subjects, and have entered into correspondence with, assisted and revolted unto the enemy . . .”<sup>250</sup> As result, he instituted martial law.

On September 7, the *Gazette* reported that Kandyan troops had attacked the post of Hanwella for the third time in a week but that the British successfully repelled them each time, first with “very considerable slaughter”; then with “considerable bloodshed on the part of the enemy”; and finally with “great slaughter”.<sup>251</sup> British troops confiscated the Kandyans’ guns during the third attack, as well as their standard. Several dozen lascars who had been imprisoned and coerced to serve in the Kandyan military rejoined service to the British government.<sup>252</sup> The British learned that Sri Vickrama Rajasimha had ventured as far as Hanwella with his troops but “fled at the beginning of the action” and beheaded two of his ministers as a result of the failed attack.<sup>253</sup>

By the end of September, the *Gazette* reported that Kandyan troops had organized an insurrection at Batticaloa in addition to a revolt led by a regional leader, Pandara Vanniyan, “who had already been once pardoned for rebellion”.<sup>254</sup> Kandyans “in great force” attacked the government house at Mullaitivu and “rebels and Candians had penetrated into the province at Jaffna”.<sup>255</sup> The *Gazette* wove corresponding reports of British success into the reports of Kandyan attacks. The September 28 edition of the paper also reported that the Malayan soldiers imprisoned within the Kandyan territories

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<sup>250</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 80 (31 Aug 1803).

<sup>251</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 81 (7 September 1803).

<sup>252</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 81.

<sup>253</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 81.

<sup>254</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 84 (28 September 1803).

<sup>255</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 84.

had “found means to escape and are arrived at Colombo, as well as the women and children belonging to them.”<sup>256</sup> During the last few days of September, the *Gazette* reported retreats by Kandyans from Matara, Chilaw, Ruwanwella, Galle, and Puttalam.

North notified Hobart that “[t]he enemy has been driven from our territories, overthrown in his hopes, and crippled in his resources . . .” North had received “no support whatever . . . and the change in our situation is owing (under divine providence) to the heroism of our few troops, and the vigour, unanimity, and spirit of all the civil and military servants of this government.”<sup>257</sup> North attempted now to “form a corps of caffres” and had requested Arab soldiers from Shinde under General Arthur Wellesley, the governor-general’s brother. He sent an agent to Kochin to recruit “native infantry and Malay regiments.”<sup>258</sup>

On New Year’s Day of 1804, North wrote to Hobart that he had “begun an offensive warfare on their frontiers, to keep them in alarm and dismay, and to increase their diffidence in their own government.”<sup>259</sup> These campaigns also bought him time, since it could not be “till the news of peace in Europe, or the arrival of greater reinforcements from the continent of India” that he could “take those measures for the subjugation of the country, which both safety and honour now point out to be necessary.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 84.

<sup>257</sup> North to Hobart, 15 September 1803. CO 54/11, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>258</sup> North to Hobart, 15 September 1803.

<sup>259</sup> North to Hobart, 1 January 1804. CO 54/13, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>260</sup> North to Hobart, 1 January 1804.

The *Gazette* reported two such actions in January, first at Chilaw, under the collector, Mr. W.E. Campbell. Travelling in the company of North, a nobleman visiting the island, Viscount Valentia, had the opportunity to examine firsthand the small British fort at Chilaw, describing it as “the most trifling thing I ever beheld under that name”—little more than a ditch “with a rampart of earth” and protected by “hedge-stakes”.<sup>261</sup> Yet with the assistance of “several hundreds” of Kandyans who had fled into the maritime provinces “firmly allied to us, by giving much valuable information”, Campbell penetrated Kandy territory,

where he burnt a large quantity of grain, and what was of more consequence to them, spoilt one of their largest stores of salt. He means, as soon as he can procure the assistance of a few Europeans from the garrison of Negumbo, to beat up the quarters of these six thousand fellows; and such is the cowardice and military ignorance of the Cingalese, that he will probably completely effect this with one hundred men.<sup>262</sup>

A second account acknowledged an action undertaken by the commander at Puttalam, Ensign Purdon, who “made small incursions into the Seven Corles” which “occasioned great detriment to the enemy, and been accompanied with no loss to ourselves.”<sup>263</sup>

Valentia noted that Purdon had been “preparing for an expedition against three Cingalese villages, and for this he talks of taking a sufficient detachment from a garrison consisting of only sixty men!”<sup>264</sup> Both offenses featured hastily assembled civil servants or military personnel who put into action North’s call for the “necessary subjugation of the

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<sup>261</sup> Annesley, George, the Viscount Valentia. *Voyages and travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806*. 3 vols. (London: William Miller, 1809), I:327.

<sup>262</sup> Valentia, I:328.

<sup>263</sup> Supplement, *Ceylon Government Gazette* 102 (20 January 1804).

<sup>264</sup> Valentia, I:332.

country.”<sup>265</sup> North believed control of the Kandyan provinces was possible if approached incrementally.

The governor began to envision an “entire accustomation” of the Kandyans “to a new and foreign yoke”, something that “must indeed be a work of time and difficulty”.<sup>266</sup> He had already imagined governing the new British territories administratively. Adding “three and four Corles to the province of Columbo” could be effected by attaching them “to the contiguous ones on the sea-coast” and “at favourable seasons” extending judicial sessions to the interior provinces.<sup>267</sup> To enlarge Sri Lanka’s British territories in the minds of the public, the governor began to publish the names of allies within Kandyan-held regions who had aided the British during the war thus far.

North reasoned that just because the Dutch had not been able to take control of the inland provinces it did not mean they could not be controlled; one only had to look at the example of India, as well as the changes in “the habits and sentiments of this very part of the Cingalese nation, within these five years”:

I am entirely convinced that the operation of natural causes, under a mild and protecting government, would in no great length of time reduce all the inhabitants of this island to a regular, easy, and unconstrained obedience to the direct dominion of Great Britain; that the attainment of that point is the great object from which our policy on Ceylon ought never to divert; that its attainment at present is as necessary for our honour as for our interest or our safety; . . .<sup>268</sup>

But only with the addition of additional troops would conquest be possible. Towards that end, if “the brilliant success which has attended the British arms in Hindostan will allow

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<sup>265</sup> North to Hobart, 1 January 1804.

<sup>266</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>267</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

<sup>268</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

of the detachment of three or four thousand effective troops for the purpose, it may be attempted this year with every hope of success.”<sup>269</sup> Privately, North communicated to Hobart that “[n]o detachment can march through the rugged and woody roads of the interior; without a considerable attendance of coolies,” and islanders “forced into that service desert, even before they reach the enemy’s frontier.” He had begun the process of acquiring foreign laborers who, “having no local attachment will have no temptation to quit the duty on which they will be sent.” The “employment of strangers” would, he felt, benefit “in the many necessary work’s [sic] not only of improvement, but of repair, which the war indeed obliges me to suspend, but which every principle of economy would otherwise induce me to accelerate.”<sup>270</sup>

After the Kandyans had been driven out of the maritime provinces, North communicated to Hobart that due to the “massacre of the English” he would accept nothing less than the deposition of the Kandyan king and the “capture and, as far as possible, the punishment of the first Adigaar and other direct abettors of that horrid and unpardonable transaction” as conditions necessary to end the war.<sup>271</sup> “Till these ends are accomplished, I should consider myself as betraying the honour of my country if I proposed or accepted any terms of peace.”<sup>272</sup> North envisioned a military force “divided into a great number of small detachments” for the purpose of setting in “motion every

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<sup>269</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

<sup>270</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

<sup>271</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

<sup>272</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

engine of violence and policy which circumstances may present to me, and morality allow”.<sup>273</sup>

By the time North communicated as much to Hobart, he and Major-General MacDowall had deployed several detachments to effect destruction of Kandyan land and provisions. As early as August of 1803, the *Gazette* had begun to carry reports of punitive expeditions detailing the burning of areca nut, paddy, and homes in the Kandyan provinces.<sup>274</sup> The August 24 edition of the paper reported that the agent of revenue and commerce for Chilaw and Puttalam had entered the Kandyan territories and burned 1,500 parrahs of stored rice and paddy, an act that North commended, claiming that it demonstrated “vigor [sic] activity and spirit”.<sup>275</sup>

A letter printed in the September 14, 1803 edition of the *Gazette*, written by artillery officer J. Worlsey on behalf of Captain William Pollock, commander of one of the detachments, described arriving at the Ruwanwella River to find “the opposite bank lined with batteries” from which Kandyan soldiers emitted heavy fire, both “round and grape shot”.<sup>276</sup> North notified Hobart that at Ruwanwella the provisions that “fell into our

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<sup>273</sup> North to Hobart, 3 March 1804.

<sup>274</sup> Wayne E. Lee writes, “For most of history the ability of an army to destroy was defined primarily by its ability to burn, which was modified only by time and army size.” See Lee, 5. Not all instances of burning were reported in the *Gazette*. On September 8, communication reached George Lusignan, agent of revenue and commerce in Jaffna that the headmen in (British) Wirtettivoe were under the impression that their district was now “under the empire of Candy” and that they should “take care for the Wirtettivoe paddy and other government stores”. The writer added, “I will do all my best to take away the paddy from this and if any thing happened before all of them are dispatched I will burn the remainder and go back to Manar.” Letter to George Lusignan from an officer, “Wirtettivoe”, 8 September 1803. Letterbook 1413, National Archives, Kandy.

<sup>275</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 79 (24 August 1803).

<sup>276</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 82 (14 September 1803).



hands” were seized but not destroyed, while the town itself “with the king’s new palace” was “entirely burned.”<sup>277</sup>

On October 12, North again instituted martial law on the island, because “. . . the Candians are still in possession of some parts of these territories, and continue to assemble around the frontiers with a view to invade them in various points . . .”<sup>278</sup> The next week, the *Gazette* reported more instances of destruction of Kandyan arms, stores, and property. Ensign J. Pendergast of the Ceylon Native Infantry burned “numerous batteries constructed by [the Kandyan] at Hambangtotte”. Captain William Macpherson of the 12<sup>th</sup> Foot reported to MacDowall the damage effected by a detachment to Sabaragamuwa:

We have burnt about 800 houses, many of them full of paddy and areca nut, to a very large amount. We have destroyed upwards of 850 ammonams of areca nut, the property of the first adigaar, and which, at the rate of 20 rixds. per ammonam, amounts to 17000 rixds.

Captain Macpherson also reported destroying “two large and well constructed batteries.”<sup>279</sup> Cordiner may have had access to Macpherson’s notes from this march, as *A Description of Ceylon* describes in detail the “neat villages, surrounded with groves of cocoa-nut trees, and fields of rice” destroyed by the detachment due to “the mode of warfare pursued,” in which it was “necessary to burn, and destroy as much as possible.”<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> North to Hobart, 15 September 1803.

<sup>278</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 86 (12 October 1803).

<sup>279</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 87 (19 October 1803).

<sup>280</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:250.

### “A soothing amusement”

Reverend Cordiner, in his account of the first war with Kandy, pulled no punches in relaying extremes of violence, from description of the mass executions of British troops to the campaign of destruction that troops would effect upon the interior provinces. Yet his picturesque images of the island invariably depict carefully-ordered, tranquil scenes. As with his verbal description of forts discussed at the outset of this chapter, *Flag Staff at Point de Galle* (fig. 3), an aquatint based on one of Cordiner’s original drawings, depicts a landscape at peace with itself and its colonizers.<sup>281</sup>



Fig. 3 James Cordiner, *Flag Staff at Point de Galle*  
Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania

<sup>281</sup> The printmaker that produced this aquatint after Cordiner’s original design was T. Medland.

If Cordiner had sought a similar sketching opportunity in Britain, he may have chosen the ruins of an abandoned castle, but in *Flag Staff at Point de Galle* the focal point is a well-secured British flag raised over a modest Dutch building. His choice of subject was hardly random. With this image he celebrated colonial conquest already achieved—Britain’s seizure of the island from the Dutch in 1796—a step towards complete conquest of the island.

Aside from serving as evidence of British colonial dominance in Sri Lanka, what would have been the purpose of this image in Cordiner’s book? A suitable answer may be found in the handwritten passport North produced for Cordiner to take with him upon leaving the island. North characterized the chaplain as “diligent in the execution of his duty, innocent in his conversation and manners, and human, beneficent, and charitable in an exemplary degree”. Specifically, he described Cordiner’s role and duty in Sri Lanka as “exercising the functions of his holy ministry to the spiritual advantage *and comfort* of His Majesty’s Subjects under our government professing the religion of the Church of England”.<sup>282</sup>

Kim Ian Michasiw, in his essay, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” referred to the employment of the picturesque in a colonial context as a “comforting frame”.<sup>283</sup> And when postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak asks, “When and how does the love of mother tongue, the love of my little corner of ground, become the nation thing?” she posits that, when nationalism is unpacked, “this love or attachment is more like

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<sup>282</sup> “We Frederic North the Governor . . . ,” 13 March 1804. Add MSS 88900/1/70, British Library, London. Emphasis added.

<sup>283</sup> Kim Ian Michasiw, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” *Representations* 38 (Spring 1992), 100 (n. 67).

comfort.”<sup>284</sup> If the “comfort is taken away,” she adds, “there is a feeling of helplessness, loss of orientation, dependency, but no nation thing.”<sup>285</sup> Like Cordiner’s role as a garrison chaplain in Sri Lanka, his picturesque images in *A Description of Ceylon* provided his metropolitan readers with comfort.

But there is more to *Flag Staff at Point de Galle* than its usefulness as an instrument of comfort to readers. A look into Reverend William Gilpin’s *Observations on the River Wye* demonstrates as much. Standing before the town of Newberry, Gilpin decided that the view “furnished little amusement.” As if offering a concession to his readers, he added, “But if it is not *picturesque*, it is very *historical*.” Gilpin explained that, “In every *historical country* there are a set of ideas, which peculiarly belong to it”:

*Hastings, and Tewksbury; Runnemede, and Clarendon, have all their associate ideas. The ruins of abbeys, and castles have another set: and it is a soothing amusement in travelling to assimilate the mind to the ideas of the country. The ground we now trod, has many historical ideas associated with it; two great battles, a long siege, and the death of the gallant Lord Falkland.*<sup>286</sup>

Here Gilpin offered a prescription for artists in the event that a landscape failed to amuse—that is, when it failed to conform to the rules of the picturesque: acknowledge the site’s history. Historical interaction with the landscape was a way of perceiving land that Gilpin developed in other publications, as well, as in as *Observations on the western parts of England, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*, where he situated numerous

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<sup>284</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Nationalism and the Imagination* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2010), 13-14.

<sup>285</sup> Spivak, 16.

<sup>286</sup> William Gilpin, *River Wye*, 150-151.

monarchs and ancient Britons in relation to the domestic landscape.<sup>287</sup> To “assimilate the mind to the ideas of a country”, he found, is “a soothing amusement” of its own.<sup>288</sup>

And if the landscape was too new to British history to hold associative ideas? Neither castles nor abbeys, or monuments recalling long-remembered sites of (British) battles were available for the amateur artist to sketch or describe in Sri Lanka, so Cordiner produced instead representations of the structures at hand, such as the flag staff at Galle, to record a new imperial history. (Scotland and Wales, too, had recently become a “naturalized part of the new imperial nation.”<sup>289</sup>) Cordiner needed only to order the landscape into the requisite planes and add framing devices and a “damper, more clearly British” sky.<sup>290</sup>

Cordiner carefully attuned himself to practices of patriotism the British carried through the colonies. In a later book, *A voyage to India* of 1820, Cordiner recalled a dinner event with clergymen in Chennai, where “many loyal toasts were given—and several songs, full of British loyalty, were sung with great animation, by persons of a swarthy complexion, who had never seen any part of the United Kingdom.”<sup>291</sup> Speaking

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<sup>287</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the western parts of England, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty. To which are added, a few remarks on the picturesque beauties of the Isle of Wight* (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1798).

<sup>288</sup> Gilpin, *River Wye*, 150.

<sup>289</sup> Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 46.

<sup>290</sup> Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1997), 58.

<sup>291</sup> James Cordiner, *A Voyage to India* (Aberdeen: A. Brown and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), 100.

for these men, Cordiner suggested that since they enjoyed “the protection of British laws . . . for that day at least, seemed to possess the full enjoyment of British freedom.”<sup>292</sup>

When William Gilpin encouraged British travelers to assimilate their minds to the ideas of a country, he did not likely consider the consequences of this advice within a colonial context, wherein assimilation often translated into Anglicization, as in Cordiner’s *Flag Staff at Point de Galle*. Benedict Anderson found that, in spite of what might appear to be an “inner incompatibility of empire and nation,” Anglicization became England’s official nationalism, a process that enabled Britain to see itself more clearly.<sup>293</sup> Britain required “new political entities” to provide “the first real models of what such states should ‘look like’.”<sup>294</sup> In the hands of amateur as well as professional artists, Sri Lanka served as raw material for a new “Hastings, and Tewksbury; Runnemede, and Clarendon”. Anglicizing the island only required stand-ins for the more usual abbeys and castles for Cordiner to impose a visual conquest.

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This chapter argued that with *A Description to Ceylon*, garrison chaplain James Cordiner conceptualized Sri Lanka as a polity sufficiently linked to Great Britain to be worthy of contestation. To achieve as much he drew from the picturesque practices of his father, Reverend Charles Cordiner, as well as Reverend William Gilpin, Britain’s most popular writer of picturesque tours. An aquatint based on an original drawing by Cordiner, *Flag Staff at Point de Galle* was interpreted to have recalled Britain’s conquest

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<sup>292</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 100.

<sup>293</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 93.

<sup>294</sup> Benedict Anderson, 46.

of the island in 1796, when Dutch colonizers relinquished the maritime provinces. Examined vis-a-vis Britain's first war with Kandy, the print's raised Union flag over a diminutive Dutch structure offered a glimpse of British nationhood in a landscape in which Sri Lanka appeared to be at peace even in the midst of colonial conflict. Composed similarly to picturesque views of historic sites in Britain, Cordiner included the image in *A Description of Ceylon* to equate Sri Lanka's landscape with that of Britain.

This chapter necessarily devoted attention to the commencement of Britain's first war with Kandy, not only to demonstrate the ways in which Cordiner's *A Description of Ceylon* functioned as a historical account to but to establish a setting wherein North's motives for engaging in the conflict can be explored, the subject of chapter three.

Towards this end, a narrative of the campaign of 1803 was constructed from the combined sources of archival documentation, Cordiner's account, and news items printed in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*. The difficulty with which the British troops struggled to combat Kandyan soldiers inland pointed to the success of the Kandyan kingdom in successfully resisting colonization over the course of three centuries.

It was determined that James Cordiner, who included extensive description of wartime violence in *A Description of Ceylon*, inserted picturesque views of sites on the island to comfort to readers, offering them a "soothing amusement" by aligning such sites visually with tourist destinations in Britain that carried historical associations. During the first war with Kandy another picturesque artist, Henry Salt, visited the island and used picturesque formulae to effect a different purpose: to emphasize the importance of Sri Lanka's natural resources to the colonial economy, as discussed in chapter three.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MR. SALT'S "PERFECT TROPICAL SCENE"

Travel accounts produced by Henry Salt and George Annesley, the Viscount Valentia, who visited Sri Lanka during Britain's first war with Kandy, stressed the importance of the island's natural resources to the colonial economy. Conveying the attitudes and practices of landowners in the metropole engaged in the improvement of private property, Salt and Valentia emphasized the necessity of altering the landscape to make the island more productive agriculturally and safe for British troops and civil servants. Both viewed Sri Lanka in terms of the picturesque, imposing upon the island a way of seeing land and people that equated it with the British countryside. The education of Henry Salt, a professional artist, is relevant to this discussion, as it was undertaken during an era of profound change to the rural landscape of Britain, which coincided with the rise and popularity of the landscape genre. Salt's design for an aquatint, *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*, is a case in point: a "perfect tropical scene" by a young painter who never intended to produce landscape imagery yet found himself working with landscape practitioners at every turn in the path of his training.

Governor Frederic North's approach to colonial land management is characterized here as an extension of metropolitan practices under George III. A document that indicates as much is North's "Considerations on the Wood of Ceylon," a testament of the governor's zealotry about the island's trees, the produce of which was the basis of Sri



Lanka's export economy. The writings of Adam Smith shaped North's attitudes about the island's natural resources, providing this governor with a vision for land management that appealed to his sense of morality; North strove to benefit Sri Lanka's diverse population not only by means of taxation of private property but through implementation of large-scale public works projects that relied heavily on local labor. The governor's public works program was well underway by the time Salt and Valentia arrived on the island. Profound physical alteration of land at North's directive is evidenced in this chapter, from the digging of canals to marsh drainage to the cultivation of gardens, fisheries, and paddy fields, and large-scale deforestation in the environs of British forts.

Scholarship on North's administration has portrayed him as a colonial governor who was single minded in his desire to conquer the Kandyan kingdom by any means and as quickly as possible. However, consideration of the governor as a disciple of Adam Smith and as one sensitive to picturesque discourse complicates this view of North. If the British occupation of Kandy in 1803 is considered in light of Smith's conception of political economy, it becomes clear that North's perceived need for access to and control of the island's natural resources may be identified as the defining factor in his decision to engage Kandy in war. Analysis of the observations of Salt and Valentia support this view. Several of North's public projects were suspended prematurely as a result of the conflict, suggesting that military engagement in the Kandyan provinces had not been planned but developed spontaneously, interfering with the governor's long-term plans for development.

If recognition of North's commitment to a particular version of political economy provides a basis for understanding British engagement in colonial warfare in Sri Lanka,

picturesque discourse may be relied upon to explain North's directive to troops to effect devastation upon the inland provinces. In this chapter, a punitive expedition undertaken in March of 1804 is explored, the action of a detachment of soldiers commanded by Captain Robert Blackall. Such campaigns destroyed crops, trees, buildings, and stores, leading to widespread starvation among the Kandyan population—this after North had characterized his relationship with the Kandyan people as a paternal one, prone to “kindness and indulgence”. The picturesque is a factor in a discussion of the destruction of land and resources in the interior, since many officers in the British army, including Robert Blackall, came from elite families that held extensive properties for which they had cultivated an aesthetic appreciation. For his part, Blackall was adept at describing the landscape but in the midst of struggle he found it difficult to differentiate between the act of describing landscape and the act of describing violence in it. North's own relationship with picturesque discourse is discussed in chapter four, where his directives to attack Kandyan land and provisions are regarded as the manifestation of a desire to “unmake” a landscape that would not conform with his picturesque vision of a colonial polity, one that was tranquil, familiar, and carefully-ordered.

While chapter five of this study addresses matters of social class relative to discussion of the colonial picturesque, class is a strong current that runs through the present chapter, as well. Upon being hired by the Viscount Valentia to serve as a private secretary and draughtsman, Henry Salt, the son of a provincial surgeon, adopted Valentia's opinions and conveyed them in his representations of the island, both visually and verbally. Reverend James Cordiner, too, constructed descriptions of land and people in Sri Lanka in a manner that shared a great deal with the opinions of the viscount, in

spite of their different social roles in Sri Lanka and within larger British society, indicating a propensity among those who possessed leisure, an interest in art, and a predisposition for travel<sup>295</sup> to defer to the aesthetic sensibilities of elites. As a product of Henry Salt's employment by Valentia, it is difficult not to read his *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*, an aquatint that appealed to a particular way of knowing Sri Lanka, as one in which access to or ownership of land that was rich in natural resources was considered as the basis for wealth.

Where chapter two analyzed imagery and writing by James Cordiner with the purpose of establishing that the chaplain crafted representations of Sri Lanka to seem enough like home to be worthy of contestation, the present chapter argues that the work of Henry Salt and his employer, the Viscount Valentia, utilized the picturesque to portray the island as an agriculturally rich site for economic exploitation. Considered in the light of Britain's first war with Kandy, imagery and text by Cordiner and Salt may be regarded as tools of conquest, inasmuch as their (published) ideas became part of the fabric of knowledge about Sri Lanka during the years in which Britain contended for the dominance of the inland provinces.

### **Valentia's first glimpse**

The collected papers of Frederic North housed at the British Library in London includes a letter from Richard, Marquess Wellesley, Governor-General of India from

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<sup>295</sup> That an Irish nobleman and a Scots clergyman had a good deal in common may have been a testimony to the extent to which the intellectual elites of Scotland's university towns tended to favor Whiggism in political matters. See Charlotte Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature: British Landscape Art in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 18.

1798 to 1805, in which Wellesley explained to North that the East India Company's Board of Directors had granted permission to George Annesley, the Viscount Valentia, to visit India for the purpose of satisfying the nobleman's "private curiosity."<sup>296</sup> Wellesley characterized the situation as unique: "The arrival of a person of that rank in India unconnected with any official situation formed so new & unprecedented a case" that he had been required to guide a number of civil and military personnel in matters of "precedence, & respect, which I deemed proper to be shewn to Lord Valentia during his progress through the Company's provinces." Wellesley "deemed it expedient from motives of obvious policy & propriety to direct that His Lordship should be received with the degree of respect due to a person of his rank in the peerage of the United Kingdoms".<sup>297</sup> Valentia carried the letter, dated November 28, 1803, from Wellesley's residence in Barrackpore to Governor North in Colombo.

Wellesley requested of North that Valentia "receive during his stay at Ceylon the same degree of attention which has been shewn to him in Bengal", adding that the viscount had "conducted himself with perfect propriety & has received my entire approbation."<sup>298</sup> North dutifully complied, and upon his arrival on the island the viscount

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<sup>296</sup> Wellesley to North, 28 Nov 1803. Add MSS 13865, British Library, London. Maya Jasanoff and Nigel Leask both suggest that Valentia's decision to travel outside of England at the time was likely motivated by a perceived need to leave Britain temporarily in the wake of an adultery scandal. Valentia's wife, Anne Annesley, claimed before a judge in 1796 that her husband was a homosexual, and that he had urged her to have an affair with a friend for the purpose of producing an heir. See Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 236, and Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 181-182.

<sup>297</sup> Nigel Leask notes that Valentia traveled in India when the East India Company was supported by a particularly large standing army, due to the company's recent conflict with Hyder Ali and the Marathas. See Leask, 163.

<sup>298</sup> Wellesley to North, 28 Nov 1803. Wellesley conveyed to North a special request from the viscount: since the latter would be visiting the Red Sea on his way back to Europe, might the

was given every courtesy. In his book, *Voyages and travels* of 1809, Valentia frequently referenced the respect he received during his visit to Sri Lanka. The deference he had been offered was on par with the respect customarily reserved for North himself, who was the third son of an earl.

On December 7, 1803, nine days after Wellesley had produced the letter on the viscount's behalf, Valentia described his first glimpse of Sri Lanka from aboard a Company vessel, the *Olive*: "The land was the Chimney Hill in Ceylon, backed by the interior mountains, covered with wood to their very summits. The shore has a bold appearance . . ." <sup>299</sup> Edging at some distance along the coast, "which is flat towards the sea, with now and then a prodigious rock rising out of the jungle", the *Olive* eventually arrived at the British fort of Hambantota, "prettily situated on a rock, and appears to have a bay close to it." Close enough now to see the details of the shoreline, Valentia wrote, "I had not hitherto seen a single cocoa-nut tree, nor any thing that looked like Asia." He also marked an "appearance of cultivation" in the landscape around the fort, and that "a beautiful green belt skirts the sea." <sup>300</sup>

Upon arriving at St. Sebastian, North's home in Colombo, Valentia's descriptions of the landscape paused, as he remained indoors for some time, indisposed, <sup>301</sup> but

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governor supply him with "expert divers from the island of Ceylon" since "His Lordship is desirous of availing himself of the opportunity which will be afforded by his voyage . . . to complete his collection of shells and other maritime productions". It would be incumbent upon the viscount to "furnish the usual security for returning them to India in safety & free of expense to the Company."

<sup>299</sup> Annesley, George, the Viscount Valentia. *Voyages and travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806*. 3 vols. (London: William Miller, 1809), I: 264.

<sup>300</sup> Valentia, I:265.

<sup>301</sup> Valentia, I:277.

traveling along the coast in preparation for his departure he continued to record his opinions of sites he observed firsthand. He registered concern that “cocoa-nut groves and jungle” at Galle fort

come too close to the water’s edge, and the skirts of the town, for the air to be salubrious. There must be a complete clearing of the belt between the mountains and the sea, before we can either reside in it or even conquer it; otherwise it will ever continue a grave of Europeans.<sup>302</sup>

For that matter, “clearing the forests and jungles” would undoubtedly increase “communication across the island between our seaports and settlements on the opposite sides” and afford “an improvement in the healthiness of the country.”<sup>303</sup> An anonymous reviewer of Valentia’s book found it suitable that the viscount acknowledged aspects of the island that required “improvements”:

The habits of a British nobleman lead him almost inevitably to a consideration of the welfare of the body politic; and from the familiarity of his ideas with proposals for public advantage, he conceives and communicates advice, intended for the improvement of countries in which he travels.<sup>304</sup>

The reviewer found that “politics” was not a subject with which Valentia appeared to be explicitly concerned, “yet there are many political observations, which appear to be founded on a just sense of existing circumstances, as well as of permanent principles.”<sup>305</sup>

While staying at North’s residence in Colombo, Valentia had learned a great deal about Sri Lanka’s political and economic situation. By the time he arrived on the island

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<sup>302</sup> Valentia, I:267-268.

<sup>303</sup> Valentia, I:300-301.

<sup>304</sup> Unsigned review of *Voyages and travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806* by George Annesley, the Viscount Valentia, *The Literary Panorama* 7 (1810), 31.

<sup>305</sup> Unsigned review of *Voyages and travels*, 31.

North had already devoted considerable attention to improvements in the maritime provinces in the form of public works projects as well as large-scale agricultural reform. The projects that North launched for the purpose of advancing the island's military and economic development involved alteration of considerable portions of landscape, especially in the vicinity of the government's fortresses. In his February 1802 dispatch to the Court of Directors, North reported that he had ordered the removal of trees from land stretching between the harbor of Trincomalee and both of its forts, one of which was situated a significant elevation from the coastline. Though expensive it was a project that North considered to be crucial for the health of the garrisons in light of reigning fears about forest miasma, as well as the effectiveness of the forts as strongholds, since the removal of trees increased soldiers' visibility of the environs.

North also commenced construction of a canal from Kalpitiya to the Kalutara River, stretching towards Galle on the island's south coast, and determined that "a long line of low & marshy ground lying between Colombo & Negumbo, & called Mootoo-Raja-Ville" (Muthurajawela) should be cultivated.<sup>306</sup> If "so great a tract of land can be rendered productive," he reasoned, "the revenue so immensely increased, and the provision of the island rendered independent of foreign supply, I shall certainly not scruple to make the necessary advances for the undertaking."<sup>307</sup>

North expressed a desire to take on "similar improvements . . . in every part of this fertile & neglected island" but acknowledged that these projects were contingent on funding, as well as "our command of effective labour"—a way of thinking about the

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<sup>306</sup> North to Hobart, 16 March 1802. CO 54/6, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>307</sup> North to Hobart, 16 March 1802.

development of the island's economy that Hobart praised in a return letter.<sup>308</sup> (Hobart had at one time been a colonial governor as well, at Chennai, from 1794 to 1798.) To North, taking on agricultural development and public works projects would result in an environment in which the presence of productive land would be aligned with “mild . . . rational people”:

Happy indeed should I see myself, could I see the period when the natural advantages of the country will be improved by it's [sic] own resources & secured to it's inhabitants by mild habits, rational principles, & the active operation of a regular government, & equal law.<sup>309</sup>

North projected that improvement of Sri Lanka's “natural advantages” coincided with an increasingly normalized colonial administration. He assumed that a system of legal parity would follow.

Like his father, the former prime minister,<sup>310</sup> Governor North subscribed to Adam Smith's ideology of political economy. As a young man, North had enthusiastically committed himself to the study of the classics, but as a third son who needed an income, he entered into colonial leadership by way of service as Chamberlain of the Exchequer, Comptroller of Customs in London, then Secretary of State in Corsica. David Hume had determined that “[t]rade was never esteemed an affair of state, till within this last century;

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<sup>308</sup> Hobart to North, 8 February 1803. CO 54/6, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>309</sup> North to Hobart, 16 March 1802.

<sup>310</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb identifies Lord North, the father of Governor Frederic North, as one of Smith's disciples. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 54. Adam Smith personally prepared a copy of *Wealth of Nations* for Lord North. See James Buchan, *The Authentic Adam Smith: His Life and Ideas* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 128.



nor is there any ancient writer on politics, who has made mention of it”;<sup>311</sup> as such, Adam Smith’s ability to reconcile “liberty and empire”<sup>312</sup> would have offered philosophical relief to North and to others like him who found themselves engaged in careers requiring expertise in trade. Smith’s concern was “the totality of interest of all the people who constituted society”<sup>313</sup> and North sought to enlist the labor of islanders in the large-scale projects undertaken by his government with a view towards bettering their lives. At times his plans proved optimistic but impractical, as when he mandated that each land deed be registered and “authenticated by a figure or a map” from the office of his surveyor general, Joseph Eudelin Jonville, a scheme that the surveyor general’s office did not have the personnel to support.<sup>314</sup>

Adam Smith was ambivalent about colonial expansion. He wrote that “the European colonies in America and the West Indies arose from no necessity” and all Columbus found upon reaching “St. Domingo, and in all the other parts of the new world he ever visited, [was] nothing but a country quite covered with wood, uncultivated, and inhabited only by some tribes of naked and miserable savages.”<sup>315</sup> Smith characterized England’s advent into colonial enterprise as following at the heels of a “project of commerce” on Spain’s part,<sup>316</sup> which had given way to a surprisingly effective “project of

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<sup>311</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 146; David Hume, *Essays Moral and Political* (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid, 1741), 175.

<sup>312</sup> Armitage, 147.

<sup>313</sup> Himmelfarb, 59.

<sup>314</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 19 (21 July 1802).

<sup>315</sup> Dugald Stewart, ed. *The Works of Adam Smith, L.L.D.*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: T. Cadell and W. Davies, et al, 1811), III:349.

<sup>316</sup> Stewart, ed., III:356.

conquest” stimulated by the search for silver and gold mines. England, having come up empty in this regard in the New World, found itself in possession of “a waste country.”<sup>317</sup> But when thinly populated by natives, Smith posited, the “colony of a civilized nation . . . advances more rapidly to wealth and greatness than any other human society.”<sup>318</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, Sri Lanka could not be described as “thinly populated,” given the ongoing presence of a militarized inland kingdom that proved impervious to colonial conquest, in addition to a diverse population in the maritime provinces, including a large number of Dutch inhabitants who technically were prisoners of war throughout North’s governorship but nonetheless were woven into the fabric of virtually every aspect of British life on the island. Yet Smith’s characterization of a colony as a “waste country” with potential to develop “to wealth and greatness” must have struck a chord with North. Though Smith’s assumptions about the apparent ease of colonial development in a waste country relied on the availability of cheap and fertile land, laborers to clear and farm it, and capital to pay the laborers—none of which North had—the governor focused his efforts on improving the land available to the British government through large-scale development projects and through taxation of private property.

In September of 1802, the *Ceylon Government Gazette* published a report of North’s visit to the site of one of his signature projects, the Muthurajawela marsh, accompanied by his agent of revenue and commerce, the civil engineer, and others. The paper described the object of the project as follows: “to drain, embank & render [it]

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<sup>317</sup> Stewart, ed., III:358.

<sup>318</sup> Stewart, ed., III:358.

cultivable”: Further,

When the admission of salt water shall have been entirely prevented, sluices will be constructed at the Lake of Maha Elle in order to afford a regular & controllable supply of fresh water, for the necessary irrigation of such portions of land are allotted to the culture of rice.<sup>319</sup>

The *Gazette* put forward the idea that a combination of natural declivities in the landscape in conjunction with the abundant presence of water naturally lent itself to the use of mills in the area, “by which means the disadvantage of transporting the grain to market in its course & more unportable form will be obviated.” The paper validated North’s optimism about the effect of engaging the labor of local inhabitants, reporting that workers had acquired “habits of activity and skill”; moreover, “there has not been one instance of desertion among those persons since the commencement of the work”. North descried the practice of using forced labor, admittedly “the shortest journey of a governor” but one that he equated with the “desolation of a province”.<sup>320</sup> If the employment of large numbers of islanders on government projects was less efficiently managed by the British than the Dutch, he reasoned, the inhabitants’ “perfect contentment” was worth it, and marked a departure from a period in the island’s history—“Dutch Time,” he called it—when “[i]t seldom happened that all the [colonial] settlements . . . were in a state of perfect tranquillity.”<sup>321</sup>

U.C. Wickremeratne characterized North as an administrator who tried but failed to pick up the pieces after Robert Andrews, a revenue superintendent for the East India Company, implemented devastating changes to systems of property ownership and labor

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<sup>319</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 30 (29 September 1802).

<sup>320</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 30.

<sup>321</sup> North to Hobart, 10 September 1802. CO 54/7, National Archives, Kew.

in 1796. North explicitly objected to Andrews's "reforms" and, to the extent possible, restored the prior (Dutch) system of administering land grants before attempting new, albeit slower, reform. In spite of his failure to create a practical registration system for property ownership through the surveyor general's office, the governor's priorities eventually emerged. They included prevention of "encroachment upon government land" and discouragement of communal ownership of land among traditional Lankan families; introduction of land grants for the purpose of agricultural development and taxation on waste land and forest land; the enabling of non-British Europeans to hold land, upon renunciation of allegiance to other countries; and creation of a board of commissioners within each area to act as coroners and registrar, whose responsibility it was to "visit a deceased's home, make an inventory of the deceased's possessions and divide them among his or her heirs" or, if necessary, bring the matter to a provincial court.<sup>322</sup>

In the eyes of his successor, Governor Thomas Maitland, Frederic North had prematurely attempted the "establishment of a system of private property" on the island.

It was as if

when we were in this state of society, if one of the ancient barons had pulled out of his pocket Adam Smith, and said, I will apply to you vassals whose situation renders it impossible to carry into effect, all the rules and regulations laid down by him for society in the last state of civilization and wealth.<sup>323</sup>

Alicia Schrikker posits that Maitland had no problem with North relying on the ideas of Adam Smith, but rather he disagreed with "how and on what timetable this progress

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<sup>322</sup> North to Hobart, 10 September 1802.

<sup>323</sup> Alicia Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform* (Leiden and Boston: Brill), 2007, 189; Thomas Maitland, general dispatch, 31 January 1806. CO 54/20, National Archives, Kew.

could be achieved.”<sup>324</sup>

North also projected that the natural resources of colonial Sri Lanka could benefit the British government’s civil servants in retirement. He proposed to the minister that money for pensioners be acquired by developing “large tracts of ground” or “gardens” of cotton, coffee, pepper, indigo, and “such other articles of Indian produce & European consumption as are not included in the exclusive trade of the Company”.<sup>325</sup> It might be possible, he reasoned, for people to invest in the gardens but to arrange for the produce to be exported to England, “like that of a West-Indian Estate”.<sup>326</sup> Such a program was contingent on researching

the probable demand & consumption of the articles of Ceylon produce in England: the value which would be given for them there; the expense of their plantation & cultivation here; & the rate of interest at which money would be obtained here on such security.<sup>327</sup>

And the opening of the canals, he added, would enable “free circulations of the produce of the provinces” and serve to replenish the funds required for the outlay of the gardens, since travel by canal required payment of tolls. Besides, “the habits of cheerful & well directed labour, which the inhabitants will acquire” from the canal project would be a kind of repayment in itself.<sup>328</sup>

North extended his ideas about betterment of the island’s inhabitants not only to future pensioners and local laborers but to children. According to Reverend James Cordiner, North planned to establish a “higher school” for children “who had given

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<sup>324</sup> Schrikker, 189.

<sup>325</sup> North to Hobart, 24 November 1802. CO 54/7, National Archives, Kew

<sup>326</sup> North to Hobart, 24 November 1802.

<sup>327</sup> North to Hobart, 24 November 1802

<sup>328</sup> North to Hobart, 24 November 1802.

proofs of extraordinary talents and merit in the Cingalese and Malabar schools”.<sup>329</sup> In the new school they “should be taught Latin, the poetic Cingalese, ancient Tamul, Pali, Greek, Arabic, Persian, and Moors; mathematics, algebra; civil, ecclesiastical, and natural history.”<sup>330</sup> North intended to examine candidates personally, after which “a sufficient number of them” would be sent to England where they would be “educated at public expense, until they should be judged capable of receiving holy orders, after which they were to return to Ceylon, and be instituted into the office of parish priests.”<sup>331</sup>

In light of North’s references to the perceived benefits for those who provided labor for his public works projects, it may be useful to consider that early nineteenth-century British colonizers not only carried values of land management associated with improvement, agricultural development, and other aspects of political economy but attitudes towards the island’s inhabitants as a potential workforce. Alun Howkins has identified and published a document about the life and work of Edward Kilner, born in the early nineteenth century near Ashdown Forest, in East Sussex, a laborer with limited rights to the forest. Kilner mined the forest resources, from lime to firewood to fine woods, some of which he probably sold. Because of his access to woodlands, Kilner only worked one-third of the year, a lifestyle that, while poor, afforded him greater freedom than laborers without access to forest resources. Howkins suggests that people like Kilner “stood literally on the margins of work (as casuals) and landscape (the forests were bad

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<sup>329</sup> James Cordiner, *A Voyage to India* (Aberdeen: A. Brown and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), 194.

<sup>330</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 195.

<sup>331</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 195-196.

land at the edge of the cultivated).”<sup>332</sup> Waste land was widely considered as land that supported “wasteful” people that “could be better used in cultivation”.<sup>333</sup>

Moreover, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have found that, for those who provided the physical labor to enact enclosure-style changes in the New World, enabling European agricultural practices and large-scale management of natural resources, “[t]error was inherent, for such work was a curse, a punishment.”<sup>334</sup> The “hewers of wood and the drawers of water” had long been “slaves, though the difference was not yet racialized”. Such labor produced “the infrastructure of merchant capitalism”:<sup>335</sup> “clear-cutting of woods, the draining of marshes, the reclamation of fens, and the hedging of the arable field—in sum, the obliteration of the commoning *habitus*.”<sup>336</sup> Given the particularly harsh associations with large-scale improvements, it is not surprising that North, by way of Adam Smith, sought to put a positive face on such work.

North’s commitment to improving the island’s landscape reflects the metropolitan climate under George III, who, during the early decades of rule, increased by nearly fifty percent the amount of British waterways suitable for inland navigation.<sup>337</sup> The crown generally initiated improvements to the domestic landscape at the “regional or even

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<sup>332</sup> Alun Howkins, “A Defence of National History,” in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Vol. 1: History and Politics*, Raphael Samuel, ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 106.

<sup>333</sup> Howkins, 107.

<sup>334</sup> Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 49.

<sup>335</sup> Linebaugh and Rediker, 49

<sup>336</sup> Linebaugh and Rediker, 43.

<sup>337</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 414.

parochial level” and often such improvements were small in scale.<sup>338</sup> North’s comfort with, and enthusiasm for, changing the island physically may have been due to a perception on his part that he made change on a relatively small scale, or that such changes would be regarded as provincial, since much of the focus for his projects lay along the island’s southwest coast. Shortly after he was named its governor, North referred to Sri Lanka as “my little island of cinnamon.”<sup>339</sup>

Viscount Valentia lauded North’s agricultural and public works projects, acknowledging in his book the new cinnamon gardens in the vicinity of Negombo and the draining of the Muthurajawela marsh.<sup>340</sup> He also noted the repair of tanks, dykes, wharves, warehouses, and existing canals.<sup>341</sup> Valentia pushed for an aggressive policy of landscape alteration, advocating widespread deforestation, writing that “the vallies, and more especially the banks of the rivers, should be freed from the close brush wood” since it was “under the branches of these shrubs, which again throw out roots in every direction, that the fatal jungle-fever is probably generated.”<sup>342</sup> As the viscount departed from the island, even the Palk Strait was not above recommended improvement. Punting up its winding channel against monsoon winds, Valentia remarked, “Could it not be made straighter, and deepened, it would be a most valuable acquisition to the coasting trade: as

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<sup>338</sup> Langford, 391.

<sup>339</sup> Schrikker, 143; North to Wellesley, 31 July 1798. MSS add 13866, British Library, London.

<sup>340</sup> Valentia, I:312

<sup>341</sup> Valentia, I:315

<sup>342</sup> Valentia, I:313



it is, none but small vessels attempt to pass.”<sup>343</sup> In sum, Valentia found the island not yet primed for full potential and merely a “land of promise”.<sup>344</sup>

In spite of his comments about the benefits to be gained by deforestation and other changes to the landscape, Valentia, like North, developed a high regard for the island’s fruit trees and fine woods. The viscount betrayed an education from North in this matter, as when he described the problems the governor had confronted upon arriving in Sri Lanka in 1798. North had found that native civil servants of rank had “impoverished the woods by cutting down all the beautiful species of timber; . . .”<sup>345</sup> Valentia considered the island’s cocoa-nut palms, especially, worthy of North’s attention. When “close planted” they appeared “to prevent the growth of underwood; might it not be employed for this purpose on the banks of rivers?”

If all shelter were removed, even in the lowlands, the ground crops might be injured by too much opening them to the sun and wind, and the effects, even on the fruit trees, might be unfavourable. But tall trees would protect, without stopping the circulation of air. Clumps of them, and hedgerows, ought to be planted when the jungle and underwood are cleared. Fire cannot be employed to destroy the cover in Ceylon, as the trees are never sufficiently dry: this is perhaps a fortunate circumstance, since the effects of fire cannot be restrained, and the fine cabinet woods of Ceylon are worth preserving.<sup>346</sup>

Here Valentia imposed a property owner’s eye for the picturesque upon Sri Lanka’s landscape. His references to “clumps” of trees and “hedgerows” recall British landowners’ concerns with achieving a sense of visual balance through irregular groupings of landscape components, including shrubs and trees. Valentia registered

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<sup>343</sup> Valentia, I:336-337

<sup>344</sup> Valentia, I:314.

<sup>345</sup> Valentia, I:314.

<sup>346</sup> Valentia, I:313.

disgust upon learning that the lyrical sounding “cinnamon gardens” at Colombo were not proper gardens, that is, designed according to metropolitan aesthetic standards, but “a jungle of cinnamon, and no [sic] otherwise interesting.”<sup>347</sup> As for cinnamon itself, he surmised

I have not much to add to the accounts that have been given by other writers. The Dutch had permitted a considerable proportion of private property to get intermingled with it. Mr. North, however, has formed other gardens near Negumbo, which will, in time, produce the whole investment, when the garden near Columbo may be disposed of for other purposes.<sup>348</sup>

For Valentia, this “great commercial staple of the island” was only interesting inasmuch as it remained exactly that—a commercial staple.

The viscount’s opinions about property, as when he wrote that the Dutch had permitted a considerable portion of cinnamon to become “intermingled” with “private property”—are worth exploring and a subject he frequently addressed in his account of travel on the island. In one case, enumerating the stereotypical vices of the natives, he pointed to Dutch policy, since “under the Dutch Government they had no choice but to be poor and idle, or work for nothing; and it is no wonder that they preferred the former: now that their property is secured to them, they gradually become more industrious.”<sup>349</sup> Unlike the Dutch, North permitted estate division. Valentia noted that North had also “established officers in each district for the registry of lands, under the conviction that giving a man a clear and undisputed title to his estate, is the best way of attaching him to

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<sup>347</sup> Valentia, I:274.

<sup>348</sup> Valentia, I:311-312.

<sup>349</sup> Valentia, I:305.

his country.”<sup>350</sup> Primed by North, the viscount included in his book a reference to the governor’s decision to overturn the “Madras system,” which Valentia characterized as “possibly more rational in its principles [than the Dutch system]” but “more violent in its operation, more repugnant to the feelings of the people, more destructive of their usages, and more subversive of their property.”<sup>351</sup>

British colonial expansion coincided with an increase in domestic enclosure practices, and as such it is prudent to consider the concepts and practices of land use in Sri Lanka in an analogous manner.<sup>352</sup> Patrick Duffy, in his study of documented struggles on landed estates in eighteenth and nineteenth century Ireland, has identified “a collision between the top down intension of the powerful landowning elite for neat and ordered landscapes, neat and docile tenantry, regulation, control and asset management, and local, impoverished and untidy tenant resistance.”<sup>353</sup> Valentia’s approach to land, resources, and the inhabitants of Sri Lanka had a good deal in common with the landowners Duffy writes about. Valentia was a member of the Irish landed elite.

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<sup>350</sup> Valentia, I:310-311

<sup>351</sup> Valentia, I:314.

<sup>352</sup> According to David Abernethy, in an attempt to create overseas empires, colonizers incorporated entire regions “in a kind of global enclosure movement”. See David Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 6. Moreover, Roger Sales writes that “the rate of enclosure increased during the Napoleonic wars, according to some calculations by almost 50 percent. The Great Enclosure Act of 1801 made it easier for the adventurers to fight Napoleon in the ditches and hedgerows of the countryside.” See Roger Sales, *English Literature in History, 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 80.

<sup>353</sup> Patrick Duffy, “Colonial Spaces and Sites of Resistance: Landed Estates in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland,” in *(Dis)Placing Empire: Renegotiating British Colonial Geographies*, Lindsay J. Proudfoot and Michael M. Roche, eds. (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 36-37.

The viscount's attention to matters of property were also manifest in the way he described North's private residences on the island. After staying with the governor at St. Sebastian, in Colombo, "situated very prettily on a freshwater lake, that nearly insulates the fort, of which there is a pleasing view,"<sup>354</sup> Valentia traveled to Arippu, the site of North's neoclassical mansion. Valentia had found North's house in Colombo "wretched, having been transformed into a habitation from a powder magazine; and within a hundred yards the Dutch had placed the powder mills, now likewise rendered habitable, where I immediately took up my residence", but in some ways he preferred it to the governor's residence at Arippu.<sup>355</sup> The viscount described North's new mansion as "a house at the expense of four thousand pound sterling . . . a pretty piece of Doric architecture" but with an interior "inconvenient, and small."<sup>356</sup> He preferred St. Sebastian because it possessed "the benefit of beautiful scenery, and lofty shady trees; whilst here [at Arippu] nothing can be more unsightly than the country around, which is a perfect flat, sandy, and without a tree." He acknowledged to his readers that North planned a garden at the residence, "but for years nothing but the ocean, and as dreary as a waste land, will be visible from the windows."<sup>357</sup>

That Valentia articulated an appreciation for "beautiful" scenery and worthwhile "views" of course betrays his reliance on picturesque discourse, which David Watkin describes as "the universal mode of vision for the educated classes" in the century

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<sup>354</sup> Valentia, I:274.

<sup>355</sup> Valentia, I:274.

<sup>356</sup> Valentia, I:335.

<sup>357</sup> While undertaking construction of the Doric, North lived in a "cool and spacious" bungalow near the residence of "a little fort-like house" where "a Mr. Nagle resides, who is the acting architect." See Valentia, I:335.

stretching from 1730 to 1830.<sup>358</sup> Valentia used the word “picturesque” to indicate his approval or disapproval of a landscape. When travelling by palenquin to Amblanangoda on the southwest coast, Valentia described

the river just before sunset, where a boat was ready to take over the pananquins. . . . The river was clear, and the bank was covered with jungle to the water’s edge. . . . The country the whole way was undulated, and occasionally broken by the most picturesque rocks; the vegetation as rich as ever and the sea constantly close on our left hand. . . .<sup>359</sup>

Or when traveling farther to the north, after passing “close to the salt marshes that are to be drained, through a country that was more open, but less picturesque, than usual,” Valentia was relieved to find the home of “Captain Blackwall [sic] situated close to a beautiful lake”. Of the scenery near Blackall’s home at Negombo, Valentia wrote that “[t]he country around is a perfect flat, yet the lake and cocoa-nut groves formed a pretty scene which Mr. Salt drew.”<sup>360</sup>

### **Salt’s “perfect tropical scene”**

Marquess Wellesley did not mention Henry Salt in his letter of introduction on Valentia’s behalf, but Salt traveled with the viscount to Sri Lanka, as he had to India, as his “secretary and draughtsman”.<sup>361</sup> Valentia chose two landscape images by Salt for

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<sup>358</sup> Charles Watkins, *Trees, Woods and Forests: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 107; David Watkin, *The English Vision* (London and New York: Harper & Row, 1982), vii.

<sup>359</sup> Valentia, I:225.

<sup>360</sup> Valentia, I:277.

<sup>361</sup> J.J. Halls, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt, Esq. F.R.S. &c., His Britannic Majesty’s late Consul General in Egypt*. 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley), 1834, I:62.

inclusion in *Voyages and travels*.<sup>362</sup> In 1809, the year that Valentia published his book, Salt published his own account of travel, *Twenty four views taken in St. Helena, the Cape, India, Ceylon, Abyssinia & Egypt*. Both men dedicated their books to Wellesley.

Henry Salt would later communicate to his biographer, J.J. Halls, how “kindly and hospitably” Frederic North welcomed him and the viscount upon their arrival in Sri Lanka, offering them “uniform attention and friendship”. Salt found North an “amiable, learned, and excellent man” and “from the beginning of their acquaintance till the death of the latter, many years afterwards in England,” he held the governor in a high estimation, to the extent that his friendship with North was “one of the most gratifying circumstances of his life.”<sup>363</sup>

Matthew Edney points out that Valentia and Salt were the sole tourists to visit the subcontinent “during the Company period” while the “only professional artists” to travel to South Asia to produce landscape paintings were William Hodges, who published *Travels in India, during the years 1780, 1781, 1782, and 1783* a decade after returning to the metropole, and Thomas and William Daniell, who traveled throughout South Asia and along the Indian Ocean littoral and South China Sea in the 1780s and 1790s. The Daniells subsequently published numerous volumes of aquatints based on their original drawings of Asia,<sup>364</sup> their work is analyzed in chapter five of this study. For an artist who had not yet distinguished himself in the metropole to pursue and receive an invitation

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<sup>362</sup> Henry Salt’s *View of Adam’s Peak, and Point de Galle*, as well as *The Manner of Passing a River Between Point de Galle and Columbo* are included in the first volume of Valentia’s *Voyages and Travels*.

<sup>363</sup> Halls, I:80.

<sup>364</sup> Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1997), 59.

from the viscount to travel to South Asia as his draughtsman and secretary must be regarded as a rare opportunity for Henry Salt.

Salt's *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon* (fig. 4) is an aquatint based on an original drawing by the artist now in the British Library,<sup>365</sup> and the single image to represent Sri Lanka in *Twenty four views*. It is a landscape that leaves little space for the eyes to breathe, save an unimpeded glimpse of sky along the upper right quadrant of the picture plane. Almost every visible patch of ground is covered with foliage, minor pathways, waterways, and, most prominently, trees. Salt included few people, animals, or buildings.



Fig. 4 Henry Salt, *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*  
Courtesy of the British Library, London

<sup>365</sup> D. Havell produced the aquatint based on Salt's drawing.

In *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*, Salt presented the island as the visual equivalent of the typical New World colony imagined by Adam Smith, albeit in South Asia: sparsely populated, fertile, and richly wooded.<sup>366</sup> The scene emphasizes the elements of landscape that Reverend William Gilpin, the popular metropolitan writer, referred to as “Nature’s alphabet”, comprising “four letters”: “wood—water—rock—and ground”.<sup>367</sup> Salt’s emphasis upon the density of the island’s woodlands is unmistakable, and his verbal description of the scene confirms that the island’s trees were his subject. He wrote that the view had been “taken at the spot where ended a canal which had been constructed by the Dutch, for the purpose of bringing down the forests of the interior, those beautiful woods, which form the chief ornament of the cabinet-work of Europe.”<sup>368</sup> Like James Cordiner’s treatment of areca palms in *A Description of Ceylon*, Salt was comfortable conveying the importance of trees to the colonial economy while enlisting them as a necessary element in the construction of a picturesque view, writing, “The groves of cocoa-nut trees, which invariably in Ceylon, are cultivated in the vicinity of the towns add greatly to the beauty of the scene, and form a roof of foliage impervious to the rays of the sun.”<sup>369</sup> Unsurprisingly, given the company he kept on the island (Valentia and North), Salt concluded his description of the view by calling attention to the nearby harbor of Galle, which he positioned as a site for potential improvement (“it might be

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<sup>366</sup> See especially Smith’s chapter, “Of Colonies,” in Stewart, ed., III: 343-485.

<sup>367</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. Relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the summer of the year 1770*. 3rd ed. (London: R. Blamire, 1792), 85.

<sup>368</sup> Henry Salt, *Twenty four views taken in St. Helena, the Cape, India, Ceylon, Abyssinia & Egypt* (London: William Miller, 1809).

<sup>369</sup> Salt, n.p.



rendered more safe, by removing several rocks, which make the entrance dangerous”).<sup>370</sup> In *Voyages and travels*, Valentia recorded the date that Salt sketched this “little canal”: December 19, 1803. He referred to it as “a most perfect tropical scene”,<sup>371</sup> a claim that the viscount could make on the basis of his understanding of the rules of picturesque composition.

North’s conception of Sri Lanka as potentially rich for the development and exploitation of its trees no doubt informed the verbal description Salt published in conjunction with this image. The short time that North spent in Parliament in the early 1790s coincided with much state attention devoted to “the importance of the forests as lands yielding timber urgently required for the maintenance of the navy.”<sup>372</sup> A report by parliamentary commissioners dated July 6, 1792, noted past supplies of timber; the relationship between timber and law, since some timber was considered private property; naval uses for oak; current timber supplies and other uses for forest trees; and suggestions for decreasing the waste of timber earmarked for naval purposes.<sup>373</sup> Nor was this matter lost on other writers of the period when considering Sri Lanka’s resources. An author calling himself Philaethes published a book in 1817 about the island in which its “singular advantages” included “soil . . . rich beyond description, in almost every species of vegetable wealth; its forests abound in timber, fit for the construction of the most

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<sup>370</sup> Salt, n.p.

<sup>371</sup> Valentia, I:268.

<sup>372</sup> John Croumbie Brown, *The Forests of England and the Management of them in Bye-Gone Times* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd; London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1883), 242.

<sup>373</sup> Brown, 244.

durable navy”.<sup>374</sup>

In *Wealth of nations*, Adam Smith conveyed an assumption that “a country quite covered in wood” yielded timber that was “of little or no value”. Hence, the primary “obstacle to improvement” was “the expense of clearing the ground”.<sup>375</sup> North found upon arriving in Sri Lanka, however, that the inhabitants considered the island’s trees a great resource, in the form of timber, fine wood, and fruit. He devoted special attention to the island’s trees, making efforts to identify, value, preserve, and commodify them.

In a report that North prepared for Hobart, “Considerations on the Wood of Ceylon,” the governor stressed that the “variety & beauty of the wood of Ceylon point out that article as one of the most capable of yielding an increase to the income of government, among the many with which nature has peculiarly endowed this island.”<sup>376</sup> North registered his concern about the lack of forestry regulation which had led, in his estimation, to “havock & destruction” and which had resulted in his decision temporarily to prohibit wood cutting on the island unless permission was obtained from a local collector.

That North identified trees as an important natural resource is not unique to the British government in Sri Lanka. The Kandyan kings had long enforced limitations with regard to the cutting of wood. Within the inland territories it was considered a criminal

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<sup>374</sup> Philalethes, *A History of Ceylon, from the earliest period to the year 1815 with characteristic details of the religion, laws and manners of the people and a collection of their moral maxims and ancient proverbs* (London: J. Mawman, 1817; New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2003), 2. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>375</sup> Stewart, ed., III:379.

<sup>376</sup> North, “Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon,” n.d. CO 54/4, National Archives, Kew.

act to fell even one's own tree before it was past the stage of bearing.<sup>377</sup> As late as 1816, an "unlicensed person who cut grass or firewood or felled timber" in the Kandyan provinces was fined fifty rixdollars or imprisoned for three months.<sup>378</sup> Dutch colonizers attempting to meet the production goals imposed by the VOC found the Kandyan court difficult to work with in the cutting and transport of timber, which was subject to highly complex regulations. "[P]ermission to fell wood was not the same permission for the woodcutters to enter the kingdom, or to remove the timber when felled," explained P.E. Pieris of the Ceylon Civil Service. "As it took four weeks [f]or a letter to reach Colombo from Batticaloa, the seriousness to the Company of the tactics can well be realized."<sup>379</sup>

Given the "considerable anxiety" that attended the subject of woodlands in Britain, which were insufficient to support the needs of the Royal Navy, some metropolitan landowners began planting trees as part of their estate improvement plans.<sup>380</sup> As such, North's interest in trees and its potential as a resource might be expected. Even so, the governor was sensitive to the fact that many trees were claimed as private property by inhabitants. In 1804 he used his understanding of "moveable & immoveable property" in a punitive measure against inhabitants within the maritime

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<sup>377</sup> P.E. Pieris, *Tri Sinhala: The Last Phase, 1796-1815*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries Co., Ltd.; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 2001), 283. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>378</sup> Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795-1833: Its Political, Administrative, and Economic Development*, vol. 1 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1953) and vol. 2 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd., 1962), II:426.

<sup>379</sup> P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders, 1658-1796*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1999), 64.

<sup>380</sup> Watkins, *Trees, Woods and Forests*, 178.

provinces who had participated in an uprising against the British government.<sup>381</sup>

Upon qualifying his ban on wood cutting, North stressed that it would remain in effect

till I should be able to adopt & enforce such regulations as might secure to the government a source of revenue from that article, without depriving individuals of the fair-profit to which they have a right from the improvement of their property, or the people of the country, of the resources which they have hitherto drawn from the public forests for their fuel, & habitations.<sup>382</sup>

He proceeded to list the trees considered sufficiently valuable for taxation from twenty-five to fifty percent, accompanied by an explanation of the value of each. North noted the need for regulation of the sizes at which specific trees might be cut; he determined who was eligible to cut and ship trees; and he expressed the need for clarification as to the participation of individuals who had held land grants (now considered proprietors of “private grounds”) as well as local headmen in the certifying, documenting, marking, cutting, transporting, taxing, and replanting of trees. He expressed concern about local headmen and government officials who “now have the sole & unquestionable power—however strongly they may be forbidden to use it—of turning the forests to their own immediate advantage.”<sup>383</sup>

North’s careful attention to the island’s trees likely stemmed not only from his understanding of their value in the metropole and among Kandyans and previous colonial

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<sup>381</sup> Supplement, *Ceylon Government Gazette* 123 (17 June 1804). In the course of Britain’s first war with Kandy, “traitorous and hostile” headmen and inhabitants were listed in the *Gazette* and required to turn themselves in to magistrates or civil officers “& submit to justice for the offence aforesaid” or else they would “forfeit” all of their “property both moveable & immoveable . . . for use of the Crown.”

<sup>382</sup> North, “Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon”.

<sup>383</sup> North, “Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon”.

governors on the island, but from his larger understanding of the ideas of Adam Smith. While Smith characterized timber as having little value in the Americas, in general terms he advocated for the scrupulous management of a polity's resources for the purpose of ensuring "a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves;" and to provide "revenue sufficient for the publick service."<sup>384</sup> It is not surprising, then, that in "Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon," North revealed concern that the island's headmen had benefitted excessively from the mismanagement of this resource. One who embraced Smith's views of political economy would reason that the poor had long borne the brunt of supplying society's labor only to a gain a little of life's "conveniencies",<sup>385</sup> and as such organization of labor was necessary. Once achieved, the rich—in this case, the privileged headmen—with "the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires . . . divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements".<sup>386</sup>

Accordingly, the governor specified that the collector should issue licenses for cutting to those with satisfactory "character & circumstances". He specified that river agents should be "respectable persons & if possible Europeans named by government on the recommendation of the collector." Such agents, upon discovering wood that had been cut but not marked, "shall confiscate it for the use of the government, if it be a species declared valuable" and which subsequently may be auctioned, whereby the purchaser

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<sup>384</sup> Buchan, 95; Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner, and W.B. Todd, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 428.

<sup>385</sup> Buchan, 96; Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael, and P.G. Stein, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 341.

<sup>386</sup> Buchan, 63; Adam Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments*, D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 184-185.

would pay the duty. To encourage Lankan officials “to pay attention to this branch of their duty”, *mudaliyars* and headmen could keep one-fifth of the duty collected on the sale of both timber and fine woods “marked with their mark.” They were also required to document the origin of the trees cut in their territories and assess additional duty based on the distance a tree or timber traveled. Further, Lankan officials oversaw the replanting and expansion of trees throughout the island, “ten seed of the same kind planted for every tree cut down in the forests & five for every tree cut down on private grounds.”<sup>387</sup>

North required inhabitants who cut down trees on land for which they had received land grants to have the wood appraised by the local collector and pay the proper duty on it before use or resale. Land grant recipients were encouraged to plant “valuable” trees on private grounds. While the governor perceived that “the forests are every day diminishing . . . by the grants of land which government gives to individuals”, he reasoned that “it is on the possession of individuals alone, that it will be possible to ensure a succession of valuable trees” in order to protect them from “the vast numbers of elephants which range through the unenclosed country”. For this reason, native headmen and land grant recipients were to receive one-fifth of the duty paid on their own trees as a return.<sup>388</sup>

The report concluded by mandating that wood “sawed into planks or cut into beams in the interior of the country & brought down the river in that shape” required marking, “as whole trees or branches” and taxed “in the same proportion with the trees from which they are sawed at the place of sale”—an indication that the practice pictured

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<sup>387</sup> North, “Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon”.

<sup>388</sup> North, “Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon”.

by Salt in *Twenty four views*, which the artist attributed to the Dutch, was already in place, or about to be put into place, by North's government.<sup>389</sup>

In "Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon," North acknowledged a category of wood "not absolutely necessary for the use of lower class of inhabitants, but which either from their beauty or peculiar aptitude to particular uses, bear a value in commerce which may overpay the expenses of removal from the place of growth".<sup>390</sup> This list includes twenty-two trees, from calamander, jack, areca nut, and black palmyra to teak, all of which may "fairly be taxed in proportion to the increased value which they receive on transportation, & on the greater or lesser utility of their employments." Several of the group, including calamander, kadumberiya or ebony, buruta or satinwood, and nedun he designated as "beautiful woods & will undoubtedly bear a high price in Europe where marquetry & cabinet work are in general estimation"; yet "their value in this island is but small & must remain so, till the finest arts of civilized society are established here."<sup>391</sup>

Of this category, ample evidence exists of the preciousness with which early British and other European colonizers regarded the island's woods, since advertisements for the sale of homes, gardens, and estates listed under the "Ceylon Intelligence" section

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<sup>389</sup> Maria Graham reported in June of 1810 that timber was "in great plenty, and easy of access" at the port of Trincomalee, and in 1859 James Emerson Tennent wrote that "Timber trees, either for export or domestic use, are not found in any abundance except in the low country, and here the facility of floating them to the sea, down the streams which intersect the eastern coast of the island, has given rise to an active trade at Batticaloa and Trincomalie." See Graham, *Journal of a residence in India* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 2000), 121. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition. See also Tennent, *Ceylon: An account of the island, physical, historical, and topographical, with notices of its natural history, antiquities and productions*, 5th rev. ed. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), I:95.

<sup>390</sup> North, "Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon".

<sup>391</sup> North, "Considerations on the Wood on Ceylon".

of the *Gazette* often specified particular trees within postings. In August of 1804, the *Gazette* listed a house for sale with an accompanying garden “well stocked with a number of fruitbearing cocoanut, jack, mango and jambo trees”.<sup>392</sup> In October of 1807, the paper printed an announcement of an upcoming auction in Kalutara that boasted, along with “gold, silver, copper, iron, glass & china wares, household furnitures,” of various kinds of “timber”.<sup>393</sup> The following year, an executor of an estate in the Pettah<sup>394</sup> put up for sale by public auction “household furniture, jewels, gold and silver plate, glass and china wares, slaves, timber, and various books &c. &c.”<sup>395</sup> An ad for part of a plantation to be sold near the river at Kalutara listed “An upstairs building of brick & good timbers” or “strong timber” . Further, the property was “now planted with fruitbearing and young cocoanut and jack-trees”.<sup>396</sup>

Other *Gazette* ads called attention to specific kinds of wood: “drawing room couches & chairs of kalamender wood . . . a set of dining room chairs of kulliberry wood . . . also a few logs of kalamender and kulliberry wood”.<sup>397</sup> Another listing included

beautiful satinwood and calamanderwood furniture, . . . consisting of glass cases silver mounted, couches, chairs, side boards, card tables, tea tables, shade stands, liquor cases, mahogany tables, an excellent eight day house clock, in calamanderwood case; a table ditto, &c. &c.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 132 (8 August 1804).

<sup>393</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 310 (28 October 1807).

<sup>394</sup> The neighborhood in the vicinity of Colombo’s fort.

<sup>395</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 360 (21 September 1808).

<sup>396</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 386 (15 March 1809); see also no. 390 (12 April 1809).

<sup>397</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 332 (23 March 1808).

<sup>398</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 346 (22 June 1808).



One ad listed simply “mahogany blackwood, and jackwood furniture” to be offered at a sale in April of 1808.<sup>399</sup> Upon the death of an apparent woodworker, Charles Reilly, auctioneer Carel Christiaan Muller advertised for several weeks the availability of goods from Reilly’s studio in the Pettah, including satinwood and jackwood tables, “incomplete furnitures of sorts of wood, calmender wood logs, reemwood logs, satinwood logs and planks, nendoowood planks—jackwood planks”.<sup>400</sup> Two years later, in August of 1810, furniture of “jackwood . . . calamanderwood, sattinwood, nendoowood, charcrossywood” were listed as available for sale at an upcoming auction.<sup>401</sup> That year, English traveler Maria Graham visited Governor Thomas Maitland’s house at Mount Lavinia, where she observed “specimens of several kinds of wood furniture of the house,” including jackwood, satinwood, and calamander.<sup>402</sup>

Within just a few decades, one of the trees that North had “valued” highly saw its limitations as a commodity tested. The island’s former colonial secretary, Sir James Emerson Tennant, in his book *Ceylon: An account of the island physical, historical and topographical* included descriptions of ebony, kadumberiya, nedun, and tamarind wood, but reserved special commentary for calamander, “the most valuable cabinet wood of the island, resembling rose-wood, but much surpassing it both in beauty and durability”.<sup>403</sup> By the time Tennant attended to the island’s trees, however, the calamander had been “so prodigally felled, first by the Dutch, and afterwards by the English, without any

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<sup>399</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 338 (27 April 1808).

<sup>400</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 362 (5 October 1808).

<sup>401</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 467 (29 August 1810).

<sup>402</sup> Graham, 101.

<sup>403</sup> Tennent, I:97.

precautions for planting or production, that it has at last become exceedingly rare.”<sup>404</sup> A settler on the island from 1846, Sir Samuel White Baker, recalled observing a deforested site near the Mahaweli River, in which “[e]xtensive piles of halmileel logs were collected along the banks of the river, while the forests were strewn with felled trees in preparation for floating down the stream.”<sup>405</sup> Of calamander wood, he noted that it was “so rare that it realizes a fancy price.”<sup>406</sup>

Indeed, for all of North’s interest in the island’s forests, Tennent would find as early as the 1840s that

the indifference of the local officers entrusted with the issue of licenses to fell, and the imperfect control exercise over the adventurers who embark in these speculations, has led to a destruction of trees quite disproportionate to the timber obtained, and utterly incompatible with the conservation of the valuable kinds.<sup>407</sup>

Still, Tennant described the (ongoing) usefulness of the island’s trees. The “trunk timber” of the jak for every conceivable purpose both economic and ornamental”; the del, a “valuable timber, not only for architectural purposes, but for ship-building”; the halmalille, “for carts, casks, and all household purposes, as well as the hulls of [native] boats;”<sup>408</sup> the satin-wood, whose “richly-coloured and feathery pieces are used for cabinet-work, and the more ordinary logs for building purposes, every house in the eastern

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<sup>404</sup> Tennent, I:97.

<sup>405</sup> S.W. Baker, *Eight years’ wanderings in Ceylon* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 145.

<sup>406</sup> Baker, 145.

<sup>407</sup> Tennent, I:95.

<sup>408</sup> Tennent, I:96.

province being floored and timbered” with it,<sup>409</sup> and the suria, for “carriage shafts and gun-stocks”<sup>410</sup>.

Sri Lankan parliamentarian and writer Colvin R. de Silva determined that, aside from the export of nuts and fruit, North’s attention to and interest in the island’s woodlands ultimately resulted in negligible government revenue.<sup>411</sup> Regardless of the economic benefits garnered through implementation of North’s plans, surviving documentation in the form of court proceedings bear witness not only to the degree to which the British government took seriously the possibilities for exploiting this resource, but the extent to which the islanders took seriously the matter of trees as property, in the form of timber, fine wood, and fruit. One of these cases is discussed at the end of chapter four, the other in chapter five.

### “Information and gratification”

In a joint review of Valentia’s and Salt’s books, Salt’s *Twenty four views* earned praise because he “offers for inspection the places themselves, by means of his representations.”<sup>412</sup> The views in Salt’s book in some cases represented “countries of which we previously, had but little knowledge; and none, we believe, by representation.”<sup>413</sup> Accordingly, critics encouraged “the ingenious draughtsman to accept

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<sup>409</sup> Tennent, I:96-97.

<sup>410</sup> Tennent, I: 97.

<sup>411</sup> Colvin de Silva, II:486.

<sup>412</sup> Unsigned review of *Twenty four views taken in St. Helena, the Cape, India, Ceylon, Abyssinia & Egypt*, by Henry Salt, *The Literary Panorama* 7 (1810), 23.

<sup>413</sup> Unsigned review of *Twenty four views*, 23.

our acknowledgments, for this addition to our information and gratification.”<sup>414</sup> But if scenes such as *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon* were received by readers as “information” about “the places themselves”, Salt’s conception of the scene must be explored—his reliance on metropolitan ideas and patterns of representation to communicate knowledge about the Sri Lankan landscape.

Salt was born in 1780, so that the completion of his education coincided with the end of the eighteenth century, the time at which many agricultural laborers in Britain began to consider urban living due to the parliamentary enclosure acts.<sup>415</sup> J.M. Neeson summarizes the radical shift in succinct terms: “Much of England was still open in 1700; but most of it was enclosed by 1840.”<sup>416</sup> It is not possible to ascertain the degree that Salt understood the effects of the reduction or elimination of commoners’ access to rural land to the British economy, to political life, or to a range of social institutions, but given that as much as thirty percent of agricultural land previously shared by commoners entered into the hands of private landowners in just seven decades, the larger society in which Salt operated underwent a profound shift indeed, economically and ideologically.<sup>417</sup> One Unitarian writer, Dr. Richard Price, determined that the enclosure movement not only destroyed rural families but also had the effect of concentrating wealth and raising prices;

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<sup>414</sup> Unsigned review of *Twenty four views*, 23.

<sup>415</sup> Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 57.

<sup>416</sup> J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>417</sup> Neeson found that from “1750 to 1820, 20.9 percent of England was enclosed by Acts of Parliament, or some 6.8 million acres; as a proportion of agricultural land the area was much greater, perhaps 30 percent of the total.” See Neeson, 329. Further, Paul Langford notes that between the middle of the eighteenth century and 1810, Parliament passed nearly four thousand enclosure acts. See Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 435.

in short, “it intensified labour and encouraged luxury.”<sup>418</sup> Dr. Price projected that “the consequences may in time prove that the whole kingdom will consist of only gentry and beggars, or grandees and slaves.”<sup>419</sup>

The social presence of yeoman farmers and families engaged in British cottage industries dissipated, and new forms of land management and large-scale, increasingly industrialized farming practices altered the landscape physically, leading many to associate Britain’s past with a “rural idyll”.<sup>420</sup> In their study of colonial settlement in South Africa, anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff found that British colonizers often carried an ideal of a “pristine countryside” into their approach to land management, derived in large part from a feudal system “in which lord and tenant, master and servant, were bound together in a web of mutually beneficial obligations”. This, in combination with a respect for “independent peasants”—a kind of yeomanry—who “shared the outlook and interests of gentlemen and merchants” as well “a mass of poor, honest smallholders engaged in both agriculture and domestic industry” served as the basis for such a vision.<sup>421</sup> “By the end of the eighteenth century,” wrote Keith Thomas, “the educated classes had come to attach an unprecedented importance to the contemplation of landscape and the appreciation of rural scenery.”<sup>422</sup> In light of the widespread changes

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<sup>418</sup> Neeson, 24-25.

<sup>419</sup> Neeson, 24-25; Karl Marx, *Capital* (London: Dent, 1962), II: 158-159; Dr. Richard Price, *Observations on reversionary payments*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davis, 1805), 158.

<sup>420</sup> Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 71.

<sup>421</sup> Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 71.

<sup>422</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 267.

effected upon British land and those who worked in the countryside and the attendant responses to such changes by artists and their patrons in British cities, it is no wonder that Salt, who had set out to become a portrait painter, found himself instead working with landscape practitioners at every step of his education, or that the primary opportunity to present itself for working as a professional artist was in the mode of landscape representation.<sup>423</sup>

J.J. Halls, a professional artist and a relative of Salt, suggested that even though the young artist met with some success in his attempts to produce effective portrait likenesses, “the natural turn of his mind was of too versatile and excursive a nature to adapt itself easily to the sedentary and persevering habits so essential to the practice of his profession.”<sup>424</sup> Significantly, Halls characterized Salt’s approach to image making as that of one who

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<sup>423</sup> Salt studied at the free school in Lichfield, after which he attended school in Market Bosworth in Leicestershire, where one of his classmates, James Holworthy, was a proficient watercolorist who became a prominent landscape artist and teacher in London. (Halls, I:9) Salt returned to Lichfield where he completed his primary education under John Glover, with whom he studied drawing. Glover also became a well-known landscape watercolorist. (Halls, I:14.) Given that Salt, too, grew to master the landscape genre, taking advantage of access to sites that few others had the inclination or the opportunity to visit, it is telling that another of Glover’s students, Georgiana Gordon, recalled that this teacher’s “chief contribution to her painting was to teach her to ‘carry away remembrances of a scene’.” See Caroline Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists and the Amateur Tradition* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 24.

Salt’s father arranged for him to work with Royal Academy painter Joseph Farington in London, with whom Salt remained for nearly three years. (Halls, I:25.) The organizers of the exhibition, “A Decade of English Naturalism,” have pointed out that the Royal Academy did not teach painting until 1815, and never taught landscape representation. See P. Lasko, *A Decade of English Naturalism, 1810-1820* (Norwich: Norwich Castle Museum, 1969), 22. In spite of the fact that Farington, too, was a landscape painter, he agreed to teach Salt to work with oil paint, to copy imagery by “the old masters,” (Halls, I:17) and to “study . . . the human figure”. (Halls, I:19.) J.J. Halls, who visited Salt frequently, mentored the young artist “in the art of seeing objects correctly, and of representing them with truth.” (Halls, I:17.) Eventually, Farington enrolled Salt at the Royal Academy as a student, (Halls, I:19) where he (finally) worked with portrait painter John Hoppner. (Halls, I:19.)

<sup>424</sup> Halls, I:45.

loved it more as an amusement than as an employment; and perhaps it may with truth be said of him, that, with the exception of landscape, he possessed more of the taste and critical powers of the connoisseur, than of that absorbing predilection for art which usually animates the efforts of the painter.<sup>425</sup>

Upon being introduced to Lord Valentia at an exhibition, Salt had “lost no time in soliciting his lordship to allow him to embark with him in the double capacity of secretary and draftsman.”<sup>426</sup> “The world seemed opened before him” and he was well suited for the job, wrote Halls, since Salt “possessed a knowledge of his art, both with respect to landscape and figures, not unusually found among those who travel in the capacity to which he had recently been nominated.”<sup>427</sup>

### **“To ravage and burn”**

If the written or visual ideas of Henry Salt, the Viscount Valentia, and Reverend James Cordiner are used in this study to reflect metropolitan values regarding land, the same must be demanded of Frederic North. The governor’s family held two properties: Waldershare in Kent and Wroxton Abbey in Oxfordshire, the seats of which North inherited in 1817 upon becoming the fifth Earl of Guilford. Both estates included a “great house” and extensive grounds. Peter Laslett has pointed out that, prior to the Industrial Revolution, “the great house in the park was the sole centre of political authority away from the Royal Court” and as such the home and properties of the landed gentry in themselves “were the one means of expressing political influence and achievement in

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<sup>425</sup> Halls, I:5.

<sup>426</sup> Halls, I:62.

<sup>427</sup> Halls, I:65-66.

monumental form.”<sup>428</sup> When North came into his ownership of these properties he was largely preoccupied with founding a university on Corfu, but what is important here is that his upbringing, both in terms of his education as well as his family relationships, would have presumed not only the privileges attending land ownership but also its perceived public responsibilities.

That the values associated with property ownership and its privileges in Britain shaped early nineteenth-century governance in Sri Lanka was not lost on V.L.B. Mendis, who in *Foreign Relations of Sri Lanka* blamed Frederic North outright for the “tragic events”—that is, the mass executions of British troops—subsequent to the occupation of Kandy in 1803. Drawing on the link between North’s social status and that of later British administrators in Sri Lanka who also came from titled families, Mendis insisted that:

no one is more to blame than this bumbling Milord whose sole qualification for this office was his peerage and was therefore a worthy forerunner of other peers like Lord Torrington and Lord Chalmers who were to bring disaster to the British name on the island. Their outlook was coloured by the ingrained prejudices of the British upper class about perfidious chiefs and native villainy.<sup>429</sup>

To Mendis, Britain’s first war with Kandy was the result of North’s failure to achieve a successful diplomatic relationship with the Kandyan court accompanied by an ensuing paranoia on the part of the governor about the treacherous Kandyan prime minister.

Geoffrey Powell, on the basis of an understanding that North had attempted over the course of years to effect a treaty with Sri Vickrama Rajasimha for British access to the

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<sup>428</sup> Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Age* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), 171.

<sup>429</sup> Vernon L.B. Mendis, *Foreign Relations of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times to 1965* (Dehiwela: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd., 1983), 330. Viscount Torrington served as Sri Lanka’s governor from 1847 to 1850. Robert Chalmers served as governor from 1913 to 1915.



Kandyan interior, asserts that in the absence of a satisfactory resolution of the areca nut matter, “North’s opportunity presented itself”.<sup>430</sup>

Alicia Schrikker, whose *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka* offers the most comprehensive analysis of Frederic North’s government to date, characterizes North as driven by the principles adopted by the East India Company leadership on the subcontinent—including Wellesley—in the aftermath of the trial of Warren Hastings.<sup>431</sup> The former governor-general, tried in London, was nearly impeached as a result of corruption charges, ultimately bringing about widespread change in governing practices in India. Certainly North’s ideals aligned with such reforms.

It is reasonable to contextualize North in relation to Indian politics, since his governorship of the island had been answerable to the Company prior to 1802. He had even been discussed for a post as governor of Chennai and Sri Lanka simultaneously.<sup>432</sup> But in this regard Schrikker points to what is clearly evident in the archive: that during the period of dual-control, when North governed at the behest of both Company and Crown, he expressed profound dissatisfaction with the methods implemented by former Company administrators out of Chennai who had administered Sri Lanka. “By 1799, many of them were replaced by men sent from Bengal or recruited from the military

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<sup>430</sup> Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803-1818* (London: Leo Cooper, 1973), 75.

<sup>431</sup> Schrikker, 185.

<sup>432</sup> Edward Ingram, ed. *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley, 1798-1801* (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1969), 171. The Earl of Mornington (Wellesley) proposed on 31 July 1799 that Henry Dundas “recall Lord Clive honorably, and to place North in the govt, annexing Ceylon to it”.

department”, writes Schrikker.<sup>433</sup> The following years, stretching into 1802, marked a “vibrant” period for North,<sup>434</sup>

really the heyday of his rule; his despatches are very positive and the reader can really believe that he had succeeded in his aim of making the island rich and orderly. The distance between London and Colombo and the consequent limited control from London gave him extra space to follow his own course.<sup>435</sup>

Throughout North’s governorship, including this period of optimism, the archives reveal that he continued to attempt to enter into a treaty with Kandy that would have secured better access to resources in the interior provinces. But does it necessarily follow that North sought conquest of the interior kingdom for any reason and by any means possible?

Frederic North made extensive practical attempts to improve the island’s infrastructure, reinstated an effective system of taxation, and worked towards refining laws, employing Adam Smith’s principles of political economy to state the ideals, goals, and plans of his government. Yet historians who have considered North’s decision to engage in war with Kandy have characterized him as obsessed by a desire to conquer the inland provinces. As an employee of the East India Company during the early years of his governorship, North had prepared to subjugate the Kandyan provinces. But once the island became a crown colony and accountability shifted to the office of the secretary of war and the colonies, North did not reveal plans to attack Kandy or express a desire to overthrow its government. While his vision for “tranquillity” on the island did not preclude conquest, it may be asserted that his investment in managing the island’s

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<sup>433</sup> Schrikker, 147.

<sup>434</sup> Schrikker, 156.

<sup>435</sup> Schrikker, 157.

resources, coupled with active policymaking, lawmaking, and public works projects make it unlikely that he was preoccupied with plans to send British troops into hostile territory.

When he did send troops to occupy the capital in 1803, North's orders demanded "that the persons and property of all individuals not employed in arms against the British troops be protected, that all supplies which may be furnished be regularly paid for, and that no disorder be allowed." Not only was violence against the Kandyan civilian population forbidden but the property of the Kandyans was to be respected to the point that British military personal would be required to pay for any stores or agricultural goods they used. North desired to keep the inland provinces free from harm, partly because he planned to exploit its rich natural resources.

However, as seen in chapter two, upon losing Kandy and faced with news of the mass executions at the capital as well as widespread threat of invasion in the maritime provinces, North redirected the efforts of the British troops to effect havoc and destruction upon the Kandyan landscape, destroying stores and crops by means of a series of punitive expeditions during which both Kandyan and British soldiers were wounded or killed. British government troops burned entire villages, homes of the Kandyan royal family and the homes of peasants, stores of provisions, including large quantities of areca nut, and crops. At the end of this period, a full two years after the theft of goods and assaults upon Muslim traders from Puttalam, Captain Robert Blackall brought a detachment of soldiers into the island's interior, producing a report of this action to submit to the governor's office. Blackall's "Journal of an Excursion into the Seven Corles, commencing the 15th and ended the 23rd of March 1804" demonstrates a clear

attempt on the part of an officer to record knowledge about the local landscape while simultaneously working to damage Kandyan property.<sup>436</sup>

Over the course of eight days, traveling from Negombo into the Kandyan territories and back again, Blackall narrated the movements and experiences of the detachment by organizing his journal entries in two distinct columns, a “daily” column in which he intended to describe information about the activities of the troops, and a “remarks” column reserved for comments about the landscape. The journal entry on the first day, March 15, reads:

At half past 5 p.m. my detachment and coolies were clear of Negumbo, and at 20 minutes past 9 arrived at Halpy where I halted during the extreme heat of the day: got all in motion again 20 minutes before 4 and quarter past six had taken possession of a peasant’s house at Allygooly, the government rest house at the ford having been some time before burned by the enemy.

Placed next to this entry, in the remarks column, Blackall wrote, “The road so far runs thro’ our own country, is very good, & the water (of the river) excellent.” At the outset, then, Blackall intended to record details of time and distance, place names, temperature, and the troops’ activities, as well as the condition of the road and the source and quality of the water. On day two, however, while Blackall continued to record the specifics of time and place (the detachment waded through the Maha Oya River to reach the village of Badabedda and then “Aboodangany” before proceeding) he included in the entry specific description of the landscape, noting on the way “a finely cultivated and extremely fertile rice valley generally from 100 to 200 yards broad, rounded on each side by close built populous villages”. At the end of the daily entry for March 16, Blackall

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<sup>436</sup> Robert Blackall, “Journal of an Excursion into the Seven Corles,” 15 - 23 March 1804, CO 54/15, National Archives, Kew.

noted, “Fired on a great deal.” The accompanying remarks for March 16 included information about the quality of water accessed by the troops, as with the day before (here he determined the water to be “indifferent”, “drawn from wells”). But upon offering further details about the landscape, he provided additional information about the activities of the troops:

Our road this morning lay much thro’ jungle, villages however frequently appeared, and sometime stacks of paddy all of which my parties destroyed. Water (drawn from wells) but indifferent; here a succession almost uninterrupted of rich villages on each side with immense quantities of paddy in them stacked in the valley, or concealed in the jungle was all here burned; water but indifferent.

Blackall’s inclusion of a notation as to the agricultural goods destroyed points to the object of the “excursion”—the destruction of Kandyan homes and provisions.

On day three, Blackall’s detachment reached Diyadora, “which we entered without loss of any kind, tho’ frequently fired on and sharply sometimes by the foe.” He had begun the March 17 entry with “a slight alarm during the night” in the form of fire received by some of his sentries. He noted as well that his detachment had met with “Mr. Campbell’s detachment proceeding to the same goal”. A *nota bene* at the end of this entry reads: “sent out while here 3 officers parties to ravage and burn.”

While the remarks for March 17 offered description of landscape both in general terms (traversing “through paddy fields, and pretty good, with villages as usual”) as well as more specific descriptions (at one point, beset by “a steep, broad, and miry nullah, which cost much time & trouble and might greatly protect a post established there”), Blackall concluded with the following: “The country as far as the eye could reach extremely fertile and water good, all however destroyed on departure.” By day three, both

notation columns ended with comments about destruction of property. In the first category, this is regarded as an activity: “parties to ravage and burn”. In the second category, the object of the violence was upon what had been noted—the destruction of the “extremely fertile” country.

Blackall’s journal the following day, March 18, acknowledged the routes of both detachments but the progress only of his own, passing through two villages on the way to Edandawela. In the remarks column that the captain usually reserved for description of land, he wrote that his troops had been fired upon at a distance, on terrain difficult to traverse due to the nullah previously mentioned, as well as to “a steep and rugged hill the road wound over”. The troops that day also experienced “indifferent water” and later on a “pretty good” route through paddy fields. He noted no punitive action on March 18 but the following day destruction was again the goal. Both regiments headed back to Dambadeniya, and after resting in the heat of midday, they destroyed “everything in and about Dambadenia” before proceeding to and halting at Boyawalana “in the very handsome well built house of his Kandian majesty.” In Blackall’s remarks for the day, he noted that the troops had marched through “paddy fields skirted by villages” and that “all was destroyed also the house of the Duganaral and its uncommonly extensive offices and paddy stacks”. He concluded by reporting that Ensign John Foulston, “with a small light party surprised here a head man, and about twenty armed followers, wounded one, seized and shot the Cuffnt. and dispersed the remainder”. In his journal Blackall placed the destruction of “Duganal” and the seizure and killing of a man, the wounding of another, and the disbursal of the rest, in the category he had initially reserved for information about the landscape. By doing so he aligned violence against the Kandians with violence

to their property. In the “daily” column, he wrote that “everything in and about Dambadenia” had been destroyed. The particulars of the acts of violence he categorized as “remarks.”

The next day, Blackall began the journal with references to destruction of a village: “At half past five a.m. left Bowilan in flames . . . ,” after which he wrote that the troops marched on to Malgamuwa “without accident or anything worth noticing occurring”. The remarks column, too, is without description, except for the following: “I forgot to mention our crossing yesterday a very difficult and tedious nullah, which I recrossed today each time much detained by it.” Blackall restricted description of the daily activities for March 20 to the time of departure from Boyawalana, the subsequent destination of the two detachments, the time that both halted, how long it took to arrive in Giriulla, where they spent the night, and that he sent his baggage and “superfluous ammunition” forward to Negombo. Under remarks, Blackall again referenced violence targeted towards Kandyan troops: “Ensign Foulston here again surprised a small party of armed men; shot two in the field and brought to me their leader whom I ordered to be shot, also he afterwards caught and made prisoners six unarmed.” There is no additional information about the deaths, either relative to where they occurred or when they occurred. Blackall diminished the perception of threat of the enemy by noting that he had sent unneeded ammunition home, even as he recorded that he had ordered the execution of a local Kandyan soldier.

On March 21, nearing the end of the “excursion,” Blackall designated more than half of his comments as remarks, thereby inverting the original orientation of the journal.

The daily entry included details of time and place. The detachment had left early for “Bootoowillie”, an arachy’s house and grounds, arriving at

twenty-five minutes after nine having been detained and fatigued much by the rugged inequality of the road which nearly for the whole march wound over or through the gorges of abrupt high rocks; sometimes mountains; & every where closed, fenced in with thick jungle;

after which they proceeded to Elabadagama to join Campbell, arriving by six p.m. in spite of having been “fired on very sharply and frequently” yet sustaining no losses.

Blackall added a *nota bene*, that they were twice “[f]ired on and alarmed” during the night. In the daily column he wrote nothing about the specifics of the landscape, only that the water was again “indifferent” and the day’s march “by far the most tedious and difficult . . . I made on the whole tour”. He noted what the troops burned: a house regarded as “spacious and in good order which as well as a great many of villages in the neighbourhood, and an immensity of paddy”. To the remarks column, now reduced to little more than a list of what the troops destroyed, Blackall added a final account of conflict between his detachment and Kandyan soldiers. Lascoryns fired at and dispersed approximately thirty armed Kandyans but captured one, whom Ensign Foulston “instantly hanged”.

Blackall noted on March 22, the day the detachment returned to Negombo, a good deal of action but few details about the landscape. The morning’s march to the river was “without variety or incident whatever,” but after both detachments “rested” during the heat of the day:

I took advantage of the trifling fatigue of the morning to detach two formidable ravaging parties to complete the work of destruction, they returned in about 3 hours after burning everything they could lay hands on, and without having seen a foe, or met with mishap of any kind.



After spending the remainder of the evening getting across the river and into the British territories, the troops halted at Halpe and returned to Negombo “without a man sick or wounded and after having burned ninety three villages 800,000 upwards parahs of paddy besides everywhere dispersing at once their armed parties, having shot six of their warriors and made prisoners of as many more.” On the final day of the march, Blackall entirely omitted remarks about the landscape. By the conclusion of the eight-day journal, he was unable to separate reports of the detachment’s activities from the particularities of the landscape, or description of the landscape with its destruction.

Robert Blackall’s inability to describe with consistency the wartime landscape of colonial Sri Lanka during the “excursion” is perhaps to be expected, given the nature of a British punitive expedition, a wartime action that, as Christopher Ballard writes, signified “the awkward moment between pre-colonial autonomy and the imposition of colonial or imperial rule and law”.<sup>437</sup> A member of an Irish landowning family and a military officer whose impressive residence at Puttalam afforded views that appealed to the picturesque tastes of Viscount Valentia and Reverend Cordiner, Blackall’s understanding of landscape would have been in keeping with the ordering principles of the picturesque. Such a system would naturally disintegrate as he and his detachment enacted destruction to, and within, the landscape during the expedition. If landscape “has to be defined—its identity or identities, its locality or localities, its function or functions,” writes literary theorist and historian Svend Erik Larsen, then there can be “neither a necessary nor an essential relation between war and landscape; it is accidental, arbitrary, or

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<sup>437</sup> Christopher Ballard, “Swift Injustice: The Expedition of Imperial Punishment,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, forthcoming.

occasional”<sup>438</sup>—much like Blackall’s descriptions of landscape in his “excursion” journal.<sup>439</sup>

The following month, in April of 1804, the *Gazette* reported that North’s decision to harass the Kandyans with “spirited incursions lately made into their own territories” had succeeded in causing much practical hardship for the population. In the aftermath of a botched Kandayn attack on Batticaloa, then under the command of Lieutenant Arthur Johnston, thirty-six Malay and six Bengal soldiers “came over to us and represent the whole Candian country as in a state of great misery and terror.” The paper reported four additional actions made by British troops in April: at Puttalam; in the Seven Corles; near Negombo; and near Alawala, expressly for the purpose of confiscating or destroying agricultural produce or generally completing “the work of destruction”. The writer of the *Gazette* report expressed regret about “the destructive mode of warfare which the conduct of our cruel and perfidious enemy has rendered necessary,” yet could not “but rejoice at the success which has attended our efforts for our preservation and their annoyance”, anticipating more to come after the abatement of the monsoons, when “under the blessing of providence . . . by still more striking examples, the wretched subjects of the present

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<sup>438</sup> Svend Erik Larsen, “Landscape, Identity, and War,” *New Literary History*, 35, no. 3 (Summer 2004), 470.

<sup>439</sup> The campaign of destruction undertaken by Blackall and his detachment is, moreover, subject to analysis from the standpoint of the motivations of the regular troops. Regarding wartime destruction of architecture, Andrew Herscher writes, “destruction needs to be understood as a response to uncertainty.” See Andrew Herscher, “Warchitectural Theory,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 61, no. 3 (February 2008), 40. Also, John Ferris suggests that “[t]error was less a tool of counterinsurgency than a substitute for it, occurring at a time when Britain had no other means to restore order.” See Ferris, 211.

usurped and tyrannical government in Candy” would become convinced “that its weakness is fully equal to its atrocity.”<sup>440</sup>

That same month the *Gazette* carried an unusual notice: a group of British residents on the island met in the home of “Mr. Thomas Pattle” and determined that the conflict with Kandy was “a just and necessary war”. They praised the governor and “the valor of our armies”, expressing hope that the war would extend British territory and give “security to our possessions, in every part of India.”<sup>441</sup> Mr. Pattle and his guests could not have known that the first war with Kandy had been discussed in Parliament a few weeks earlier, wherein North’s decision to invade Kandy had been ridiculed as one in which his government had “left its useful occupation, and put all the troops in Ceylon in motion to chastise the King of Candy, to invade his dominions, and seize his capital”—only because of “the difference between the prompt and protracted payment of £300” for areca nut. “It was in this transaction that our national honour was supposed to be involved”.<sup>442</sup>

In light of the extraordinary reach of news published in the *Gazette*, did the party in Mr. Pattle’s home publish their notice in anticipation of metropolitan blowback against Governor North, or against the British government’s civil servants and soldiers? Like Reverend Cordiner, the group in the home of Mr. Pattle determined that the war could effect a virtual extension of British territory, potentially bringing safety to their own small “part of India”.

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<sup>440</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 116 (18 April 1804).

<sup>441</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 114 (4 April 1804).

<sup>442</sup> T.C. Hansard, “Parliamentary Debates, March 13, 1804,” in *The Parliamentary debates from the year 1803 to the present time, vol. 1: 22 November – March 1803-1804* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, etc., 1812), 655-656.

North, however, no longer believed that the inland provinces had the potential to become an extension of Britain, as it had become instead a place associated with danger and death, as will be discussed in chapter four. In spite of James Cordiner's best attempts to envision Sri Lanka as an extension of picturesque Britain, and Henry Salt's attempts to demonstrate its rich economic potential, it would require the efforts of professional artist Samuel Daniell to achieve in visual terms a postwar picturesque sensibility that could reassure viewers that the island was safe for habitation.

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This chapter enabled a closer look at the administrative priorities of Governor Frederic North, through analysis of the work of artist Henry Salt and the writings of the Viscount Valentia, and through analysis of an essay by North himself, "Considerations on the Wood of Ceylon." It was demonstrated that North's approach to land management in Sri Lanka was informed not only by late eighteenth-century metropolitan practices under George III, whom North served as a parliamentarian, but by the ideas of Adam Smith. In the name of "improvement," North, Salt, and Valentia advocated for physical alteration of the island, including canal digging, marsh drainage, garden and fishery cultivation, and widespread deforestation near British forts.

Faced with a failed attempt to sustain an occupation of the Kandyan capital and the mass executions of British troops inland, this study argues that North directed troops to destroy Kandyan land, buildings, and provisions because the Kandyan kingdom would not conform to, and could not coexist, with the governor's vision of political economy. North's priorities and his motivation for engaging troops in punitive expeditions, as presented in this chapter, differs from scholarship to date about North and the first war

with Kandy. Scholars have typically portrayed the governor as determined from the outset to conquer the Kandyan kingdom as quickly as possible and by any means.

An aquatint based on an original drawing by Henry Salt, *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*, was interpreted to have stressed the importance of the island's natural resources to the colonial economy. Henry Salt, an employee of Viscount Valentia, channeled the values of metropolitan landowners into his representations of land and people, but from a purely visual standpoint *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon* was seen to have shared Adam Smith's conception of an ideal colony: thinly populated and agriculturally rich.

North's own relationship with picturesque discourse is a discussion that necessarily follows, in chapter four. His directives to destroy Kandyan property and land will be considered in light of his background as an aesthete, a landowner, and a philhellene who insisted that Sri Lanka conform to his vision for tranquility and order.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SAMUEL DANIELL'S "EXQUISITE TASTE AND FIDELITY"

The previous chapters utilized picturesque accounts of travel in Sri Lanka by Reverend James Cordiner and Henry Salt in part to identify the colonial priorities of politically powerful men with whom these artist-writers shared ideas and enjoyed close professional relationships. Cordiner, whose *A Description of Ceylon* included a tour of the island in the company of Governor Frederic North, used picturesque discourse to construct a conception of Sri Lanka as an extension of Britain, whereas Salt, who traveled with a viscount (also a picturesque adept) urged a view of the island as a richly forested site ideal for economic exploitation. That Cordiner and Salt produced visual and verbal descriptions of Sri Lanka while Britain was engaged in war with its inland kingdom intensified their claims, aligning both projects with colonial conquest.

The work of professional artist Samuel Daniell, who arrived in Sri Lanka in 1806, demonstrates that after North's departure from the island, at which point the Kandyan conflict temporarily entered an inactive stage, the effects of violent conflict remained discernible in the maritime provinces. To establish the groundwork for a thorough analysis of Samuel Daniell's work in a colonial context, it is necessary to acknowledge the violence experienced by and perpetrated against British troops in Sri Lanka in the course of the first war with Kandy. Towards this end, this chapter includes an exploration of military memoirs published by two British officers, Captain Arthur Johnston and

Bombardier Alexander Alexander. Both writers produced vivid descriptions of a particular action during the first war with Kandy: the retreat of a detachment commanded by Captain Johnston from the inland capital in 1804, in which the surviving soldiers returned to Trincomalee, the site of an aquatint view by Samuel Daniell. In his representation of British forts on the island, Daniell relied on the picturesque to construct landscape imagery in which military sites were emptied of conflict and appeared secure, allowing metropolitan viewers to imagine the coastal regions as safe for habitation. To accomplish as much, the artist relied heavily on the example of British artists who utilized the picturesque to produce postwar landscape imagery in India.

Daniell's aquatints, published as *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants, of the Island of Ceylon*, were lauded in a metropolitan gentleman's periodical for their "exquisite taste and delicacy" and reveal an approach to colonial representation that respected the education and social priorities of elites like Frederic North, particularly from the standpoint of ownership and management of private property. Analysis of the aesthetic climate in Britain leading up to and during North's lifetime provides the necessary intellectual context within which to interrogate North's relationship to the picturesque. Of particular significance in this regard are the written works of picturesque theorists Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, both of whom were classicists and men of property, like North. Their ideas, as well as those of Reverend William Gilpin and others, are analyzed here for the purpose of situating North's position as a colonial governor vis-à-vis the Enlightenment concept of taste.

Specifically, the governor's reliance on the concept of tranquility, arguably the defining factor of picturesque representation, invites analysis of North's ideas of

governance. How could North proclaim that an invasion of Kandy would bring tranquility to the interior provinces? How did North reconcile his eventual decision to direct troops to destroy land and resources in the interior, which led not only to starvation among the Kandyan population but which damaged the British colonial economy? North would seek to bring the Kandyans down to the “lowest pitch” before he left the island. What follows are accounts of North’s success in this regard, after which this study turns to an analysis of the metropolitan cultural milieu from which North emerged and to which he would return after leaving the island.

### **“Reduced to the lowest pitch”**

Towards the end of 1804, word reached North that Parliament supported his decision to invade the Kandyan provinces. He expressed relief to Hobart on October 5, grateful for the secretary’s testimony on his behalf.<sup>443</sup> The previous month had resulted in near disaster for a detachment led by Captain Arthur Johnston, who had misunderstood military orders and reoccupied Kandy. Yet because Johnston and several of the troops had survived their retreat to the maritime provinces, the mistake bolstered rather than diminished North’s resolve. The governor reasoned that “any compact body of soldiers, well equipped, might pass through any part of the Candian territories, and that several such bodies acting in concert, during the healthy season, would soon drive that people and its government to desperation.”<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> North to Hobart, 5 October 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>444</sup> North to Camden, 8 February 1805. CO 54/16, National Archives, Kew.



In February of 1805, North communicated to Lord Camden, who replaced Hobart as the new secretary of state for war and the colonies, that

Peace is indeed uncertain, and (as the first Adigaar preserves his power undiminished) is probably distant. But we have regained the most decided superiority over the enemy. They are confined within their own limits, deprived of many of the necessaries of life, and cruelly harassed by the incursions of our troops. It is impossible to say when this state of misery and terror may bring about the indispensable revolution in their internal government, either by popular insurrection, or by royal differences. The discontent of the country appears to be general and deep . . .<sup>445</sup>

The destruction of Kandyan property remained the primary military activity reported in the *Gazette* and an important subject in the correspondence between North and Camden, and between military officers on the island. That month Captain Robert Blackall received intelligence from Thomas P. Chamley, a lieutenant commanding the Ceylon Cavalry, who had learned from a *mudaliyar* that Kandyans had constructed new batteries near the border. Chamley “surprised a party of the enemy”

who were strongly posted on the side of a hill, contiguous to a river, where they kept up a tremendous fire of genjals & small arms, but in Lieut Parker charging those on the hill with his sepoy, they fled; I pursued with the cavalry who cut down several of the enemy in their precipitate retreat to the jungle. . .<sup>446</sup>

In the action, one British soldier had been injured “by a Candian with the butt end of a firelock, whom the trooper with one stroke of his sabre deprived of an arm, & repeating his blow severed the head from the body.”<sup>447</sup> Blackall communicated to Lieutenant Colonel Robert Brownrigg (a military officer who would become the island’s fourth British governor in 1812) that “[t]he enemy sustained considerable damage by the

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<sup>445</sup> North to Hobart, 5 October 1804.

<sup>446</sup> Chamley to Blackall, 13 February 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>447</sup> Chamley to Blackall, 13 February 1805.

destruction of their houses, paddy & other property.”<sup>448</sup> He enclosed Chamley’s letter in his post to Brownrigg.

Even so, North learned that the Kandyans were planning “a general attack on all our settlements at the same time.”<sup>449</sup> The governor had received warning that the Kandyans intended to treat the British as they had treated Dutch and Portuguese colonizers: when the English “were in good behavior, we were in like manner,” but

now as the English are acting contrary to the king & do injustices to the Cingalese people of the low country which were not happened before—we—are intended to break & destroy the English by taking forts & then to bestow upon the people of the low country, high ranks & employment . . .  
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Another headman informed Colombo’s *mahamudaliyar* that North had “resolved not to allow for any negotiating nor would he take away the guards stationed at the limits, and that he would take such steps as to destroy the Candian country”, and that, in short,

the governor (who is wanting of senses, and who does not know what will happen for the future) will cause such things to be happened, without looking fore or behind, and without considering what is serviceable and what is unserviceable, what is good, and what is bad, and what is religious & what is unreligious.<sup>451</sup>

The *mahamudaliyar* informed North that “there will also be taken such steps by the principal chiefs, to ruin & destroy the envious English people, accepting [sic] the Cingalese people of the low Country—the Cingalese who are under the British government”.<sup>452</sup> North communicated to Camden that he had taken military action

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<sup>448</sup> Blackall to Brownrigg, 13 February 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew

<sup>449</sup> North to Camden, 21 February 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>450</sup> Letter to Ilangakoon, 13 February 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>451</sup> Peradeniya Raja Karoena Wijeyekoon to the *mahamudaliyar*, 21 February 1805.

<sup>452</sup> Peradeniya Raja Karoena Wijeyekoon to the *mahamudaliyar*.

against the Kandyans “before [they] had time to do injury to our territories”,<sup>453</sup> specifying that “their side of the frontier has been laid waste, many of their cattle brought down by our troops, and their magazines destroyed; which, under the present circumstances of scarcity, must be a severe blow to them.”<sup>454</sup>

On March 5, the justice of the peace for the town and fort of Colombo, examined a Malayan priest, Kar Bocus, who in 1803 had marched with the British troops from Trincomalee to Kandy and remained inland as a prisoner until he found an opportunity to escape. The justice, H. Powney, asked about the British prisoners at Kandy. Kar Bocus explained that Major Davie and others were alive, but that the conditions of the prisoners were difficult, as they were forced “to live on leaves and fruit.”<sup>455</sup> The interview continued as follows:

- Is rice very scarce in the Candian country?
- Yes, it is very scarce & it is difficult to get a handful for 2 pice.
- How do the common people of Candy live without rice?
- They live upon the leaves of trees & jack and other fruits.
- Do the common people of Candy complain much?
- No, they are too much frightened and dare not speak.
- Do many of them die?
- Yes, many die of hunger & the small pox.
- Is there any thing else very scarce in Candy?

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<sup>453</sup> North to Camden, 21 February 1805.

<sup>454</sup> North to Camden, 21 February 1805.

<sup>455</sup> “The examination of Kar Bocus born at Batavia—a Malay Priest,” 5 March 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

- Yes, except areka nut & leaves every thing is scarce & salt particularly so.
- Is salt difficult to be found?
- Yes, almost impossible & the people frequently went two or three days without it.
- Did you ever go without salt yourself?
- Yes, frequently, & two or three days at a time.
- What was the effect of it?
- It made my belly swell & be painful.
- Is the country well cultivated?
- It was well cultivated but at present there are a great many fields that are abandoned.<sup>456</sup>

Three days later North received the deposition of a Kandyan prisoner of war, Perrouma Adownie, who had spied on British troops near Ruwanwella at the order of the *dessave* of the Four Corles. While interrogated, Perrouma Adownie was asked questions such as, “How are the people in the Four Corles at present?”; “Do the people suffer much from the war?”; “Do they want salt in your country?”<sup>457</sup> He responded that the Kandyans had been experiencing “a dreadful state of famine; greater than I ever remember; due to the war the Kandyans “cannot employ themselves in cultivating the lands—the headmen come and punish them, and take away their money . . .”; and that “more than a thousand people are dead of hunger and want of salt”.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>456</sup> “The examination of Kar Bocus born at Batavia—a Malay Priest.”

<sup>457</sup> “Examination of Perrouma Adownie,” 8 March 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>458</sup> “Examination of Perrouma Adownie”.

Perrouma Adownie testified that the Kandyans fought the British because they were ordered to do so by Sri Vickrama Rajasimha, but that “when they come to the frontiers—the moment they hear of a detachment advancing, they go back.” When the prisoner was asked, “Are not all the people very desirous of peace?” he responded “Yes, all the people, and the little chiefs—for they are entirely ruined.”<sup>459</sup> North enclosed this account of “the state of that country” by “an intelligent prisoner” in a letter to Camden, writing that while peace with Kandy would bolster the island’s revenue, it would not be “in a degree sufficient, in my opinion, to justify the smallest sacrifice of dignity on our part.”<sup>460</sup>

But North had grown to feel that his situation as the island’s governor was untenable.<sup>461</sup> Finding that “it is impossible to say how long it will be” to “bring the court of Candy, to reason” he expressed to Camden that he felt “too strongly the effects of my long continuance in this climate, on my mind as well as on my health, not to feel it my duty to repeat most anxiously my solicitations for the appointment of a successor.” North sensed his “force diminishing for the last year,” and

labouring under a derangement of the nervous system, which has obliged me, in a great measure, to suspend my application to the duties of my office. . . . While I am on my post, I will do my duty to the best of my ability; but I must repeat to your Lordship that nerves, shattered and

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<sup>459</sup> “Examination of Perrouma Adownie”.

<sup>460</sup> North to Camden, 8 March 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>461</sup> Additionally, since North was required to manage the trade in areca nut during his tenure as governor—he oversaw a rise in revenue from its export until 1803—export of this commodity had been eliminated for more than two years due to the first war with Kandy. In 1805, Wellesley directed North to re-open the trade, “reducing the export duty, and [directing] the re-establishment of a monopoly.” Wellesley to North, 6 February 1805. CO 54/16, National Archives, Kew.

unstrong as mine are, are not formed to encounter the fatigue and disgusts of such a government as this is.<sup>462</sup>

North cited the effects of the climate and his state of mind and health, especially his nerves, as problems. Not the war, necessarily, but its personnel caused North “fatigue and disgusts”, particularly the presence of Major-General David Douglas Wemyss, who had arrived on the island carrying greater authority than Hay MacDowall, and North found it difficult to work with him.

### **“A kind of property in everything he sees”**

General Thomas Maitland was sent to replace North as the island’s governor in July of 1805. That a career military officer rather than a civil servant was sent to replace North serves to highlight the trajectory of North’s professional life. Sons of earls, North and Maitland served in Parliament at the same time. But the manner in which their respective careers developed illustrates their differing interests as well as their access to financial resources. After Sri Lanka, Maitland accepted governorships in Malta and Corfu. North did not again serve in the capacity of a colonial governor. Unlike Maitland, North eventually inherited his father’s title and properties. He too resided in Corfu for much of his later life, but in the capacity of founder and administrator of a university, where he presided in garments inspired by classical Greek culture.

Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where North excelled at languages and classics, he traveled extensively in Greece in the early 1790s, where he became a member of the Orthodox church, a fact about his personal life that he closeted. James

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<sup>462</sup> North to Camden, 8 February 1805.

Cordiner would eventually publish a second travel memoir, *A voyage to India*, where he recalled North's "uncommon facility" with languages: "French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, Latin, ancient and modern Greek, he speaks with the same fluency as his native tongue." Moreover,

He has enjoyed the luxury of reading Virgil in Italy, Don Quixote in Spain, and Homer in the island of Ithaca. In the perusal of books, he has a wonderful quickness of perception; he can read volumes in a day, which many persons could not in a week, and, at the same time, he can give a perfect account of their contents.<sup>463</sup>

The list of books Frederic North packed in preparation for his departure to Sri Lanka to begin his post as the island's governor in 1798 includes hundreds of titles of books on art, travel, history, gardening, geography, literature, languages, and science.<sup>464</sup>

If North's personal library included books by William Gilpin, they did not make the cut to be sent with the others to Sri Lanka. Few elites who had not (yet) inherited property would have had reason to engage in picturesque practice, an activity requiring direct access to land either for the purpose of redesigning the landscape elements on one's grounds or for seeking out views and sketching the landscape. No drawings or other works of art by Frederic North are known to exist.

This study does not argue for an interpretation of Frederic North as a picturesque practitioner. Rather, what is demonstrated is that North's administration of Sri Lanka was strongly informed by picturesque discourse, and that the travel writings of the picturesque adepts who visited the island bring this matter to light. Aside from the picturesque

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<sup>463</sup> James Cordiner, *A Voyage to India* (Aberdeen: A. Brown and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), 206-207.

<sup>464</sup> "Liste de livres que re: f. North," 25 January 1798. ADD MS 88900/1, British Library, London. The list includes a three-volume edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, as well as Robert Home's *Select Views in Mysore*.

projects discussed as travel literature in this study, there is little material evidence of the practice by residents of the island during North's administration. A new girl's school in Chennai, advertised in the pages of the *Gazette* in May of 1804, was listed as offering a curriculum based on "Reading, Writing, Arithmetic & Geography" with "French, Drawing, or Dancing" as electives.<sup>465</sup> Presuming that some British families in Sri Lanka arranged for their daughters to attend the new school, drawing lessons would have included the fundamentals of landscape representation, similar to the "polite" education that the daughters of military officers typically received in the metropole. But this elective does not appear to have proven popular; when the school advertised a second time in the *Gazette*, at the end of October, the sole elective listed was "Needlework".<sup>466</sup> Inasmuch as picturesque practice required the requisite drawing materials, an announcement in June of that year stated that a box of "several dozens of drawing pencils marked *Conti a Paris Dessein No. 3 & 4*" was stolen from the house of a Mr. Longchamps" who offered a reward if they were returned.<sup>467</sup> This, too, is a possible but thin reference to a practice of landscape representation in Sri Lanka during the earliest years of British colonization. Picturesque practice reflected metropolitan ideals and required a metropolitan education.

The primary means by which to contextualize North's administration vis-à-vis picturesque practice is through a discussion of taste, an invention of Enlightenment thinkers. Concepts of taste in eighteenth century in Britain were shaped by elites like

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<sup>465</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 121 (23 May 1804).

<sup>466</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 145 (31 October 1804).

<sup>467</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 125 (20 June 1804).



North whose values in turn were shaped by property ownership, a strong education in the classics, and an interest in and fluency with art and its history. Upon analyzing documents relative to Britain's first war with Kandy to present to the Royal Historical Society in April of 1918, Violet Methley offered the following summary of North's government on the island: he was "a man of most cultivated artistic tastes, but inexperienced in the political and psychological problems of the East."<sup>468</sup> To align North with men of similarly "cultivated artistic tastes" positions him more clearly in relation to picturesque practice. Reverend William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight, all theorists of the discourse, deserve attention in this chapter, since within the scope of their writing projects each comprehended subjects as disparate as nature and property, art and imagination, politics, travel, and violence—all factors of colonial wartime representation in Sri Lanka.

The three most influential writers about the picturesque—Gilpin, Price, and Knight—were personally preoccupied with issues of land management. William Gilpin, whose picturesque practice has been discussed throughout this study, was born at Scaleby, an impressive estate in Cumberland that fell into disrepair during his lifetime. In his autobiographical memoir, Gilpin acknowledged Scaleby second only to the names of his parents.<sup>469</sup> He maintained an affection for the property throughout his life and continued to visit it. Values associated with property ownership shaped this Anglican

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<sup>468</sup> V.M. Methley, "The Ceylon Expedition of 1803," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4, vol. 1 (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1918), 94.

<sup>469</sup> William Jackson, ed. *Memoirs of Dr. Richard Gilpin, of Scaleby Castle in Cumberland; and of his posterity in the two succeeding generations; written in the year 1791 by Rev. Wm Gilpin, Vicar of Boldre: together with an account of the author, by himself; and a pedigree of the Gilpin family* (London: Bernard Quaritch; Carlisle: Chas Thurnham and Sons, 1879), 110.

schoolmaster to the extent that he assigned the boys at the Cheam School in Surrey, where he served as headmaster, with the task of managing individual garden plots:

Some of the more popular boys would sometimes possess very large estates: portions of which they would either sell or let out as their affairs required. All however were obliged to cultivate their gardens. It was a law of the state, that whatever was neglected, escheated to the Lord; who gave it to those who would make a better use of it.<sup>470</sup>

An enthusiast, too, for Baroque landscape painting, Gilpin observed and produced drawings of sites in Britain that evoked the qualities of landscape views by the Continental artists he admired, and he encouraged others to do the same.

Geographer Denis Cosgrove ties the traditional appreciation for landscape imagery held by most Europeans as stemming from “elite consciousness . . . refined and elaborated over a long period during which it expressed and supported a range of political, social and moral assumptions and became accepted as a significant aspect of taste.”<sup>471</sup> There is not adequate opportunity here to address in detail the range of “political, social, and moral assumptions” that comprised Gilpin’s “taste” for landscape, but considering the clergyman in relation to a key moment in the history of British writing offers a way forward, ultimately to arrive, once again, at Frederic North.

Literary theorist John George Robertson identified Joseph Addison as the thinker who marked a turning point in England’s aesthetics, inasmuch as Addison’s work bridged earlier naturalist poets with the eighteenth century.<sup>472</sup> In 1712, long before the advent of picturesque discourse in Britain, Addison contributed an essay to *The Spectator* in which

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<sup>470</sup> Jackson, 127.

<sup>471</sup> Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 1.

<sup>472</sup> John George Robertson, *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), 237.

he explored the subject of the imagination through a discussion of taste and nature.<sup>473</sup> In a passage of writing that anticipated picturesque practice, Addison argued that “visible objects” could take many shapes, including “agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious”. In this way “[a] man of polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures”.<sup>474</sup> This “man of polite imagination” is important to this study, the man who, as Addison phrased it, could “converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue.”<sup>475</sup> In the presence of a work of art, such a man “meets it with a secret refreshment . . . and often feels greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession.”<sup>476</sup>

It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated part of nature administer to his pleasures: so that he looks upon the world, as it were, in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind.<sup>477</sup>

Here Addison defined imagination in one who was conversant with art as the tendency to see the world differently from others, to the extent that even “the most rude uncultivated part of nature” could charm and satisfy him. Addison acknowledged a tension between land that was owned and land that was not, but with a resolution: the man of “polite imagination” did not require ownership of land to enjoy looking at the landscape; indeed,

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<sup>473</sup> Joseph Addison, “No. 409. [On Taste]”, *The Spectator* (19 June 1712), in *The Great Age of the English Essay*, Denise Gigante, ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 78-81.

<sup>474</sup> Addison, 79.

<sup>475</sup> Addison, 80.

<sup>476</sup> Addison, 80.

<sup>477</sup> Addison, 80.

his pleasure before it was so immense that felt he owned all of nature, “the prospect of fields and meadows” becoming to him “a kind of property”.

It is as if Addison anticipated Reverend Gilpin, insatiable in his consumption of art and who found every evidence of pleasure in applying art’s principles to the natural environment of Britain while he boated, walked, and sketched out of doors. Gilpin was so attached to the idea that every element in the landscape visible to the eye must bolster the effect of the scene as a “picture” that he could be dismissive of people and animals that lived on the land.<sup>478</sup> He occasionally expressed genuine interest in the people he encountered on a picturesque tour, as when he described a suffering individual who lived at Tintern, a woman who could “scarce crawl; shuffling along her palsied limbs, and meager, contracted body, by the help of two sticks”,<sup>479</sup> but he avoided producing sketches of scenes with evidence of discomfort or sharp disparity of social class. Departing from the countryside around Tintern, Wales, which Gilpin had described as “a solitary, tranquil scene,” he came upon “great ironworks; which introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity.”<sup>480</sup> Gilpin produced aquatints of Tintern for his book about the Wye Valley but he did not represent the suffering woman or the ironworks pictorially.

William Gilpin had published several books on the picturesque by 1794, when Uvedale Price, an English landowner, brought out *An essay on the picturesque, as*

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<sup>478</sup> Gilpin’s picturesque projects drew him into a British countryside that was highly populated. According to Asa Briggs, “by far the largest number of people were employed on the land, and the village—in all its rich diversity—was a more familiar social unit than the town or city.” See Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1959), 36.

<sup>479</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. relative chiefly to picturesque beauty; made in the summer of 1770*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: R. Blamire, 1792), 50.

<sup>480</sup> Gilpin, *River Wye*, 52.

*compared with the sublime and the beautiful; and, on the use of studying pictures, for the purpose of improving real landscape.* With this three-volume work Price threw his hat into the ring of writers who contributed to the literature of taste in eighteenth-century Britain.<sup>481</sup> Price was a baronet, classicist, and the owner of Foxley, an estate of more than four-thousand acres in Herefordshire. His father, Robert Price, and his grandfather, Uvedale Tompkins Price, had both been amateur artists.<sup>482</sup> Kim Sloan, a curator of prints and drawings at the British Library, notes that the River Wye ran through the Foxley estate and became a frequent subject for the drawings of the Prices, in which “composition and effect took precedence over topographical detail.”<sup>483</sup>

Price used his book to register concern about the widespread employment of “improvers”—professional landscape gardeners hired by landowners to redesign their estates according to changing fashion in landscape design. In Price’s opinion, improvers damaged the landscape when they modified it so extensively that the property no longer appeared natural. He recalled the reconstruction of a lane near a “gentleman’s pleasure grounds” and finding “a great many labourers wheeling mould to this place; by degrees they filled up all inequalities, and completely covered the roots and pathways”.<sup>484</sup> Horrified by their disregard for the natural face of land, with its irregularities that “time

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<sup>481</sup> Uvedale Price, *An essay on the picturesque, as compared with the sublime and the beautiful; and, on the use of studying pictures, for the purpose of improving real landscape*. 3 vols. (London: J. Robson, 1794).

<sup>482</sup> Kim Sloan, *‘A Noble Art’: Amateur Artists and Drawing Masters, c. 1600-1800* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 166.

<sup>483</sup> Sloan, *Noble Art*, 167.

<sup>484</sup> Price, I:29-30.

only, and a thousand lucky accidents can mature”, Price labeled their action “the rash hand of false taste”.<sup>485</sup>

To an even greater extent than nature, it was art that dictated Price’s sense of taste, especially the work of the Continental Baroque landscape painters he admired, including Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin. On the basis of the aesthetic principles he associated with these artists, Price dismissed the career of an otherwise popular landscape designer, Capability Brown. To Price, Brown was “bred a gardener, and having nothing of the mind, or the eye of a painter.”<sup>486</sup> Brown lacked both a gentleman’s education and a professional painter’s formalist training, so in Price’s eyes the designer could do little more than meddle with nature.

Uvedale Price wrote confidently about matters of taste, one in a long line of men, from Joseph Addison onwards, who had published their ideas on this subject, largely according to the patterns of Enlightenment thought in Britain. Two of the most prominent had been David Hume and Edmund Burke. In his essay “Of the Standard of Taste,” David Hume stressed the importance of familiarity as a factor of taste, remarking that readers were predisposed to prefer “the writer who resembles us.”<sup>487</sup> Enlarging this idea to admit the possibility of a national taste, Hume imagined an Englishman or Frenchman trying to enjoy an Italian comedy, in which “the fine lady, upon whom all the play turns, never once appears to the spectators, but is always kept behind the scenes.”<sup>488</sup> Such a

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<sup>485</sup> Price, I:29.

<sup>486</sup> Price, I:188.

<sup>487</sup> David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste,” in *Four Dissertations* (London: A. Millar, 1757), 233.

<sup>488</sup> Hume, 235.

play may have been suitable for the “reserved humor” of “the ancient Greeks”—even the “modern Italians”, and “a man of learning and reflection can make allowance for these peculiarities of manners, but a common audience can never divest themselves so far of their usual ideas and sentiments, as to relish pictures which in no wise resemble them.”<sup>489</sup> Hume insisted that that ordinary Britons could not appreciate literature or theatre in which they could not see, identify, or place themselves.

Familiarity was also a key theme in Edmund Burke’s essay “Of Taste,” published as the introduction to the second edition of his influential essay, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and the beautiful* of 1759, wherein he wrote that,

The mind of man has naturally a far greater alacrity and satisfaction in tracing resemblances than in searching for differences; because by making resemblances we produce new images, we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock; but in making distinctions we offer no food at all to the imagination; the talk itself is more severe and irksome, and what pleasure we derive from it is something of a negative and indirect nature.<sup>490</sup>

While too much familiarity could be “stale and unaffecting”, wrote Burke, familiarity also facilitated the process of investigation, since those who walk along the “paths” of writers with which they are familiar are “not content with serving up a few barren or lifeless truths” but rather find that a work by such authors

leads to the stock on which they grew; it tends to set the reader himself in the track of invention, and to direct him into those paths in which the author has made his own discoveries, if he should be so happy as to have made any that are valuable.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Hume, 235.

<sup>490</sup> Edmund Burke, *A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *With an introductory discourse concerning taste and several other additions* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), 18-19.

<sup>491</sup> Burke, *A philosophical inquiry*, 5.

Burke explored literature in this regard. He had little use for paintings, finding that a visual landscape representation “can at most affect only as . . . [it] would have affected in reality,”<sup>492</sup> but like many other British writers about aesthetics in the eighteenth century, he utilized landscape metaphors to communicate his ideas.

The attention that Hume and Burke paid to familiarity as a factor of national taste becomes relevant to this study when such ideas are applied to the work of artists who traveled to Sri Lanka. In the second chapter, Reverend James Cordiner was characterized as an artist determined to depict not only that which was aesthetically suitable for his metropolitan readership but also that which would have seemed recognizable, or familiar, when describing the new British colony. Cordiner frequently likened Sri Lanka to Britain. During his tour of the island in 1800, as he took in the views from atop “Mulgeerelenna” (Adam’s Peak), he found that its “broadest valleys resemble the most beautiful parts of Yorkshire in England, but are still more highly adorned.”<sup>493</sup> From the peninsula of Kalpitiya he could see that “the opposite coast of Ceylon, and little intervening islands, present a charming appearance: fine trees, resembling many of those in England, overhang the water . . .”<sup>494</sup> A portion of the Buddhist temple in Weligama resembled “the cupola of St. Paul’s church in London”,<sup>495</sup> and he found that the bread-fruit tree was very

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<sup>492</sup> Burke, *A philosophical inquiry*, 102.

<sup>493</sup> James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Aberdeen: A. Brown; 1807; New Delhi: Navrang, 1983), I: 202. Citations refer to the Navrang edition.

<sup>494</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:334.

<sup>495</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:189.



similar to “a common oak”.<sup>496</sup> Even small beach shells culled from Sri Lanka’s coastline reminded Cordiner of “peppermint drops”.<sup>497</sup> Had such observations been personal, they might have gone unheeded here, but Cordiner was providing a large audience with information about people and land in Sri Lanka. Moreover, his observations extended to political conflict on the island.

Cordiner’s descriptions of Sri Lanka, indeed the colonial picturesque in general, was problematic, since the picturesque adept sought out, observed, and described not what was local and new to the eyes but rather what was similar to the British landscape. The island’s landscape and its population were violated by this means, since the views from Adam’s Peak and Kalpitiya, the Buddhist temple at Weligama and the bread-fruit tree, and even certain small shells were enlisted to serve not as local objects but the aims of British nationalism, carrying associations with “the most beautiful parts of Yorkshire in England” or its “fine trees” (particularly the “common oak”); or with “the cupola of St. Paul’s” and “peppermint drops”.

If stating what looked “British” in Sri Lanka was essentially a violation, the idea of violated land could at times lead metropolitan writers about aesthetics to think about the colonies. In the second volume of *An essay on the picturesque*, Uvedale Price recalled with regret his decision to destroy an “old-fashioned garden” on his estate, giving way to “prevailing opinion”:

I doomed it and all its embellishments, with which I had formed such an early connection, to sudden and total destruction; probably much upon the same idea, as many a man of careless, unreflecting, unfeeling good-nature,

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<sup>496</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:361.

<sup>497</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:444.

thought it his duty for demolishing towns, provinces, and their inhabitants, in America.<sup>498</sup>

By comparing the elimination of his old garden with the destruction of “towns, provinces, and their inhabitants” by colonizers in the New World, Price cautioned readers about the danger of fashionable ideas. He considered the picturesque as an aesthetic that would weather time, since it was grounded in the principles of art and anchored by an appreciation of nature. But the discourse also provided Price with a way to frame ideas about land, not only in theoretical but in material terms; after all, the practice of the picturesque led him to an awareness of the types of violence that threatened his property. Price wrote little of violence in colonized places. It was not his aim. Yet when he desired to articulate violence upon land in the strongest terms (“sudden and total destruction”), he relied on a version of material violence that he associated with the colonies, that is, violence that he considered to be “careless, unreflecting, unfeeling”.

The same year Price published *An essay on the picturesque*, his friend Richard Payne Knight dedicated a poem to Price in response to it. *The Landscape, a didactic poem* articulated a line of thinking about land that was, like Price’s book, suitable for national consumption, since Knight explored the domestic landscape in relation to the arena of contemporary European politics, concluding with France’s Reign of Terror.<sup>499</sup> The son of a clergyman, Knight inherited his property, Downton, from an uncle. Like Price, he was enamored of seventeenth-century painting and managed his lawns and

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<sup>498</sup> Price, II:119.

<sup>499</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *The landscape, a poem. In three books* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1794).

gardens accordingly. Knight was also an ardent classicist<sup>500</sup> and found the work of improvers distasteful.

Because Knight contextualized picturesque discourse in relation to political events, ideas about the nation figure prominently in this poem, as in the following excerpt, in which he praised the English landscape:

Hail native streams, that full yet limpid glide!  
Hail native woods, creation's boast and pride!  
Your native graces let the painter's art,  
And planter's skill, endeavor to impart;  
Nor vainly after distant beauties roam,  
Neglectful of the charms they leave at home.<sup>501</sup>

Zealous in his enthusiasm of the charms of home, Knight defended Britain's landscape in a series of comparisons with "distant beauties".<sup>502</sup> He countered Peru's "vast Maragnon" (Rio Marañon) with the "wide wand'ring Wye" in Wales. Against those impressed by Ontario, where "Niagara roars", he offered the "Tiber's broken, wild cascade," unapologetically appropriating the geography of Italy as an extension of "home".<sup>503</sup> He could claim Italy as part of the domestic landscape because of the large number of Italianate landscape paintings by Continental artists that hung on the walls of town and country houses throughout Britain.

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<sup>500</sup> Ian Jenkins writes, "All human creative expression, indeed all that one said and did in polite society of the eighteenth century, was informed by the classics." See Ian Jenkins, "Ideas and Antiquity: Classical and Other Ancient Civilizations in the Age of Enlightenment," in *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, Kim Sloan, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 168. Romita Ray has suggested that William Gilpin, in imagining a "bramin" who formed branches of a banyan tree into an arch, "transposes the Golden Age of Homer and Virgil onto the Indian landscape". See Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 102.

<sup>501</sup> Knight, *Landscape*, 66-67.

<sup>502</sup> Knight, *Landscape*, 67.

<sup>503</sup> Knight, *Landscape*, 29.

Knight positioned the domestic landscape to serve as a source of national pride, but he did not require that landscape paintings serve such a lofty role. In a later essay, *An analytical inquiry into the principles of taste* of 1805, he cautioned men not to look to art “to correct national manners” or “social virtue”; “as if men ever applied to such sources of information for directions how to act in the moral or prudential concerns of life, or ever looked at pictures for any thing other than amusement.”<sup>504</sup> Instead, the role he assigned to music, art, and poetry was that of “civilizing and softening mankind, by substituting intellectual, to sensual pleasures; and turning the mind from violent and sanguinary, to mild and peaceful pursuits”.<sup>505</sup> Those drawn to the arts, he explained, “seldom or never disturb the tranquillity either of kingdoms or families; and if their lives are not very useful, they are always harmless, and often ornamental to society.”<sup>506</sup> Knight’s emphasis on tranquillity—that, as a result of being well-versed in the arts, a man of taste would be unlikely to “disturb the tranquillity of either kingdoms or families”—strikes the chord of the colonial picturesque. Surely Knight was describing the life of a country aesthete like himself, but what if such a man were appointed governor of a colony? Was not Frederic North such a man?

North stated repeatedly that he desired tranquility on Sri Lanka’s behalf, even prior to the island becoming a crown colony, when he administered it for an institution that expected him to focus solely on trade, in spite of “an empty treasury”, a “starving population”, and “an unsettled country.” Things got worse before they got better; he

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<sup>504</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical inquiry into the principles of taste* (London: T. Payne and J. White, 1805), 453.

<sup>505</sup> Knight, *An Analytical inquiry*, 454.

<sup>506</sup> Knight, *An Analytical inquiry*, 453-454.

informed the Court of Directors in August of 1800 that a new tax imposed by his administration had resulted in a widespread insurrection, particularly troublesome in the district of Matara, “inhabited by the wildest and most turbulent people on the island.”<sup>507</sup> Violence ensued and the insurgents “disbursed” after which North reported that “the country was completely restored to tranquillity.” He acknowledged additional threats to the tranquility of Sri Lanka in a letter the following year: “dreadful ravages” of small pox; talk of invading forces from Europe; and “above all, a dreadful mortality among the cattle.”<sup>508</sup>

Eventually Hobart encouraged North to consider the importance of “protection and a due administration of justice” to the subjects of George III in colonial Sri Lanka; to “meliorate their condition, and . . . add to their prosperity”; and generally do that which was conducive “to the happiness and improvement of the inhabitants to ensure their attachment and to promote the general interests and strength of the British empire.”<sup>509</sup> North embraced such language; eventually he extended the concept of tranquility to the Kandyan, using the establishment of it in the inland provinces as a justification for occupation.

North linked the concept of tranquility with the presence or threat of suffering because the contrast between them pointed to his desired outcome. Cordiner provided a useful illustration of this concept in his second book, *A Voyage to India*:

After a vessel has been a few days at sea, every thing on board gets into high order, and none of that confusion appears which is observable on her

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<sup>507</sup> North to the Court of Directors, 30 August 1800. CO 54/2, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>508</sup> North to the Court of Directors, 18 February 1801. CO 54/3, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>509</sup> Hobart to North, 13 March 1801. CO 54/5, National Archives, Kew.

first sailing. We now found ourselves again pursuing a tranquil voyage, in the midst of the ocean. The economy of the ship is conducted with a more uniform and perfect regularity than is often witnessed in a family on shore. Abundance of leisure and quietness is afforded for the enjoyment of our peculiar studies; and reading and writing are carried on, with as much comfort as if we were seated in a silent grove, in the most grateful climate.<sup>510</sup>

Here Cordiner juxtaposed words and phrases such as “high order,” “uniform,” and “perfect regularity” against the “confusion” that accompanies the initial phase of an ocean journey. He asserted that with tranquility comes pleasure, in the form of opportunity for “leisure” and for “enjoyment of our peculiar studies.” North and Cordiner may have derived their use of the word tranquility from Adam Smith, who in *Wealth of Nations* defined perfect tranquility as “the principle and foundation of all real enjoyment.”<sup>511</sup> Smith himself likened the idea of tranquility to the picturesque, evoking for his reader’s imagination a scene replete with gentle light and peace: “In the mild sunshine of undisturbed tranquility, in the calm retirement of undissipated and philosophical leisure, the soft virtue of humanity flourishes the most, and is capable of the highest improvement.”<sup>512</sup>

North’s closest colleagues in Sri Lanka exhibited sensitivity to the aesthetics of landscape, from James Cordiner and Hay MacDowall to Joseph Jonville and Anthony Bertolacci, the latter of whom Cordiner described as “a man of taste, and had a great

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<sup>510</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 51.

<sup>511</sup> Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 253.

<sup>512</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Cadell & Davis; F., C., and J. Rivington; and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown; Edinburgh: W. Creech and Bell and Bradfute, 1812), 259.

genius for painting.”<sup>513</sup> In the capacity of his work as a civil servant, Bertolacci employed description of the landscape that went beyond the commercial or scientific. Of the rivers of the south coast, for example, he wrote that they “discharge themselves into the sea, after beautifying and fertilizing a country always decked with the most enchanting variety of verdure.”<sup>514</sup> Long after returning to Scotland, Cordiner remembered “some beautiful drawings” representing the Indian island of Elephanta produced by Bertolacci and by Jonville “when they visited it, in company with Hon. Frederic North, in June, 1798.”<sup>515</sup> For his part, Bertolacci summed up North’s administration as one that had been “mild and considerate”<sup>516</sup>—exactly the adjectives to which someone of North’s upbringing, education, and interests would have aspired.

### **Memoirs of the retreat to Trincomalee**

North accepted responsibility for engaging the inland Kandyan kingdom in war. At the same time, he had invested ideologically in the governance of a polity he defined in large part by its potential for tranquility. The apparent contradiction between North’s ideals and his actions is especially poignant when considered in light of the harrowing survival narratives produced by British soldiers garrisoned on the island during the first war with Kandy. The published memoirs of Captain Arthur Johnston and Bombardier

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<sup>513</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 164.

<sup>514</sup> Anthony Bertolacci, *A view of the agricultural, commercial, and financial interests of Ceylon. With an appendix; containing some of the principal laws and usages of the Candians; port and custom-house regulations; tables of exports and imports, public revenue and expenditure, &c. &c.* (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 37.

<sup>515</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, 74.

<sup>516</sup> Bertolacci, i.

Alexander Alexander contain description of soldiers profoundly outmaneuvered while engaged in conflict in the Kandyan provinces. Cordiner mentioned Captain Johnston in his account of the Kandyan campaign as an officer who had participated in the occupation of the inland capital in 1803 but grew ill and returned to the coast, thus he avoided being killed with the others.

In 1810, the year Johnston published his memoir, *Narrative of the operations of a detachment in an expedition to Candy*, the publishing market was primed for soldiers' tales due to the ongoing the Napoleonic wars. According to literary theorist Neil Ramsey, readers found accounts of the wars to be a "serious and all-pervasive national experience"<sup>517</sup> to which "[w]riters and artists responded by creating portrayals of war that invited the public to imagine themselves as eyewitnesses to conflict and to identify sympathetically with those exposed to war."<sup>518</sup> Success on the battlefield increasingly became associated with the contributions of individual soldiers, and readers valued having access to a soldier's motivation. An appreciation for their suffering followed suit. However, soldiers' personal stories occasionally conflicted with the government's need to protect information generated within the context of war.<sup>519</sup> Johnston requested and received permission from the British army to publish his account.

Serving for nearly twelve years in Sri Lanka in both military and civic capacities, Johnston "had frequent opportunities of observing the nature of the country" and of "making myself acquainted with the character and customs of its inhabitants, and their

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<sup>517</sup> Neil Ramsey, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture, 1780-1835* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 82.

<sup>518</sup> Ramsey, 82.

<sup>519</sup> Ramsey, 83.



mode of warfare.”<sup>520</sup> That he combined these elements—the “nature of the country” with “the customs of the inhabitants, and their mode of warfare”—indicates that for Johnston observation and experience of the landscape were crucial elements of military life in Sri Lanka. The officer noted in the preface to his book that his first job on the island had been to oversee the troops that “opened a road” for Major-General MacDowall’s embassy to Kandy in 1800. During the first war with Kandy, Johnston commanded “remote districts,”<sup>521</sup> in particular, Batticaloa.

Johnston stated that the goal of his book was to explain

the peculiar nature of Candian warfare, and to describe the country and the character of the inhabitants, considered with relation to military affairs; since to these circumstances may be attributed, in a great measure, the want of success which in the interior of Ceylon has too frequently attended the operations of the regular troops of Europe against the undisciplined rabble by whom they had been opposed.<sup>522</sup>

Referring to “[o]ur knowledge of the interior” as “still extremely imperfect”, he “could testify that it consisted particularly . . . of steep and lofty mountains, in many places covered with impenetrable forests”.<sup>523</sup> Johnston considered the Kandyan soldiers “perfect masters of their intricate paths and passes” who moved “with much more rapidity than regular troops”, who were “encumbered with artillery, ammunition, baggage, provisions, and frequently a long train of sick and wounded”.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Major A. Johnston, *Narrative operations of a detachment in an expedition to Candy, in the island of Ceylon, in the year 1804. With some observations on the previous campaign, and on the nature of Candian warfare, etc., etc., etc.*, new ed. (Dublin: James McGlashan; London: Wm. S. Orr and Co., 1854), vii.

<sup>521</sup> Johnston, v.

<sup>522</sup> Johnston, 1.

<sup>523</sup> Johnston, 3.

<sup>524</sup> Johnston, 11.

In the aftermath of the fall of Dambadeniya in June of 1803, Johnston characterized the Kandyans as “in as complete possession of the interior of their country, and govern it as independently of any European influence has at any period of their history since the first invasion of their coast.”<sup>525</sup> With renewed confidence, the Kandyans had “poured down from their mountains in the months of August and September in the hope of utterly expelling us from the island”. Some of the islanders living within the British territories joined them.<sup>526</sup> However, with reinforcements from the Cape of Good Hope and from Bengal, the British defeated the Kandyans, and

thus strengthened, considered itself in a situation to retaliate on the enemy; and detachments entered the country from various points, laying waste wherever they penetrated. This mode of warfare, however repugnant to the feelings of government, appeared the only one now left us to pursue . . .<sup>527</sup>

In spite of claiming that the occupation of Kandy had “afforded no advantages whatever”,<sup>528</sup> in 1804 the British army under the command of Major-General Wemyss “resolved once more to penetrate into the interior, and to take possession of the enemy’s capital.”<sup>529</sup> Wemyss and North intended to send six columns of troops to Kandy, marching from different points of origin: Colombo, Negombo and Chilaw, Puttalam, Hambantota, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee.<sup>530</sup> The detachments were to converge “on the heights of Candy” on September 28 or 29, to participate in its destruction.<sup>531</sup> In addition

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<sup>525</sup> Johnston, 34.

<sup>526</sup> Johnston, 35.

<sup>527</sup> Johnston, 35-36.

<sup>528</sup> Johnston, 26.

<sup>529</sup> Johnston, 36.

<sup>530</sup> Johnston, 36-37.

<sup>531</sup> Johnston, 39.

to increasing the likelihood of procuring an adequate number of porters, marching from six different locations, it was believed, “would disconcert the enemy, and lead to information relative to the interior of the island, hitherto so little explored by Europeans.”<sup>532</sup>

Johnston was assigned to lead the detachment marching from Batticaloa, and after offering “a few remarks relative to that district”<sup>533</sup> he inserted James Cordiner’s description of it, published three years earlier, in *A Description of Ceylon*:

The south-east coast, viewed from the sea, is particularly picturesque and romantic. The country, in the highest degree mountainous, presents hills beyond hills, many beautiful and verdant, others huge and rocky, of extraordinary shapes, resembling ruined battlements, ancient castles, and lofty pyramids.<sup>534</sup>

Johnston wrapped up Cordiner’s picturesque description with a dry comment: “Of these mountains we have little knowledge.”<sup>535</sup> He added what little information he had learned from local Lankans about Batticaloa, only that the mountains were “covered with immense forests”, the northernmost of which were populated with aboriginal inhabitants.<sup>536</sup> Johnston’s need to supply information about the landscape and his lack of it at times resulted in tension within his text. For this reason, he readily used Cordiner’s descriptions even though Johnston himself was not engaged in picturesque description.

Captain Robert Moubray communicated in a letter to Johnston in September that “unforeseen obstacles” would prevent “the various columns forming the intended

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<sup>532</sup> Johnston, 37.

<sup>533</sup> Johnston, 40.

<sup>534</sup> Johnston, 40-41.

<sup>535</sup> Johnston, 41.

<sup>536</sup> Johnston, 41.

junction” at the capital.<sup>537</sup> Instead, he instructed Johnston and his troops to meet those marching from Hambantota “on the great road leading to Candy” and “concert such measures as will best tend to effect the greatest devastation and injury to the enemy’s country.”<sup>538</sup> Moubray added, “All persons found in arms to be immediately made examples of, and the peaceful and defenceless peasant to be spared.”<sup>539</sup> He further stipulated that Johnston “note in writing all observations relative to the country, as our future operations will be guided by them in that part, and transmit your journal to me, for the general’s information.”<sup>540</sup>

The day-by-day account Johnston subsequently produced, beginning on September 20, contained “observations relative to the country” including remarks about climate and population. As with Robert Blackall’s “excursion” journal discussed in chapter three, Johnston attempted to align the military activities of his detachment with the specificities of landscape. He acknowledged encampment sites and villages of interest in relation to their proximity to the region’s rivers and to cultivated fields, and noted the arrival of new troops by explaining the route they had traversed to reach the detachment. Perhaps the best indication of the agency he ascribed to the landscape itself is a general statement he made about the course of the march, which was determined “as the nature of the country would admit”.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Johnston, 43-44.

<sup>538</sup> Johnston, 43.

<sup>539</sup> Johnston, 43.

<sup>540</sup> Johnston, 44.

<sup>541</sup> Johnston, 46.

When indicating the location of Kandyan soldiers or enemy batteries Johnston described in detail their positions on the mountains, in hollows or valleys, upon the opposite banks of rivers, or “concealed behind rocks and trees”.<sup>542</sup> The daily marches progressed in spite of obstacles in the form of rapid, circuitous, or rocky streams or rivers, and rugged, steep, and rocky paths. At times Johnston described in some detail the efforts spent by the column to traverse the landscape, as on October 3, during a halt on a plain,

where we found plenty of excellent water, a most welcome refreshment to our men who were exhausted by climbing up the mountains under the rays of a vertical sun, reflected from rocks, which, as the day advanced, became more and more heated. Meantime the enemy assembled in considerable numbers higher up the mountain . . .<sup>543</sup>

Or the next day, October 4:

The road on this day’s march was worse than any we had yet passed; it lay along the brow of a mountain, in several places nearly perpendicular, where a false step would have caused a fall of several hundred feet. Being very narrow, many of the bullocks tumbled headlong down, and the path would have been altogether impracticable for these animals, had they not been habituated to carry merchandize along the hills.<sup>544</sup>

Johnston noted that, “where the earth had been washed away, or a rock fallen down, the natives had driven stakes horizontally into the sides of the mountain, forming a kind of bridge, over which travelers could pass”,<sup>545</sup> adding, “[h]ad these given way under any of

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<sup>542</sup> Johnston, 54.

<sup>544</sup> Johnston, 51.

<sup>544</sup> Johnston, 52.

<sup>545</sup> Johnston, 52.

the men, they must have been dashed to pieces; or had they been previously removed, the hill would have been rendered impassable.”<sup>546</sup>

Upon reaching Kandy, Johnston found that the residents had once again abandoned it but the other detachments had not arrived. Concerned about retreating without orders but nervous that a delay could result in disaster, given the oncoming monsoon, Johnston decided to attempt to get the troops back to the British territories by means of an alternative route, the Trincomalee road.

En route to Trincomalee, the British troops struggled against the “considerable violence” of the rain<sup>547</sup> or, alternately, the “scorching sun”,<sup>548</sup> and the psychological and physical difficulties associated with “hearing the fall of the trees which the Candians were felling lower down on the mountain to obstruct our next day’s march”.<sup>549</sup> He described the desertion of porters “into the forests to conceal themselves” or “among the troops, whom they threw into confusion”,<sup>550</sup> and at times the difficulties of the path itself, which at one point was “so narrow and intricate that I foresaw it would be impossible to make much farther progress after dark, without entangling the detachment in the woods.”<sup>551</sup> Johnston’s characterization of “the woods” as a place not to “entangle” soldiers after dark was a matter of constant concern among troops deployed in the interior in the course of the war. Cordiner recounted that, of the two men who died under the

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<sup>546</sup> Johnston, 52.

<sup>547</sup> Johnston, 65.

<sup>548</sup> Johnston, 78.

<sup>549</sup> Johnston, 73.

<sup>550</sup> Johnston, 75.

<sup>551</sup> Johnston, 76.

command of Captain Robert Blackall during the action at Dambadeniya, one had drunk “to excess the strong liquors which the party was employed in destroying” and wandered into the woods, where it was supposed he fell asleep, as he could not be found when the detachment departed.<sup>552</sup>

Barefoot and “emaciated by fatigue and labouring besides under a severe dysentery”, Johnston returned “carried in my cloak, fastened to a stick.”<sup>553</sup> The recorded number of casualties resulting from the march and retreat was twenty-one killed, thirty-nine wounded, and seventeen missing, with the Bengal sepoy comprising more than half of these numbers, including thirteen missing.<sup>554</sup> Major-General Wemyss had in fact countermanded Johnston’s initial orders to take Kandy, the new object being only that they should “. . . *enter those parts of the enemy’s territory adjacent to their respective districts*, and return after laying waste the country”.<sup>555</sup>

While Johnston’s detachment marched on Kandy the other columns made regional incursions, as directed. In the course of these actions, Major Herbert Beaver, commanding a detachment comprised of three hundred and forty troops, “burned the residence” of the prime minister, Pilime Talaewa, “nearly taken his person, and laid waste the country from which he draws his principal resources”.<sup>556</sup> As for Johnston’s

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<sup>552</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:219.

<sup>553</sup> Johnston, 82.

<sup>554</sup> Johnston, 93.

<sup>555</sup> Johnston, 84. Emphasis added.

<sup>556</sup> North to Camden, 8 February 1805.

troops, “the government, having learnt from the Cingalese on the borders of my detachment having been in Candy, had despaired of our ever returning.”<sup>557</sup>

Of the damage to provisions and buildings effected by Johnston’s column during the ascent, they destroyed a *dessave*’s house so “that the Hambingtotte division on arriving there might see that we had already passed”,<sup>558</sup> and a palace that Sri Vickrama Rajasimha used as an armory.<sup>559</sup> The soldiers burned as well the palace of the King of Uva, “a beautiful building, richly ornamented with the presents received by the kings of Candy from the Portuguese, Dutch, and English” and which

had been carefully preserved by General Macdowal [sic] in 1803. And the King had availed himself of this respect shown to it at that time to make it a principal depôt of arms and ammunition; which, as I was unable to remove, and it being my object to destroy, wherever found, I was under necessity of setting the building on fire.<sup>560</sup>

As for further damage to the environment as a result of the detachment’s presence inland, Johnston reported that Kandyan troops “contrived to turn aside a stream” that supplied the British soldiers with water,<sup>561</sup> and felled numerous trees to obstruct their progress.

Bombardier Alexander Alexander, a noncommissioned officer from Scotland who worked as an overseer on slave plantations in the Caribbean before joining the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, published an autobiography in Edinburgh in 1830 with the help of editor and writer John Howell. Stationed at the Trincomalee

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<sup>557</sup> Johnston, 84-85. Four of the divisions had “entered the enemy’s country” and “carried into execution their instructions, the completion of which required but a few days”. See also Johnston, 91-92.

<sup>558</sup> Johnston, 49.

<sup>559</sup> Johnston, 50.

<sup>560</sup> Johnston, 59-60.

<sup>561</sup> Johnston, 57.



garrison, Alexander was frequently assigned tasks requiring the skills of a scribe. Upon arriving at Fort Ostenburg to record Captain Barnsley's survival account following the mass executions at Kandy, Alexander found that

a detachment of artillery and part of the 19<sup>th</sup>, with Malays and sepoy, were sent to Batacolo; they went by sea to the Cotiar shore, then marched to that little place, and instantly set off for the capital of Candy, under the command of Captain Johnstone of the 19<sup>th</sup>, leaving in Batacolo as many as garrisoned the fortress. This little army, including officer and native troops, did not exceed 300 men. The artillery had only their hangers and light field ordnance.<sup>562</sup>

But there had been a "violent misunderstanding" between General Wemyss and Governor North, "so much so, that it was evident even to the common soldiers".<sup>563</sup> The "expedition was countermanded after this division marched."<sup>564</sup>

Upon talking with soldiers who survived the retreat from Kandy, Alexander learned that Johnston's troops had not initially expressed concern about arriving "first" to Kandy. On the contrary, they discovered arrack that had been left behind by Davie's men in 1803 and celebrated, "anticipating the glorious advantage they would have in plundering as soon as the others appeared."<sup>565</sup> But the sight of Kandyans "collecting in immense numbers" around the city alarmed the soldiers:

No tongue can express the feelings of intense anxiety that took possession of the little army; the recollection of the last massacre rushed on their minds; the cry ran through the ranks, 'A massacre, a massacre, a second

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<sup>562</sup> John Howell, ed., *The life of Alexander Alexander: written by himself*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1830).

<sup>563</sup> Howell, I:148.

<sup>564</sup> Howell, I:148-149. Also consider North's communication to Camden, that "a general reunion of them at the Candian Capital was thought by Major General Wemyss not capable of being carried into execution without greater preparation. That plan therefore, which had once been adopted, was renounced". North to Camden, 8 February 1805.

<sup>565</sup> Howell, I:150.

massacre; we are sold, we are sold,—General Wemyss has sold us,—  
North has sold us,—we cannot retreat, it is of no use to try it, let us remain  
where we are and fight to the last man.’ The whole town resounded with  
their cries; horror and despair were in every man’s face; all was confusion

<sup>566</sup>  
...

After convincing the men that he was innocent of “selling” them, Johnston “cooly and seriously recommended” a retreat as quickly as possible, in a manner

strictly enjoining order and regularity, together with obedience to orders, and above all, silence, keeping close together, and waiting for each other, and on no account to separate; as if the front were heedlessly to push on, the rear must be separated from it, and both become an easy prey to the enemy.<sup>567</sup>

During this brief occupation, a sergeant had accidentally set fire to stores of ammunition, injuring himself and others and killing one of the members of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment.<sup>568</sup>

Perhaps for this reason Johnston encouraged the troops to be conservative in their use of ammunition, instructing them to “not heedlessly fire it away, or allow it to be damaged, for on that depends our safety”. He acknowledged “the massacre of our countrymen two years ago, whose bones we passed over the other day, and have again to pass over.”

Accordingly, he urged troops “upon all occasions” to be “obedient to orders, and we shall yet reach our countrymen in safety.”<sup>569</sup>

In Alexander’s account of the retreat, which he gathered from soldiers’ testimonies, a battle with the Kandyans ensued upon reaching a small clearing within the heavily wooded interior. Lieutenant William Vincent received a shot to the groin requiring him to be transported in a “doolie”. Ensign Smith “was struck on the breast

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<sup>566</sup> Howell, I:151.

<sup>567</sup> Howell, I:152.

<sup>568</sup> Howell, I:152-153.

<sup>569</sup> Howell, 152.

with a spent ball, which knocked him down. They were sent off by a bye-road, under the care of guides, with instructions to join again upon the route.”<sup>570</sup> Vincent had trouble persuading his men to remain with him. One grenadier agreed to accompany him.<sup>571</sup>

Farther on, the Lankan guides employed by Johnston lost their way. Alexander learned that the captain “had recourse to the whip; he tied up the guides to the trees and flogged them, to make them look sharper.”<sup>572</sup> The troops eventually reached Trincomalee

cold, wet, dirty, and lousy; almost naked, many barefoot and maimed; officers and all were alike starved and shriveled, their countenances haggard, forming an assemblage of the most miserable looking men it is possible to conceive. All had to go to the hospital, on their arrival; their strength appeared only to have endured to this point, then to have utterly deserted them. Indeed, this retreat was as fatal to the men as the massacre had been, for almost all died in the hospital; few, very few, survived.<sup>573</sup>

Officers Vincent and Smith never returned, leading to “much murmuring and blame”.<sup>574</sup>

One soldier, Sergeant Henry Craven of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment, was “tried by a court-martial for cowardice, in skulking behind a tree during the action, and for laughing at one of these officers when he was wounded.”<sup>575</sup> Another, Lieutenant Virgo, who had lost an eye during the retreat was implicated, like Craven, in the matter of the abandonment of Vincent and Smith and “suspended from rank and pay for six calendar months.”<sup>576</sup>

Captain T.A. Anderson, an officer of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment and a poet, included a memorial to Vincent and Smith in a collection of verse, *Poems, written chiefly in India* of 1809:

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<sup>570</sup> Howell, I:161.

<sup>571</sup> Howell, I:161-162.

<sup>572</sup> Howell, I:164.

<sup>573</sup> Howell, I:164.

<sup>574</sup> Howell, I:164.

<sup>575</sup> Howell, I:165.

<sup>576</sup> Howell, I:165-166.

. . . But now in dark and gloomy wilds  
Your bones, alas, decay!  
To howling savages expos'd  
An unresisting prey!

Forsaken 'ere the vital spark  
Had left your fainting frame,  
Oh, stain to manhood! and to arms  
An everlasting shame!

Too well! lamented youths, have you  
Fulfill'd stern Honor's call,  
Obedient to whose sacred voice,  
Unnumber'd victims fall!<sup>577</sup>

In an explanatory note, Anderson acknowledged that two fallen lieutenants from his regiment “who, being wounded in their retreat from Candy, were abandoned to their fate in the jungle.”<sup>578</sup>

The “dark and gloomy” setting that Anderson created for his tribute might be dismissed as a conceit constructed for readers with a preference for Romantic poetry, but Bombardier Alexander, in the course of acknowledging the “many stories current at this time” specifically recalled that members of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment “constantly asserted . . . that the day on which they marched was remarkably stormy and wet, and became so unusually dark and cloudy, that the like had been seldom seen.”<sup>579</sup> But the story he determined to be “still more remarkable” was that “all the dogs in the town howled after”

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<sup>577</sup> T.A. Anderson, *Poems, written chiefly in India* (London: J. Asperne, 1809), 82-83.

<sup>578</sup> Within Anderson's collection of verse, a poem about the island's “forests” in the vicinity of Cannia springs could evoke “reviving health, recover'd ease” while but when the forests used as a setting for the military experiences of the British troops the “glens for ever green” became a “jungle.” See Anderson, “Sonnet XV: Written at the hotwells of Cannia near Trincomalie” and “Stanzas. To the Memory of Lieutenants Vincent and Smith, of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment, who, being wounded in their retreat from Candy, were abandoned to their fate in the jungle,” 15, 82.

<sup>579</sup> Howell, I:125.

the soldiers, “and as they advanced, they were greeted by the howling of the dogs of the different places they came to, several of them following a long way howling.”

One dog in particular followed them until he was killed, often running in front of them and stopping to howl. He was different times beaten by the men, and left for dead; even the officers took notice of him, and said, ‘can none of you despatch that dog?’ but he always revived, though he was at last killed by a single kick.<sup>580</sup>

Alexander concluded his account of Johnston’s march and retreat as follows: “There were a great many excursions into the enemy’s country; none went so far during my stay, or suffered anything like this: —but all the talk soon died away.”<sup>581</sup>

Alexander’s concluding remark, that “all the talk soon died away”, recalls Cordiner’s statement about the effect in Colombo of the news of the mass execution: “like a clap of thunder followed by a profound calm.” The “talk” among those garrisoned in the forts at Trincomalee was testimony about the many kinds of violence experienced by Johnston’s detachment, from the gunshot, knife, or sword wounds aimed at, sustained, or generated by the soldiers; corporal punishment enacted upon local guides and porters; violence directed against animals and property; even the violence associated with extreme weather. But what can be made of this subsequent quiet in the garrison at Trincomalee in 1804, or in Colombo in 1803 after report of the “massacre”? Surely it was not a step towards forgetting, since all three writers—Johnston, Alexander, and

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<sup>580</sup> Howell, I:125-26.

<sup>581</sup> Howell, I:166.

Cordiner—brought their respective descriptions of violence to press as quickly as possible upon leaving the island.<sup>582</sup>

### **Aesthetics and colonial warfare**

Johnston's and Alexander's memoirs of warfare within the Kandyan interior provided metropolitan readers with vivid and compelling narratives of colonial violence. But their descriptions of are verbal rather than visual, begging the question, What does militarized violence look like, in the context of British colonial Sri Lanka?

Samuel Daniell, who trained to become a professional artist at the East India College at Hertford under the guidance of printmaker Thomas Medland, had served as a secretary and draughtsman to the British government at the Cape of Good Hope, and produced images based on African land and people for a series of aquatints.<sup>583</sup> By 1808 he had published *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants, of the Island of Ceylon*.<sup>584</sup> Daniell constructed views for this publication from the vantage point of British forts, images that relied on the precedent of wartime representation practiced by artists who worked on the Deccan Plateau in India during the Anglo-Mysore Wars. Such work appealed to the aesthetic sensibility of men like Frederic North, who acquired this series of aquatints.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> In his preface, editor John Howell acknowledged the “long train of misfortunes” that Alexander experienced prior to completing his autobiographical notes, and which had resulted in a significant delay in publication. See Howell, ed., I:iv.

<sup>583</sup> Samuel Daniell, *African scenery and animals* (London, 1804-1805).

<sup>584</sup> Samuel Daniell, *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants, of the Island of Ceylon* (London: T. Bensley, 1808).

<sup>585</sup> North and Wellesley corresponded about the Mysore conflict regularly, and when North sent Major-General MacDowall to Kandy to meet with Sri Vickrama Rajasimha in 1800 to attempt to

Two of Daniell's views of forts on the island, *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee* (fig. 5) and *View of Caltura* (fig. 6), depict calm bodies of water at the left, and heavy, dark foregrounds on the right, capped by forts. In the former, Daniell articulated his vantage point verbally, indicating with a subtitle that the view was "Taken from the Fort Ostenburg". However, the text that accompanies the print makes no mention of the fort, instead directing viewers' attention to elements of the landscape. The artist described the bay and harbor as "bold and romantic", the ground covered with "the most luxuriant shrubbery, the verdure of which is perpetual." Aside from a few cottages "interspersed about the hilly coppices" (not visible to the viewer), Daniell went so far as to suggest that, "The whole surrounding country may almost, indeed, be considered as in a state of nature, there being very little cultivation carried on in the neighbourhood of the bay".

The caption for *View of Caltura* acknowledges the fort, but only to call attention to its diminutive size and excellent location "upon an eminence, commanding the river"—a "delightful situation, [since] the mountain known by the name of Adam's Peak is distinctly visible." The text accompanying *View of Caltura* also acknowledged the presence of teak, coconut, and palmyra trees at the site which "finely clothe" the riverbank and village.

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secure a treaty, among the gifts MacDowall presented to the king was the "betel dish, with ornaments of solid gold, which had belonged to the late Tippoo Sultaun"<sup>585</sup> that a detachment led by Herbert Beaver would destroy during a punitive expedition in February of 1805. See Lawrence Dundas Campbell, "War in Ceylon," *Asiatic Annual Register, or, View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce, and Literature of Asia, for the Year 1804* (1806), 4.



Fig. 5 Samuel Daniell, *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee: Taken from the Fort Ostenburg*  
Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection



Fig. 6 Samuel Daniell, *View of Caltura*  
Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection



Daniell organized these views by means of the same principles that James Cordiner and Henry Salt used in the vicinity of Point de Galle but he did not describe the forts directly, instead directing viewers to consider elements of the landscape beyond or near them. Nor did Daniell include soldiers, even though composed from forts. His view of Trincomalee—a site strongly associated with death and recovery as a result of Johnston’s retreat in 1804—provides an impression of denying altogether the realities of colonial violence.

A print organized similarly is included in *Select Views in Mysore, the Country of Tippoo Sultan; from drawings taken on the spot* of 1794 by English artist Robert Home, which represents a site on the Deccan Plateau of India.<sup>586</sup> Home, a professional artist to whom the East India Company granted permission to produce imagery during the wars with Tipu Sultan, downplayed military accouterments and action in his work, focusing instead on elements of nature that he handled according to the rules of the picturesque. *View of Shevagurry from the top of Ramgaree* (fig. 7), an etching based on Home’s original drawing, positions viewers on a hilltop, as if taking in an expansive view. Home’s accompanying text directed viewers to look into the distant plane at a fortress on a rocky outcropping. The artist also required viewers to consider the specificities of the foreground, to the extent that it is not difficult to realize that the artist stood within a fort to provide this vantage point. The walls of the fort are visible in the upper third of the picture plane, a heavy gun situated at the lower left.

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<sup>586</sup> Robert Home, *Select Views in Mysore, the Country of Tippoo Sultan; from drawings taken on the spot* (London: Mr. Bowyer, 1794).



Fig. 7 Robert Home, *View of Shevagurry from the top of Ramgaree*  
Courtesy of the British Library, London

Of the former presence of troops at the site, Home acknowledged in the accompanying text that on December 22, 1791, British soldiers “attacked the lower fort and pettah, and carried them by assault” after which the fort was surrendered. He added that, “it was found to be well provided with guns, provision, and stores” and had recently been strengthened.<sup>587</sup> But Home did not represent the soldiers themselves, and even the cannon is marginalized to the extent that it is only partially visible, a diminutive object in a landscape where rocks and clouds play a more dynamic role.<sup>588</sup> As if to justify his decision to include it the artist noted in the text that the “sterile soil” of the landscape was in fact rich in iron, “and applied to that worst of purposes, the fabrication of implements of war.”

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<sup>587</sup> Home, 22.

<sup>588</sup> Lest it is assumed that Byrne, the printmaker, reduced the impact of the gun’s presence in the landscape, comparison with the original drawing confirms that Home did not intend for it to be visually prominent. The cannon is easy to overlook in both images.

Home described the South Indian landscape as “wild and savage . . . abounding with barren rocks, and extensive thickets, the abode of tigers and other beasts of prey.”<sup>589</sup> With principles of the picturesque firmly in place, from receding planes to strong framing devices that provided visual balance, the single cannon sits close to the base of the composition, a place typically occupied by villagers or foliage. The rocky terrain, more than the fort or weaponry, alluded to the difficulty and danger of the terrain, “the abode of tigers and other beasts” but not of villagers or military personnel.



Fig. 8 Colin Mackenzie, *Distant View of Savan-Droog in Mysore*  
Courtesy of the British Library, London

An ink wash drawing from the same period, *Distant View of Savan-Droog in Mysore from the East Side* (fig. 8), reveals a good deal about the spread of picturesque

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<sup>589</sup> Home, 21.

practice into the colonial battle spaces of South India in the late eighteenth century. In this work by Colin Mackenzie of the Madras army, the artist reduced nature's colors to a monochromatic scheme. He included in the drawing only as much of the landscape as would fill a Claude glass—an oval-shaped, blackened mirror used by artists to heighten the light and dark values of a scene while sketching. Use of this tool required Mackenzie to stand with his back to the view and sketch instead its darkened reflection. He framed a distant, elevated fortress with nearer hills on both sides and attended to a minimum of local detail, a few scattered trees. The image does not invite questions about military activity to viewers who neglected to read the accompanying text, which identified the fort of Savandurga as the site of one of Tipu Sultan's prisons, extremely difficult to reach and from which it had been impossible for soldiers to escape.

With no discernible reference to violence in this landscape, one less familiar with the distinctive silhouette of Savandurga might mistake the Indian scene for a site in one of the hill regions of Britain. A similar image, published by William Gilpin in *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty* of 1786 (fig. 9), reveals the visual priorities shared by Gilpin and Mackenzie: a variety of shapes, both on land and in the sky; a clear recession of spatial planes; and the use of a Claude glass to assist in the production of light and dark values and the reduction of local details. Gilpin described this aquatint as “An illustration of that wild kind of country, of which we saw several instances, as we entered Cumberland.”<sup>590</sup> At the place in the text that he bound this print into the first volume of *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*, he urged

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<sup>590</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England; particularly the mountains and lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (London: R. Blamire, 1786), II:v.

amateur artists to consider the importance of choosing the correct time of day to produce such a landscape:

In every representation, truly picturesque, the shade should greatly overbalance the light. The face of nature, under the glow of noon, has rarely this beautiful appearance. The artist therefore generally courts her charms in a morning, or an evening hour, when the shadows are deep, and extended; and when the sloping sun-beam affords rather a catching, than a glaring light.<sup>591</sup>



Fig. 9 William Gilpin, “An illustration of that wild kind of country, of which we saw several instances, as we entered Cumberland,”  
from *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*  
Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

Deep passages of shadow cast the mountain into relief, the printer’s ink a warm brown. Mackenzie, too, used a brown wash for his drawing of Savandurga, suitable for imitating the sun’s first or last rays of day. Similarities in the approach of these artists might lead some to suggest a causal relationship, but their aesthetic training of drew deep from the

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<sup>591</sup> Gilpin, *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty*, I:162-63.

well of eighteenth-century British military representation, largely accounting for their similarities.<sup>592</sup> As with Home's *View of Shevagurry from the top of Ramgaree*, it is the harsh terrain in Mackenzie's work, rather than accoutrements of battle, that promises viewers difficulty in traversing this landscape.<sup>593</sup> Gilpin, too, referred to his view of Cumberland as ". . . that wild kind of country".

In visual terms, picturesque imagery of military sites in India by Home and Mackenzie, and in Sri Lanka by Daniell, took landscapes where there had been hostility and tranquilized them, enabling such sites to appear safe. Postwar landscape imagery by practitioners of the colonial picturesque purposefully refrained from articulating violent action, making room instead for contemplation. Trincomalee, which had heard much testimony of violence and witnessed the deaths of many soldiers, and the forts of the Deccan Plateau, which had seen direct and prolonged military action, are empty. The arresting silence of such works, made possible by ridding these picture planes of perpetrators of violence, exists in stark contrast to documentation of wartime activity.

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<sup>592</sup> Gilpin's father, John Bernard Gilpin, was an officer in the 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. While he was not formally designated a military draftsman, Gilpin senior admired the approach to landscape representation taught by Paul Sandby, drawing master for over thirty years at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Further, as Rama Sundari Mantena points out in *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India*, Colin Mackenzie's work as a surveyor was indebted to Sandby's approach. See Rama Sundari Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 48.

<sup>593</sup> According to Nicholas Dirks, Mackenzie's "surveying and engineering skills were put to use to position artillery and act as a technical advisor for assaults" in the Deccan. Accordingly, his decision to depict difficult, albeit unarmed, terrain is striking. See Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive," in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 284.

Attempts to determine the function of colonial warfare imagery by Mackenzie, Home, and others<sup>594</sup> in South India have led scholars to suggest that they may have aided viewers in practices of imagining and memorializing. Patterns of artistic training in combination with soldiers' and artists' personal experiences of war perhaps resulted in the production of battle sites as landscapes "where memory could subsequently be located and invoked" by individuals or collectively,<sup>595</sup> It is possible, too, that such works encouraged viewers to construct imagined histories for the troops.<sup>596</sup>

Whether viewers utilized such representations of South Indian land for these purposes is neither debated nor forwarded here. Rather, it is a "logic of private property"<sup>597</sup> that requires attention. Writing not about the picturesque but about law, geographer Nicholas Blomley has demonstrated that a consideration of land that privileges the idea of private property results in a sensibility of "territoriality" that serves to divide "bounded space from the things and relations that inform it, thus imagining the space as a purely abstract and empty site".<sup>598</sup> Bereft of those who inform it, a site's meaning becomes informed instead through its natural attributes. To view Daniell's aquatints or, for that matter, any picturesque project by means of Blomley's "logic of

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<sup>594</sup> See also Robert Colebrook, *Twelve views of places in the Kingdom of Mysore, the country of Tippoo Sultan, from drawing taken on the spot* (London, 1973; London: Edward Orme, 1805).

<sup>595</sup> Rosie Dias, 'Memory and the Aesthetics of Military Experience: Viewing the Landscape of the Anglo-Mysore Wars,' *Tate Papers* 19 (Spring 2013), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/memory-and-the-aesthetics-of-military-experience-viewing-the-landscape-of-the-anglo-mysore-wars>, accessed 5 October 2016.

<sup>596</sup> Mary A. Favret, *War at Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 213.

<sup>597</sup> Nicholas Blomley, "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 1 (March 2003), 121-141.

<sup>598</sup> Blomley, 129.

private property” fits, given the roots of this discourse. Its practitioners and theorists in the metropole had long been tied to matters of estate improvement and other concerns of property owners,<sup>599</sup> and had largely accepted the national movement towards enclosure.

Colin Mackenzie had used the picturesque to order the landscape of South India in the context of his job as a surveyor, part of a larger project of preparing that region for privatization that would result in the establishment of “a class of yeoman farmers whose productivity might guarantee the Company a fixed income from land rents.”<sup>600</sup> Daniell represented Sri Lanka in both visual and verbal terms as habitable. Indeed, his verbal description of the Trincomalee and Kalutara forts has a good deal in common with

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<sup>599</sup> Within the context of Smith’s conception of political economy, one was thought to be “released from private interest and from the occlusions of a narrow and partial existence of the world, and from an experience of the world as material” if one had private means. Such a man was perceived as “able to grasp the public interest” and as such was assumed to be “fit” to govern. See John Barrell, “The Public Prospect and the Private View: The Politics of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, eds. *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 82. Nigel Everett points out that Adam Smith was unenthusiastic about the role of “the great landowners” within the political economy, since they tended to be preoccupied with improving the land around their mansions at the expense of the needs of their larger estates. It was, rather, the “smaller proprietors of land . . . who know every inch of their land and derive much of their pleasure from its cultivation and adornment” that served a useful role. See Nigel Everett, *The Tory View of Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 215. While Frederic North could refer to the island itself in affectionate terms, some criticized him for not thinking about widespread improvement of the maritime provinces; he concentrated on public works projects in or near the southwest. See Alicia Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 94. Even so, to the surprise of Valentia, North did not exhibit a marked interest in improving either of the properties at which he resided on the island, aside from plans for a garden at Arippu. See Valentia, I:121.

“Up to Waterloo,” wrote Harold Perkins, “power was unquestionably in the hands of the great landowners and their friends of one or the other faction”; landowners were “lobbied not for a share of the power but for patronage of their particular policies.” See Perkins, 38. Geographer Kenneth Olwig states the matter succinctly: “One did not belong to a country defined as the place of polity; one owned a place in the country.” See Kenneth Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain’s Renaissance to America’s New World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 123.

<sup>600</sup> Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 169.



property advertisements in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*. An ad dating back to 1802, the first year of the paper's publication, a property was marketed "as pleasantly situated as any fruit gardens in the environs of Colombo, having a view over the lake to the fort & cinnamon gardens, as well for riding as for walking".<sup>601</sup> A decade later the *Gazette* still published such ads: in June of 1812 it printed the following description of a country house for sale on the island:

most delightfully situated on an eminence, that commands an extensive view of the sea, and the interior of the country around—and, without exaggeration, is really worthy of the notice of any gentleman in want of the like, being a short distance from the fort.<sup>602</sup>

Like Daniell, the writers of these listings isolated aspects of landscape to call attention to what was most valued: views afforded by access to the properties, particular trees or gardens, and "environs . . . for riding as for walking".

Daniell became ill and died in Sri Lanka in 1811, and when the news reached London, the *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* published an acknowledgment of his death, merited because of the "exquisite taste and fidelity" of his work.<sup>603</sup> Daniell's "exquisite taste" was what afforded him acknowledgement in the gentleman's periodical. But that his work was considered noteworthy for its "fidelity" is important too, since he produced imagery of contested sites about which visual information would have been deemed valuable. While participation in picturesque discourse demanded that artists position themselves in relation to the landscape to

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<sup>601</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 34 (27 October 1802).

<sup>602</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 559 (3 June 1812).

<sup>603</sup> "Mr. Samuel Daniell," *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 82, no. 2 (July-December 1812), 296.

maximize a view's potential to look like a painting, within a context of colonial warfare the particularities of ground cover, the shapes of potentially recognizable hills, and other particularities of terrain were often retained as valuable information that allowed viewers to recognize battle sites.

Late in 1804, not long after the survivors of Captain Johnston's detachment arrived at Trincomalee, Governor North became involved in a capital crimes case concerning private property, the proceedings of which shed light on North's values in this regard.<sup>604</sup> The governor seldom sought counsel from the metropole about crimes committed on the island, but such was the case with regard to Kahatoodoowege Savriel Silva, called Nainde, who was sentenced to death by the island's British supreme court after killing a property owner during a botched robbery. The case is important to this project inasmuch as North devoted a great deal of attention to it during the same period in which he continued to direct British troops to effect widespread destruction upon Kandyan property as a measure of punishment, albeit within the parameters of warfare. In the capital crimes case, too, what concerned North was how to implement just punishment with regard to a violent crime.

North offered the defendant respite until he could contact London about the matter. The governor communicated to Camden that Nainde and another person had

. . . entered the garden of one of his neighbours, in the intention of stealing a jack-fruit, for which purpose he was armed with a mahmooty, or some other strong iron instrument, calculated to break the hard shell.

The proprietor of the garden, who was sleeping (as is customary) in the veranda on the outside of his house, awoke and, seeing the attempt

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<sup>604</sup> The jack fruit tree that featured in the Nainde trial of 1804 was, along with coconut, bread-fruit, and areca nut trees, among the type of tree most often found in the gardens of property owners. See Colvin de Silva, II:322.

to rob his fruit-tree, very naturally went to defend it. A scuffle ensued, in which he was mortally wounded, by the man since condemned, who shewed the most violent contrition at the time, and who clearly had not premeditated the murder, which he committed.<sup>605</sup>

North had no problem identifying the crime as murder, and as such a capital crime.

Rather, the issue for North was its the spontaneous nature, rather than one that could be construed as premeditated. “Premeditated murder is but too frequent here,” explained North, “and even the attempt of it, when accompanied with burglary, or any other positive crime, I never would pardon.”<sup>606</sup> To illustrate as much, he informed Camden that he was

. . . about to sign a warrant for the execution of two persons, lately condemned by the supreme court, for wounding a man with intent to kill him, for the purpose of securing his ear-rings, which they were tearing out of his ears, as well as many other articles of value, which they had burglariously taken from his house at the time the attempt was made on his life.<sup>607</sup>

Having provided an example of his willingness to sign off on executions, North nonetheless saw fit to suggest to Camden that the “present state of society on the island” was one in which “the broad lines of moral rectitude ought as much as possible to be attended to in the application of punishment.” Accordingly, the case of Nainde was one in which he hoped “. . . His Majesty will be graciously pleased to spare the life of the

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<sup>605</sup> North to Hobart, 8 October 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>606</sup> North to Hobart, 8 October 1804. Some months after the incident, and shortly before North would leave the island permanently, one his government’s magistrates, Thomas Farrell, was shot on the verandah of his home in the Pettah. A witness “saw the flash, and heard the report of the gun, and thought that he heard an exclamation in Mr. Farrell’s voice.” Upon reaching the magistrate, the witness “found him stretched on the floor near a door-way leading from the verandah into his rooms, and totally senseless.” A military surgeon identified two entrance wounds. The report noted that “no traces of the murderer have yet been found, but a reward of five thousand rix dollars was published yesterday by government . . . which it is hoped will lead to a discovery.” See the *Ceylon Government Gazette* 175 (22 May 1805).

<sup>607</sup> North to Hobart, 8 October 1804.

abovementioned individual; and I am sure that the example will be very far from having a bad effect on his unenlightened subjects in these remote settlements.”

In the proceedings of the supreme court that North forwarded to London, Alexander Johnston, the advocate fiscal, documented that “Nainde of Pallenchena”, on the evening of May 9, 1804, “willfully and of his malice aforethought did make an assault” on Cicoo Cangaan and

willfully and of his malice aforethought did beat and bruise upon the head and breast and with a knife which he . . . then and there in his hands had and held the right side of the lower part of the belly . . . willfully and of his malice aforethought did pierce and stab . . . one wound of the depth of four inches and the breadth of one inch of which said beating and bruizing and of the said wounding . . . did die.<sup>608</sup>

In sum, the advocate fiscal found that Nainde “willfully and of his malice aforethought did kill and murder against the peace of our said lord the King his crown and dignity” Cicoo Cangaan. Johnstone turned the matter over to the Supreme Court, before which Nainde pleaded “Not guilty.” The court, however, found him guilty, and on August 14 sentenced him to “be taken from hence to the common gaol of Colombo from whence he came and from thence be taken to Negombo in the province of Colombo” on the morning of August 17, to be “hanged by the neck until he be dead.”<sup>609</sup>

North entered the documented proceedings at this point, and stated the following on October 6:

As I must send home a statement of the reasons which induced me to respite the punishment . . . I take the liberty of inclosing the minute which I wrote on the occasion, and will request you to inform me whether you perceive any error in the statement of the fact.<sup>610</sup>

<sup>608</sup> “Colombo, third session in the year 1804,” 17 July 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>609</sup> “The sentence of the court,” 14 August 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>610</sup> Frederic North, “Statement of reasons,” 6 October 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

The text of North's minute acknowledged the case as a murder "committed on the person of a man defending his own property, and with a weapon which must have produced death."<sup>611</sup> Such a situation normally warranted death, but this was "a robbery of the slightest nature, that of fruit in a garden" during which "the repose of the proprietor was only disturbed by his natural wish to defend his property," and further, the "weapon of that man was not brought to the garden with any intention of wounding or hurting the proprietor, but merely of cutting his jack-fruit." Accordingly, the governor recommended that the accused be spared his life and commuted to "Hard Labour in Chains for Life," a sentence North thought suited a crime harsher than manslaughter but less severe than premeditated murder. North continued:

I am convinced that the effect of his punishment, so committed, would be fully sufficient to deter the inhabitants of the neighbourhood from the unjust invasion of other men's property, and by any subsequent assault on the person of the proprietor; and that it's [sic] commutation would tend to prevent the frequency of burglaries attended by murder, and of assassinations from motives of revenge.<sup>612</sup>

During the proceedings, the governor betrayed little concern for the theft of the jack fruit itself, calling it merely "a robbery of the slightest nature, that of fruit in a garden". But given his claim as to the prevalence of premeditated murder in colonial Sri Lanka, North downplayed the theft of property expressly for the purpose of setting a new legal precedent, colonial law not offering flexibility in sentencing for murder. In 1805 the court would hear another case involving property, specifically timber. In that instance

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<sup>611</sup> North, "Minute by the governor," 15 August 1804. CO 54/14, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>612</sup> North, "Minute by the governor".

North would act without hesitation on behalf of the local property owner, even though the perpetrators of the crime were linked to a British army officer of significant rank.

In spite of North's zealous protection of the island's natural resources, he looked at the object of the theft by Nainde—the jack fruit—as barely relevant in light of a larger matter of governance, a matter of establishing the correct punishment. North's approach to governance in the Nainde case was a microcosm of his handling of the “areca nut” war: he set aside the prize—the desirable produce—and devoted his intellectual and moral energy, as well as his resources, to enacting what he thought was a “correct” and thorough response to the crime that had been committed. With regard to his attempt to effect a proper punishment of the Kandyan for the mass executions at the capital and the subsequent attacks on the maritime provinces, North not only failed to effect tranquility—that is, “high order,” uniformity, and regularity, but turned against the Kandyan landscape, leading to an ocean of confusion of his own making.

North eventually characterized his government of the island during the war as a “turbulent and discreditable period”, a situation significantly at odds from the kind of administrator he had set out to be. He communicated to Camden that the duties of governor had brought him “many years of physical and moral calamity rendered insupportable to my feelings”. Claiming that he “sacrificed those feelings, as well as every private comfort” to satisfy expectations, and “for the happiness of the people under my care”, still “no degree of prudence, exertion, or economy” could change the situation, except to establish a new governor invested with the authority to command the military.<sup>613</sup> In spite of this, North surmised that his governorship had resulted in

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<sup>613</sup> North to Camden, 10 July 1805. CO 54/18, National Archives, Kew.

the country flourishing, beyond all former example, in industry, commerce, and interior tranquillity; the enemy reduced to the lowest pitch of misery and impotence; the stores tolerably provided; and the military force amply sufficient in numbers and in efficiency for all the service which it can be called upon to perform.<sup>614</sup>

North registered hope that his conduct might “be judged on the grounds of political propriety”. That he could list “tranquility” and reduction of “the enemy . . . to the lowest pitch” as compatible achievements of his governorship surely indicates what he viewed as his moral mandate. Prevented from utilizing the Kandyan provinces towards the end and aims of political economy, he set them back economically, hitting hardest the crops, produce, and goods he desired to subsume but had been denied access.

In undertaking a campaign of destruction, North may have drawn from a range of precedents, from military operations conducted by the English in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to conflicts in Europe and Scotland in the eighteenth century, as well as British imperial actions in North America.<sup>615</sup> Regardless of whether North relied on such precedents, one thing can be stated with certainty: to punish the Kandyan government for resisting his attempts to unify the island’s resources under the umbrellas of the economic system and aesthetic systems to which he subscribed, North insured the temporary devastation of the Kandyan economy. For North to write that he had left the

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<sup>614</sup> North to Camden, 10 July 1805.

<sup>615</sup> Peter E. Russell writes that “the regular officers who led in Anglo-American armies in North America during the Seven Years’ War” . . . “had gained their experience in the 1740s . . . [when] they had ample opportunities to observe, combat, and occasionally to conduct guerilla tactics.” Moreover, “popular and technical literature described irregular warfare in European and Scotland. British newspapers and magazines included numerous firsthand accounts of the skirmishes of Pandours, Grassins, and Highland clansmen, and it is clear from their correspondence and lists of new publications that the readership included army officers.” See Peter E. Russell, “Redcoats in the Wilderness: British Officers and Irregular Warfare in Europe and America, 1740 to 1760,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (October 1978), 630 and 640.

island in a better state of “interior tranquility” he was no doubt referring to his attempts, rather than his achievements, in this regard.

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This chapter utilized imagery by Samuel Daniell, Robert Home, and Colin Mackenzie to provide the basis for an understanding of the colonial picturesque in a postwar context. These artists relied on the picturesque to reconceive colonial sites associated with violent conflict as safely habitable. Analysis of the visual properties of these works in combination with the accompanying verbal description of the sites pointed to the ownership and management of private property as a significant factor in the reading of them. A brief look at the writing projects of theorists of the picturesque, including Reverend William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight, bolstered the relevance of a discussion of private property to the interpretation of works by Daniell, Home and Mackenzie.

After his death, Samuel Daniell’s aquatints were singled out in a gentleman’s periodical in Britain for their “exquisite taste and delicacy,” hence aligning the artist with the education and social priorities of elites like Frederic North. Specifically, this chapter argued for a characterization of Frederic North as a man of property, classical education, and aesthetic taste who would not embrace a position of violence against the Kandyan kingdom unless strongly motivated to do so ideologically. In particular, North’s reliance on the concept of tranquility, a defining factor of picturesque representation, invited analysis of his ideas of governance in relation to colonial violence, accounting for his decision to direct troops to destroy land and resources in the interior with the aim of reducing the Kandyans to the “lowest pitch.” This chapter drew not only from



documentation as to the suffering of the Kandyans but accounts of the experiences of British troops in action in the Kandyan provinces, in the form of memoirs produced by Captain Arthur Johnston and Bombardier Alexander Alexander. When juxtaposed against Samuel Daniell's *View of the Harbour of Trincomalee*, it became evident that Daniell sought to represent the island as one that had largely recovered from harrowing events associated with Britain's first war with Kandy.

In the nine-year period that stretched between North's departure from the island and the final occupation of the inland capital in 1815, Maria Graham visited Sri Lanka. Despite Daniell's picturesque representations of the island's forts, which offered reassurances as to its safety in the postwar period, Graham, in *Journal of a Residence in India*, expressed concern about numerous forms of danger on the island.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MARIA GRAHAM'S "EXTENSIVE BURNED FOREST"

In the aftermath of the first war with Kandy, Reverend James Cordiner, Henry Salt, and Samuel Daniell published their picturesque accounts of travel on the island for metropolitan audiences. In 1810, Maria Dundas Graham visited Sri Lanka twice, publishing her observations in a book, *Journal of a Residence in India*, in 1812, three years before hostilities between the British and Kandyan governments resumed. This chapter argues that, as an author and artist, Graham positioned herself as the intellectual and moral compass by which metropolitan readers could navigate an understanding of Sri Lankan people and land during the years leading up to Britain's final occupation of Kandy. Graham based many of her descriptions of people on stereotypes, an aspect of colonial representation that applies as well to the work of Cordiner, Salt, and Daniell. As such, a re-visitation of their work from the standpoint of stereotypes informed by racism, classism, and sexism during the period in which Frederic North governed the island is necessarily a component of the present chapter.

Graham situated her account of the island in relation to the aims of Enlightenment era travel, that is, with an eye towards encyclopedism, Orientalism, and the picturesque. Analysis of two prints based on original drawings by Graham, *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen* and *Cape Town from the Heer Graght*, point to Graham's tendency to reduce people and land visually to picturesque formulae, while

simultaneously offering her readers extensive verbal information about the sites depicted. This combination of pared down visual elements and enhanced verbal description results in a tension between the images and the text in *Journal of a Residence in India*, the former imposing strict visual order and the latter offering wide-ranging information.

The aftermath of the first war with Kandy coincided with a period of heightened interest in the Indian Ocean region due to an extension of the Peninsular War to battle sites in and around South Asia, acknowledged here with analysis of reports in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*. Accordingly, Graham's verbal and visual descriptions of the island are considered in relation to projects similar in their geographic scope, including William Vincent's new translation of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* and Thomas and William Daniell's *A picturesque voyage to India by the way of China*. One of a small number of artists who unified perceptions of the region's littoral cultures by consistently employing picturesque discourse in descriptions of its port cities, Graham's observations are analyzed from the standpoint of class, race, and gender, allowing for more complex discussions of wartime and postwar conflict than has been possible within the parameters of this study thus far.

Picturesque imagery or verbal description of Sri Lanka by James Cordiner, Henry Salt, and Samuel Daniell is necessarily revisited in light of discussion of class, race, and gender. Moreover, images and textual description by these artists are juxtaposed with documentation dating to the period of Frederic North's governorship, from court proceedings in which North had worked to resolve a dispute between a native property owner and an employee of Major-General David Douglass Wemyss, to accounts of

abducted or disappeared women reported in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, to a closer analysis of Bombardier Alexander Alexander's account of the retreat from Trincomalee.

To a greater degree than Cordiner, Salt, or Daniell, Graham conveyed numerous concerns about danger on the island, which are aligned here with reports in the metropolitan periodical press about individual incidents of violence experienced by British troops and civil servants living in Sri Lanka. Coupled with her decision to omit description of British or Lankan women from her account, it is demonstrated that Graham apprehended Sri Lanka as a place in which women were particularly vulnerable. Since Graham was a picturesque adept, the gendered roots of this discourse are examined, resulting in the determination that metropolitan and colonial practitioners of the picturesque represented women in far less corporeal terms than they represented men. Analysis of Graham's account of travel reveals that not only aspects of gender but class and race determined who acquired a modest degree of authority, safety, or comfort on the island.

### **“So picturesque”**

On March 9, 1810, Maria Graham recorded in her journal that she and her companions were “highly gratified by an excursion to Negumbo,” to which they traveled for the purpose of watching the capture of elephants.<sup>616</sup> Joining her party had been “Mr Daniel [sic] the painter, whose printed views of Ceylon you must have seen”.<sup>617</sup> Graham

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<sup>616</sup> Maria Graham, *Journal of a residence in India* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 2000). Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>617</sup> Graham, 101.

proceeded to describe in detail the elephant craal, claiming, “I never saw grief and indignation so passionately expressed as by one of these creatures; he groaned, tried to tear his legs from their fetters, buried his trunk in the earth, and threw dust into the air”.<sup>618</sup> After taking a walk to allow their bearers time to rest, the party began their return journey by palanquin, anxious to “get through the jungle before sunset, the night air in the woods occasioning intermittent fevers”.<sup>619</sup> The subject of illness associated with travel in the forest stimulated Graham to add that “none of our troops have been able to stand the noxious effects of a campaign in the jungle.”<sup>620</sup>

Aside from this brief mention of “a campaign in the jungle” Graham did not address the difficulty with which the British army tried but failed to maintain an occupation of Kandy six years earlier. She did, however, give her readers a means by which to recall the effects of the war. Upon coming to a charred but recovering landscape near Negombo, she described “the curious spectacle of an extensive burned forest”:

Many of the massy trunks had fallen down, and, by stopping the water from running off after the rains, had formed little swamps, where aquatic plants and moss had begun to grow, but the greater part were erect, bare, and bleached, with here and there a creeping plant beginning to grace their barrenness with a foreign verdure.<sup>621</sup>

Graham positioned this description of the damaged landscape in her journal immediately after her departure from Samuel Daniell, who “intended to stay some time in search of subjects for his pencil” at the craal. She noted that Daniell smoked as a defense against “the bad effects of his sylvan life” and lit “great fires within and without his tent”. She

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<sup>618</sup> Graham, 103.

<sup>619</sup> Graham, 105-106.

<sup>620</sup> Graham, 106.

<sup>621</sup> Graham, 106.

may have intended for readers to assume that the burned forest resulted from carelessness or accident. But given the location of the craal in the vicinity of the Kandyan border, as well as indication of a fairly advanced ecosystem that had developed in the midst of the dead trees, Graham undoubtedly had glimpsed the effects of one of the punitive expeditions undertaken during the war.

Sri Lanka was one of several places Graham visited and described within the context a larger narrative about Indian Ocean travel. She explored European, African, and South Asian port cities and their environs from May of 1809 to June of 1811 in the company of her father and husband, both officers in the Royal Navy. Long before Graham visited a British colony, her family predetermined her relationship with colonialism; her father, Rear-Admiral George Dundas, served Britain in the American War of Independence, and her mother, Ann Thompson, was a loyalist from Virginia who fled to England in the course of that conflict.<sup>622</sup> As a girl, Maria Dundas received an “ornamental” education from the daughters of a clergyman. She studied French, dancing, music, drawing, botany, philosophy, and metaphysics. This curriculum contrasted with the practical education of working-class girls: sewing and accounts.<sup>623</sup> Maria Dundas met her husband, Thomas Graham, on the voyage to South Asia. They studied Persian together, along with Tacitus and Dugald Stewart’s *The Philosophy of the Human Mind*.<sup>624</sup> As Graham traveled along the Indian Ocean littoral she produced imagery that was clearly informed by picturesque discourse.

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<sup>622</sup> Rosamund Brunel Gotch, *Maria, Lady Callcott* (London: John Murray, 1937), 7.

<sup>623</sup> See Gotch, 24-30, and Caroline Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists and the Amateur Tradition* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>624</sup> Gotch, 130.

Graham turned eighteen the year the war with Kandy began and she chose to undertake a journey to the Indian Ocean six years later. It is important to consider the ways that Graham and other metropolitan readers informed themselves about the sites to which such a journey afforded access. In light of her role in the lives of members of the Royal Navy, she would have possessed an understanding of the politically charged situation of the British in Sri Lanka before she arrived on the island. To point out ways in which information about Sri Lanka could be apprehended by metropolitan readers is not to suggest what Graham knew or did not know of the island before commencing travel, but rather to acknowledge such sources as a means by which those who held an interest in Britain's activities in the colonies could acquire information.

A popular source for such information were accounts of residence and travel by those who had produced memoirs or histories of the island, all of which have previously been acknowledged in this study: Percival's *An account of Ceylon* of 1803, Cordiner's *A Description of Ceylon* of 1807, and Samuel Daniells's *A picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants of the island of Ceylon* of 1808. Graham's own account of travel to South Asia, *Journal of a Residence in India* of 1812, would eventually rank among such books. Shortly before publishing her book, *The Scots Magazine, and Literary Miscellany* alerted readers of its imminent publication, to "be illustrated by engravings and drawings taken on the spot".<sup>625</sup> In many Enlightenment accounts, knowledge of the island and its inhabitants was accumulated but unchanging. An additional source of information about the island was *The Scots Magazine* itself,

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<sup>625</sup> "Literary Intelligence," *The Scots Magazine, and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany, being a general repository of literature, history, and politics* 74 (August 1812), 618.

advertised as “a general repository of literature, history, and politics”. This periodical offered readers an opportunity to piece together an understanding of colonial conflict in Sri Lanka through recycled news items from the *Ceylon Government Gazette* and letters supplied by readers. *The Scots Magazine* carried news information about recent events from relatives and friends of soldiers, government agents, and others who visited or lived on the island.

The expressions of concern in Graham’s book about potential for danger on the island ran parallel with references to danger noted in the *Scots Magazine*. Whether the concern was fever, violent weather, or armed conflict, all were acknowledged in the magazine during the latter months of 1803, when the “Foreign Intelligence: East Indies” section began to carry references to Sri Lanka that increasingly conveyed a tone of urgency about problems on the island. One account reported “two armies assembling” in Sri Lanka but dismissed the news as a “misunderstanding having taken place betwixt our government and that of Candia”.<sup>626</sup> The news deemed more important by the editors at that point was a description of “the most violent hurricane ever remembered by the oldest person living on the island”.<sup>627</sup> Soon, however, the *Scots Magazine* published news that “certain merchants, subjects of the British government in this island, were, by an officer of the government of the King of Candy, robbed of 220 ammonums of areka-nut, which they had fairly purchased at a market in the Candian dominions”. British troops had “taken the field” after “His Excellency Mr North remonstrated against this outrage”.

Similar to that which was reported in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, the *Scots*

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<sup>626</sup> “Foreign Intelligence: East Indies,” *The Scots Magazine, and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany, being a general repository of literature, history, and politics* 65 (August 1803), 571.

<sup>627</sup> “Foreign Intelligence: East Indies,” *Scots Magazine* 65 (August 1803), 571.



*Magazine* noted that “The troops have gone, under order to respect the temples, religion, and priests of the country which they invade” while the people of the inland provinces had been “exhorted to submit in quiet to the invading army. The expedition is sent out as against a power that possesses no adequate means of resistance.”<sup>628</sup>

In November of 1803 the magazine informed readers that “The British Government in Ceylon, is occupied in making roads through all parts of the country into which our troops have penetrated” and that Major-General MacDowall, once he had arrived inland, was “met by a deputation from the Candians, imploring his protection for themselves and their families.”<sup>629</sup> December saw the following report: “Intelligence of an unpleasant nature has been received from the island of Ceylon”; a letter sent from Chilaw had arrived in Edinburgh, revealing that “the war against the king of Candy . . . has not turned out so favourably as was expected; we have only made one trifling conquest” largely due to a “dreadful malady”—a “bad fever”. An additional news item that month reported “a severe engagement” between “the English forces “ and “part of the King of Candy’s army” but did not articulate the outcome, adding only that “the English have suffered a great loss from a malignant fever and ague prevalent in the island.”<sup>630</sup>

As a voracious reader whose writing would eventually be acknowledged by *The Scots Magazine*, and as the daughter of an officer in the Royal Navy, Graham would have been as well informed as any about the precarious situation on the island, and may have anticipated long in advance of her arrival in Sri Lanka the forms of danger she would

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<sup>628</sup> “Foreign Intelligence: East Indies,” *Scots Magazine* 65 (September 1803), 664.

<sup>629</sup> “Foreign Intelligence: East Indies,” *Scots Magazine* 65 (November 1803), 807.

<sup>630</sup> “Foreign Intelligence: East Indies,” *Scots Magazine* 65 (December 1803), 879.

write about in her journal. Yet aside from her observations about the bleached trunks of a damaged forest, “a foreign verdure” now appearing amidst the “barrenness,” and her reference to British troops unable to sustain action in the island’s interior due to the likelihood of illness, Graham hardly acknowledged the war. Only once did she comment about ongoing tension between the island’s two polities in the aftermath of the war. As she stood before a “magnificent lake” near Ambalangoda, “formed by a large river which descends from the Candian country”, she noted that

The Candians frequently come down this river to barter betel-nut, rice, and precious stones, for salt and some other necessaries,—a traffic that no jealousy of their government can prevent, for, as the English possess the whole of the coast of Ceylon, they have no salt but what they obtain in this manner.<sup>631</sup>

The reference to conflict is subtle, revealing little of Britain’s attitudes towards Kandy and emphasizing instead the Kandyan king’s “jealousy” about members of the inland population entering the maritime provinces for the purpose of procuring “necessaries”. Yet in spite of a paucity of explicit references to the war, her descriptions of people and land address conquest and reveal practices of epistemic violence.

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<sup>631</sup> Graham, 95-96.



Fig. 10 Maria Graham, *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen*  
 Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

To a greater degree than Reverend James Cordiner's *A Description of Ceylon* and most travel writers of the era, Graham's approach to writing about the places she traveled was encyclopedic in scope. She took on all manner of subjects, from the practices of Buddhist priests to meticulous description of a curious lamp she found in one of the rooms in which she stayed. The single image Graham chose to represent her visits to the island, *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen* (fig. 10), also served to stake a claim of knowledge.<sup>632</sup> Organized by means of picturesque formulae, it is treated as a wartime image here, as it both anticipated and celebrated Britain's conquest of Sri Lanka.

In her account of travel to the island, Graham acknowledged active troops, suffering elephants, fear-inducing fevers, violent weather, and forest fires, yet this single published image of the island is peaceful. In this regard, her work shares a quality of

<sup>632</sup> The printmaker that produced this etching after Graham's original design was James Storer.

tranquility found in the travel imagery of James Cordiner, Henry Salt, and Samuel Daniell. Upon visiting “Barbieren” (Beruwela), she described “a beautiful rest-house” situated on a “bold projecting rock, nearly insulated, on the top of which is a Mussulman saint’s tomb,—a mean little building, overshadowed by four or five coco-nut trees; here the Modeliar had built our bungalo of bamboos”.<sup>633</sup> Her party found the bungalow “covered with cotton cloth, and decorated with leaves, flowers, and bunches of coco-nuts by way of capitals to the pillars”. Graham directed the reader to picture “across the chasm . . . a temporary bridge . . . covered with cotton, and decorated like the bungalow.” She completed her description of the site’s visual appeal by acknowledging that,

At the foot of the promontory the fishermen sometimes lay up their boats and spread their nets; and the whole scene was so picturesque that I made a sketch of it, after which I joined the party in the rest-house, and enjoyed the freshness of the breeze, which ruffled the open sea, but left the inner bay smooth and clear as a mirror.<sup>634</sup>

Literary theorist Rebecca Weaver-Hightower proposes that printed maps included in nineteenth-century castaway novels invited “the reader into the acts of mapping and projection” associated with a character’s colonial identity within a newly inhabited landscape.<sup>635</sup> Analogously, when Graham acknowledged her own presence in the colonial landscape by calling attention to the activity of sketching at a particular site, and then included a version of that sketch in her book,<sup>636</sup> she engaged in an act of sharing an experience of travel with which picturesque adepts in the metropole identified. In

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<sup>633</sup> Graham, 98.

<sup>634</sup> Graham, 98.

<sup>635</sup> Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 19.

<sup>636</sup> “M.G. del.” incised below the print at the lower left corner indicates Graham’s authorship of the original drawing: “Maria Graham deliniat”.

choosing a view of the island's coast that lent itself to representation by means of the picturesque, easily broken down into Reverend William Gilpin's visual vocabulary of landscape elements distributed among fore, middle, and background planes, she familiarized Beruwela for her readers.

Graham's description of the site as "so picturesque" indicates the degree to which the discourse saturated colonial travel by 1810. The manifestation of her characterization of a view as "so picturesque" can be likened to today's postcard, an aspect of contemporary culture that art critic Lucy Lippard defines as "a consensus of what viewers hope to see."<sup>637</sup> Like a postcard, Graham's image is geographically specific enough to appear to be an actual site, yet possesses a satisfying pictorial completeness, communicating "an idea of rootedness, of place and locality, with all the warmth, cosiness, and sense of belonging that such an idea implies".<sup>638</sup>

*Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen* is free of discernible conflict, but in Graham's extended verbal description of the village of Beruwela she pointed to the presence of weaponry, observing that Beruwela's inhabitants, "chiefly artisans," produced "swords and dirks, with their scabbards, of very good workmanship".<sup>639</sup> It is not surprising that weaponry caught her eye, since her journal entry for the day noted two other references to danger. Earlier, as she mused about the interesting pictorial effects of "low rocks on the shore, which cause a continual boiling of water round them, and the stupendous clouds that roll over the main, changing its hue to every various tint as they

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<sup>637</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 15.

<sup>638</sup> Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 177.

<sup>639</sup> Graham, 98.

roll”, her companion countered her observation, finding the effect more frightening than interesting, since the sight inspired a “secret horror” if associated with storms and shipwrecks.<sup>640</sup> While attempting to sketch a river scene at Kalutara, Graham experienced a “violent storm of rain, thunder, and lightning”. Graham was an enthusiastic traveler, frequently confessing delight and demonstrating curiosity, but she regularly rooted out and described actual or potential incidents of discomfort or danger, calling attention to her vulnerability.

As with the representations of the island’s local inhabitants in works by Salt, Cordiner, and Daniell, the fishermen represented in *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen* are diminutive, generic figures that staff and animate the scene. From Graham’s image little information can be ascertained about the fishermen except that they are men. Homi Bhabha finds that, in a colonial context, construction of the “other” relies on the concept of fixity—perceptions of what is unchanging and rigid.<sup>641</sup> Graham did not suggest in her verbal account of Beruwela that the fishermen were a fixed presence in the landscape, writing that they “*sometimes* lay up their boats and spread their nets”.<sup>642</sup> She determined as well that the house and bridge were merely temporary elements in the view. But as figures to staff her image, the fishermen occupied a role indispensable to the colonial picturesque. They served as quiet actors in a scene worthy even of Reverend Gilpin’s attention, where the view functioned like a painting, depicting a perfectly balanced and ordered world. Graham’s tranquil scene, like the Italian, Dutch,

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<sup>640</sup> Graham, 98.

<sup>641</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 94.

<sup>642</sup> Graham, 98. Emphasis added.

or French landscape paintings that inspired picturesque adepts, provided an illusion of fixity, and travelers who later attempted to locate Graham’s viewpoint at Beruwela would have expected to find the fishermen there in their boats, completing the scene.

In his account of the first war with Kandy, Cordiner noted that fishermen at “Cogel” on the island’s south coast tried to “interrupt with their fishing-boats” communication between British government officials stationed at Galle and Matara. Late in 1803, a member of the Ceylon native infantry, Lieutenant Fullarton, was sent with a detachment to punish the fishermen.

This was effected on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, by burning above fifty boats, and destroying all of the houses in the village. One of the chief rioters was taken and hanged, and five others condemned to receive one thousand lashes each, by the commissioners for executing martial law, which the disordered state of the country had obliged government to proclaim.<sup>643</sup>

Graham’s employment of the picturesque at Beruwela achieved a representation that was partly a record of the landscape and entirely a chronicle of order. In *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen* the fishermen not only do not appear to pose a threat to the British government but they aided Graham in packaging the site in the form of a sketch to take away, like a souvenir.

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<sup>643</sup> James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Aberdeen: A. Brown; 1807; New Delhi: Navrang, 1983), II:224-25. Citations refer to the Navrang edition.

## Eyes on the Indian Ocean

An army surgeon on the island, Dr. John Davy, characterized the period following Britain's first war with Kandy as one of "mutual and gloomy forbearance".<sup>644</sup> Another writer described the aftermath of the war as a time during which the British grew to realize "how difficult of accomplishment was the subjugation of a country, not more defended by its strong natural fastness, than by the fatal insalubrity of its climate."<sup>645</sup> Even the metropolitan reviewer of Cordiner's *A Description of Ceylon* wrote of Sri Lanka in pessimistic terms, its "advantages . . . all in embryo; instead of a benefit, it has hitherto been only a source of expense to the government."<sup>646</sup> Yet the years spanning North's departure from the island until the reoccupation of Kandy in 1815 coincided with a growing interest in the role of Sri Lanka as an Indian Ocean polity within the larger context of the British empire. The *Ceylon Government Gazette* articulated this role primarily through reports of conflict with the French offshore, until Britain completely dominated the region.

As early as its first year of publication, in 1802, the *Gazette* included accounts of Franco-British conflict, publishing in its seventh issue a list of British troops killed,

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<sup>644</sup> John Davy, *An Account of the interior of Ceylon, and of its inhabitants. With travels in that island* (London: Longman, Hurst Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 316. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>645</sup> *A narrative of events which have recently occurred in the island of Ceylon, written by a gentleman on the spot* (London: T. Egerton, 1815), 2.

<sup>646</sup> Unsigned review of *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*, by James Cordiner, *The Critical Review, or Annals of Literature* 14 (1808), 194.



wounded, and missing in an action against the French.<sup>647</sup> The Napoleonic Wars brought such conflict close to home for readers of the *Gazette* when the paper reported in November of 1804 the presence of *La Destin*, a French ship “laden with Tabacco Sugar” at Trincomalee, captured by the *H.M.S. Lancaster*: “Seven French vessels of various descriptions had been taken and destroyed by it” including “a privateer mounting 14 guns which was sunk, and a large French store ship”. The latter ran “a shore when she was totally destroyed by the fire of the *Tremendous*; on which occasion it is stated some men were killed.” The report also noted that *Mornington*, a British merchant vessel, “has been retaken” from the French.<sup>648</sup>

In June of 1806, the *Gazette* published a letter by Captain William Doig, commander of the *H.M.S. Anna*. Doig described how on May 19 off Galle a French vessel attempted to “cut me off from the shore” and

as soon as I hauled in again . . . he hoisted the three coloured flag & opened a fire of round & grape upon me, I kept the British flag flying until the *Anna* was on shore & then to save the lives of the crew I ordered them to be hauled down although to the Frenchman’s disgrace he did not desist from firing for some time after the *Anna* was on shore . . .<sup>649</sup>

A few months later, readers of the paper learned that on September 24 the *Fame*, sailing from Mumbai, “was taken off Quilon by *Piedmontese*, a French frigate, after an action of 25 minutes” leading to the death of a midshipman and six sailors wounded, including the chief officer. *Piedmontese* “lost six men killed and eleven wounded.” Passengers and

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<sup>647</sup> “Return of the killed wounded & missing of the British Army in the action of the 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, & 21<sup>st</sup> March with the French,” *Ceylon Government Gazette* 7 (26 April 1802).

<sup>648</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 148 (21 November 1804).

<sup>649</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 232 (4 June 1806).

crew of the *Fame* arrived at Galle on the *Monsoon*, an Arab vessel.<sup>650</sup> Two years later the *Gazette* followed up with a report that the *H.M.S. St. Fiorenzo* “towed in *Piedmontese* a perfect wreck”; “the wounded prisoners have been landed and every attention paid to them. They are under the joint care of our surgeons and their own at the hospital.”<sup>651</sup>

In 1808 the paper published an account of seaborne battle near the island, offering extensive detail about damage wrought to the British ship involved. In “a very severe & well contested action” between the *H.M.S. Terpsichore* “& a large French frigate, supposed from her appearance to be the *Cannonier*”, the *Terpsichore* had left Galle for Chennai on March 11 but “fell in” with the frigate five days later. “[B]y disguising the *Terpsichore*” Captain W.A. Montagu “was fortunate enough to bring the enemy to action at 7 p.m.”. However,

at the very moment [he] imagined his exertions had been crowned by the most complete success, the enemy’s fire having for the last 20 minutes considerably slackened & at times wholly ceased, he experienced the mortification of seeing her make sail.<sup>652</sup>

Captain Montagu “endeavoured immediately to follow, but found that the enemy’s fire which had been principally directed at the masts & rigging, had nearly reduced the *Terpsichore* to a perfect wreck”. The report listed “the particulars of this gallant action” by specifying damages to the ship:

her fore & main stays, topmast stays, and many of her lower and topmast shrouds, her braces, bowlines, tacks and sheets, without a single exception, were each cut in several places—the leach rope of the main and

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<sup>650</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 249 (1 October 1806).

<sup>651</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 331 (16 March 1808).

<sup>652</sup> Extraordinary, *Ceylon Government Gazette* 334 (4 April 1808).

main-topsail cut and the sails split across, besides many others for a time rendered useless . . .<sup>653</sup>

The captain acknowledged “in the highest terms” his officers and “the whole of his ships [sic] company” as well as the “very considerable” losses: a lieutenant and twenty men killed, another twenty-two wounded, two of whom had since died. “The *Terpsichore* has returned to Point de Galle”; of the *Cannonier*, it “made off & owing to her general superiority in sailing & to the severe damage sustained by the *Terpsichore* in her rigging, unfortunately escaped, after a most anxious & active chace [sic] of five successive days.”<sup>654</sup>

In September of 1811, a year after Graham’s visit and while Samuel Daniell continued to live in the Sri Lankan woodlands, the *Gazette* announced that, as the result of a “spirited and successful attack” of the French posted at Barrossa, a royal salute was to be “fired from the batteries at Colombo” to honor “the signal and continued advantages” of the allied British and Portuguese armies.<sup>655</sup> Just as importantly, the following month the paper announced the British conquest of Java, devoting much of its October 12 issue to description of conflict and charts of returns of those killed, wounded, and missing.<sup>656</sup> In November, the *Gazette* included a dispatch from the governor-general of Batavia, stating that

we have the satisfaction to announce that Java & its dependencies were formally surrendered up to His Majesty, on the 18<sup>th</sup> September last, by a capitulation . . .

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<sup>653</sup> Extraordinary, *Ceylon Government Gazette* 334.

<sup>654</sup> Extraordinary, *Ceylon Government Gazette* 334.

<sup>655</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 523 (25 September 1811).

<sup>656</sup> Extraordinary, *Ceylon Government Gazette* (12 October 1811).

After the sanguinary contest on the 26<sup>th</sup> August, General Janssens made another attempt on the 16<sup>th</sup> September in the neighbourhood of Samrang, but British valour was again triumphant—after this General Janssens surrendered himself & concluded that capitulation which was such as His Excellency Sir Samuel Auchmuty had a right to dictate.<sup>657</sup>

For some in Sri Lanka the “taking of Java” symbolized British dominance in the region as a whole. A concluding paragraph about the conflict informed the island’s English-language readers that with the fall of Java the British crown conceived of their power as absolute in the Indian Ocean, an “event” that “completed the destruction of the enemy’s power to the eastward of the Cape of Good Hope. Not a flag hostile to the British interests now waves in the Indian Seas.”<sup>658</sup> The writer did not mention the as of yet unconquered kingdom of Kandy as an exception.

In the metropole, consciousness of the importance of the Indian Ocean region to British interests grew partly through the efforts of individual scholars and travelers. Classicist and geographer William Vincent published *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* in 1800,<sup>659</sup> a book that in many ways could serve as a companion project to Maria Graham’s *Journal of a Residence in India*. Vincent’s book included a new translation of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, a first-century Egyptian-Greek account of trade, navigation, and people spanning East Africa to the China. In Vincent’s dedication to George III, he offered his translation of the *Periplus* as a solution towards solving what

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<sup>657</sup> Extraordinary, *Ceylon Government Gazette*.

<sup>658</sup> Extraordinary, *Ceylon Government Gazette*.

<sup>659</sup> William Vincent, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea. Part the first* (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1800).

he called “three of the greatest problems that concern the world which we inhabit”:  
access to the Pacific Ocean, access to “distant nations,” and the health of the sailor.<sup>660</sup>

Vincent’s second “problem”—access to “distant nations”—is of interest here. He characterized distant nations as places that “may be visited, not for the purpose of subjugation, but for the interchange of mutual benefits, and for promoting the general intercourse of mankind”,<sup>661</sup> a comment that may have been informed in response to anti-colonial sentiment lingering in Britain as a result of the drawn-out trial of Warren Hastings, the East India Company’s first governor-general of India who was alleged to have misused his power for personal gain. In another publication of the period, a series of fifty aquatints depicting sites along the Indian Ocean littoral by Thomas and William Daniell, the artists used the book’s introductory pages to stage an elaborate defense of their own project, to the extent that they referred to their picturesque views as a “guiltless spoliation”.<sup>662</sup> Readers excused Graham from association with the exploits of East India Company officials because of her sex.

Graham constructed *Journal of a Residence in India* as a geographically comprehensive account of travel with discussion of diverse topics relative to each of the places she visited. As with imagery produced by William Gilpin, Robert Home, Henry Salt, James Cordiner, and Samuel Daniell, Maria Graham conceived of the views she included in her book as a sequence of images bound by picturesque discourse. Uniform in her visual approach to each site, Graham’s verbal narrative varied on the basis of the

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<sup>660</sup> Vincent, vi.

<sup>661</sup> Vincent, vii.

<sup>662</sup> Thomas Daniell and William Daniell, *A Picturesque voyage to India by the way of China* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; William Daniell, 1810), unpag.

specific local information she could gather. As a producer of knowledge Graham did little to unravel extant pictorial and textual discourses that comprised how the British thought about land and people along the Indian Ocean littoral. But her decisions about what to describe as opposed to what not to describe complicates the body of travel literature explored in this study in important ways.

Arjun Appadurai finds that, “Without reliably local subjects, the construction of a local terrain of habitation, production, and moral security would have no interests attached to it.”<sup>663</sup> As a project informed by and produced in response to scholarship about the Indian Ocean, Graham, more than other picturesque adepts who traveled in Sri Lanka, produced text that was highly informative as well as credible, in large part because of her willingness to draw close to the subjects she wrote about. An example is her description of a visit to Cape Town, about which she provided six pages of verbal description of subjects based on study of indigenous and imported plants, observations about crops, architecture, and topography, and her visit to a “Hottentot camp”.

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<sup>663</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 181.

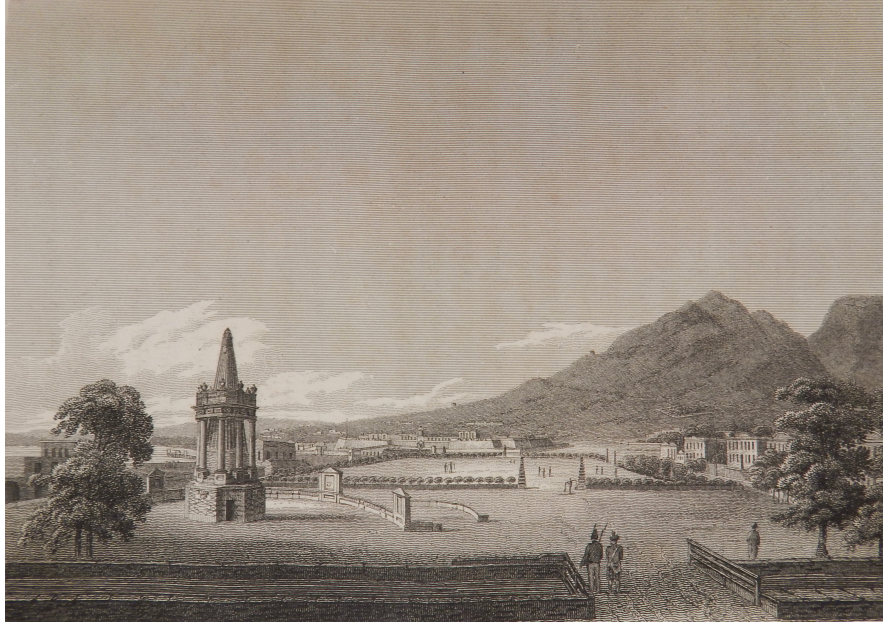


Fig. 11 Maria Graham, *Cape Town from the Heer Graght*  
Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

Yet of the British colonial population that lived in and near Cape Town, Graham noted only that “English people at the Cape live like the English people everywhere, as much in the manner they would do at home as circumstances will permit.”<sup>664</sup> Her view of the settlement, *Cape Town from the Heer Graght* (fig. 11), held to this. Contrary to the typical ways in which women participated in the production of imagery during the Enlightenment, wherein they were “credited with an aptitude” to produce subjects that professional male artists had not determined to be lucrative or interesting, such as “sensitive miniaturist portraits of cottages, village scenes, or flowers”,<sup>665</sup> Graham positioned viewers to “command” Cape Town by looking down at the site from an

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<sup>664</sup> Graham, 174.

<sup>665</sup> Malcom Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 157.

elevation.<sup>666</sup> She framed the view according to the patterns of the picturesque, with a distinctive monument on the left to balance the hills at the right, and chose a vantage point that would allow her to include buildings that recalled the neoclassical style of recently-constructed English country houses. The combined image and verbal description of Cape Town in *Journal of a Residence in India* provided readers with local information organized in a recognizable framework, resulting in a comfortingly familiar view accompanied by useful and credible text. In this way, once again, Graham organized her project as an exercise in ordering knowledge.

The success of Graham's approach was borne out by James Cordiner, who in 1820 brought out his second book, *A voyage to India* (again dedicating it to North, by then the Earl of Guilford).<sup>667</sup> In the preface, Cordiner situated his new publication alongside Graham's *Journal of a residence in India*. Of Graham and her book Cordiner wrote only that, "In some cases, I have travelled the same ground with Maria Graham; but there is little or no similarity between the two publications; at the same time there is no contradiction." He added, "The 'Journal of her Residence in India,' which is written with spirit and intelligence, does her the highest credit, and bears upon it the stamp of truth."<sup>668</sup> By 1820, literary circles recognized Graham as a writer responsible for one of the most comprehensive travel accounts to South Asia, placing her beside authors and artists such as the Viscount Valentia and Thomas and William Daniell. By the time

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<sup>666</sup> Malcolm Andrews has characterized such a view that looks down upon the landscape as gendered—particularly male—and associated with "issues of property and territorial control". See Andrews, 157.

<sup>667</sup> James Cordiner, *A Voyage to India* (Aberdeen: A. Brown and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), v-vi.

<sup>668</sup> Cordiner, *Voyage*, vii-viii.



Cordiner published *A voyage to India*, Graham had already published her second book (in 1814); translated the text for another author's publication (in 1816); and awaited publication of her third book, already at press.<sup>669</sup> Rather than offer Graham his stamp of approval Cordiner may have evoked her name to force a pairing of their respective accounts for the benefit of his book's sales, and to elevate his reputation as a writer of travel literature. The title of Cordiner's book, like Graham's, is misleading, since he included observations of travel not only in India but Madeira, St. Helena, the Cape of Good Hope, and Sri Lanka, all places about which Graham had written.

The project more similar to Graham's *Journal of a Residence in India* was *A Picturesque voyage to India by the way of China* of 1810 by Thomas and William Daniell, who were Samuel Daniell's uncle and brother, respectively. Situating Graham's work in relation to that of the Daniells correctly aligns accounts of travel that offered metropolitan readers extensive imagery and information about the Indian Ocean region. While *A picturesque voyage* consisted of high quality aquatints with extended text captions, the Daniells, like Graham, took seriously the process of constructing knowledge about the region. But rather than attempting to provide a range of knowledge about each site pictured, the artists used text to enhance the viewer's experience of the aquatints. For example, an aquatint by Thomas and William Daniell that calls attention to a value shared by Frederic North—tranquility—is *Near Whampoa, China* (fig. 12), their

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<sup>669</sup> See Maria Graham, *Letters on India* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, and Edinburgh: A. Constable and Co., 1814); M. de Rocca, *Memoirs of the War of the French in Spain*, trans. Maria Graham (London: John Murray, 1815); and Maria Graham, *Memoirs of the Life of Nicholas Poussin* (London: Longman, Hurst Rees Orme, and Brown, and Edinburgh: A. Constable and Co., 1820).

picturesque study of a site along the coastline of the South China Sea. They did not provide local information about the landscape, referring to the temple only as “a stately pagoda [which] forms a striking object with its sweet romantic scenery.” As such, they nudged readers towards contemplation, pointing out “the beauty of the country”, “vegetation . . . most luxuriant,” and river boats which produced the “illusion of enchantment”. The artists offered a personification of peace in the form of a Chinese boatman, who they did not picture but encouraged the viewer to imagine, smoking “his pipe with perfect tranquillity” in the midst of river traffic.<sup>670</sup> Like Graham’s *Temporary Bridge & Bungalo at Barbereen*, which offered readers an opportunity to enjoy an illusion of quiet and order, *Near Whampoa, China* provided a framework for tranquility.

Another aquatint by the Daniells from *A picturesque voyage* demonstrates the degree to which the artists used text to denigrate a local population with the information they provided about a site. In *Chinese Vessels* (fig. 13), the Daniells offered criticism of the vessels pictured, and Chinese navigators generally, writing that,

Numbers of these vessels sail every season from Canton on commercial expeditions, and it is computed that ten thousand seamen perish annually in the Chinese seas. . . . It would, perhaps, be impossible to discover a man, who, like Sindbad, had made a seventh voyage. In one or two passages to Batavia the adventurer makes his fortune, the only object sufficiently stimulating to draw him from his native home.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> The Daniells, *Picturesque voyage*, unpag.

<sup>671</sup> The Daniells, *Picturesque voyage*, unpag.



Fig. 12 Thomas Daniell and William Daniell, *Near Whampoa, China*  
Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California



Fig. 13 Thomas Daniell and William Daniell, *Chinese Vessels*  
Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

Referring to the junks as “the common concern of a hundred merchants” they described in apparent detail such a ship at capacity, where each of five hundred men in his “humble berth, containing a mat and a pillow” placed a compass “before an altar, on which burns a taper, composed of wax, tallow, and sandal wood dust, and divided into twelve equal divisions; which are intended to measure out the progress of the hours.”<sup>672</sup> Such details provided viewers with the impression of a wealth of local detail as the Daniells reduced several hundred Asian traders to a stereotype of mass superstition. According to Samir Amin, many Europeans subscribed to the belief that “the Greek heritage” inclined “Europe to rationality. In this myth, Greece was the mother of rational philosophy, while the ‘Orient’ never succeeded in going beyond metaphysics.”<sup>673</sup> Such information about the littoral populations of the Indian Ocean and South China Sea insured that metropolitan readers would not find the African, Malayan, Javanese, Sumatran, Chinese, or Indian people pictured in the Daniells’ prints a threat to European economic dominance in the region, since they were depicted as technologically inferior and generally unenlightened.

With some exceptions, Graham also exhibited little regard for the littoral peoples she encountered while traveling. She felt regret at her feelings of disfavor, but came to the conclusion that coastal inhabitants generally behaved badly. In her introduction, writing in the third person, she communicated her ill regard as pity. Graham wrote that she “ventures to hope”

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<sup>672</sup> The Daniells, *Picturesque voyage*, unpag.

<sup>673</sup> Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), 91.

that she may perhaps contribute, in some instances, to direct the attention of those in whose hands so much of their destiny is placed, to the means of improving their moral and intellectual condition, as well as securing them from political or civil injuries.<sup>674</sup>

Graham departed for India the year Reverend Thomas Gisborne, an abolitionist, poet, and moralist, published the eighth edition of *An enquiry into the duties of the female sex*.<sup>675</sup>

Gisborne wrote that “the effect of female character is important” in the contribution “daily and hourly” to the comfort of family and friends; in the improvement, by society and example, of the behavior and conduct of women; and in the shaping of children’s minds.<sup>676</sup> To extend one’s influence as a woman of “character” in seeking the improvement and protection of British subjects could only enrich Gisborne’s list.

Graham carried from the metropole a tendency to stereotype non-English speaking people in South Asia. This is most evident in her description of a visit to a colony of Chinese gardeners on the island, brought by the British government to Sri Lanka because “none of the Europeans who have possessed Ceylon have yet been able to raise vegetables”. Graham stressed that it was the “patience of the Chinese” that led to their success as gardeners, as she witnessed “not only esculent vegetables of every kind, but thriving sugar-cane under their management.” She then described their homes:

The gardeners have built themselves very neat houses in the garden. At each end of the principal room in every house there is a high table, over which is hung a tablet containing Chinese characters; I am told that these are the names of the forefathers of the families; and before each tablet a lamp was burning. The rest of the furniture consisted of cane couches or beds, and pieces of carpet for covers, which are folded up in the day-time.

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<sup>674</sup> Graham, vii.

<sup>675</sup> Thomas Gisborne, *An enquiry into the duties of the female sex* (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1797).

<sup>676</sup> Gisborne, 12-13.

At every door there were two or three chairs, and a low table with tea-pots and cups upon it. The dress and air of the Chinese is so exactly what we see on every China cup and dish, that is needless to describe them.<sup>677</sup>

Of her visit to this community, Graham determined that information about the physical environment in which Chinese gardeners lived would be of value to her readers, but that it would not be worthwhile to describe the people themselves, since their appearance was already known—“so exactly what we see on every China cup and dish”—to render further description unnecessary. In effect, Graham masked the Chinese gardeners with an aesthetic formula, that is, with imagery painted onto English porcelain. Reducing description of the gardeners to their “patience”, their “neat houses”, and their veneration of ancestors, Graham, like Thomas and William Daniell, prevented a fuller visibility of the Chinese immigrants from entering her narrative. Pre-conditioned not to see Chinese inhabitants as individuals, all three artists instead perpetuated stereotypes, Graham going so far as to direct her readers to the painted caricatures they possessed in their cabinets at home.

Samuel Daniell also depicted people as types in the work he produced on the island. His aquatint publication of 1808 included not only landscape views but studies of three contrasting pairs of figures, including *A Mahamodliar and Toddy Gatherer*, in which the artist contrasted two men by means of their social status. The other paired representations comprised a contrast in sex: *Portraits of a Gentoo Man and Woman* and *Portraits of a Cingalese Man and Woman*. Daniell represented each of the six islanders in profile, or with her or his head turned slightly toward the artist. He approached representation of animals on the island in these terms, as well. Organized differently from

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<sup>677</sup> Graham, 94.

his picturesque views, Daniell's representation of forest animals directed viewers' attention to the specific details of anatomy of four mammals: a spotted antelope, a wild boar, an elk, and an elephant, each placed within a setting taken to be its native habitat, replete with birdlife, other mammals, and flora. Each of the animals stands in profile or turns its head towards the artist, as if acknowledging the process of representation. In the accompanying text captions for these aquatints Daniell did not remark on the act of drawing but rather on elements of natural history, identifying specific birds or trees represented in the prints and calling attention to the general habits of the mammals. In his description of the elk he added information of an anecdotal nature. Noting its "harmless and inoffensive look" Daniell recounted an officer in the garrison at Trincomalee who had acquired a young elk, but when in its second year it grew "vicious" the officer felt "obliged to shoot it".<sup>678</sup>

Maria Graham did not know or perhaps chose not to mention to her readers that Samuel Daniell not only produced paintings and prints but that he received a government salary as the island's first forest ranger. Civil servant and naturalist J.W. Bennett relayed in his book *Ceylon and its Capabilities* of 1843 how Daniell came to receive this post from Governor Thomas Maitland, North's successor. The artist had appeared at Mount Lavinia, the governor's residence, with his belongings, on the pretense of moving in because he had no money. As the two joked about what type of work Daniell could do on the island, Maitland said,

if you can point out, within five minutes by the watch . . . any place that will relieve me from being your Chancellor of the Exchequer, without

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<sup>678</sup> Samuel Daniell, *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants of the island of Ceylon* (London: T. Bensley, 1808), unpag.

your interfering with any body but the wild beasts, with whom, the moodliars tell me, you are on such good terms, that they stand still to let you draw their pictures, you shall have it, upon your solemn promise, never to come to the Mount again, until I send for you.<sup>679</sup>

Daniell responded, “Done! Done! Done, Your Excellency. *Dictum factum reddidi*, Ranger of the Woods and Forests!” The governor extended his hand, offering the artist “eight hundred rupees a month to begin with” along with an advance of six months. The artist, wrote Bennett, with “‘his heart up to his throat,’ attempted to express his thanks”.<sup>680</sup>

Daniell’s work in Sri Lanka coincided with a growing “thirst” among artists in the metropole “for objectivity, for the innocent eye”—that is, an eye increasingly unhampered by conventional aesthetic patterns.<sup>681</sup> Towards this end he acquired a graphic telescope, a recently-patented, technologically innovative instrument that allowed him to view his subjects from afar by means of a magnifying lens which projected an image onto paper for tracing.<sup>682</sup> Daniell’s demonstrated commitment to objectivity must be viewed in the context of late eighteenth-century conceptions of natural history, wherein “species did not evolve nor could they suddenly emerge by way of mutation”, writes literary theorist Beth Tobin.<sup>683</sup> Daniell’s desire to observe his subjects closely, leading to depiction of animals and people as immobile, inanimate, and available for study, coincides with a pre-

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<sup>679</sup> George Bennett, ed. *The Concept of Empire: Burke to Attlee 1774-1947* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), 388.

<sup>680</sup> Bennett, 388.

<sup>681</sup> P. Lasko, *A Decade of English Naturalism, 1810-1820* (Norwich: Norwich Castle Museum, 1969), 16.

<sup>682</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 555 (6 May 1812).

<sup>683</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 146.



evolutionary comprehension of a “static, timeless universe”.<sup>684</sup> Homi Bhabha’s concept of “fixity” may stem from observation of text and imagery produced during this period, formed within these parameters of representation.

In spite of Daniell’s attempts to stave off what Graham called the “bad effects of sylvan life,” he died of a fever in 1812. The *Gazette* reported that among his belongings at the time of his death were “Varley’s Patent Graphic Telescope in mahogany case, with directions for using it”, camel hair [brushes] and black lead pencils, watercolor cakes, “a box of chalk for drawing, drawing papers &c. &c.”,<sup>685</sup> as well as “colour’d prints of Ceylon &c. executed by the late Saml. Daniel Esq. and brother”,<sup>686</sup> all of which went up for auction at Loughlin’s Commission Room in Colombo fort in May and December of 1812. In Daniell’s published obituary, in *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, the editors determined that acknowledgment of the artist was worthy of their readers’ notice because of the artist’s importance as a visual chronicler of an island “very little known to the European world”:

At a period like the present, when the labours of circumnavigators and travelers are, in all countries, viewed with a degree of interest proportionate to the indisputable importance of those exertions to mankind, we are confident, that a short notice of the gentleman whose death we record, cannot fail being acceptable to our readers.<sup>687</sup>

To these gentlemen, Daniell had turned a landscape not yet adequately known to one that was knowable.

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<sup>684</sup> Tobin, 146.

<sup>685</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 555 (6 May 1812).

<sup>686</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 587 (16 Dec 1812).

<sup>687</sup> “Mr. Samuel Daniell,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 82, no. 2 (July-December 1812), 295.

In 1814, two years after Samuel Daniell's death, his original drawings became the subject of discussion between Sir John D'Oyly, who had long been a civil servant on the island, and his brother Thomas D'Oyly. Samuel Daniell's brother, William Daniell

called upon [John D'Oyly] within these few days to mention that he had received his brother's drawings from Ceylon consisting of representation of objects of natural history & principally birds; he has shown them to Sir Josh. Banks and other competent judges who state that though many of the sorts are well known to naturalists yet that a considerable number of them are wholly new & are therefore curious and valuable.<sup>688</sup>

The drawings had arrived without accompanying texts and Daniell hoped, via John D'Oyly, to "procure some account and history, there being at present none".<sup>689</sup> This final acknowledgment of Samuel Daniell's work serves to illustrate that, regardless of the degree to which early nineteenth-century artists practiced objectivity, the addition of text to provide "some account and history" was thought necessary for a pictorial version of knowledge to be perceived as complete. Maria Graham readily supplied such information; she was proficient, for example, in the use of Linnean taxonomy, which she "combined . . . with respect for the knowledge base of local people."<sup>690</sup> Samuel Daniell, the son of a bricklayer and publican, would not have been expected to undertake formal study of his subject but could implement the newest visual technologies in the representation of them, in a lesser-known corner of the empire.

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<sup>688</sup> P.E. Pieris, ed., *Letters to Ceylon 1814-1824. Being correspondence addressed to Sir John D'Oyly* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1938), 15.

<sup>689</sup> Pieris, *Letters*, 15.

<sup>690</sup> Graham's attentiveness to local information may seem "at odds with the Linnaean universal totalizing project of observing, cataloguing and systematizing," but travel theorist Betty Hagglund asserts that many Orientalists relied on systems that combined classification and local information. She suggests that Graham may have been influenced by practices of the Orientalists she met during her travels. See Betty Hagglund, "The Botanical Writings of Maria Graham," *Journal of Literature and Science* 4, no. 1 (2011), 48.

### **“I am a low person and a soldier”**

The disparity between the social backgrounds of Graham and Daniell, even though neither was an elite, calls into question the ways in which social class impacted both colonizers and the colonized in Sri Lanka, practically and ideologically. In addition to considering the manner in which picturesque discourse is implicated in the matter of class it is also crucial to investigate incidents of racism and sexism, whether visible on the surface of colonial discourse or embedded in its layers. Exploring the work of Graham and, to a secondary degree, Daniell, in this chapter provides opportunities for such analysis. To enlarge this discussion vis-à-vis the parameters of this study, the years associated with the first war with Kandy will be revisited. Documentation in the form of a transcript of court proceedings during North’s tenure as governor, two reports from the *Ceylon Government Gazette* from 1804, and a detail from Captain Johnston’s memoir of the retreat to Trincomalee are explored herein, to raise questions about ways in which epistemic violence figured into the cultures of law, the military, and the press during Frederic North’s governorship and in the aftermath of the war.

In April of 1805, shortly before North’s departure from the island, he contacted Camden in frustration, writing that “every occurrence which happens is supposed by the general to involve the fate of empire and by the chief justice to attack the foundations of social order.”<sup>691</sup> He referred to a conflict involving Major-General David Douglass Wemyss and Chief Justice Codrington Edmund Carrington regarding an accusation of theft in which the justice implicated the major-general. Well-worn by problems stemming from Wemyss, North characterized himself to Camden as having the “misfortune of

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<sup>691</sup> North to Camden, 24 April 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

seldom satisfying either of the parties” and contacted the secretary in anticipation of their complaints.<sup>692</sup> History has forgiven North’s frustration with Wemyss. In his account of Britain’s wars with Kandy, Geoffrey Powell, who was no defender of North, summed up the major-general’s actions while in Sri Lanka as “eighteen months of perverse conduct”.<sup>693</sup>

The matter regarded an attempted theft of firewood. An inhabitant of Kollupitiya, Simon de Zielve, who earned his subsistence by means of a garden on his property, discovered that Wemyss’s tindal and lascars had entered the garden “where he kept two trees which he cut down about two months ago until he should find a good market for the same.” Wemyss’s employees cut up one of the trees, and de Zielve “intreated them very much . . . [s]tating that it was his property, that the tindal replied, you may go where you please, we have the general’s order to do so & we will do so.”<sup>694</sup> De Zielve approached the local magistrate, who directed a peace officer to “stop the taking away of his property & to bring the offenders before the said magistrate.” The cut wood remained in Simon de Zielve’s possession.

Wemyss’s employee, Hady Syrang, provided two depositions in his own defense.

In the first, he admitted that the information given by Simon de Zielve was “true,”

but that he was ordered by the general to cut wood in the garden of any of the natives [sic] black inhabitants, but not in the gardens of the Europeans, that notwithstanding any remonstrance that any native proprietors of gardens might make on the subject he would execute the orders he received for that purpose . . .

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<sup>692</sup> North to Camden, 24 April 1805.

<sup>693</sup> Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803-1818* (London: Leo Cooper, 1973), 176.

<sup>694</sup> North to Camden, 24 April 1805.

Hady Syrang added, “I am a low person and a soldier; should I dare not to obey the general’s order?” He produced the “warrant,” as he referred to the permission slip issued by the major-general to cut firewood, claiming that the incident was the only time he had attempted to cut and remove firewood in Kollupitiya, and that elsewhere, “when the proprietors asked, when he was employed in cutting down their wood, why he did it, he replied it was by the order of the general on which the proprietors did not oppose them.”

North characterized the matter to Camden as a property dispute in which “a black inhabitant” had “very properly resisted” the removal of firewood from his garden, and the magistrate had “very properly protected the property and took up the offenders.” The governor communicated to the advocate fiscal his intention to ask Wemyss to stop using his lascars for this purpose, “and that the trespass should be punished, and the proprietor satisfied, or that case should go on in regular form.” The following week North wrote again to Camden, referring to the preceding letter as “an account of only the commencement of the business.” Three additional councils had been held, partly at the major-general’s request, since the tindal had “denied every word of his declaration” given previously. After the tindal’s initial deposition, Wemyss denied before the council that he had given “any such orders as to respect exclusively the property of Europeans.” He added that, “As I do not understand the native languages, I never had any communication on the subject with the men themselves but always had my orders interpreted thro’ the medium of my head servant.”

On the second day of the proceedings, Hady Syrang explained that he employed five lascars to acquire goods for the major-general: one to gather leaves for his goats, two

for obtaining “coals to iron linen” and the remaining two for the acquisition of firewood. All were required by the major-general to “be at 3. 0’clock in the afternoon in the generals [sic] house, and if they come a little later, they are forthwith flogged for it”. Hady Syrang claimed to have held his post for a year, and “he never paid for any thing for all they collect in this manner.”

As Hady Syrang offered a second deposition, the magistrate asked him if he understood that he was to cut firewood “in the publick jungles only”. The tindal answered, “Such were my orders”. Further, the magistrate asked:

—Where do you conceive the public jungles are?

—At the Pass Betal, and where the battalion lies.

—Do you also consider the garden at Colpetty to be a jungle?

—No, but I went in on seeing a dead tree lying in it.

—If you see a dead tree in any other garden would you enter and take it out?

—If there was a hedge I would not go and take it out, but I had positive orders

not to enter the garden of any white person whatever, neither into any of the native gardens, which had a fence round it.

—Was there any fence round the garden which you entered?

—No, but a few sticks which I did not consider as a fence.

Brigade Major Hankey, present during the tindal’s second deposition, asked:

—Did you not receive positive orders not to touch any living tree, but only to

gather up the dead wood[?]

—Such were my orders.

—Did you not receive positive orders not to enter any garden whatever[?]

—I have positive orders not to enter any garden whatever, only to go to the publick jungles to bring dead wood.

Hankey then asked a final follow-up question:

—Syrang Hady; were you ever flogged for coming later than three o'clock?

—No never.<sup>695</sup>

The question of punishment surfaced again in a minute prepared by Wemyss:

If the tindal has erred, let him be punished and no man more loudly calls for the law taking its course, without prejudice to person or things, than I do. The courts are open and why has he not been brought before them. But it seems, his unauthorized act is to reflect upon me.

The major-general added that he “little thought it could have been imagined, even by [the tindal], that I meant to encourage the invasion of private property of the inhabitants, either native or European. What is there in the words of that pass to warrant such a construction?” Wemyss then remarked:

In sending him to cut firewood, into the jungle, surrounded as we are by deserts, I did no more than my predecessors, nor was their right in this particular ever questioned—is it even at this moment, denied to the meanest cooley; it being a general practise to cut firewood without the collector's permission . . .

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<sup>695</sup> Examples of punishment by flogging as reported in the *Gazette* occurred mid-way through North's administration. In September of 1802, among other crimes listed, a native man was charged and convicted of culpable homicide and sentenced to 251 lashes and three years of hard labor in chains for hitting his victim on the head with a club; also, three men were found guilty of enslaving a free born youth (a boy). One of these men was sentenced to three months in prison and a fine of 156 rixdollars, while the other two were sentenced to 100 lashes each and two years of hard labor. In October of 1802, a slave of Count August Carl Friedrich von Rantzow was found guilty of stealing “sundry articles of plate”; the slave was sentenced to 100 lashes as well as prison and hard labor. See the *Ceylon Government Gazette* 27 (15 September 1802); see also the *Ceylon Government Gazette* 34 (27 October 1802).

Wemyss at this point clarified his understanding that one needed to obtain the permission of the collector only in situations “when it is requisite to cut wood for public works, or transportation”. Returning to his attack of Hady Syrang, the major-general added,

Had I the most distant reason for supposing that this tindal would have so far abused my pass, as to make it a pretext for attacking the rights and property of individuals, he never should have received it; and had any complaint been made to me of his misconduct, I should have thought it incumbent on me to advise the parties aggrieved to seek redress before the proper legal tribunals.

In response to the major-general’s minute, North clarified his own position: he “objected to the general’s sending lascars to cut firewood” because his “long residence in this country” gave him to understand “the abuse which natives in the line of life of the tindal & lascars are apt to make of any power which is entrusted to them by their superiors”; and that upon learning of “the trespass, . . . I thought it my duty to remonstrate against its further observance”. But North perceived that the major-general was innocent of desiring to “injure the property of any individuals, or to disturb the public peace.”

Chief Justice Carrington declared the pass issued by Wemyss illegal, adding that its use was easily misconstrued, since such an order “might have led, either from error on their part, or abuse on the service in which they were sent, to opposition on the part of the native proprietor, to riot and bloodshed.” He agreed with North that the general should apply to the collector for firewood, to prevent “recurrence of similar trespasses & violations of the property of the natives.” Carrington stated that, for his part, his decisions were motivated by “[t]he preservation of the peace & good order, and the prevention of abuse, under colour of military authority, amongst ignorant natives”.



Wemyss took umbrage with Carrington's determination of the pass as illegal, since it represented "the general tenor of all passes in the military service. That I have been thirty years in the service and never before heard that it was illegal." He accused the chief justice of taking on the role of prosecutor, "affecting my character & honor, and even my life itself" and requested that the governor's secretary add to the record that he had "protested in the strongest manner that he had never authorized his lascars to enter into the garden of any person whatever". He added that he continued to offer employment to the lascars "in the same way they had been accustomed to, for procuring firewood," which he assumed they gleaned from "the road side, & that if they disobeyed his orders in going into the gardens of private persons, they deserve to be punished."

At one point during the proceedings Wemyss verbally attacked Carrington, which North found inexcusable in light of the "peculiar situation" of the chief justice as "sole judge of all cases, capital as well as pecuniary, of His Majesty's subjects on this island." To North, discrediting the chief justice was "far more likely to injure the political and social interest of this very small portion of the world, than all the mighty objects which, for these last eight months, have kept it in agitation and turmoil." Even so, North requested that Camden excuse Wemyss, characterizing the major-general's comments as "not offensive so much as extravagant". He ultimately requested that Camden consider the "general temper" of the major-general who, though not formally charged with a capital crime, had nonetheless passed "six months of anxiety, in very disagreeable circumstances, with formal accusation . . . against him by the highest legal authority on the spot."

All told, North's primary concerns in the matter were that a crime of property had been committed against one of his subjects and punishment was due to the perpetrator; that Wemyss's employees and lascars should not bear the responsibility, or the authority, for procuring firewood; and that the reputation of the chief justice be protected at all costs. Carrington's concern centered upon the potential misuse of a pass such as that which Wemyss issued to the tindal, leading to possible civic unrest and mass violence. Wemyss expressed concern about the possibility of being charged with a capital crime, and throughout the council meetings he called for the punishment of his employee, Hady Syrang. Upon contacting Camden directly about the issue Wemyss blamed the tindal: "He abused this privilege in one instance by entering the garden of an individual & attempting to cut his wood. But why was he not tried for the offence; or rather why was his offence made mine?" Answering his own question, the major-general continued, "Because he at first said by way of exculpating himself that he had my authority for so doing".

Wemyss also communicated to Camden his concern that the secretary might assume after reviewing the proceedings that the military had engaged in (other) abusive practices on the island, "and that it was owing to the oppression of the military over the natives that it was thought necessary to call a council on this occasion." Using the opportunity to set the record straight, he added, "I have however the satisfaction to inform your Lordship that such conjectures are without foundation"; "there have been fewer instances here, than in any part of the world where I have been, of complaints by the inhabitants against the military." He could not know that Anthony Bertolacci would eventually write about the regular harassment of civilians by troops garrisoned in the

maritime provinces,<sup>696</sup> or that Arthur Johnston acknowledged the impressment of local Lankan, Malay, and Indian men for service in the British army.<sup>697</sup>

Within a discussion of class and race in British colonial Sri Lanka, it is the recorded testimony of Hady Syrang, who described himself under oath as “a low person and a soldier”, that emerges as an object for careful consideration. Confronted with Wemyss’s disavowal—the major-general claimed not to be able to communicate with the tindal due to language differences, and that he had not hired but inherited Hady Syrang upon acquiring his predecessor’s household—as well as Wemyss’s repeated calls for him to be punished, the tindal changed his story. In his first deposition, Hady Syrang claimed that Wemyss ordered him to “cut wood in the garden of any of the natives [sic] black inhabitants, but not in the gardens of the Europeans”. In his second deposition, he stated, “I had positive orders not to enter the garden of any white person whatever, neither into any of the native gardens, which had a fence round it.” Hady Syrang did not use the word black, as North did in his letter to Camden when the latter described Simon de Zielve as a “black inhabitant of the neighborhood of Colombo”, nor did the tindal deny having permission from the major-general to cut firewood in “native” gardens. When Hady Syrang confirmed that he entered a garden marked only by “a few sticks which I did not consider as a fence” rather than the garden of a black property owner, he successfully

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<sup>696</sup> Anthony Bertolacci, *A View of the agricultural, commercial, and financial interests of Ceylon. With an appendix; containing some of the principal laws and usages of the Candians; port and custom-house regulations; tables of exports and imports, public revenue and expenditure, &c. &c.* (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 34-35.

<sup>697</sup> Major A. Johnston, *Narrative operations of a detachment in an expedition to Candy, in the island of Ceylon, in the year 1804. With some observations on the previous campaign, and on the nature of Candian warfare, etc., etc., etc.*, new ed. (Dublin: James McGlashan; London: Wm. S. Orr and Co., 1854), 21-23.

shifted the conversation from race to private property. The tindal repeated later in the deposition, “I have positive orders not to enter any garden whatever . . .”<sup>698</sup>

It is not possible to ascertain whether Hady Syrang provided an honest response when questioned if he had experienced punishment by flogging in the major-general’s household, but it must be noted that, as an employee of the highest ranking military officer on the island, Hady Syrang, who identified himself in part as a soldier, worked for an individual with authority to implement measures on behalf of an institution notorious for excessive punitive activity. Thoroughly familiar with garrison life on the island, Bombardier Alexander Alexander wrote in his memoir that “scarce a day passed in which some of [the British soldiers] were not tied up and flogged for the most trivial fault.”<sup>699</sup> Alexander previously worked as a slave overseer in the West Indies but it was in Sri Lanka that he saw the “triangles . . . every day in use”, and eventually came to the conclusion that, “The West Indies was nothing to it; neither before nor since have I seen such unfeeling severity used to the very worst disposed slaves, as to these poor unfortunate soldiers of the 19th and 66th—the officers appeared to take pleasure in it.”<sup>700</sup>

North and Carrington exhibited interest in the rights of the native property owner, Simon de Zielve, but largely discounted, even disparaged, Hady Syrang, “a low person and soldier”. North publicly discounted the tindal, associating him with “abuse which . . .

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<sup>698</sup> North to Camden, 24 April 1805.

<sup>699</sup> John Howell, ed., *The Life of Alexander Alexander: written by himself*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1830), I:128.

<sup>700</sup> Howell, I:167.

[tindals and lascars] are apt to make of any power which is entrusted to them by their superiors.”<sup>701</sup>

If land ownership and attendant matters of class shaped the perceptions of the powerful, well educated British men who participated in Sri Lanka’s justice system during the years of conquest, to what degree was race a factor in the treatment of the tindal? Albert Memmi characterized colonial racism as a three-part process requiring not only a determination of difference on the part of the colonizer towards the colonial subject, but an assignment of value, or values, to that difference and use of those values in a way that served “to denigrate the other, to the end of gaining privilege or benefit through that stigmatization”.<sup>702</sup>

To impose Memmi’s definition of colonialist racism upon the work of Maria Graham, her description of the Chinese colony needs to exhibit denigration, in order to determine that her description was informed by racial bias. Indeed, Graham’s refusal, or inability, to describe the Chinese gardeners denigrated them, since her assertion that readers needed only to look to their china cabinets to know what the gardeners looked

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<sup>701</sup> G.E. Mingay stressed that land was the primary factor that determined agency in English society: “Soil itself yielded the nation its sustenance and most of its raw materials, and provided the population with its most extensive means of employment; and the owners of the soil derived from its consequence and wealth the right to govern”. G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 3. Until the latter nineteenth century “the landed establishment owned about four-fifths of the land in the British Isles,” write David Sugarman and Ronnie Warrington. The dominance of the landed elite in British culture was largely due, they argue, to the belief that “[c]ertain forms of property relations, and therefore the ability to exercise power over people, were rendered more natural than other types of relations.” British land law not only favored the rights of landowners through credit and business opportunities, but property law was “an important narrative discourse, like religion, history, or literature”. David Sugarman and Ronnie Warrington, “Land Law, Citizenship, and the Invention of ‘Englishness’,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, John Brewer and Susan Staves, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>702</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 37-38.

like constituted a masking of them sufficient to effectively erase them from her narrative. Picturesque landscape imagery by Henry Salt, James Cordiner, and Samuel Daniell also diminished representation of local people to the point that they are barely noticeable vis-à-vis the landscape, but more than this, the artist depicted islanders as homogeneous and passive, contributing to the reduction of individual identities and robbing inhabitants of their agency. Arjun Appadurai finds that such practices facilitated a perception in the metropole that the landscape was available for intervention, conquest, settlement, or development.<sup>703</sup>

Critical race theorist David Theo Goldberg identifies modernity as the defining instrument by which to consider racism in a historical context, dating from early European shipping endeavors and corresponding reports of “inestimable mineral wealth and natural resources” in lands “peopled by ‘strange’, and ‘hostile’ beings”.<sup>704</sup> Given the commercial roots that attended subsequent colonial conflict, he proposes that by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries racial identity had become hegemonic.<sup>705</sup> For Goldberg, fundamental to a discussion of race in a colonial context are class relationships. Reverend Cordiner mixed notions of class and race in his denigration of some inhabitants, as when he characterized members of Colombo’s militia (who were at the time employed to replace troops in the field) as “half castes” who had “neither inclination nor ability to become good soldiers”.<sup>706</sup> And Cordiner referred to Kandyan

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<sup>703</sup> Arjun Appadurai (symposium paper, Representing the Raj, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, October 17-18, 2003).

<sup>704</sup> Goldberg, 44.

<sup>705</sup> Goldberg, 44.

<sup>706</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:186

peasants as “a poor harmless race, which could live contented under any government.”<sup>707</sup>

The ease with which Maria Graham dismissed the appearance of the Chinese gardeners stemmed not only from their physical difference but from their status as immigrant gardeners. And when faced with two “black” islanders enmeshed in a crime of property, one a landowner and the other “a low person and a soldier”, Frederic North pitted them against each other, viewing them first and foremost in economic terms.

### “All flesh is grass”

Of all of the description that Maria Graham provided, or neglected to produce, during two visits to the island in 1810, among the most striking was her decision to omit discussion of native women, with one exception. Addressing the clothes and hairstyle of the chief headman, Graham noted that, like him, Lankan women “deck the knot behind” using “long pins of gold and silver set with precious stones”.<sup>708</sup> Graham did not otherwise acknowledge Lankan, Malay, Chinese, or even European women in Sri Lanka, which is unusual within the context of her larger project of description of people and land in *Journal of a Residence in India*. If she did not exclude women from her narrative due to lack of interest, it may be helpful to consider the “conditions of life” for women on the island, and how her treatment of women may have been informed by factors such as women’s physical health and safety.<sup>709</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:198.

<sup>708</sup> Graham, 92.

<sup>709</sup> See Virginia Woolf’s essay, “A Room of One’s Own,” in Anna Snaith, ed., *Virginia Woolf: A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 38.

It is possible that Graham saw fewer women in the course of travel in Sri Lanka than while traveling at other sites along the Indian Ocean littoral. Nihal Perera characterizes Colombo, in particular, as a city designed for Portuguese men by Portuguese men, and in which (male) military and civic spatial practices changed little through the centuries, including activities affiliated with leisure:

Clubs were principally for men of the colonial community and ladies were excluded from meetings. Entertainments involving women were occasionally provided by both main clubs, but they took place in the country and in the fort, not in the clubs; . . . The exacerbation of the unevenness of sociality for men and women would, thus, reproduce the temporalization of spatial control and the subordination of women.<sup>710</sup>

Perera finds that by the British period there was an “intense stratification” of gender roles in Colombo coupled with an “unwritten rule of colonialism that there should be no breach in the ranks”, especially with regard to British women, who colonial authorities discouraged from cultivating friendships with either female or male islanders. “Englishwomen bore the burden not only of maintaining this social integrity,” he writes, “but also of being considered the guardians of the purity of the race.”<sup>711</sup> Graham visited Colombo in the course of her first three-week visit to the island, a stay of short duration and filled with almost constant travel. She may not have had the opportunity or inclination to penetrate otherwise rigid ranks of gendered activity while traveling along the island’s south and west coasts.

Graham traveled to South Asia in the company of her sister, who may have accompanied her to Sri Lanka but, if so, Graham did not reveal this to her readers.

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<sup>710</sup> Nihal Perera, “Feminizing the City: Gender and Space in Colonial Colombo,” in *Trans-Status Subjects: Gender in the Globalization of South and Southeast Asia*, Sonita Sarker and Esha Niyogi De, eds. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 81.

<sup>711</sup> Perera, “Feminizing the City,” 81.



Graham recalled one glimpse of (ostensibly) British women, shortly after arriving at Galle, as she “walked out to the beach . . . to see the last of the homeward-bound ships; two-and-twenty sail got under way at day-break, and many an anxious wish went with them.” She continued:

Many a mother had trusted her darling child to the waves, nay, much more, to the care of strangers, in the conviction that, depriving herself of the delight of watching over it, was to secure its permanent advantage. And many a fond husband, unable to accompany his wife, had sent her to breathe her native air, as the last resource to preserve a life so dear.<sup>712</sup>

This passage of text provides an impression that British residents on the island considered Sri Lanka’s climate unhealthy for women and children, to the extent that families sometimes separated, husbands living apart from wives and parents living apart from children. But Graham herself had been ill in Mumbai and traveled to Sri Lanka specifically to take advantage of its coastal breezes. Recovering quickly, she traveled widely and rigorously in Sri Lanka, continuously writing and sketching. Since British families did not reside in or even travel to the interior, which was associated with illnesses contracted by British troops during the first war with Kandy, Graham’s comments about families choosing to separate so that a dear “wife” could “breathe her native air” is surprising. More to the point, Graham’s account depicts women leaving the island rather than living on it.

Coupling Graham’s glimpse of women departing from the island with occasional notices about women in the pages of the *Ceylon Government Gazette* and other sources during the first war with Kandy suggests that women in Sri Lanka were perceived as highly vulnerable during the period of British conquest. The *Gazette* published two such

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<sup>712</sup> Graham, 87.

accounts in 1804. That January, the paper reported that native women had been abducted by a man named Goddakandegge from the Kandyan provinces who had incited “chaos” along the border regions. The “notorious rebel and robber” returned “with other rebels where they were committing depredations” but a local headman “marched out with a party” and was fired upon but the headman shot Goddakandegge. The *Gazette* reported that the women were subsequently “restored to their husbands.”<sup>713</sup>

The following month, the *Gazette* printed a rare advertisement for “an entertainment” called “the Invisible Woman” in the home of “Mr. Vanderlaan, at the little Pass.” For “one star pagoda” for the first time on the island, “ladies and gentlemen” had the opportunity to experience “a physical and mechanical representation . . . a recent invention”. The entertainment had been “performed at Paris with universal approbation for these two years past”; and “the exhibitors presume that the settlement will be highly gratified with this entertaining and ingenious performance.”<sup>714</sup> The following month the *Gazette* again advertised a performance of the Invisible Woman, at a reduced price.<sup>715</sup>

A third notice from 1804, albeit from a different source, is relevant to a discussion of representations of women in Sri Lanka as departing or disappearing. In Alexander Alexander’s account of the retreat from Trincomalee in 1804, the noncommissioned officer described in greater detail than Arthur Johnston the events surrounding the brief occupation of Kandy in September of that year.<sup>716</sup> Johnston had written in *Narrative of*

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<sup>713</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 103 (25 January 1804).

<sup>714</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 105 (8 February 1804).

<sup>715</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette*, 112 (21 March 1804).

<sup>716</sup> Published in 1830, twenty-five years after the first war with Kandy, Alexander did not likely seek the army’s permission to publish his memoir.

*the operations* that when the troops approached the inland capital, he “could plainly perceive the enemy flying through the streets in great confusion.” But upon entering and “taking possession of the capital” it was “entirely deserted by its inhabitants.”<sup>717</sup> In Alexander’s account, based on oral testimonies of survivors, Kandy had indeed been evacuated but the British soldiers encountered there “a little boy weeping, a woman, over whose fate humanity forces me to draw a veil, and a white rat.”<sup>718</sup> Of the rat and the child, Alexander had more to tell. Johnston took the rat “prisoner” and resolved

to have great care taken of it, as he meant to have it carried home to Ireland, as a present for his mother; but flushed with success, one of the [members of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment] wantonly exclaimed, ‘All flesh is grass,’ and killed it, for which the captain confined him, but his confinement was of short duration.<sup>719</sup>

Alexander added that the child had been allowed to escape. But what of the woman? He offered no additional information. Faced with what he had learned about her, Alexander ceased describing, writing only that “humanity” forced him to “draw a veil” over her.

In the course of a single year, reports of the abduction and restoration of native women in the border region, an evening’s entertainment in Colombo featuring optical trickery for the purpose of producing a disembodied female presence, and Alexander’s veiled reference to the rape, murder, or worse enacted upon a woman at the Kandyan capital demonstrates a culture of instability regarding women on the island to the extent that their presence in Sri Lanka could only be regarded as vulnerable. But did Maria Graham apprehend and convey such a perception, or was it for other reasons that her

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<sup>717</sup> Johnston, 61.

<sup>718</sup> Howell, I:149.

<sup>719</sup> Howell, I:149.

representation (or lack of representation) of women may be characterized similarly? To what degree was picturesque discourse itself gendered, shaping Graham's decision not to describe women on the island? A look at ways in which other picturesque adepts addressed women in their work will be helpful in responding to these questions.

James Cordiner seldom wrote about women in Sri Lanka, but in one instance he enlisted a Lankan woman to aid in his description of the island's trees. He described cashew nuts as

an article of daily use in Ceylon, and extremely cheap. It is a common sight to see a poor woman sitting under a tree in the morning, burning the oil from heaps of the nuts, which she means to expose for sale through the day. Many of the cashew-trees grow spontaneously amidst the cinnamon plantations at Colombo, which they considerably overtop, and increase the picturesque appearance of that wild garden.<sup>720</sup>

Earlier in this chapter excerpts from *A Description of Ceylon* were utilized to demonstrate that Cordiner mingled notions of class and race as he denigrated mixed-race Lankans as bad soldiers and Kandyan peasants as “harmless” and thus easily subsumed politically. Yet in both cases Cordiner contextualized the men acknowledged in his descriptions in relation to real events, specifically vis-à-vis the war with Kandy. Alternatively, his “poor woman sitting under a tree in the morning” enhancing the “appearance” of Colombo's cinnamon gardens, is not tied to an event but is part of the ordered world of the colonial picturesque. Considered alongside the other accounts of women on the island in 1804, his reference to the “poor woman” under the cashew tree becomes a matter of concern. In the midst of reported and unreported violence against women, was the woman sitting under the cashew tree going to remain in the “picturesque” landscape?

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<sup>720</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, I:372-373. Emphasis added.

Metropolitan writers about the picturesque similarly conceived of women as absent from ordinary life and hence from history. Gendered difference entered Uvedale Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* at the point that he cautioned readers as to the difficulty of blending imported trees with native trees on their estates.<sup>721</sup> Price compared "foreign trees" to a group of Englishmen who try to impose themselves on a group of Italians engaged in a discussion about art, with the result that the Englishmen might appear awkward and ungracious.<sup>722</sup> Then he imagined a tree suddenly appearing of its own accord among the foliage of one's property, likening such a phenomenon to a foreign woman, "beautiful and amiable" whose "original accent and character" . . . "give a peculiar grace and zest to all her words."<sup>723</sup> Price used a reference to English men when constructing a personification of a plausible event but a foreign woman when he considered the mysterious appearance of a tree of no traceable origin. Neither Price's nor Cordiner's evocations of women were attached to anyone else in the landscape, alone in adding "zest" or grace to the respective scene.

Uvedale Price and Reverend Cordiner aestheticized their descriptions of foreign women, but Price went further in this regard, to the point that the woman he pictured vis-à-vis the picturesque landscape was incorporeal. Cordiner's travels in South Asia provided him with ample opportunity to complicate stereotypes of foreign women, but he, too, largely took recourse in aesthetic formulae. In her analysis of early travelers'

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<sup>721</sup> Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the picturesque, as compared with the sublime and the beautiful; and, on the use of studying pictures, for the purpose of improving real landscape* (London: J. Robson, 1794). To acquire and read Price's book in its day presumed that you were male, well educated, and the proprietor of an extensive estate, hence you might be in a position to consider whether to introduce imported trees onto your property.

<sup>722</sup> Price, 213-214.

<sup>723</sup> Price, 214.

conceptions of women, Jennifer L. Morgan finds that British men regularly subjected foreign women, and African women, in particular, to stereotypes of the body that defied corporeality. As late as 1770, British colonial administrator Edward Long maintained that African women did not experience pain when giving birth to children.<sup>724</sup>

Graham, an ardent subscriber to the picturesque, may have been influenced by the gendered roots of the discourse. Combined with a lingering perception of vulnerability regarding women's safety on the island and a lack of sufficient opportunity to observe and interact with native women, it is not surprising that she chose to omit discussion of them. When offering her readers a glimpse of British or European women leaving the island, she watched them from afar as they sailed away, sent home by their husbands. She also stood next to some of them, gazing, like them, towards the Indian Ocean at the ships that carried away their children. Her employment of picturesque discourse in this instance resulted in the production of a correct and moral word picture.

In spite of the ways that picturesque discourse limited Maria Graham, her stated interest in the moral and intellectual lives of the people she encountered, along with her negotiation of diverse aspects of knowledge-making and her ability to uphold expectations about female character, positioned this "polite Anglo-European woman" to signify to nineteenth century reading audiences that she was "the ultimate marker of advanced civilization."<sup>725</sup> Countering such a perception of this author and artist, current

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<sup>724</sup> Jennifer L. Morgan, "Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder": Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January 1997), 189.

<sup>725</sup> Kay Dian Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar, and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies, 1700-1840* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 2008), 4.

feminist thought might do better to characterize Graham and her work in the words of Trinh Minh-ha: “If she does not ravel and unravel his universe, she will then remain silent, looking at him looking at her.”<sup>726</sup>

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This chapter argued that Maria Graham, both as an author and artist, positioned herself to make an intellectual as well as a moral contribution to her metropolitan readers. In analysis of the subjects about which Graham wrote and depicted visually and also those which she omitted, it was determined that she relied on stereotypes to convey knowledge of the island, as indeed had James Cordiner, Henry Salt, and Samuel Daniell before her. Elements of racism, sexism, and classism were explored in this chapter by revisiting the period during which Frederic North had governed the island. News items from the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, court proceedings, and a second look at Bombardier Alexander’s memoir all revealed instances in which assumptions about inhabitants’ race, sex or class harmed them, or pointed to the potential to harm them.

In etchings from *Journal of a Residence in India* based on Graham’s original drawings, she revealed a tendency to reduce people and land to picturesque formulae while simultaneously offering copious information about the sites she visited. Several years after Frederic North departed from Sri Lanka, Graham’s representations of sites along the Indian Ocean littoral continued impose colonial order upon newly colonized, or nearly colonized, places.

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<sup>726</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1989), 47.

## CHAPTER SIX

### LIEUTENANT LYTTLETON'S "DELIGHTFUL VALLEY"

If Reverend James Cordiner crafted his representations of Sri Lanka to allow the island to seem enough like home to convince readers that it was worthy of contestation, and Viscount Valentia and Henry Salt presented metropolitan readers with travel accounts of Sri Lanka in which the island featured as an agriculturally rich site for economic exploitation; if Samuel Daniell portrayed Sri Lanka as sufficiently militarized to provide an appearance of the island as safe and available for widespread habitation, and Maria Graham provided an intellectual as well as a moral compass by which to negotiate with its people and land, then Lieutenant William Lyttleton, in 1819, presented readers with definitive evidence of Britain's conquest of the island.

This chapter foregrounds an aquatint by an officer in the British army who participated in the final occupation of Kandy in 1815. William Lyttleton's *The Summit of the Balani Mountain* depicted Sri Lanka's interior as tranquil, pleasant, and even familiar, when it had long been associated with death and violence by British soldiers and civil servants. Lyttleton's aquatint is interpreted here as one of several ways that colonizers marked the conquest of Kandy, which was not heralded by the colonial or the metropolitan press in terms of a triumph of British "valour," as the conquest of Java had been portrayed in 1812. This was due to the perceived ease with which troops took the inland capital, resulting from an internal weakening of the Kandyan kingdom. Moreover,



the occupation of the capital in 1815 was eventually contested, with widespread violence ensuing in 1817 and 1818. This chapter concludes with acknowledgement of travel on the island after its complete colonization by the British, and the afterlife of picturesque discourse after its popularity waned in Britain after 1809. It is demonstrated that picturesque discourse was a fundamental means by which the British continued to construct perceptions of the island well into the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

### **Lyttleton's moment of conquest**

In 1815, British troops reoccupied Kandy, eleven years after Johnston's detachment retreated from the inland capital and twelve years after British troops were cut down outside of it. The print formats that afforded colonizers opportunities to produce narratives of conquest included published memoirs by military personnel and civil servants, reports in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* and other periodicals, and landscape imagery. Each version pointed to particular events that signified a shift in power to British dominance in the Kandyan provinces.

A writer who called himself "a gentleman on the spot" witnessed the British flag raised "for the first time" in Kandy. He reported that "a royal salute from the cannon of the city" announced George III as sovereign of the island, hence signaling that Sri Lanka was both "possession" and "acquisition". Citing a motivation for conquest, he added "we have avenged the massacre of our countrymen in the downfall of the very tyrant by whose cruelty and breach of faith it had been perpetrated".<sup>727</sup> This writer also thought it

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<sup>727</sup> *A narrative of events which have recently occurred in the island of Ceylon, written by a gentleman on the spot* (London: T. Egerton, 1815), 49.

suitable to offer readers a look at Thomas Maitland's successor, Governor Robert Brownrigg, presiding in the state room of the former Kandyan king. Describing the scene as he might a painting of a historical subject, he noted "the hall lined on both sides with British officers".<sup>728</sup>

For army surgeon John Davy, the removal of the Buddhist tooth relic from Kandy signified conquest. He remarked that "the effect of its capture was astonishing and almost beyond the comprehension of the enlightened" since its confiscation caused the Kandyans to claim that "the English are indeed masters of the country; for they who possess the relic have a right to govern four kingdoms: this, for 2000 years, is the first time the relic was ever taken from us".<sup>729</sup>

Lieutenant William Lyttleton of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot marked the British conquest of Kandy with a picturesque project, *A set of views in the Island of Ceylon* of 1819, comprised of six large aquatints.<sup>730</sup> An amateur artist and a professional soldier who would eventually settle in Tasmania, naming his property there after family connections in England, Lyttleton participated in the reoccupation of the inland capital in 1815.

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<sup>728</sup> *A narrative of events*, 46.

<sup>729</sup> John Davy, *An Account of the interior of Ceylon, and of its inhabitants. With travels in that island* (London: Longman, Hurst Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 369. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>730</sup> William Lyttleton, *A set of views in the Island of Ceylon* (London: Edward Orme, 1819), n.p.



Fig. 14 William Lyttleton, *The Summit of the Balani Mountain*  
Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney

The military nature of Lyttleton's activities on the island are apparent in his aquatints. Two of the six views are depicted from the vantage point of forts, while a third, *The Summit of the Balani Mountain* (fig. 14), represents the remnant of a Kandyan battery overlooking "the only pass over these mountains" to the inland capital.<sup>731</sup> The caption and image, when viewed together, signify a moment of conquest, since Kandy, longed for but unattained by earlier colonial governments, was now accessible to the British. The "road," Lyttleton pointed out, "which winds the brow of the hill, terminating in a delightful valley, is now rendered passable for conveyances with the greatest facility, presenting no longer an almost insurmountable barrier to the Kandyan capital."

<sup>731</sup> The printmaker that produced this aquatint after Lyttleton's original design was M. Dubourg.

English-language writers that discussed the state of the island's roads during the early British colonial period include James Cordiner, who had written twenty years earlier that, "Strictly speaking, there are no roads in Ceylon,"<sup>732</sup> and Captain L. de Bussche, who in 1817, just two years before publication of Lyttleton's series of aquatints, could testify that the "great road" to Kandy was "nearly finished . . ."<sup>733</sup> During the years that stretched between these accounts the British viewed the Kandyan provinces primarily through the lens of military concerns and, along with earlier Portuguese and Dutch soldiers, invariably described the island's interior as densely forested and difficult to penetrate, let alone traverse.

In 1816, Dr. Davy ascended Balana Mountain with Governor Brownrigg, describing the journey as "laborious, but less so than I expected, and infinitely less than it was before the new road was made." He added, "The Governor and Lady Brownrigg, were carried in their tom-johns all the way, without being obliged to get out once."<sup>734</sup> En route to the summit of Balana the governor's party came across a community of British soldiers living in a hollow employed in "felling trees and making shingles for the buildings at Fort King."<sup>735</sup> The doctor registered surprise at their presence in "an overhanging gloomy forest" but found that they had built huts and "connected themselves

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<sup>732</sup> James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Aberdeen: A. Brown; 1807; New Delhi: Navrang, 1983), I:15. Citations refer to the Navrang edition.

<sup>733</sup> Captain L. de Bussche, *Letters on Ceylon; particularly relative to the Kingdom of Kandy. Illustrated with a survey of Kandy* (London: J.J. Stockdale, 1817), 92.

<sup>734</sup> Davy, 360. A tonjon is a sedan chair carried by bearers.

<sup>735</sup> Davy, 361.

with native women, who came out with their children, and looked in good circumstances, and contented.”<sup>736</sup>

In the course of Britain’s first war with Kandy, Bombardier Alexander had described the inland landscape as “rich and fertile country” filled with “high and craggy rocks, the stately palm, and cocoa-nut trees” that “concealed a lurking foe . . .” When under attack, “every tree and bush seemed to send forth fire.”<sup>737</sup> He described how Kandyan soldiers utilized elements of the environment to repel and slow the British army, rolling rocks down upon the ascending troops and felling trees across their path.<sup>738</sup> Major Arthur Johnston, who considered the Kandyans “perfect masters of the intricate paths and passes” of the interior,<sup>739</sup> characterized the typical Kandyan soldier as one who

crawls through the paths in the woods, for the purpose of commanding the roads through which the hostile troops must pass, or climbs the mountains, and places himself behind a rock, or a tree, patiently to await the enemy’s approach. At the end of fifteen days he is relieved by a fresh requisition from the village . . .<sup>740</sup>

To Johnston, the Kandyan troops were one and the same as the interior’s rocks and trees, and in a constant state of renewal like nature itself, vibrant and fecund. His account of the inland landscape during the march and retreat of the detachment he commanded in 1804 was troubled by memories of seeing the bodies of British soldiers who had been executed

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<sup>736</sup> Davy, 361.

<sup>737</sup> John Howell, ed. *The Life of Alexander Alexander: written by himself*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1830), I:155-56.

<sup>738</sup> Howell, I:157.

<sup>739</sup> Major A. Johnston, *Narrative operations of a detachment in an expedition to Candy, in the island of Ceylon, in the year 1804. With some observations on the previous campaign, and on the nature of Candian warfare, etc., etc., etc.*, new ed. (Dublin: James McGlashan; London: Wm. S. Orr and Co., 1854), 11.

<sup>740</sup> Johnston, 10.

the previous year, “whitening in the sun, unburied skulls and thigh bones mixed together.”<sup>741</sup>

In contrast to soldiers’ experiences of the island’s interior as “difficult,” William Lyttleton’s post-conquest representation of Balana Fort depicts a landscape with gentle hills and warm with sunlight. Lyttleton personally participated in the occupation of the capital in 1815, but in *The Summit of the Balani Mountain*, Kandyan territory is not a place of war but a “delightful valley”. It is a composition that would bring to the minds of nineteenth-century British viewers Italy’s Campania region, or that which was more familiar still: a fine summer day in Britain itself. Lyttleton’s decision to de-emphasize violence in a conflict laden landscape required that he reimagine a little known place as one familiar and peaceful through use of picturesque formulae, in the manner that Colin Mackenzie, Robert Home, and Samuel Daniell had published military sites as picturesque views.

As early as 1807, James Cordiner allowed himself to imagine the conquest of Kandy in a manner that has much in common with Lyttleton’s *The Summit of the Balani Mountain*. Using topographical and botanical information from military personnel who had visited or occupied Kandy, he imagined a landscape that aligned with his idea of a tranquil existence, one redolent with fruit trees, freshwater fish, and game:

. . . The vallies are ornamented with groves of cocoa-nut, areka, jack, orange, lime, pumplemose, and plantain trees. The King’s garden was richly stored with vegetables, amongst which was abundance of excellent

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<sup>741</sup> Howell, I:153-54. As late as World War II, Brigadier J.G. Smyth characterized “jungle warfare” as “closely akin to night operations. To the highly trained individual fighter, and the junior leader, the jungle offers great opportunities for raids, ambushes and deep patrols. To the untrained and inexperienced man the jungle is a nightmare.” See Brigadier J.G. Smyth, “Ground: The Dictator of Tactics,” *Military Affairs* 8, no. 3 (Autumn 1944), 176.

cabbage; and the river swarmed with fish, which the Candians never molest, it being one principle of their religion not to deprive any animal of life.

The grand arsenal was blown up before the Candians evacuated the town, but a large quantity of ammunition, brass cannon, and smaller arms, was found in various places: and some pits were discovered filled with copper coins. A few horses likewise, and three beautiful milk white deer were captured, the latter of which were esteemed a singular curiosity.

There are many beautiful and charming rides around the town. The climate was experienced to be delightful, and considered as salubrious; but the variation of temperature between the night and day often ranged from 69 to 95 of Fahrenheit's thermometer.<sup>742</sup>

Once cleansed of "ammunition, brass cannon, and smaller arms," the capital, in Cordiner's estimation, would clearly suit the picturesque adept, since "[t]here are many beautiful and charming rides" to be had "around the town."

For others, however, the picturesque views now accessible by visiting the Kandyan provinces did not justify praise for what continued to be considered a dangerously fever-ridden environment. Out of his distaste for travel within the interior, Ambrose Hardinge Gifford, an Irishman who became Sri Lanka's chief justice in 1819, produced a mock ode to the inland provinces, whose "feotid airs" and "sad stillness" he loathed. Instead, Gifford yearned for "western breezes": "Oh, when shall I the western breezes hear/Bearing old Ocean's intermittent roar/As wave succeeding wave, assails the sounding shore?"<sup>743</sup> For others, remembrances of difficulty in the landscape, even when

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<sup>742</sup> Cordiner, *Description*, II:183.

<sup>743</sup> J. Penry Lewis, *List of inscriptions on tombstones and monuments in Ceylon, of historical or local interest, with an obituary of persons uncommemorated* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1994), viii.

*Marshes and quagmires, puddles, pools, and swamps,  
Dark matted jungles and long plashy plains  
Exhaling foetid airs and moral damps,  
By Kandian perfidy miscalled a Road,*

the difficulty had not been their own, pervaded their memoirs. Major Thomas Skinner, who arrived on the island in 1818, recalled his father, an officer who had participated in the 1815 occupation of Kandy, describing the army's efforts to get heavy guns through the woods to the capital: "he had parbuckled the guns up from tree to tree". . . an "impossible" task.<sup>744</sup>

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Decades before Britain commenced its permanent occupation of Kandy the idea of conquest loomed large within documentation produced by North's government in the pages of the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, in memoirs by soldiers who had been stationed on the island, and in accounts by travelers to Sri Lanka. Participants in the occupation of the inland capital in 1815, such as Lieutenant Lyttleton, continued to mark events that signified conquest. But nineteenth-century sources that acknowledged Britain's control of the Kandyan provinces generally downplayed or omitted the idea of conquest. As early as

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*Through which the luckless traveler must wade,  
Uncheared by sign of man—or man's abode,  
Gladly I give to you these farewell strains,  
Nor e'er again would your repose invade.  
I loathe your noisome fogs—your poisonous mud,  
And the sad stillness of the sultry wood,  
Without a sound the sickening heart to cheer.  
Oh, when shall I the western breezes hear,  
Bearing old Ocean's intermittent roar,  
As wave succeeding wave, assails the sounding shore?*

<sup>744</sup> Annie Skinner, ed. *Fifty Years in Ceylon: An Autobiography by the late Thomas Skinner* (London and Calcutta: W.H. Allen & Co., Ltd., 1891; New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2003), 7. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.



1828, one of London's specialty newspapers, *The Missionary Gazetteer*, included a topical listing for "Kandy" as follows:

Kandy was entered by the British troops in 1803, the king and principal inhabitants having previously fled; but the expedition terminated in the massacre or imprisonment of the whole detachment.

In 1815, it was again entered and with better success . . .<sup>745</sup>

Contrasted with the manner in which the taking of Java had been characterized in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* in 1811, an event in which "British valour was again triumphant",<sup>746</sup> the "better success" with which the action of 1815 is noted here is not definitive language of conquest. As late as 1983, V.L.B. Mendis summarized Britain's colonization of the inland provinces in language somewhat more colorful yet equally succinct: "At first the British tried to overthrow [the Kandyan government] by force like a bulldozer pushing fallen wreckage and later they gave it rope to hang itself."<sup>747</sup>

Unwritten but clearly communicated by both writers was that the final occupation of Kandy was not achieved through the "valour" of the British military.

Like Mendis, sociologist Asoka Bandarage attributes agency to the Kandyans rather than the British when discussing the final occupation. She suggests that "the Kandyan kingdom was ceded, not conquered by the British", adding, "[i]t was political

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<sup>745</sup> Charles Williams, *The Missionary Gazetteer; comprising a geographical and statistical account of the various stations of the church, London, Moravian, Wesleyan, Baptist, and American, Missionary Societies, &c. &c. &c. with their progress in evangelization and civilization* (London: Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1828), 297.

<sup>746</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 530 (10 November 1811).

<sup>747</sup> Vernon L.B. Mendis, *Foreign Relations of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times to 1965* (Dehiwela: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd., 1983), 330.

acumen rather than military strength that led to the British success in taking Kandy.”<sup>748</sup>

The conspicuous lack of an official conquest narrative attending the final occupation of the capital stems partly from perceptions of an internal weakening of the Kandyan kingdom under the leadership of Sri Vickrama Rajasimha, causing the British reoccupation of the capital to seem relatively effortless. But more than this, grisly details attending stories of violence in the capital may have left writers with the impression that the events leading to the final occupation were best left untold.<sup>749</sup>

Two events cited by Dr. John Davy as leading to the mobilization of the British troops in 1815 echoed the actions that had led Britain to engage Kandy in war in 1803. “Several of our native merchants,” he wrote, “who in the way of trade had gone into the interior, were treated as spies, and sent back shockingly mutilated”.<sup>750</sup> His account of an attack upon merchants from the maritime provinces coincided with publication of an article, “An Account of the Late Conquest of Candy,” published in 1816 in the *Asiatic*

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<sup>748</sup> Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833-1886* (Colombo: Lake House Investments Ltd.; Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 49.

<sup>749</sup> Another reason for a softening of rhetoric regarding conquest may be due, as Jacqueline Hill explains, to an Enlightenment era distaste about the term stemming from Tom Paine, who maintained in *Rights of Man* “that aristocratic rights stemmed from conquest.” In Ireland, the term “Protestant ascendancy” was increasingly used, having “arisen in the 1780s as contemporaries sought to describe the realities of Protestant control.” See Jacqueline Hill, “The Language and Symbolism of Conquest in Ireland, c. 1790-1850,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (2008), 173.

<sup>750</sup> Davy, 324. Also, the *Quarterly Review* included a report about the mutilation “in the most barbarous manner” of “ten innocent traders of the province of Columbo”, three of whom survived and returned “with their amputated limbs, arms, noses, and ears, suspended round their necks”. See the unsigned review of *An account of Ceylon, containing its history, geography, natural history, with the manners and customs of its various inhabitants* by Robert Percival; *A Description of Ceylon* by James Cordiner, and *A narrative of events which have recently occurred in the island of Ceylon* by “A gentleman on the spot”, *The Quarterly Review* 14 (October 1815-January 1816), 8.

*Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies*, which reported that merchants had been traveling within the Kandyan provinces

for their usual purposes of traffic, when they were seized and sent to Candy, where, without the imputation of crime or the form of trial, they were mutilated in a most shocking manner: seven died on the spot, and the remaining three arrived in Columbo with their arms, noses, and ears cut off, presenting a spectacle calculated to awaken the most lively feelings of pity and resentment.<sup>751</sup>

A second incident noted by Davy was that, “very soon after, a party of Kandyans passed the boundary and set fire to a village within our territory.”<sup>752</sup> Subsequently, with succor from India, Governor Brownrigg declared war on Kandy on behalf of Great Britain in January of 1815.<sup>753</sup> Like Davy, Dr. Henry Marshall, in his book *Ceylon: A general description of the island and of its inhabitants* of 1846, indicated that it was not until “a cottage on the limits of our territory was set on fire” that the British mobilized troops to re-engage the Kandyans in warfare.<sup>754</sup>

But the event that would linger within subsequent narratives of Britain’s final occupation of Kandy was not the mutilation and murder of traders from Colombo or damage to British property in the maritime provinces. Rather, it was conflict between Sri Vickrama Rajasimha and his prime minister, Ehelepola (the successor of Pilime Taewala), leading to the king’s public execution of the minister’s family. Readers of London’s *Quarterly Review* learned of the incident in 1816 within a comprehensive

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<sup>751</sup> “An Account of the Late Conquest of Candy,” *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies* 1 (January-June 1816), 119.

<sup>752</sup> Davy, 324.

<sup>753</sup> Davy, 324.

<sup>754</sup> Henry Marshall, *Ceylon: A general description of the island and of its inhabitants; with an historical sketch of the conquest of the colony by the English* (London: William H. Allen and Co., 1846), 112.

review of travel books produced about Sri Lanka.<sup>755</sup> The journal's editors, having learned of the atrocity, wrote that nothing less than

humanity, as well as sound policy, called on [General Brownrigg] to accede to the wishes of the chiefs and people of the Candian provinces, that the dominion of them should be vested in the sovereign of the British empire. This wish manifested itself in all ranks of people from the moment that the British troops entered the king's territories.<sup>756</sup>

Referencing an act of torture the editors characterized as “the last stage of individual depravity and wickedness, the obliteration of every trace of conscience, and the complete extinction of human feeling” they referred to Rajasimha's execution of Ehelepola's wife and children, “the youngest an infant at the breast.”<sup>757</sup> R. Montgomery Martin, in *Statistics of the Colonies of the British Empire* of 1839, suggested that the sovereign's authority ended as a result of the event, during which Ehelepola's wife had been required to “pound to death her own children in a rice mortar” after which “General Brownrigg was invited by the Kandian chiefs to take possession of the interior, and excepting an expensive and troublesome insurrection . . . Ceylon has ever since had the British sway established over the whole island.”<sup>758</sup> Montgomery cited the execution as an example of the king's “acts of oppression and cruelty” but his acknowledgement of the violent act—

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<sup>755</sup> Within the thirty-eight page review, the review of the book by “a gentleman on the spot” was mostly dismissed as “a paltry compilation from the London Gazette and the daily papers” while Percival's observations were deemed “so overcharged as to become caricatures—always confused, generally inaccurate, and often absurd.” Cordiner's book fared better: “He made a tour of the whole sea-coast of the island a journey of 800 miles, in company with the governor; of course he saw much, and more of what he did see is put down than was necessary.” Through “somewhat heavy, tedious, and ill arranged,” *A Description of Ceylon* was thought to “contain, on the whole, a great deal of curious matter.” See the *Quarterly Review*, 1-2.

<sup>756</sup> *Quarterly Review*, 9.

<sup>757</sup> *Quarterly Review*, 9.

<sup>758</sup> R. Montgomery Martin, *Statistics of the Colonies of the British Empire in the West India, South American, North America, Asia, Austral-Asia, Africa, and Europe . . . From the official records of the colonial office* (London: Wm. H. Allen and Co., 1839), 370.

that Ehelepola's wife was required to grind her children in a mortar—is placed in parentheses, almost as if it should not be described. As if by contrast, eighteen months after troops occupied Kandy in 1815, Captain de Bussche marked Britain's conquest of the inland territories by acknowledging an absence of violence there. “[D]uring all this time,” he wrote,

not one act of violence has been committed by the natives, who have just emerged from such a state of abject barbarism and slavery as cannot be described, and who are now enjoying, for the first time, the blessing of freedom and security.<sup>759</sup>

Kandy itself was emerging as a “gay town”, wrote de Bussche, his evidence being that “several ladies have joined their husbands, who are either in garrison there or hold civil stations”.<sup>760</sup>

De Bussche and others treated the 1815 occupation as a decisive victory, which it was not. In 1817 and 1818, Kandyan resisters to British colonization attempted to regain control of the capital, unsuccessfully. In the course of military action in the inland provinces during this period, Marshall marched with the British army from Batticalao and Kandy towards Velassy, describing in detail how British troops resumed “the work of devastation” to “inflict severe punishment on the inhabitants” for arrows and musket balls that Kandyan troops had directed at them:

the houses of the inhabitants were forthwith set on fire and burned to the ground, and all the cattle, grain, &c., belonging to the people, were either carried off by the troops or destroyed. The inhabitants appeared to be horror-struck at the devastation thus produced; they ceased to shout at the troops, or to fire upon them; while they were seen on the neighbouring heights, and close to the skirt of the plain, gazing in silence upon the

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<sup>759</sup> De Bussche, 91-92.

<sup>760</sup> De Bussche, 93.

flames which consumed their habitation, and driving away of their cattle, and having no time to remove any part of their property.<sup>761</sup>

Several of those who lost their homes “submitted” themselves to the British officer in charge, leading Marshall to believe that “the flames of insurrection was nearly extinguished.”<sup>762</sup> However, the resistance movement resurfaced, and “acted like a match thrown into a barrel of gunpowder, upon the dissatisfied and disaffected population of the whole country”, and within a few months, “the whole of the Kandyan provinces was placed under martial law.”<sup>763</sup> In addition to describing specific incidents of violence, Marshall considered violence through analysis of the losses within a particular British regiment.<sup>764</sup>

In Davy’s account of ongoing struggle in the Kandyan provinces in 1817 and 1818, he estimated losses of Kandyan soldiers at a minimum of ten thousand and as many as fifteen thousand men.<sup>765</sup> Davy, more than any of the writers who participated in or witnessed the aftermath of Britain’s wars with Kandy, attempted to quantify violence on the island by providing a numerical estimate of Kandyan soldiers killed. While his numbers are arresting—ten to fifteen thousand Kandyans killed during the resistance actions of 1817 and 1818—his account is the least engaged in description of specific incidents of violence.<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> Marshall, 187-188.

<sup>762</sup> Marshall, 188.

<sup>763</sup> Marshall, 188.

<sup>764</sup> Marshall, 210-212.

<sup>765</sup> Davy, 329-334.

<sup>766</sup> Julian Hoppitt notes that in the eighteenth century “[t]here were limitations to the quantitative view, helping to explain why, like [Adam] Smith, many put little faith in numbers.” Indeed, there was no national census in Britain before 1801. However, while the “modern statistical age” is

## The pervasiveness of the colonial picturesque

In one narrative of the aftermath of the 1815 occupation, the Kandyan minister, Ehelepola, whom the British government provided with accommodation in the coastal home of Governor Brownrigg, was said to have remarked that it was the first time he

had ever beheld the sea, except in a faint glance from a distant mountain; and the grand view of the expanded ocean which he enjoyed from the Governor's house, that was situated on a rock overhanging the shore, affected him with feelings of wonder and delight.<sup>767</sup>

The account may have been based on actual remarks made by Ehelepola, but metropolitan writers rarely if ever accorded natives with an ability to appreciate a view. Aestheticization, suggests Indira Ghose, can only come from a place of privilege.<sup>768</sup> The British perceived the island's Dutch inhabitants as having no comprehension of the picturesque: one writer noted of the Dutch at Trincomalee that "neither did the grandeur of the surrounding scenery, consisting of rocks, cliffs, islands, woods, and mountains, so different from the flat swamps of Batavia (their standard of beauty,) interest them."<sup>769</sup> But like Lankans, the Dutch had little social power on the island, and if there is one unifying characteristic of the British travel writers explored in this study it was access to a classical or polite education and to art. None were elites but Salt traveled in the company of a viscount; Cordiner and Lyttleton, as an Anglican clergyman and a military

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thought to have begun in the 1820s and 1830s, quantifying knowledge was not uncommon in the eighteenth century. See Julian Hoppitt, "Political Arithmetic in Eighteenth-Century England," *The Economic History Review* 49, no. 3 (August 1996), 516, 519, 525.

<sup>767</sup> T.B. Pohath-Kehelpannala, *The Life of Ehelepola, Prime Minister to the last King of Kandy; with notes relating to the king and the court* (Colombo: Observer Printing Works, 1896), 23.

<sup>768</sup> Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 49.

<sup>769</sup> Walter Hamilton, *A geographical, statistical, and historical description of Hindostan, and the adjacent countries*. 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1820), II:523.

officer, respectively, could dine at the table of a gentleman; and Maria Graham, as the well-read daughter and wife of officers in the Royal Navy, could access polite society in much the same manner. Even Samuel Daniell's social standing was elevated posthumously when his obituary appeared, albeit with by an editorial justification, in the pages of *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*.

In Britain, picturesque discourse was almost passé by the time Samuel Daniell published his aquatints of Sri Lanka in 1808. But while no longer fashionable in the metropole, the picturesque remained a useful discursive tool to colonial travelers.

The picturesque acquired a diverse afterlife within colonial contexts. In Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* of 1961, he characterized the effect of colonial domination and oppression upon the colonized as follows:

In this becalmed zone the sea has a smooth surface, the palm tree stirs gently in the breeze, the waves lap against the pebbles, and raw materials are ceaselessly transported, justifying the presence of the settler: and all the while the native, bent double, more dead than alive, exists interminably in an unchanging dream.<sup>770</sup>

Fanon's word picture is based on a picturesque landscape, its smooth sea surface and palm tree a setting for the ongoing export of natural resources. It is a startling indictment of the relationship of this discourse to violence. Fanon's "becalmed zone" was the twentieth century equivalent of North's practice of tranquility, appropriated by the writer on behalf of colonized people in Algeria at the hands of the French government. One and one-half centuries after Salt, Cordiner, Daniell, Graham, and Lyttleton utilized

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<sup>770</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 51.



picturesque discourse to impose visual conquest in Sri Lanka, Fanon effectively applied the discourse to an alternative colonial context.

Of the picturesque in Sri Lanka, its practice after the colonization of Kandy intensified before waning. Upon visiting Trincomalee in June of 1810, Maria Graham claimed the scenery to be “the most beautiful I ever saw,” comparing it to Loch Katrine near Stirling, Scotland “on a gigantic scale.”<sup>771</sup> The harbor appeared land-locked “like a lake”<sup>772</sup> and from Fort Ostenberg the bay was “gleaming with the rising sun”; it

seemed like a sheet of liquid gold, broken into creeks and bays, studded with verdant isles, and inclosed by mountains feathered with wood to the summit; while from the nearer crags the purple convolvulus, the white moon-flower, and the scarlet and yellow gloriosa, floated like banners in the wind.<sup>773</sup>

More than two decades later, when R. Montgomery Martin published his *History of the British Colonies* in 1834, he characterized the view at Trincomalee as similar to Loch Katrine “on a giant scale”.<sup>774</sup> Aesthetic theorist David Marshall identifies “the fate of the picturesque” as becoming “too recognizable”: over time, even landscape that had been “accidentally created in and by nature—did not resemble a painting as much as it resembled a picturesque landscape.”<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>771</sup> Maria Graham, *Journal of a residence in India* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 2000). Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>772</sup> Graham, 120-121.

<sup>773</sup> Graham, 121.

<sup>774</sup> R. Montgomery Martin, *History of the British Colonies*, 5 vols. (London: Cochrane and M'Crone, 1834), 1:399.

<sup>775</sup> David Marshall, “The Problem of the Picturesque,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2002), 431.

In the production of Samuel Daniell's published view of Trincomalee, unlike Graham, he did not call attention to flora within the scene.<sup>776</sup> For his part, Daniell described the view as "bold and romantic", with the goal of rendering a specific effect: that of a starkly quiet landscape, grand and vast. That Daniell characterized the site with these words suggests that he was moving away from the picturesque and in the direction of an approach to landscape that increasingly required observation of nature for the purpose of eliciting emotional reactions from viewers. As noted in chapter five, he owned a graphic telescope, which points to Daniell's willingness to experiment with delineating objects with greater specificity, an aspect of representation at odds with the picturesque, which privileged aesthetic formulae over local detail. At times picturesque discourse resulted in views that resembled each other more than the sites they depicted. James Cordiner and Samuel Daniell both produced views of Colombo, for example, and while they composed them from different directions, the images offer the same pictorial effects. Perhaps this was the reason Daniell captioned his aquatint of Colombo, published just a year after Cordiner's, "This view requires no explanation."<sup>777</sup> Candice Bruce, discussing Australian imagery, may just as well have been describing pictorial practice in Sri Lanka when she writes, ". . . in the attempt to 'know' the land, so it was possible to lose it by the very same means. . . . By codifying the untamed landscape, the very qualities which made it unique were lost."<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>776</sup> And though Graham acknowledged the local convolvulus, moon-flower, and gloriosa, she did so not to distract the general effect of the scene but to complete a word image, alerting readers to the presence of a picturesque landscape without actually presenting an image.

<sup>777</sup> Samuel Daniell, *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants, of the Island of Ceylon* (London: T. Bensley, 1808), n.p.

<sup>778</sup> Candice Bruce, "A Landscape of Longing," *Australian Journal of Art* 12, no. 1 (1994).

Yet those who visited the island continued to use the discourse to impose “order continually working on local disorder”.<sup>779</sup> When British missionaries W.M. Harvard and his wife, Elizabeth, arrived at Galle in February of 1815, Harvard employed picturesque principles in his verbal description of the town:

The crowded fort, to the left, presents a fine contrast with the opposite shore, which appears to be without inhabitants. Mr. Gibson’s handsome bungalow rises from a hill on the right, like a Chinese pagoda from the midst of surrounding jungle; while the stupendous Kandyan hills, and Adam’s Peak, proudly rising above all, furnish a most imposing background to the enchanting view.<sup>780</sup>

Emphasizing the picturesque concept of variety when describing the foreground, contrasting the left shore with the right—that is, the bustling versus the quiet—he then addressed the other two planes: the middle ground (the site of Mr. Gibson’s bungalow) and the background (the Kandyan hills and Adam’s Peak). His description suggests he had been studying travel imagery and hence anticipated what he would see along the Indian Ocean coastline; likening a Sri Lankan bungalow to a “Chinese pagoda” evokes the work of Thomas and William Daniell in *A picturesque voyage to India by the way of China*.<sup>781</sup>

Upon arriving at the residence of a colleague, Mr. Clough, the missionary described the property as if standing before a painting, guiding the reader’s eye from the native village in the background to the middle ground all the way to the back door of the

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<sup>779</sup> Elizabeth Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation in Britain, 1815-1850* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>780</sup> W. M. Harvard, *A Narrative of the establishment and progress of the mission to Ceylon and India, founded by the late Rev. Thomas Coke, L.L.D. under the direction of the Wesleyan-Methodist Conference including notices of Bombay, and the superstitions of various religious sects at the Presidency, and on the continent of India. With an introductory sketch of the natural, civil, and religious history of the island of Ceylon* (London: Printed for the author, 1823), 227.

<sup>781</sup> Thomas Daniell and William Daniell, *A Picturesque voyage to India by the way of China* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; William Daniell, 1810), unpag.

house by means of a path, and then to the foreground, a spacious, flora-filled lawn.<sup>782</sup> As with his description of Galle, Harvard brought a parallel image to mind, but not a view of China. Rather, he evoked an imagined landscape of the Garden of Eden. Both descriptions concluded by calling attention to the viewer's safety. In the former, in spite of an "imposing background" the viewer could enjoy the "enchanted" scene. In the latter, the home of Mr. Clough was described as "the sacred habitation of devout peace and retirement." If Harvard left his readers any doubt of his fondness for picturesque discourse, his discussion of different kinds of "ornamental wood, and useful timber" on the island served as another platform to confirm his interest. He found the Calamander tree visually fascinating: "The variegated and singular veining of this wood sometimes presents a lively imagination with the appearance of a picturesque landscape."<sup>783</sup> The contrasting light and dark values and sepia color of the polished wood may have recalled the aquatints that accompanied William Gilpin's picturesque tours.

Kandy eventually became a prominent site of tourism. Reverend Reginald Heber, the bishop of Kolkata, and his wife Amelia Heber traveled on the island with their daughter in the mid 1820s. Amelia Heber published an extensive account of travel under her husband's name after his death, including a chapter titled, "Journal of a Tour in Ceylon."<sup>784</sup> Both Hebers exhibited an interest in the picturesque, and Amelia Heber specifically acknowledged their drawing activities, as on September 14, 1825, when she

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<sup>782</sup> Harvard, 228.

<sup>783</sup> Harvard, xx.

<sup>784</sup> Amelia Heber and Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-1825. (With notes upon Ceylon,) an account of a journey to Madras and the Southern Provinces, 1826, and letters written in India.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1828), 169.

decided to sketch “a distant view” while traveling to Kandy. Their host provided a comfortable place for them to work: “a shed was actually built for us, and a road cut through the jungle to it, in less than half an hour.”<sup>785</sup> She acknowledged “many excursions”; “we have also the daily use of the governor’s saddle-horses, and Emily has a quiet pony for her riding.”<sup>786</sup> Amelia Heber was impressed by the island’s trees and foliage, writing “Our road had hitherto lain through a continued wood of palm-trees, which from its uniformity would have been tedious, but for the flowering shrubs and underwood with which the ground was covered”.<sup>787</sup> As with others who visited the island, she expressed disappointment that, “[a]fter hearing so much of the spicy gales from the island” the air did not smell like cinnamon.<sup>788</sup>

From 1836 to 1843, the British crown privatized one-quarter of a million acres of land in Sri Lanka, much of it “opened” for coffee plantations<sup>789</sup> and a significant amount for farming by “lower-caste groups”.<sup>790</sup> With regard to the latter, James Webb writes that, by the 1880s, farming consumed “the entire forest belt surrounding what had been the Kandyan kingdom” to the extent that “foresters would be unable to discern even the traces of what had been a formidable barrier.”<sup>791</sup> William Knighton, a coffee planter who published a memoir in 1854, witnessed deforestation extending even to the streets of

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<sup>785</sup> A. Heber, 184.

<sup>786</sup> A. Heber, 183.

<sup>787</sup> A. Heber, 172.

<sup>788</sup> A. Heber, 174.

<sup>789</sup> James L.A. Webb Jr., *Tropical Pioneers: Human Agency and Ecological Change in the Highlands of Sri Lanka, 1800-1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 70.

<sup>790</sup> Webb, 66-67.

<sup>791</sup> Webb, 66-67.

Colombo. Musing about the trees that had once “bordered the roads and street of the fort”, planted by the Dutch to provide “agreeable shade to the pedestrian who makes his way under so tropical a sun as that of Colombo”, Knighton remarked that the typical British inhabitant no longer could “see the propriety of planting new ones as fast as the old are removed. In fact, he does not consider them business-like enough, and hence his aversion to what is merely intended to adorn and gratify.”<sup>792</sup>

Not all of those who produced travel literature as a result of visiting Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century were picturesque enthusiasts. Like the Hebers, Reverend W. Osborn Allen, an Oxfordshire vicar, traveled to Sri Lanka as a tourist, also visiting India and Myanmar in 1882 and 1883. Admitting that “the scenery looked so tempting that we did not delay” in going to shore, his narrative immediately transitioned into a one-paragraph, all-purpose assessment of the island, including its size (“a little smaller than Ireland”) and a one-sentence chronicle of conquest: “In 1796 the English obtained all the Dutch settlements, and in 1815 they conquered the Kandyan kingdom, and became master of the whole island.”<sup>793</sup> On the whole, Allen’s account of travel on the island suggests a relationship with picturesque discourse that was tired, in spite of his genuine enthusiasm for nature.

Allen published his travel memoir, *A parson’s holiday*, in 1885, with the justification that even though South Asia had become a popular destination for winter travel, and “the T.G. (or travelling gent.) is becoming a common object in every large

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<sup>792</sup> W. Knighton, *Forest Life in Ceylon*. 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1854), 48.

<sup>793</sup> W. Osborne B. Allen, *A parson’s holiday; being an account of a tour in India, Burma, and Ceylon, in the winter of 1882-83* (Tenby: F.B. Mason, 1885), 209.

railway station”, there remained “a great ignorance among English people of things Indian.”<sup>794</sup> He admitted to the availability of copious literature on the subject—the “politician and the professor, the sportsman and the traveling lady, have already given their experiences of a tour in India to the world”—but Allen seems not to have read the narratives of other clergymen and women who lived on or visited the island, not Cordiner nor Harvard or Heber.<sup>795</sup> He occasionally used the word picturesque but reserved it for description of landscape in India and Myanmar. Even so, he described his first view of Sri Lanka in a manner that recalls the work of Henry Salt more than eighty years earlier:

a shore set thick with cocoa-nut palms and green with the luscious vegetation of the tropics. The land was clothed with verdure to the water’s edge, and the feathery crowns of the palm trees were mirrored in the calm waters of the harbor.<sup>796</sup>

By the time Allen visited the island in the early 1880s, Sri Lanka had long been a plantation economy, and at Kandy he observed that “the houses of the planters are seen far up amongst the trees.”<sup>797</sup> He described Kandy as a site that had experienced much picturesque activity, since “All round the town walks have been laid out on the sides of the hills overlooking the lake, and peeps have been opened out through the luxuriant jungle.”<sup>798</sup> He proceeded to describe tree life and flora in the vicinity, the vegetation so splendid that it “must strike the most unbotanical traveler.”<sup>799</sup> As with Viscount Valentia, James Cordiner, and Samuel Daniell, Allen characterized the landscape around Kandy in

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<sup>794</sup> Allen, 1.

<sup>795</sup> Allen, 2.

<sup>796</sup> Allen, 208.

<sup>797</sup> Allen, 211.

<sup>798</sup> Allen, 211.

<sup>799</sup> Allen, 212.

terms that could have been applied to the great park of an English landowner, affording those with sufficient leisure rich views on their regular walks. His slang for picturesque views—“peeps”—downplayed the discourse even as the use of casual language marked its pervasiveness.

Allen visited Anaradhapura, the site of impressive ruins located in the former Kandyan provinces. As a result of the visit, he expressed concern about management of the island’s resources. If such impressive ruins were evidence that the island had been “much more thickly populated than it is at present”, he reasoned, then “[w]hat is now thick jungle was once cultivated land, . . . [and] rice and other crops might be profitably raised. The resources of Ceylon have never been fully developed.”<sup>800</sup> He blamed the indigenous inhabitants for not taking the “trouble to increase the productiveness of the country.”<sup>801</sup> As if to demonstrate that under British rule the island was now productive economically, he visited a coconut oil factory, describing in detail the process of oil extraction and its uses as far afield as England. Allen recommended “all who make a tour in the East” to visit Ceylon, primarily for its

green loveliness, its shore fringed with palms bending over the surf, its hills clothed with forests twined with creepers, its rivers flowing between banks covered with bamboos, its woods bright with many flower shrubs . . . all come back in pleasant memories and make a picture which never can be forgotten.<sup>802</sup>

In spite of his ambivalence about picturesque discourse, he encouraged visitors to visit the island for its wood, water, rock, and ground: Reverend William Gilpin’s alphabet.

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<sup>800</sup> Allen, 218.

<sup>801</sup> Allen, 218.

<sup>802</sup> Allen, 220.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

This study reconciled a problematic tendency in British accounts of travel to colonial Sri Lanka in the early nineteenth century: that, despite ongoing military conflict, artists constructed imagery of the island as a peaceful and orderly place. Achieved through analysis of the work of five artists—James Cordiner, Henry Salt, Samuel Daniell, Maria Graham, and William Lyttleton—this project demonstrated that picturesque discourse was the means by which travelers characterized Sri Lanka as suitable and available for conquest and colonization. This was possible because the ordering principles of the discourse aligned with a vision for colonial rule on the island as paternal, tranquil, and, in the matter of land management, socially responsible.

The British travelers whose prints were analyzed herein shared an awareness of and concern about Britain's conflicts with the inland Sri Lankan kingdom of Kandy. Close readings of these prints in conjunction with documentation of the first war with Kandy, from 1802 through 1805, as well as its aftermath and the final occupation of the inland capital in 1815, allowed for the argument that Sri Lanka's first British governor, Frederic North, engaged the Kandyan kingdom in sustained conflict not because he was inept, immoral, inexperienced, or merely bent on conquest by any means or for any reason, but because he was fixated on a vision of colonial order informed by elite conceptions of land management in Britain, by Adam Smith's vision of political

economy, and by picturesque discourse. North's frequently-stated desire for tranquility on the island aligned his practices as a colonial governor with thinkers about aesthetics in the metropole, including prominent theorists of the picturesque. Even so, not just elites but many of the government's military officers and civil servants participated in picturesque practice when producing descriptions of the island for military reports or for publication in the *Ceylon Government Gazette*, when describing Sri Lanka in letters addressed to people in Britain, or when sketching the island's landscape. In short, picturesque discourse offered Governor North and others in Sri Lanka a familiar framework within which to envision the conquest as well as the political, economic, and judicial ordering of the island.

Analysis of the interests, assumptions, and concerns of colonial travelers to Sri Lanka who practiced the picturesque enlarged Britain's conflicts with Kandy, carrying discussion of war beyond analysis of foreign policy or military strategy into the realm of intellectual history. Chapter two found that James Cordiner conceptualized Sri Lanka as a polity sufficiently linked to Britain to be worthy of contestation. Towards this end, Cordiner relied on the picturesque practices of his father, Reverend Charles Cordiner, as well as the popular writer and artist Reverend William Gilpin. *Flag Staff at Point de Galle*, a composition that Cordiner constructed while traveling along the island's southwest coast, points to Britain's seizure of the island from the Dutch in 1796, but when considered light of Britain's first war with Kandy, to which James Cordiner was an attentive witness, the soaring Union flag over a diminutive Dutch building suggests the dominance of British nationhood on an island that appears to be at peace. Chapter three saw the analysis of an aquatint by Henry Salt, a professionally-trained artist, in

conjunction with the ideas of his employer, the Viscount Valentia. Both visited Sri Lanka during the first war with Kandy. Stressing the importance of the island's natural resources to the colonial economy, their travel accounts convey the attitudes and practices of landowners in the metropole engaged in the improvement of private property. Like Cordiner, both Salt and Valentia utilized picturesque discourse to impose upon the island a way of seeing land and people that equated it with the British countryside, albeit transformed into a "perfect tropical scene," as manifest by Salt's design for an aquatint, *View near Point de Galle, Ceylon*. To support these interpretations of works by Cordiner and Salt, a close reading of their work was interwoven with archival documentation, including an essay by Frederic North, "Considerations on the Wood of Ceylon," and the journal of a punitive expedition produced by Robert Blackall, in addition to government proclamations, dispatches, and correspondence produced in the course of the first war with Kandy.

Chapters four and five considered the aftermath of the war, when Samuel Daniell, a professional artist, and Maria Graham, a budding writer in the midst of constructing her first travel account, visited the island. Daniell's *A Picturesque illustration of the scenery, animals, and native inhabitants, of the Island of Ceylon* included landscape views produced from the vantage point of British forts on the island, analyzed here as postwar images of conflict that presented Sri Lanka as safe for habitation. Praise for the "exquisite taste and delicacy" of Daniell's work in a gentleman's magazine of the period stimulated an examination of the ways in which the education, demonstrated interests, and cultural background of Governor Frederic North coincided with picturesque practice. Like Henry Salt, who included a single visual representation of Sri Lanka in his book of travel

imagery, *Twenty four views*, Maria Graham constructed a picturesque view of the coastal village of Beruwela to serve as the representative image of Sri Lanka for her book, *Journal of a Residence in India*. Graham's decision to seek out copious and varied details about local culture for inclusion in her account was interpreted here as a bid for intellectual authority, as she discussed subjects she assumed would be of interest to her readers, not only in terms of the picturesque but also through an Orientalist lens. Moreover, Graham's physical descriptions and stated concerns as to the moral condition of British subjects in the colonies called into account the ways in which travel writers and artists in Sri Lanka employed stereotypes in the production of knowledge. Analysis of elements of racism, sexism, and classism evident in the work of Graham, as well as Daniell, Salt, and Cordiner, was supported by juxtaposition with court proceedings of a trial in which North had been involved prior to his departure from the island, as well as by the published memoirs of British military officers who participated in the first war with Kandy, and additional accounts from the *Ceylon Government Gazette*.

Extending from a discussion in chapter five of Indian Ocean maritime action relevant to the Peninsular War, chapter six explored the occupation of Kandy by British troops in 1815, through analysis of a picturesque image of the Kandyan interior, *The Summit of the Balani Mountain*, designed by William Lyttleton. An army officer who participated in military action against Kandy, Lyttleton's depiction of the island's interior as pleasant and peaceful was produced in contradistinction to long-held associations of the Kandyan interior with danger and death. This aquatint was interpreted as a moment of conquest, one of several such claims by British civil servants, military personnel, and government officials in the wake of the final occupation. Exploration of accounts of

Kandyan resistance to the British occupation in 1817 and 1818 uncovered an estimation, by army surgeon Dr. John Davy, that between 10,000 and 15,000 Kandyans were killed in an attempt to expel the British from the inland provinces.<sup>803</sup>

In light of the varied and extensive description about violence uncovered in the course of this study, it is important to question the value of Dr. Davy's numbers. What can an estimate of the number of Kandyans killed in conflict reveal about the cultures of violence practiced on the island, the ways in which both colonized and colonizers experienced monumental and "petty fears"?<sup>804</sup> In the course of colonial warfare, analysis of verbal and visual description is necessary because numbers reveal little about violence or conquest. Quantified violence cannot take into account a child's report of the murder of his father—a Muslim trader from Puttalam—in 1802, or the beatings and "very ill" treatment of the other traders detained by Kandyan officials, or the theft of their cattle and areca nut, their livelihood. Further, incidents of incorporeal or epistemic violence, such as the elimination or masking of an individual's identity or the stereotyping of a group of people through verbal or visual misrepresentation, cannot be studied through analysis of what is quantified but through analysis of what is not, since the ways in which description points to absence are the means by which such violence becomes apparent.

Davy's estimates of Kandyans killed in the resistance actions did not take into account women's vulnerability in virtually all of the island's provinces and institutions,

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<sup>803</sup> John Davy, *An Account of the interior of Ceylon, and of its inhabitants. With travels in that island* (London: Longman, Hurst Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821; New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 316. Citations refer to the Asian Educational Services edition.

<sup>804</sup> Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 25-28.

an important lacuna, since corporeal violence resulting from militarism regularly manifest itself on the bodies of women at the hands of Kandyan and British soldiers. One British writer expressed disgust upon learning about the execution of a Kandyan woman who had attempted to help British prisoners communicate with each other while held in the inland capital,<sup>805</sup> but Alexander Alexander wrote openly about beating his native wife, “following the example of the others”.<sup>806</sup>

Davy’s estimate did not acknowledge wartime acts of rape, murder, or abduction, nor could it hint at the fears articulated by Maria Graham and others about the possibility of illness, the violent weather patterns, and the crafting of arms by local artisans on the island. It played no role in describing the obvious discomfort of captured service animals necessary for the large-scale public works projects of colonial governors or indigenous rulers, or those animals brought into the garrisons as pets and eventually destroyed, or killed arbitrarily or for sport in the midst of military action.

Rather, description of violence is available in published narratives and unpublished documents, including legal proceedings such as those undertaken in 1805 when Hady Syrang, an employee of David Douglas Wemyss, attempted to appropriate firewood from a local landowner, Simon de Zelve, and all involved articulated concern about violence. Frederic North stated at the outset “that the trespass should be punished”,

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<sup>805</sup> *A narrative of events which have recently occurred in the island of Ceylon, written by a gentleman on the spot*. London: T. Edgerton, 1815; *Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon* 27, no. 2 (October 1937), 53.

<sup>806</sup> John Howell, ed., *The life of Alexander Alexander: written by himself*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1830), 180. But he recounts, too, how “James Barlow, one of our men, had a short time before been tied to the wheel of a six pounder and got five hundred lashes, for beating an abandoned woman of the country, who, with her associates, had robbed and maltreated him,” 129-30.

Wemyss demonstrated concern that he would be punished for the crime, Chief Justice Carrington expressed concern about the likelihood of public “riot and bloodshed” in the face of perceived injustice, and Hady Syrang revealed that he and the lascars who worked for Wemyss lived under the daily threat of being flogged.

Crimes of property on the island were invariably tied to physical violence. The (physical) punitive action that resulted was only a matter of the degree, in relation to the circumstance. In 1804, the year before the Hady Syrang trial, North documented his intention to authorize two state executions of burglars who injured an inhabitant by trying to steal the earrings on his person “with intent to kill him”, and who had stolen additional goods from the man’s house.<sup>807</sup> Also that year a man in the maritime provinces was sentenced to death by hanging for killing a property owner in the midst of an attempt to steal fruit from his garden. North did not authorize the execution in the latter case, as he found that the murder had been not been premediated, and he changed the sentence to a punishment that would result instead in a slower form of violence: “hard labor in chains for life”.

During the first war with Kandy, violence was also associated with states of mind and with communication. Arthur Johnston described the psychologically taxing experience of listening to Kandyans fell trees to hamper the retreat of his detachment in 1804, even as Alexander Alexander reported that it was as a result of a “violent misunderstanding” that caused Johnston to bring the detachment to Kandy in the first place.<sup>808</sup> North, who is characterized in this study as someone whose upbringing, tastes,

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<sup>807</sup> North to Camden, 24 April 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>808</sup> Howell, I:148.

and personal pursuits placed him in the category of men who would not intentionally “disturb the tranquillity either of kingdoms or families”,<sup>809</sup> grew to suffer from “a derangement of the nervous system” as a result of his tenure as the island’s governor, his “nerves, shattered and unstrong”.<sup>810</sup> Sensitive to disorder caused by epidemics, war, or rumors of war—in short, “many years of physical and moral calamity”—North found it helpful to contrast turbulence with tranquility. Like battle torn sites depicted by British artists in the midst of the Mysore Wars, in which all appeared calm in the aftermath of struggle, both North and artist Samuel Daniell imposed upon the island an ideal of what Adam Smith called “undisturbed tranquillity”.<sup>811</sup> As a value and a practice, tranquility lingered long after North’s departure from the island. After the final occupation of Kandy, an anonymous writer defined conquest as “securing the permanent tranquillity of these settlements”, but with a qualification: that peace on the island vindicated “the honour of the British name.”<sup>812</sup>

North equated war with Kandy as a means of bringing tranquility to the inland provinces, which is understandable given that both aesthetically and philosophically the idea of tranquility matched the governor’s vision for colonial order. From North’s residences at Colombo and Arippu, the view inland, towards Kandy, was obscured by a roadless, barely penetrable forest which British military personnel associated with

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<sup>809</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical inquiry into the principles of taste* (London: T. Payne and J. White, 1805), 454.

<sup>810</sup> North to Camden, 8 February 1805. CO 54/16, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>811</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Cadell & Davis; F., C., and J. Rivington; and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown; Edinburgh: W. Creech and Bell and Bradfute, 1812), 259.

<sup>812</sup> A gentleman on the spot, 56.



frightening incidents of violence and disappearance. At times, severely injured soldiers could not be transported for the duration of a retreat, and like Lieutenant Vincent and Ensign Smith were left behind to fend for themselves. Due to misfortune, folly, or abduction, others went missing in the course of action. In some cases, soldiers or their family members were discovered dead in the forest. The wife of a Malay soldier in Johnston's detachment who had accompanied her husband to Kandy was found mutilated outside the capital in 1804. The year before, British troops had discovered one of their sepoys, a deserter, strung up in a tree. Advancing inland was sufficiently taxing to warrant an association with extreme danger, but it is now thought that the illness contracted by so many of the British troops in 1803 and 1804 was due less to forest miasma than the lethal combination of physical exhaustion, extreme weather conditions, and poor nutrition.<sup>813</sup>

Lankan guides, porters, and bearers loyal to the British troops were equally if not more vulnerable than the troops themselves while marching in the inland provinces. They were considered the prized targets of Kandyan soldiers due to the difficulty with which the British government procured laborers or guides with knowledge of the Kandyan provinces. Guides were subject to corporal punishment if their efforts failed military authorities. In a single action undertaken in 1803, James Cordiner reported that nineteen bearers were killed and several others wounded.

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<sup>813</sup> Channa Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War: Indigenous Military Resistance to European Expansion in Sri Lanka, 1594-1818* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 175-176.

Upon deciding to occupy Kandy in 1803, North proclaimed publicly that “no disorder be allowed” by troops as they marched inland,<sup>814</sup> and that the temples and property of those living in the Kandyan provinces be protected. After the mass executions of British troops in 1803, North relinquished hope of building a road to Kandy and shifted his priority from occupation to destruction. Of all the types of violence enacted or experienced during Britain’s first war with Kandy, that which was least quantifiable in terms of loss of life, yet which likely caused the greatest death toll, resulted from the governor’s decision to attack the Kandyans’ agricultural goods and residences. Not only were Sri Vickrama Rajasimha’s secondary palaces and the homes of other titled Kandyans destroyed, but hundreds of homes of peasants, as well as storehouses of grain, paddy, areka nut, and salt were despoiled, burned, or confiscated. Entire “neat villages, surrounded with groves of cocoa-nut trees, and fields of rice”<sup>815</sup> were laid waste, while in the maritime provinces the homes and boats of fishermen thought to be traitorous were destroyed by fire. The testimony of Kar Bocus, a former prisoner held at Kandy, and that of Perrouma Adownie, a Kandyan spy held prisoner in the maritime provinces, revealed that the punitive expeditions of the British were effective: “the common people” of the

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<sup>814</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* 48 (2 February 1803).

<sup>815</sup> James Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon, containing an account of the country, inhabitants, and natural productions; with narratives of a tour round the island in 1800, the campaign in Candy in 1803, and a journey to Ramisseram in 1804. Illustrated by engravings from original drawings*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Aberdeen: A. Brown; 1807; New Delhi: Navrang, 1983), II:224-25. Citations refer to the Navrang edition. II:250.

inland provinces were reduced to living solely on leaves and fruit,<sup>816</sup> and “more than a thousand people” had died “of hunger and want of salt.”<sup>817</sup>

Unsuccessful attempts by British troops to occupy Kandy in 1803 and 1804 led to significant losses and injuries to both British and Kandyan troops. During Captain Robert Blackall’s excursion into the Seven Corles in March of 1804, he and his detachment not only undertook the destruction of property but Blackall also authorized the imprisonment or execution of Kandyan soldiers by shooting or hanging. In other instances soldiers engaged in one-on-one combat. In one action, Lieutenant Thomas P. Chamley reported that a “trooper” received a blow from the “butt end of a firelock” wielded by a Kandyan soldier, who in turned was “deprived of an arm, & repeating his blow severed the head from the body.”<sup>818</sup> Alexander noted that one of the soldiers court martialed after Johnston’s retreat lost an eye, and that during the brief occupation of Kandy another member of Johnston’s detachment injured himself and killed two others as a result of accidentally setting fire to ammunition. During the mass executions the year before, British soldiers hospitalized at the inland capital were beaten to death, while those well enough to march out under an assumption of safe capitulation were beheaded and left unburied in the forest.

Accounts by soldiers who survived marches in the inland provinces indicate that some equated their largely unseen opponents with the landscape itself, given the resourcefulness of Kandyan soldiers to enlist trees, lighter foliage, and even river beds to

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<sup>816</sup> “The examination of Kar Bocus born at Batavia—a Malay Priest,” 5 March 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>817</sup> “Examination of Perrouma Adownie,” 8 March 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>818</sup> Chamley to Blackall, 13 February 1805. CO 54/17, National Archives, Kew.

defend the capital, at one point attempting “to turn aside a stream” that supplied British troops with water.<sup>819</sup> The British manipulated the island’s natural resources in the maritime provinces, in particular the rich tree life and the courses of natural springs, in an attempt to stabilize and enhance a nascent colonial economy. Henry Salt even advocated for the removal of the rocks in Galle’s harbor, because the boulders made “the entrance dangerous”.<sup>820</sup> Draining, digging, and embanking land, and clearing coastal forests, brought about new waterways and fields for the cultivation of crops, which in some cases involved the removal, relocation, or establishment of vegetable, fruit, and spice gardens.

The decision to grade and “value” the island’s trees contributed to the diminishing of the Calamander, which by the 1840s was reported as scarce and is now extinct. Due to the absence of roads in the island’s interior, any interaction between British and Kandyan officials necessitated extensive tree removal. It is significant that in the course of the first war the officer who was able get a detachment to Kandy and back again, albeit with heavy casualties, was Arthur Johnston, who had, as his first military task on the island, “opened a road” to Kandy for Hay Macdowall. It is also significant that an officer who participated in the 1815 occupation of Kandy, William Lyttleton, produced an image of the interior that emphasized the British government’s newly built road to the capital. It is difficult within the context of this study not to see the road pictured in Lyttleton’s *The*

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<sup>819</sup> Major A. Johnston, *Narrative operations of a detachment in an expedition to Candy, in the island of Ceylon, in the year 1804. With some observations on the previous campaign, and on the nature of Candian warfare, etc., etc., etc.*, new ed. (Dublin: James McGlashan; London: Wm. S. Orr and Co., 1854), 57.

<sup>820</sup> Henry Salt, *Twenty four views taken in St. Helena, the Cape, India, Ceylon, Abyssinia & Egypt* (London: William Miller, 1809), n.p.

*Summit of the Balani Mountain* as a metaphor for the long process of conquest and the many small and large actions of violence that attended it.

Stepping back to glimpse records of described and undescribed violence, from Captain Montagu's detailed description of the remnants of the *H.M.S. Terpsichore*, destroyed off Galle, to the "fate" of a woman encountered in the not-quite-abandoned capital of the inland provinces, to a dog kicked to death on a march, to an inebriated British soldier left behind in the woods, death within the context of warfare is certainly present, but it is interwoven with corporal punishment and execution; spousal abuse and rape; the killing of animals; harassment and impressment; the destruction of property; and the alteration of landscape. Present within this same discursive fabric are numerous strategies of comfort, from ideas of improvement to national honor, from claims of liberation and security to the imposition and maintenance of tranquility. As to the practice of the picturesque, which embodied all of these strategies, even Dr. Davy marked the conquest of Kandy with a tour—an excursion to "afford illustrations of the condition and manners of the people, and of the state of the country, and its most remarkable scenery."<sup>821</sup> Davy:

. . . The river-scene was a very impressive one and extremely picturesque: the torrent, with fine effect, rushed from a wooded height down a channel obstructed by great masses of rock, on which were assembled numerous groups of pilgrims, variously employed, —some bathing, some making a frugal repast on cold rice, and other resting themselves, laying at length, or sitting cross-legged in the Indian-fashion, chewing betel."<sup>822</sup>

John Davy completed his word picture with islanders "resting themselves" and "chewing betel"—that is, areca nut, the stimulant that sustained the British economy during the

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<sup>821</sup> Davy, 335.

<sup>822</sup> Davy, 339.

early years of colonization, a conflict over which spurred Frederic North to invade Kandy.

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