

British Conceptions of Wealth and Property in the East Indies
and their Influence on Governance and Society:
1807 – 1824

by
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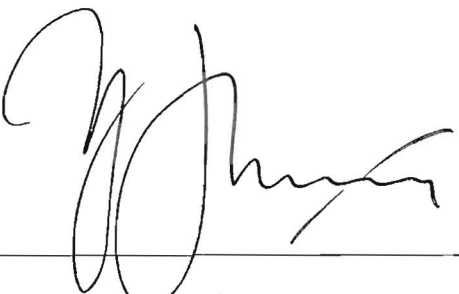
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Declaration of Original Work

I, Tze Shiung Ng, certify that this thesis which I have submitted is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment before.



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Abstract

The British East India Company's invasion of Java in 1811 is regarded by historians to have paved the way for the Company's founding of a free port in Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819. Raffles's references to Adam Smith's 1776 treatise, *The Wealth of Nations*, in his 1817 *History of Java* have reinforced the view that he had adopted Smith's liberal principles of political economy when he was governor of Java from 1811 to 1816. A closer inspection, however, shows Raffles's policies to have instead protected monopolies, restricted markets, and regulated people's lives. From this contradiction had arisen the historical problem of how the two events of Java's invasion and Singapore's founding were connected. Historians maintain that, though later inspired by free trade, Raffles was initially bound to the mercantilist interests of the Company. Yet the Company's Governor-General, the Earl of Minto, had in Java introduced some of the first emancipatory laws and civil reforms of the modern era. What were the British really doing in the East Indies between 1811 and 1819?

In this thesis, I answer this question by showing that these contradictions had arisen from the historian's assumption that ideological relations had determined Raffles's and Minto's policies. I show instead that the linguistic contexts of those policies, when examined, reveal not contradiction but a general criticism of both 'liberalism' and 'mercantilism'. Raffles, Minto, and the third actor in this study, John Leyden, had held moral and political views which were sceptical of political economy's claims to deliver productivity and surplus. While virtue and the ideal of freedom had brought material progress, they were believed to have also led to vice, slavery, and human decline. This conception of the human condition identifies a civic humanist discourse and a common sense philosophy that were prominent in eighteenth-century

Britain. They influenced an ethical approach to empire that was radically opposed to both Franco-Dutch and British colonialism. In the East Indies, Raffles, Minto, and Leyden resolved to end the power of a moneyed interest over the native population and restore the native individual's self-consciousness and self-dependence.

These events defined a 'venture of critique' which saw the Company effectively decolonise Napoleonic Java and lay the foundations for a native commonwealth that encompassed the Malay Archipelago and which was centred at Singapore. They articulate an historical moment when the established narrative of modern empire is interrupted by a narrative of the classical republic. Such a moment entirely overturns the conventional understanding of the historical relation between Britain and the Malay States. By introducing humanist conceptions of wealth and property into the colonial and oriental discourse, it changed existing forms of society and governance in the East Indies and profoundly determined future forms of society and governance in nineteenth-century British Malaya and twentieth-century Malaysia and Singapore.

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Introduction

A Venture of Critique

When the former British governor of Java, Sir Stamford Raffles, fatally collapsed at his North London home on 5 July 1826, the United Kingdom was in the throes of a general election. The Whig party, last in power in 1807, contested under its nominal leader, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, the third Marquess of Lansdowne, and lost. But the following year, Lansdowne formed a government with the leader of the Liberal Tories, George Canning. It was short-lived, owing to Canning's sudden death. Lansdowne, nevertheless, returned to government when the whigs (under the Earl Grey) carried the election in 1830. On this occasion, Lansdowne secured for the talented son of a friend, a young Thomas Macaulay, a safe seat in the House of Commons as well as the office of Secretary to the Board of Control for India. Before Macaulay, however, the protégé of Lansdowne who was most experienced and qualified in the affairs of the East was in fact Raffles. Raffles was only 45 years old when he died. Had the 'clouds and death'¹ spared his life, the political office that was otherwise given to Macaulay would arguably have been his.

This counter-history is compelling. When Raffles returned to England from the East in August 1824, he had expressed a desire to 'get a seat in parliament'.² The prospect of Raffles wanting to return to government affairs in the East is significant, for

¹ Demetrius Charles Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* (1897) (Amsterdam: Pepin Press, 1999).

² Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 24 August 1824; Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, F.R.S. etc: particularly in the Government of Java, 1811-1816, and of Bencoolen and its Dependencies, 1817-1824; with details of the Commerce and Resources of the Eastern Archipelago, and Selections from his Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1830), 582.

it suggests an unfinished business in Singapore, where he had established a free port in 1819. 'I shall come back to Singapore one day,' Raffles had said as he left that island in June 1823.³ Yet this notion of continuity has never figured in the history. Raffles's widow, Sophia Raffles, in her 1830 *Memoir* of her husband's career, indicated that his interest in the East ended after the British Government ratified Singapore as a British settlement in the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. She stressed that Raffles subsequently settled down in England to a life of the country gentleman. It is this denouement which had instead been influential in the history. It had the effect of localising Singapore's founding as a singular historical event. Colonialists and historians consequently venerated the event for having changed the course of British history in the East. It was idealised as a moment of triumph of liberty which ended the unjust feudal and mercantilist despotisms in the East and ushered in a liberal empire of free trade.

This narrative, notwithstanding its longevity in the history, is inadequate and unsatisfactory. Where Raffles was concerned, Singapore's founding was the culmination of a series of events that had begun with the British East India Company's invasion of Napoleonic Java in 1811 and which marked the Company's administration of the island until 1816 and its interventions in Sumatra and Borneo that continued even after Singapore's founding until 1821. These events described a coherent narrative. They represented a continuity of acts and purpose. They expressed a congruity of views. These views, purpose, acts, and narrative would very well explain Raffles's aims had he lived and returned to the East. But they have never been understood, if only because they are unintelligible under an historical approach that is long established by the theme of 'liberty and empire' and ideology of *liberalism*.

³ Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, *Hikayat Abdullah*, Tr. A. H. Hill (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Reprint No. 29, 2009), 191.

The economic liberalism that is believed to have inspired Singapore's founding in 1819, and consequently built Britain's empire in the East, does not relate the British activity in the East Indies in the years between 1811 and 1819. The liberal agenda at the time, which saw British national sovereignty and economic freedom to be under threat from Napoleon's populist agenda of universal empire and the common market, is not tenable where Britain's invasion of Java was concerned. The Company, led by the Governor-General of Bengal, the Earl of Minto, did not liberate or destroy the commodity-rich Franco-Dutch colony after it fell. Rather, in the figure of Raffles, the Company remained to govern and regulate the island's economy, including the colonial monopolies and tax revenues. A continuity of Franco-Dutch reforms from the early 1800s has been forwarded to explain the British policy, but, though influential in the history, it does not hold. For Minto and Raffles also legislated six major policies which taken together proved to be far more radical, progressive, liberating, and visionary than the boldest of Franco-Dutch reforms. Their emancipation of the Javanese peasant and conferring of property rights on him in fact evoke twentieth-century ideas. Certainly, they defy any theory of imperial expansion. Minto, especially, never intended to occupy Java longer than the implementation of these policies made necessary.

What should the historian make of this awkward ambivalence between free trade and mercantilism, between progressivism and conservatism, between what are considered to be the 'left wing' and 'right wing' of ideology? Clearly, the authority of economic liberalism and the theme of liberty and empire, which had prescribed a historical narrative of the struggle to free trade from mercantilism and people from feudalism, cannot explain what was going on. But it begs the question of what were the British really doing in the East Indies between 1811 and 1819? And what can explain the events of the period? The ambivalence of those events actually suggests broader

causes that underlay ideology and ideological conflict. Indeed, this was a period when the nature of ideas and ideologies, rather than ideas and ideologies as such, was being challenged and defended, tried and tested. What the events of 1811-19 disclosed is found in the speech and texts of their primary architects and actors, that is, Minto, Raffles, and John Leyden. This was the context of debate, counterargument, and criticism.

Context of critique

A context of debate, counterargument, and criticism is discernible in Raffles's main intellectual work, *The History of Java*. It was published in 1817, the same year as the more renowned work by James Mill, *The History of British India*. Mill's *History* had expounded an utilitarian view for Britain's approach to India. For its reviling of Indian society and religion, it has been historically impugned as a manual of imperialism. But the charge is simplistic. Javed Majeed, unearthing the context of Mill's *History*, found it to represent a criticism of British society and ideas. The people of India were the object of a destructive worldview equally European as Asian. 'The source of almost all oppression, in Asiatic and European governments alike,' Mill observed, 'is the rage of extorting more and more of their earnings from the people'.⁴ Importantly, 'this passion, instead of being abated by connexion with the English, is prodigiously inflamed; when the tributary prince is carried to all the excesses of taxation, not only by his own rapacity, but the necessity of supplying the enormous demands of his European masters'.

Mill indeed criticised Indian society, but as a society whose seemingly-native cultural conventions had been influenced through empire by 'the powerfully dominant

⁴ James Mill, *The History of British India, Vol. III* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), 397.

ideology of British society at the time'.⁵ The despotism of a British ideology, which imposed normative beliefs and principles on all peoples within the British sphere, and then judged them by their standards of knowledge and behaviour, was the real focus of Mill's criticism. Mill's *History*, said Majeed, was 'unable to view India in terms other than as part of a strategy for attacking British society itself; India was important only in so far as it played a part in a larger political and epistemological venture whose purpose was to fashion a critique of the ruling British ideology of the time.'⁶ The particular intent of 'criticizing another culture meant criticizing one's own.'⁷ This self-critique of British society anticipated, far ahead of its time, the postcolonial critique. It applied to Raffles' *History*, but with respect to Java's ruling Franco-Dutch ideologies. Raffles had conceived of oppression in the same way as Mill: in the form of taxes which, though extorted under an Asian regime, ultimately accrued to the Dutch:

The taxes on the internal trade of the country extended to every article of manufacture, produce, or consumption, and being invariably farmed out to Chinese, who employed every mode of extortion that their ingenuity could invent, or the passive disposition of the people would allow them to practice, constituted an inexhaustible source of oppression: to these we may add the feudal services and forced deliveries required under the Dutch government.⁸

Treating Raffles's *History* as a criticism of the ill-effects of European society and ideas which also manifested in Asian society and ideas, puts into context the events in British Java which it chronicled. Raffles's criticism took a different aspect from Mill's criticism. But the policies and actions that proceeded from his criticism, as well as the policies and actions that likewise proceeded from Minto and Leyden's criticisms, all fall within the 'larger political and epistemological venture' that had categorised Mill's

⁵ Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 200.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁷ Majeed, 200.

⁸ Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java, Vol. I* (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 149.

criticism. Unlike the postcolonial critique, this British *venture of critique* traced its object to an intellectual fount rather than the imperial will. In the case of Mill, Majeed says, his utilitarian view of the world targeted the ‘revitalized conservatism’ based on the common law ideas prescribed by the political theorist, Edmund Burke, in his seminal 1791 book, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. These ideas were seen by Mill to have influenced the representations of the East by British orientalist and poets, which subsequently influenced the ethos and conventions of Indian society – or, as the postcolonial critic, Edward Said, later put it, which became internalised as colonial knowledge and powerfully bound the Asian mind to the gaze of the European. The British venture of critique, however, did not merely identify the object which it criticised; it also proposed to correct that object. Its anxieties were not aesthetic but deeply theoretical and practical. Mill’s corrective to the despotism of British ideology in India, for example, proposed Jeremy Bentham’s happiness-maximising policies for the Anglo-Indian governments.

Minto and Raffles’s target was not Burke’s conservatism or any ideological system as such. Their focus was rather the concepts behind the beliefs, values, and ideas which might form an ideological system. Principally, they were critical of the nascent market fundamentalism being adopted in British society – and, indeed, by the Dutch and French states – on the basis of the ‘new economic arguments’ of political economy such as were extolled in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*.⁹ The articulation of commerce as a law of nature and of human behaviour as a science of man was seen to have dispensed with the moral and political concerns historically attached to commerce. The freeing of trade implied the free rein of human behaviour and ideas. It revived historical fears of the return of the vicious cycle wherein commerce, regarded to be the

⁹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994).

cause of prosperity and independence, was also the cause of corruption and enslavement.

Thus for Raffles, political economy abetted mercantilism and private monopolies as much as it galvanised markets and competition. For Minto, it threatened the ‘refinement of the arts’ and returned society under the influence of the usurer. Both Minto’s teacher, the Scottish philosopher David Hume, and his mentor, Edmund Burke, Britain’s preeminent whig theorist, had warned against the power of the private creditor of the nation’s finances, known as the ‘moneyed interest’, in compelling all free nations to bow to its command. These concerns traced their source to a political, moral, and intellectual discourse in which the questions of Britain’s rising national debt and Britain’s shifting national wealth were intensely debated. At the heart of both questions was the well-being of the individual. For Minto, public debt undermined the ‘primaeval contract’ by which society had guaranteed to the individual his ‘security of person and property’. While for Raffles, the free market threatened the individual’s independence and denied him that equality which the distribution of landed property was argued, by the likes of Richard Price and Sir James Steuart, to bring.

The figures of Smith, Hume, Burke, Price, Steuart – and, we will see, Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart – relate the British reformer-critic’s criticism to the vibrant intellectual field of Britain’s eighteenth-century Enlightenment. From the Enlightenment had sprung the new ideas and ideals of nature and modernity, and while their inventiveness and accomplishments were recorded and credited, their flaws and failures were also observed and criticised. The adverse effects of the Enlightenment were particularly acute in industrialising Britain and in commercialising India. However, the British literature on the human condition at both places has been overshadowed by aesthetic writings expressing existential angst or pleasure alongside

representations of the nature of India and the orient. Leyden in particular was aware that much of these romantic writings, in portraying ‘positivities and totalities’ toward Indian culture, depicted the very representations of the East that were believed to have shaped that culture.¹⁰ Or, if they portrayed ‘anxieties and instabilities’,¹¹ it was often with the same essentialising language of the Enlightenment idealism which led to plunder and misery in India. The British reformer-critic was capable of apprehending the Enlightenment’s claims and promises in his own terms. The real human condition in the domains of empire and the orient described the fate of a humanity betrayed by those claims and promises – and this fate he felt compelled to change by his own terms.

Decolonisation and reform

The British venture of critique concerned not quite empire as such, but a kind of ‘anti-empire’ mode of empire, as it were, that operated in the domain of empire itself. The empire of trade and civilization represented the fulfilment of Enlightenment ideals of liberty, progress, and jurisprudence. But in the venture of critique, empire was but the means to virtue, reconciliation, and peace. It saw the ‘ends of empire’ in the concord and commonwealth between nations. This distinction affects our usual understanding of empire as an activity of power and of the colony as an object of exploitation. Admittedly, the venture’s motivation was paternalistic and British, but British paternalism in this instance precluded the usual justifications for colonisation. The venture’s mission was redeeming rather than civilising. It aimed to restore the alienated personality of the native individual and end his subjection, if only to restore in turn the alienated personality of his subjector, the British individual.

¹⁰ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, October 1978).

¹¹ See Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2. Also Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

This logic of catharsis in the venture of critique was, as Majeed put it in the case of Mill, a necessary ‘exercise in disenchantment’.¹² It ‘offered,’ Majeed explained, ‘the possibility of some sort of liberating critique, that is a critique which affords the possibility of changing the way we define ourselves in order to change our practices for the better.’ The passions and prejudices of India, having been ‘prodigiously inflamed’ by ‘connexion with the English,’ demanded to be ‘abated by connexion with the English’. Thus, Raffles described the Company’s invasion of Java in no less earnest terms than that ‘the English came to Java as friends.’¹³ This commitment of the venture to atonement and redemption, while not exempt from criticism, falls outside the moral jurisdiction of the postcolonial critique. Indeed, it was, as mentioned, an earlier form of postcolonial criticism itself. But where in the postcolonial critique it tended to be the subjected *other* (the Asian/African) who distinguished its otherness under the gaze of the controlling *self* (the Westerner), in the British venture of critique the redeeming *self* distinguished its own alienation. This introspectiveness rather portrays the venture as an ethical dimension of empire.

We are dealing here with an anomaly and an anachronism in the history: an approach to empire and the colony that was not power-seeking and exploitative, if only because the intent was to reverse power and exploitation. Power and exploitation were the ill-effects of the flawed ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment – the promise of an abundant and material future for all mankind gone wrong. Edmund Burke had complained of the East India Company that ‘no trace of equitable government is found in their politics, not one trace of commercial principle in their mercantile dealing’.¹⁴ The free traders, no less, were not spared. The Company’s reformist chairman, Charles

¹² Majeed, 200.

¹³ Leask, xii.

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, ‘Speech on Mr. Fox’s East India Bill’ (1783), in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (United States: Penguin, 1999), 376.

Grant, had condemned their ‘imperfect Knowledge, and Ignorance and Conjecture, all to have led to erroneous Conclusions’ to the prejudice of the Eastern Islanders. Their determination to emancipate the East to the new economic liberalism by a ‘sanguine Spirit of Adventure, which sees no Difficulty, and anticipates nothing but Success’, was deeply misplaced.¹⁵ John Leyden denounced these ‘iniquitous commercial principles’ and ‘pernicious effects of European commerce’¹⁶ which brought rapacity and degradation instead of benevolence and happiness. In the case of Africa, they ‘continued to regulate the intercourse of white men with their sable brethren,’ and continued unforgivably ‘to degrade the negro, and disgrace the European.’¹⁷

Thus, there emerged within the Company’s governments in India and its Court of Directors in London, and within the British government and parliament, a class of ‘legislators and governors’ who stood in criticism of the commercial ‘men of old standing’. Mill’s utilitarianism was put into practice by utilitarian reformists in India, notably the former governor of Madras and future Governor-General of India, William Bentinck. Minto, Raffles, and Leyden, meanwhile, put their own theories into practice. Unlike Mill’s *History*, Raffles’s *History* was retrospective and genuinely historical. It not only picked on what was wrong about the Dutch and French approaches in the East Indies, it also recorded what his and Minto’s government did to correct those wrongs. Mill could only preach what Minto, Raffles, and Leyden were able to do, which was to physically reverse, by a reconstitution of society through government and governance,

¹⁵ House of Lords, *Report, relative to the Trade with the East Indies and China, from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to enquire into the Means of Extending and Securing the Foreign Trade of the Country, and to report to the House; together with the Minutes of Evidence taken in Sessions 1820 and 1821 before the said Committee* (11 April 1821) (London: House of Lords, reprinted 5th June 1829), 249-250.

¹⁶ John Leyden, *A Historical & Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries & Settlements of the Europeans in Northern & Western Africa, at the close of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: J. Moir, 1799), 103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

the ill-effects on the human condition of the ‘new economic arguments’ of political economy.

Their attempt stands out in a period of violent intervention and revolution in the historic European colonies. The old empire’s liberation had been the foreign policy of both Britain and France: the former to preserve individual freedoms by freeing markets, the latter to re-engineer the civil state by removing old regimes. Both had pretensions to create a new middle or bourgeois class. This new class, however, generally remained a European or Mestizo inheritance. The circumstance was especially true of South America, but it was also the case, by virtue of the fall in 1795 of the Dutch Republic as a collateral outcome of the French Revolution, of Java. Bourgeois, liberal, *afrancesado* Java, wrote the future British governor of Mauritius in 1807, was to the ‘people of Holland’ and their king, ‘Louis Buonaparte’, the ‘principal source of their commercial splendour’.¹⁸ It was grievously apparent that, in spite of the promises of the Rights of Man or the Right of Property, Java was, like ‘a Second St Domingo’ (Haiti), built over a system of ‘Slave Debtors’ which was ensconced in local custom and supported by European commerce. That changed when the British reformer-critic invaded in 1811. Java’s common native population, neglected by the universal aspirations of the age, supplied an opportunity for realising the venture of critique. Java was annexed to empire in order to free its native inhabitants from empire, so to speak. The event was a departure from the South American pseudo-decolonisation. It amounted to a native decolonisation which prefigured independent Indonesia by a century and a half.

Between them, Minto and Raffles implemented six major policies in Java: the devaluation of paper money, the withdrawal of paper money, the sale of government land to the European proprietor, the distribution of government land to the native

¹⁸ Robert Farquhar, 1807, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/2.

cultivator, the introduction of a new paper currency, and the centralisation of taxes and judiciary. The criticism of political economy underpinning these measures has been described above. The impulse to free the people from debt and slavery, and to empower the individual with the authority of real property, apprehended a standpoint of civic humanism. Minto and Raffles's policies aimed to eradicate debt and slavery by eliminating the moneyed interest, and to distribute land to individual cultivators through the government lease. The rationale was to enshrine the security of person and property in the individual, so as to stimulate a personal interest in the fruits of his own industry. Between the native cultivator and European colonist, would thus emerge a landed interest. Unlike Raffles, however, Minto never fully rejected the market. He hoped that a commercial agricultural society would develop out of the interdependency between the native cultivator, European colonist, and a new merchant interest. Raffles, on the other hand, expected the native cultivator to subsist independently in an agrarian republic.

In the event, two years after he had occupied Java, Minto left India to return to England and Raffles was left with absolute authority. But by this time, their opponents within the Company had caught up with them. In December 1813, Raffles was charged with corruption in his sale of lands and dismissed in 1815. By then Raffles also learnt bitterly that Java had the previous summer been legally restored to the Kingdom of the Netherlands by the British Government. The venture of critique that was British Java thus came to an abrupt end. Raffles left Java for England in 1816, but harbouring plans to revive the venture, initially in Bangka, then Billiton,¹⁹ and ultimately in Singapore.

¹⁹ 'By one article of which his Britannic Majesty agrees to cede the Island of Banca to the Dutch, but no mention is made of either Palembang or Billiton.' Raffles to Robert Inglis, 12 June 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 394.

Native consciousness

As an ethical dimension of empire, and in its political form of British Java, the British venture of critique can be traced to Edmund Burke's parliamentary speeches from the 1770s about British avarice and rapacity in India. In one sense, British Java from 1811 to 1816 stands as a realisation of the whig reform which was articulated by Burke in his India Bill of 1783. Persistent efforts to this end had in India been consistently crushed by the commercial 'men of old standing' in the Company. British Java was demonstrated proof that Burke's 'True Moral Equality of Mankind' was right and achievable. Theoretically, it was an indictment of the new idealism of political economy, and a vindication of the older moral truths of civic humanism. Politically, it held up a mirror to Indian society and British society. Indeed, the event is a credit to the Company's woeful humanitarian record, in that it represented the first moment when the Company acted in revolt to its 'monopolising spirit' and its 'spirit of conquest' for the sake of the people under its jurisdiction. It was also the only moment that this benevolent behaviour resulted in the creation of an independent polity. In India, benevolent government, though it inaugurated in 1833 an era of reform, led to a century of imperial rule. In Java, British reform prepared for a sustained autonomy of sorts, intervening to clean up the social malignancies of the European inheritance – 'the rubbish and incumbrances of two centuries of Dutch mal-administration'²⁰ – before resuming the original plan 'to leave the possession of these Settlements to the occupation of the Natives.'²¹

The restitution of Java to the Dutch was therefore a huge blow to Raffles. Not because the island was lost to empire, but because it was returned to empire, so to speak. Java's restitution effectively represented a re-colonisation, and one which

²⁰ Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 30 November 1822, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 526.

²¹ William Astell and Jacob Bosanquet to Minto, 31 August 1810, MSS Eur F148/2.

presupposed the reinstatement of the contorted social structure and economic system of the previous colonial regimes. The result of their labours snatched from them, Raffles, the last of the reformer-critics in Java, tried to save its legacy. British Java had represented the political form of the venture of critique. Without Java, nevertheless, the venture could still identify with an epistemological form. This was Leyden's conception of the 'Malay Nation'.

On 1 January 1815, Raffles resumed a correspondence with the eminent author of *The History of Sumatra* (1783), William Marsden, on a topic which they last discussed in 1809: the *Malays*.²² Their exchange began in 1806 with an enquiry from Marsden.²³ Raffles's replies paraphrased what were Leyden's views on the Malays. They revealed a dispute between Marsden and Leyden as to the Malay origin. These rival claims were subsequently published: by Leyden in his *On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations* (1808),²⁴ and Marsden in his *A Dictionary of the Malay Language* (1812).²⁵ Raffles in fact wrote several reports on the Malays for Leyden and Minto, but these dried up after the fall of Java. Then, in 1816, his first publication in the *Asiatick Researches* appeared, entitled *On the Maláyu Nation, with a translation of its Maritime Institutions*.²⁶ This paper had been initiated in 1806 through

²² Raffles to Marsden, 1 January 1815, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, F.R.S. etc: particularly in the Government of Java, 1811-1816, and of Bencoolen and its Dependencies, 1817-1824; with details of the Commerce and Resources of the Eastern Archipelago, and Selections from his Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1830), 235.

²³ Raffles to Philip Dundas, 6 July 1806, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 9.

²⁴ John Leyden, 'On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations', in *Asiatick Researches; or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia, Volume the Tenth* (London: Vernon, Hood, and Sharpe, 1811), 158-289.

²⁵ William Marsden, *A Dictionary of the Malayan Language, in Two Parts, Malayan and English and English and Malayan* (London: Cox and Baylis, 1812).

²⁶ Stamford Raffles, 'On the Maláyu Nation, with a translation of its Maritime Institutions', in *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society; instituted in Bengal, for enquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia, Vol. 12* (Calcutta: Calcutta Gazette Office, 1816), 102-158.

Leyden's guidance and encouragement.²⁷ Raffles was to have compiled its material when he stayed at Malacca in 1808,²⁸ but he did not produce the required piece.²⁹ When Raffles visited Calcutta in July-October 1810, and became privy to the invasion plan, Leyden again commissioned the *Maláyu Nation* from him.³⁰ It did not materialise until September 1811,³¹ when the Franco-Dutch government surrendered Java, and Leyden had passed away suddenly.

Raffles's *Maláyu Nation* was intended by Leyden to form a sequel to his *Indo-Chinese Nations*, which together had defined Leyden's objective for the invasion. In Java, Raffles submitted the paper to Minto with another report on 'Malay policy' for the 'Malay States'. Minto, however, had his own specific objective for the invasion. In September 1811, he appointed Raffles as Lieutenant-Governor of Java and instructed him to undertake the 'radical reform' of the entire political structure of Java's society. Nothing more was heard of explicitly of the Malay Nation until 1815, when it resurfaced after it became known that Java was to be restored to the Dutch. The significance of the Malay Nation, it is self-evident, was its renewal or reawakening. To this end, Raffles's *Maláyu Nation* attempted to politicise it among the British. It did not

²⁷ 'Go on and prosper my dear fellow, the work will not only be very desirable in a literary point of view, but will... do everything possible for your reputation at home.' Leyden to Raffles, March 7, 1806, *National Library of Scotland*, MS971. Quoted in I. M. Brown, *John Leyden (1775-1811): his life and works* (unpublished thesis, Edinburgh, 1955), 444. Leyden stayed with Raffles in Penang in December 1805. The *Maláyu Nation* was probably initiated at this time.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 445.

²⁹ He produced a different paper, referred to in chapter two as his 'Malacca paper'. Raffles to Minto-in-Council, 31 October 1809, MSS Eur F148/3.

³⁰ 'With respect to the Undang Undang [the laws] I will tell you candidly that I have not done above 20 Sheets since I left you, for I was very ill onboard Ship and since I came here in truth I have not had time. I shall however do something between this and the time of my Report and Believe me My dear Leyden that nothing but ill health, that is to say, health that won't allow me to work beyond Ten hours a day will prevent my doing all you wish.' Raffles to Leyden, 14 December 1810, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/4. 'Altho I apprehend that my Undang Undang will not be completed for publication by the end of next Month I trust that you will have no reason to believe me idle even in essentials.' Raffles to Leyden, 9 January 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5.

³¹ 'As I hope to be able to lay shortly before your Lordship a translation of the Malay laws relative to this interesting topic, I shall not enlarge upon it at present'. Raffles to Minto, 10 June 1811 (revised 20 September 1811), *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/7.

involve the ‘invention of tradition’³² or imagining of a common community.³³ It simply related the laws and customs of the Malays, but not as the conventions of necessary ideas, practices, and rules. Rather, Raffles explained, Malay laws and customs distinguished ‘the numerous peculiarities of a nation generally believed to act on most occasions, solely from individual will, and ferocious passion.’³⁴ This ‘will’ and ‘passion’, in Leyden’s theory of humankind, identified with the *free will* which was native to man’s original human constitution.

Here, the British venture of critique presented an epistemological form which, though muted and implicit, was more lasting and effective than its political form. It originates from a theory of perception by Scottish pedagogues in the eighteenth century, which was expounded in criticism of the theory of ideas proffered by the Enlightenment rationalism and refined by David Hume. The Scottish theory of perception established a theory of cognition which validated warranted beliefs about existence, reality, and human goodness, which Hume’s sceptical empiricism had invalidated. This epistemological realism, known as the Scottish School of the Philosophy of Common Sense, operated contrarily to the Enlightenment idealism by also invalidating ideas and ideals that were ungrounded in perceived reality. The implications affected all fields of inquiry at Scotland’s universities.

Dugald Stewart, Edinburgh University’s hugely influential professor, attempted to address the problems of the new economics by reformulating it according to realist conceptions of human nature and the human condition. He basically taught that man might overcome his fallibility in the modern world if to political economy was united

³² Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

³⁴ Stamford Raffles, ‘On the Maláyu Nation’, 128.

the theory of government. Stewart criticised Hume's unrealistic associations, Smith's idealistic foibles, then combined their realistic ideas with those of Steuart, Price, Burke, Arthur Young, and other thinkers, into a practical, common-sense economics. With this knowledge Stewart armed his students, who included nearly all of empire's Scottish personages. His careful blend of governance in society, which he termed the 'Political Union' or 'Political Society', unquestionably influenced Minto, who will have seen in it a parallel with Burke's settlement between the 'Institution of Property' and 'Civil Society'. Sir James Macintosh and James Mill would have seen in it a parallel with the principle of 'utility'. Raffles (though he was not Stewart's student)³⁵ simply understood it as 'an improved system of political economy'.

Prior to his lectures on political economy, however, Stewart was a purist of the Scottish School in maintaining the autonomy of the human constitution as the sole determinant of the human condition. This referred to the conceptualisation of man as a sentient being and sovereign subject, in whom resided an original and innate or native knowledge of self, the world, and morality – knowledge which determined his will to act and cause events. Native free will, it was believed, presupposed all free human actions, including the free human exchanges at market. No intervention by government in society, and no idealisation of virtue or esteem by the individual, was necessary to instruct him how to trade benevolently and appropriately. His native intellect and innate knowledge – his common sense – already equipped him to self-govern his own conduct. Man's condition and destiny were thus his own to shape. Among Stewart's students, there was only one who excelled in this metaphysical understanding of human life, one who also outshone Mill at Edinburgh: John Leyden.

³⁵ Raffles, however, gave employment to Stewart's son in Java.

In eighteenth-century Scotland, the native will became a national and democratic cause for a people who found themselves as a stateless nation forced by poverty to enter into union with England. In this union had resumed an old dilemma: should the Scots languish in their human condition or should they save themselves by adopting the ways of the English? Hume had persuaded the Scots to abandon their futile self-belief and accept the learned ideals of the Enlightenment that had made England rich. But his reasonings fell on defiant ears. The reason was due to the human constitution's fragility; it was believed that ideas and ideals which were ungrounded in common sense, notably those of the Enlightenment, debased the native will and made it no longer free and its actions no longer morally true. The vulgar consciousness of the common Scot, that latent pulse of the native will which Hume despised as the nonsensical passions and prejudices of the savage of the Highlands and Borders, remained unbudged. In turn, the common Scot rejected the necessary conventions of the learned philosophers as the absurd passions and prejudices of a misconceived system of society that, by debasing the native will, degraded the native character – an outcome that rendered that system entropic or deteriorating of itself.

As a theory of knowledge, the Scottish School nativism informed a theory of language, a theory of manners, a theory of literature, and a theory of human history. A narrative of the native free will, as having been historically suppressed in the common Scot by the necessary conventions of church and nobility – i.e. the codes of religion and chivalry – had been popularised in a medieval manuscript known as *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549). Leyden was the *Complaynt's* first editor, and he subsequently applied its narrative to India, Persia, Indo-China, and the East Indies. His nativist conception of the East clashed with the high Orientalism of Sir William Jones and the *Asiatick Society* of Bengal. He criticised their claims as the product of ungrounded ideas which were

corrupting and perilous to the native Asiatic will. Marsden and Jones' theory, for example, that the Malay language was a derivative of Sanscrit, was understood by Leyden to lead to essentialising and objectifying representations of the Malay nature through the ancient gnostic learning from which Sanscrit had been constructed. This learning, the Scottish School claimed to have been inherited in modern Enlightenment idealism and the Calcutta Orientalism. It denied the native intellect and innate knowledge – or common sense – of human beings, imprisoning them instead, through its language, manners, and literature, in an entropic system of society.

Leyden's conceptualisation of the Malay Nation was thus intended to identify and emancipate the Malay will and character. Above all, it meant to recover the real native consciousness of the Malay from the false Malay nature constructed by the Calcutta Orientalists. The Malay Nation was not Leyden's only such project. Multiple reawakenings of the native consciousness throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe were expected to achieve a 'communal effort of will' as would comprise a 'commoun weil' of morally self-governing individuals. The need for government intervention would be redundant, as society would answer to man's moral instinct rather than place demands upon his nature, and be reformed in turn into a kind of positive community. This metaphysical conception of the 'nation' and 'race' in terms of an original vulgar consciousness antedates their nineteenth-century definitions as physical, material, and physiological categories. It identified an extant kindredship between the common Scots, Tamils, Malays, Berbers, and Maoris who, for still retaining their innate and original will, possessed true liberty where the civilised societies of the world did not. Their shared ethos divulges an ethical dimension of orientalism that has gone unnoticed. It reinforces Majeed's argument that Mill's criticism of Sanscritic rituals was not by itself an objectification of the Indian, but was rather aimed at the Orientalist-Sanscritic

objectification of the Indian. It also suggests that Macaulay's (whose famous uncle Leyden called 'my friend') later suppression of Sanscrit in India was intended to protect the nativism of the Indian.

Malay Commonwealth

Leyden's Malay Nation, I argue, provided Raffles with a lifeline for the venture of critique they initiated in Java. In 1817, back in England, Raffles submitted an English translation of Leyden's manuscript of the *Sajarah Malayu* to the publisher Thomas Longman, who advertised it in 1819,³⁶ and eventually published it as the *Malay Annals* in 1821.³⁷ The *Sajarah Malayu* was Leyden's means of recovering and reawakening the native consciousness among the common native people of the Malay Archipelago. Redacted and collated in Jawi (Malay script) by Leyden in July-October 1810, it chronicled their encounters initially with the native Dravidian people of Kalinga who had been mixed with the learned Indo-Europeans from the northwest, and subsequently with the learned Arabs from across the Indian Ocean. These exchanges in effect portrayed Leyden's theory of Malay origin. The cycle of rise and fall which the *Sajarah* related of the Malays, as their admixture of Sanscritic and Arabic influences determined the freedom and degradation of their native character, evoked the genre of the medieval 'Complaint'. Leyden confidently knew, from the *Complaynt of Scotland*, what a *Complaynt of Maláyu* will achieve for the Malay consciousness in the Malay Archipelago.³⁸ What was needed was a historical site whereunto anchor it.

³⁶ In a biography of Leyden by his cousin, James Morton, whom Raffles purportedly met in England in 1816. John Leyden, *The Poetical Remains of the Late Dr. John Leyden, with Memoirs of His Life*, ed. Rev. James Morton (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819).

³⁷ John Leyden, *Malay Annals: Translated from the Malay Language, by the late Dr John Leyden* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster-Row, 1821).

³⁸ Munshi Abdullah's 1849 *Hikayat Abdullah*, which referred to the period from the late 1820s to 1835, constituted a *Complaynt of Maláyu*. See chapter seven.

‘We must have a general Malay league, in which all the Rajahs must be united,’ Leyden thus instructed Raffles in March 1811 as the invasion of Java went underway, ‘and these must all be represented in a general Parliament of the Malay States’.³⁹ ‘This council should meet in the island of Madura, or some celebrated ancient place, and under the protection of the [British] Governor of Java.’ ‘You should write to all the Rajahs of the Malays,’ Leyden continued, ‘however far or wherever situated, to come in person to meet the Good Maha Rajah of Bengal [Minto]... and state in your letters that the Malay States are expressly invited to send their most ancient and sagacious men to assist at a general meeting or congress, to take into consideration all their laws, institutions, government, religion, and policy.’ On 12 December 1818, having obtained the sanction of Minto’s successor at Calcutta, Raffles sailed for the Straits of Malacca and wrote to Marsden that ‘you must not be surprised if my next letter to you is dated from the site of the ancient city of Singapura.’⁴⁰ On 31 January 1819, two days after his founding of Singapore, Raffles wrote again to Marsden: ‘Here I am at Singapore, true to my word... and in the very seat of the Malayan empire.’⁴¹ In another letter, he explained that ‘this is the spot, the site of the ancient maritime capital of the Malays, and within the walls of these fortifications, raised not less than six centuries ago’.⁴²

Thirteen years after Leyden first contrived to stir awake the native consciousness of the peoples of the Malay Archipelago, Raffles fulfilled it in Singapore. There the seeds of the Malay Nation were planted, the emancipation of the Malay will and character promised. In Singapore, the legacy of the British venture of critique was salvaged and continued. The moral and political goals which were realised in British Java merged into the moral and epistemological aspirations for the Malay Nation. From

³⁹ Leyden to Raffles, March 1811, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 25.

⁴⁰ Raffles to Marsden, 12 December 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 374.

⁴¹ Raffles to Marsden, 31 January 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 376.

⁴² Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 22 February 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 378.

the epistemological point of view, an ancient Malay capital in Singapore would provide a bulwark for the native will against the corrupting ideals that gave rise to European mercantilism and free trade. From the political point of view, a British foothold in Singapore would provide a policing presence against the ‘monopolising spirit’ of both the old moneyed interests of the Dutch colonial economy and the new British country traders plying the China route. The result of this convergence of the moral, political, and epistemological elements of the British venture of critique, was an intriguing balancing or union of the moral, political, and commercial interests in the region. It invoked, again, Stewart’s ‘Political Union’ or ‘Political Society’, as well as the order of society Burke had insisted will result from the restoration of ‘commercial principle’ and ‘equitable government’ in the ‘cause of humanity’. In Singapore were thus balanced the rejuvenated interest of the Malay Nation alongside the rising interest of British free trade and the reinstated interest of Dutch state mercantilism.

Where the Malay Nation was concerned, British Singapore achieved for the Malay Archipelago what British Java had previously achieved for Java: native independence. The individual’s independence in Java, however, was a political freedom built upon property by decree of government. As such it lacked impulse and instinct, and rather constituted the authority of a grant which faded away when its British legislator was forced to give up the island. In Singapore, no government decree and supervision was necessary to maintain the individual’s independence, because it sprang from the native consciousness and native will of the individual himself. The native consciousness among the peoples and kingdoms in the Malay Archipelago led them to act, commune, and exchange with each other. This active communing and exchange in turn distinguished a *commonwealth*. Indeed, a change was discernible in the shared cultural nature of disparate kingdoms and peoples of the East Indies which had long

informed the Dutch imagination of the Malay world. From the 1810s onwards, the people and kingdoms in Sumatra, Borneo, and the Malay Peninsula, began to identify with the sense of existence in a Malay world.⁴³

The Malay Commonwealth, manifesting as nothing more tangible than the active communing and exchanges between a people moved by their instinct or intuition, is an unrecorded event. The British reformer-critic's role in its conceptualisation rather reduced it, as it reduced the Scottish and Maori nations, to but one kindred Malay Nation within the larger 'oceanic and global' commonwealth given the appellation of 'British'. This circumstance bore out Leyden's dictum that 'the Malays must neither be independent nor get very dependent'.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Raffles's political missions and expeditions to Palembang, Padang, Aceh, Riau, Tappanuli, and Nias between 1818 and 1822 – which resumed similar engagements with Bali, Pontianak, Sambas, Banjarmasin, Siak, Jambi, Palembang, Kedah, and Perak from 1810 to 1814 – played out the constructing of Leyden's Malay League. They explain the unusual anger of the returned Dutch imperialists who, having only just repossessed Java in 1816 after having lost it in 1811 to outrageous British aspirations for native independence, now found themselves confronted by a native consciousness being fanned across the region by Raffles from Singapore,⁴⁵ his 'headquarters at the centre of my Malayan friends'.⁴⁶

⁴³ Perhaps best described by Clive Kessler as the 'idiom whereby people may shape and express their own experience of themselves both as the products and the producers of their society's history'. Clive Kessler, *Islam and Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan 1838-1969* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 244. For a formative discussion on the Malay consciousness, see Anthony Milner, *The Malays* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); and Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Leyden to Raffles, March 1811, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 25.

⁴⁵ It is an event that curiously anticipates the Japanese intervention in Southeast Asia between 1942 and 1945.

⁴⁶ Raffles to Peter Auber, 11 October, 1822, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 524. As mentioned above, Raffles's initial choice for the Malay capital was Banca. Banca was, however, stipulated in the cession of Java under the 1814 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. On his return to the East Indies in 1818, Raffles set his eyes on Billiton, through patronage to the Sultan of Palembang. But the Dutch pre-empted his move. See Raffles to Robert Inglis, 12 June 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 384-401. For Raffles's own account of this affair, see his 'Protest of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' in *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1819, Vol. 61* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1820), 216-232.

‘With this single station I would undertake to counteract all the plans of Mynheer,’ Raffles said; ‘it breaks the spell; and they are no longer the exclusive sovereigns of the Eastern Seas.’⁴⁷

This collision between the British and Dutch in Singapore has been recognised in the history as a conflict between British free trade and Dutch mercantilism. But theoretically, there was never any conflict between Holland’s colonial trade from the East Indies and Britain’s country trade that passed through the East Indies to China: the interests of both trades never crossed. Holland’s colonial trade, on the other hand, was naturally opposed to the Malay Commonwealth. Moreover, Holland’s colonial trade and Britain’s country trade also clashed with an Anglo-Indian ‘free trade’ that was drawn to the ‘Malay’ market that was the Malay Commonwealth. These conflicts described the contest that took place after 1819 over a strategic question arising from Raffles’s act of occupying Singapore: was the island to be the capital of a Malay Commonwealth, or was it to be the entrepôt for the British country trader?⁴⁸ In the event, Singapore was to be both. In 1824, the British Government ratified the island as a British free port to the satisfaction of the Dutch under their Anglo-Dutch Treaty. Nevertheless, already in 1819, Singapore proved to be a magnet for the ‘Malay’ trade from across the Malay Archipelago. By 1822, it had become ‘a large and prosperous town, containing at least 10,000 inhabitants of all nations’.⁴⁹

Historically, these conflicts disclosed three British dimensions of ‘empire’ that emerged in the wake of the British hiatus in an East Indies otherwise dominated by three centuries of Dutch colonial empire. These dimensions soon determined the

⁴⁷ Raffles to Peter Auber, 19 February 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 377.

⁴⁸ This contest also manifested in the rival claim by William Farquhar that he, and not Raffles, was the true founder of Singapore as a free trade entrepôt. See Nadia H. Wright, *William Farquhar and Singapore: Stepping Out from Raffles’ Shadow* (Penang: Entrepot Publishing, 2017).

⁴⁹ Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 30 November 1822, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 525.

dynamic of empire and later of nationalism in the region. The competition involving British and Anglo-Indian free trade would go on to etch out a vast liberal system of imperial preference on a foundation that has historically been attributed to British capital and the Royal Navy. Yet neither capital nor the navy could have played so determining and efficacious a role before the 1840s, when the Opium war and the repeal of the Corn Laws propelled their fortunes. Even so, their fortunes also ebbed over the next century as often as they rose. As common sense will tell us, a system of free trade so enduring and of so vast an extent must necessarily rely on the free and active communing and exchanges between peoples across its entire network. In the East Indies, this basic agency of free trade stemmed from the free will of a Malay Commonwealth centred in Singapore. Singapore was ‘a free port in every sense of the word,’ Raffles told Marsden in 1822, vindicating Leyden; ‘the active spirit of enterprize which prevails among all classes [of people] is truly astonishing’.⁵⁰

This thesis argues that what the British were really doing in the East Indies between 1811 and 1819, had, through the actions of Minto, Raffles, and Leyden, amounted to an humanitarian intervention followed by a programme of political reform. As described above, Minto, Raffles, and Leyden’s actions may be appropriately termed as a *venture of critique*. What made this venture intelligible was its context of criticism, and it has been the object of my research to examine this context in order to determine what it was that our three historical actors were criticising and why they acted as they did. Accordingly, the following chapters are structured to ask, (1) what Raffles, Minto, and Leyden had each conceived to be the condition of the East Indies prior to 1811, and (2) how they each conceived their actions would change (and had changed) that condition.

⁵⁰ Raffles to Marsden, 30 November 1822, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 526.

Raffles, Minto, and Leyden's conceptions of the condition from before 1811 are dealt with in chapters two, three, and six respectively. Chapters four, five, and seven deal with their conceptions of changing that condition.

Minto, Raffles, and Leyden's conceptions are ascertained from their primary source texts. Their writings demonstrate certain 'modes of speech' or 'modes of language' that distinguish how they had conceived of the East Indies, i.e. their conceptual frameworks. As we will see, there were three conceptual frameworks: that of political economy, civic humanism, and common sense. It is found that, through these frameworks, Minto, Raffles, and Leyden's texts had reiterated a critique of British commercial society which had developed from the political, moral, and intellectual discourse of eighteenth-century Britain. By comparing their writings with the writings of British theorists on the subject, it has been possible to determine exactly how they conceived commerce to have grievously affected native and colonial societies in the East Indies.

A brief comment may be necessary on this methodology which focuses on the context of the text, termed the 'discursive context',⁵¹ to discover what the writer is doing. It is new to a historiography that has otherwise relied solely on the 'authorial intention' of the historical writer and the authority of ideas which he discusses,⁵² such as Adam Smith's economic liberalism. The authority of Adam Smith has particularly led to contradictions that have troubled the history of empire in the East Indies. Raffles,

⁵¹ See J.G.A. Pocock, 'Introduction: The state of the art', *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-34.

⁵² The difference was framed by the historian John Pocock, who asked 'whether intentions can exist before being articulated in a text,' and 'whether they can be said to exist apart from the language in which the text is to be constructed.' Pocock believed they cannot, while his colleague, Quentin Skinner, believed they can. Their divergence epitomises the two historical approaches. See J.G.A. Pocock, 'Quentin Skinner: the history of politics and the politics of history', *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123-144. Also Quentin Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', *New Literary History* Vol. 3, No. 2, On Interpretation: I (Winter, 1972), 393-408; and Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', *History and Theory* 8 (1) (1969), 3-53.

for example, had criticised mercantilism and supported free trade, but the historiography that consequently classified him as a liberal never knew what to make of his criticism of free trade and his support for monopolies. In fact, these contradictions describe the historian's problems of interpretation and circularity rather than any inconsistency on the part of Raffles. They are, as such, resolvable in the context of the criticism of commercial society. As mentioned, both mercantilism and free trade were seen by Raffles in this context to have brought 'liberty and empire' as well as the 'demise and suicide' of empire.⁵³

Chapter one begins with the founding of Singapore in 1819. It is demonstrated that the event had really consisted of two separate developments. The first was Raffles's establishment of the settlement in 1819 as the capital of a Malay Commonwealth. The second was William Huskisson's endorsement of the settlement in 1821 as an entrepôt for Britain's country trade to China, and its ratification in the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty as the cornerstone of a revitalised British empire of trade. These separate developments are shown to indicate two different contexts: Huskisson's envisioning of imperial free trade on the authority of Adam Smith, and Raffles's conceptualisation of a Malay Commonwealth from a civic and moral duty of protecting the interests of the native population from the interests of British commerce. Both contexts together give an entirely different account of the event of Singapore's founding from the one conventionally told in the history.

Raffles's civic and moral approach to people and commerce is consequently identified in chapter two in terms of a civic humanist critique of political economy. This critique is observed in Raffles's 1817 *History of Java*, and is traced to his criticism of

⁵³ Whereby '*libertas* had conquered an *imperium* greater than it could maintain, and the institutions of the latter had replaced those of the former.' J.G.A. Pocock, 'Rome: the republic as ideal and as history', in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

debt slavery in the East Indies in his writings from 1808 onwards. Chapter three in turn identifies Minto's conception of the East Indies as being in a state of disorder and traces it to his criticism of the Company's subsidy system in India during Edmund Burke's tabling of the 1783 India Bill. It is shown in both chapters that both Minto and Raffles's criticisms expressed a civic humanist anxiety toward the corruption and decline of Britain and Holland's old commercial empires in Asia. But where Raffles located the cause in the yoke of debt to which commerce had bound the native people of Java, Minto pointed to the source of the debt itself, which was the moneyed interest. It was to free Java from the moneyed interest, it is argued in chapter three, that Minto invaded and occupied the island in 1811.

Chapter four describes Minto's conceptualisation of the new British Java that would emerge from his invasion. It is explained that, by devaluing the island's paper currency, Minto actually eradicated the public debt and eliminated the moneyed interest. In the long term, he had hoped that this would restore the order of things and return a security of property and person to both native and colonial societies. Chapter five describes Raffles's subsequent actions in 1812-14, which were to bulldoze through a radical demonetising policy and an agrarian legislation that he believed would not only free the native individual politically, but make him economically independent of the Dutch colonist.

Chapter six discusses Leyden's criticism of the commercial colony and his conceptualisation of the colony as a free positive community. Leyden's views identify an intellectual realism and nativism that is traced to the Scottish School of the Philosophy of Common Sense. In chapter seven, it is explained why the Scottish nativism had opposed the Enlightenment idealism that influenced the classical Orientalism of the *Asiatick Society* of Bengal, and how this led Leyden to conceptualise

an orient that was not subject to the representations of the Orientalists but in which the native consciousness was sovereign and autonomous. Leyden achieved this through his works on language and literature. It is argued that they reawakened a sense of native consciousness within the communities of India and the East Indies, including, in particular, a sense of Malay consciousness in a Malay Archipelago.

Chapter eight explains how Singapore's founding in 1819 is connected to Java's invasion: as the means of salvaging the venture of critique upon Britain's restitution of Java to Holland in 1816. Raffles's ingenuity in recognising that the native self-dependence that his political reform had brought about in British Java could be sustained in the epistemological form of native self-consciousness was based upon Leyden's earlier conception of a Malay Commonwealth encompassing the Malay Archipelago. Raffles's labours in 1818-1823 were focused toward this end, and I show how a profound awareness of both Singapore's history and its geostrategic location had already in 1816-17 led Raffles to secretly designate the island as the Malay capital of the Malay Commonwealth. The narrative of Singapore's founding in this context is related in the last part of this chapter.

The intellectual contexts behind Raffles's, Minto's, and Leyden's actions and policies – elucidated in the above eight chapters – turn the existing interpretation of those policies and actions on its head. Together, they depict an historical moment that departed from both British and Dutch narratives of eighteenth-century commercial empire. Yet this moment also represented a restoration of, and continuity with, an antecedent narrative of political and humanist empire that harked back to the attempt at modern statehood during the Cromwellian Commonwealth. An account of the British venture of critique as essentially a republican project, and a history of this project, is given in the Conclusion. It explains how, by reconciling the natural law to the common

law, the British reformer-critic solved (or tried to solve) the moral and philosophical crises of the eighteenth-century empire and laid the foundations for a British commonwealth of nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter One

The Ideological Origins of the Founding of Singapore¹

The founding of Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles on 29 January 1819 is a cornerstone of modern British and Southeast Asian history. As an historical event it signified the establishment of the first international free trade port in Asia.² Global British history looks back at this symbolic moment as one ‘of immense strategic importance to the developing empire of trade which was already becoming the envy of the nineteenth century world.’³ This strategy of international free trade has had a lasting legacy, and is deeply etched in Singapore’s national identity. A compendium by Singapore’s academy, to mark the occasion of Singapore’s fiftieth anniversary of national independence, claimed that in founding Singapore, Sir Stamford Raffles had ‘initiated an economic

¹ An early version of this chapter is published in Gareth Knapman, Mary Quilty, and Anthony Milner, eds. *Liberalism and the British Empire in Southeast Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

² Although Sir Francis Light had purportedly declared Penang (or Prince of Wales’ Island) to be a free port after he acquired the island in 1786, this proposal was not ratified by the East India Company. It in fact remained a proposal in 1799: see Sir Home Popham, *A Description of Prince of Wales Island, in the Streights of Malacca: with its Real and Probable Advantages and Resources to recommend it as a Marine Establishment* (G. Cawthorn, 1799). A detailed account of Penang’s farm revenues and import/export duties, including how they date back to 1789, is given in Sir George Leith, *A short account of the settlement, produce, and commerce, of Prince of Wales Island in the Straits of Malacca* (London: J. Booth, 1805). Penang, especially when it became a Presidency in 1805, had in fact represented the easternmost limit of the Company’s restricted zone. A US diplomatic manual from 1834, for example, explains that not until the British-American peace of 1815 did ‘clauses give to the vessels of the United States the right of trading with the principal British settlements in the East Indies; viz. Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Prince of Wales’ Island’. Jonathan Elliot, *The American Diplomatic Code, embracing a collection of Treaties and Conventions between the United States and Foreign Powers, from 1778 to 1834* Volume II (Washington: Jonathan Elliot, 1834), 575. This restriction had also applied to private British vessels until 1813, when the India Charter Act deregulated the India sector, at which time it was Malacca that represented the easternmost limit.

³ Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-1870* (England: Longman Pearson, 3rd ed., 2001), 113.

change, that of laying the framework for free trade... in contrast to the taxed trade practiced by neighboring ports which followed mercantilist philosophy.⁴

While there is no doubt that free trade has defined Singapore's colonial and national histories, it is not certain that Raffles had indeed established Singapore specifically for free trade. Soon after the event, Raffles derided free trade for its 'speculations'⁵ and 'indulgences'.⁶ This critical stance toward free trade was not transitory. It was consistent with a long-held distrust of what Raffles had, as early as 1811, impugned to be the 'commercial adventure' and 'interference' of 'individuals', which were 'injurious' and 'by no means scrupulous'.⁷ Because he rebuked the individual, rather than the state, for interfering in the market, Raffles's criticism of the free trader appeared to demonstrate a mercantilist bias.⁸ It is true that he had opposed a general deregulation of trade.⁹ In Java, Raffles imputed free trade to Franco-Dutch policy and brought monopolies under the protection of the East India Company.¹⁰ Yet,

⁴ Linda Y.C. Lim, ed., *Singapore's Economic Development: Retrospection and Reflections* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2016), 19.

⁵ Stamford Raffles, 'On the Administration of the Eastern Islands in 1819,' in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, F.R.S. etc: particularly in the Government of Java, 1811-1816, and of Bencoolen and its Dependencies, 1817-1824; with details of the Commerce and Resources of the Eastern Archipelago, and Selections from his Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1830), Appendix, 16.

⁶ Raffles to Peter Auber, 6 December 1821, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 503.

⁷ Raffles to Minto (Raffles's 'Malay policy' paper), 10 June 1811, revised 20 September 1811, *British Library*, 'Raffles-Minto Papers', MSS Eur F148/7.

⁸ If 'the government of Java will be assumed by the Crown... it is probable that a free trade will follow... The trade between Europe, India and Batavia, and between Batavia and China, will fall into the hands of individuals, against whose interference restrictions would be in vain.' Raffles to William Ramsay, 8 January 1813, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 185.

⁹ Mary Quilty suggested that Raffles had favoured 'the East India Company to regulate the archipelago, rather than condemn them.' Mary Quilty, *British Economic Thought and Colonization in Southeast Asia, 1776-1850* (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2001), 93.

¹⁰ With respect to the Dutch, he described their 'desire to open a free Trade' (Raffles to Minto, 8 February 1811, MSS Eur F148/5), and their 'contemplation to make Malacca a free Port' (Raffles to Minto, 31 October 1809, MSS Eur F148/3). Where the Company was concerned, he envisioned 'such an Empire of Colonies, that must encourage New principles of Commerce and in many cases dictate Monopoly.' (Raffles to Minto, 6 February 1811, MSS Eur F148/5). One particular case was 'Tin, which article also appears to... recommend it to attention as a Monopoly.' (Raffles to Minto, 10 February 1811, MSS Eur F148/4). Raffles believed 'We would also be put in possession without further trouble of the grand monopoly of the tin trade.' (Raffles to Minto (Raffles's 'Malay policy' paper), 10 June 1811, revised 20 September 1811, MSS Eur F148/7). Another case was opium: 'Having possession of Java, and the Settlements commanding the whole Eastern Archipelago, facility & immense advantage naturally suggest Monopoly.' (ibid.) Earlier still, in 1809, Raffles already suggested of opium that 'it might have been of

nothing is as it seems. For Raffles had simultaneously and repeatedly imputed monopoly to the Dutch and credited the East India Company with freeing trade.¹¹ The fifth ‘principle’ of his land rent regulation of 1813 declared, far ahead of its time, ‘to extend free trade and commerce, and to promote a spirit of enterprise and speculation amongst the inhabitants’.¹²

The paradox of Raffles’s simultaneous conceptions of liberty and authority is a long-standing problem of Raffles’s texts.¹³ It defeats every attempt to place him within either side of the dichotomy between free trade and mercantilism. Clearly, the political economy which frames this dichotomy does not apprehend the significance and meaning of Raffles’s language. This begets the question of what, then, does? In what context does Raffles’s speech and actions become intelligible? Moreover, how might such a context explain Singapore’s founding, and how would it relate to the historiographical claim in favour of free trade? I attempt to answer these questions by examining the three objectives that Raffles had foreseen for Singapore, which he formally delineated in the following passage:

It was of primary importance to obtain a port which should have a commanding geographical position at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca, which should be in the track of our China and country trade, which should be capable of affording them protection and of supplying their wants, which should possess capabilities of defence by a moderate force, which might give us the means of supporting and defending our commercial intercourse with the Malay states, and

the greatest advantage for the Company... to have held the monopoly of it themselves.’ (Raffles to Minto, 31 October 1809, MSS Eur F148/3).

¹¹ For example, he proposed ‘the reestablishment of a free Trade and cancelling the oppressive Contracts that the Dutch have enforced,’ and to assure the native rulers ‘on the part of the English that not only the Dutch Contracts will be annulled but a free Trade established.’ (Raffles to Minto, October 1810, MSS Eur F148/8).

¹² New Revenue System, 15 October 1813, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 217.

¹³ It is encapsulated in a sentence he wrote in a letter: ‘In Java I advocated the doctrine of the liberty of the subject, and the individual rights of man – here [in Sumatra] I am the advocate for despotism.’ Raffles to Thomas Murdoch, 22 July 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 463.

which, by its contiguity to the seat of Dutch power, might enable us to watch the march of its policy, and when necessary to counteract its influence.¹⁴

These objectives, which have since been generalised in the historiography as (1) naval security, (2) the Malay trade, (3) the China trade, are examined here against the propositions and objections expressed by both the Company and free trader during the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Trade, conducted in London in 1820-23. Unravelling these causal inferences on the part of both Company and free trader allows us to identify the contextual dichotomies operating at that moment, and to place Raffles accordingly. It will be shown that Singapore's founding was underpinned by two consecutive but ideologically-disparate events. The first is the island's occupation by Raffles in 1819; the other is its endorsement in 1821 as a British establishment by the free trader, William Huskisson. Only the second event constituted the idealisation of the nineteenth-century creed of *liberalism*. It supplied the basis of a political-economic interpretation of Raffles's three objectives which subsequently framed the narrative of geographical strategy in Singapore's history. The first event, on the other hand, Raffles's actual deed, represented the restitution of an eighteenth-century conception of a moral and institutional order of society.

Historiography of Raffles's Three Objectives

Interpreting Raffles's three objectives for Singapore as having secured for Britain an empire of trade originated with his widow, Sophia Raffles. In her 1830 *Memoir of Raffles*, she quotes Raffles's passage above and then stipulated how,

¹⁴ Stamford Raffles, *Statement of the Services of Sir Stamford Raffles* (London: Cox and Baylis, 3 November 1824), 54. Raffles's three objectives already occur in his 1817 report, *On British Interests in the Eastern Archipelago*.

the occupation of this station proved to the varied and enterprising population of the Archipelago, that the power and commerce of the British nation had not entirely sunk under the encroachments of the Dutch; and it also proved a determination to make a stand against them, and to maintain the right of free commerce with the Malay states.¹⁵

This demonstration of the ‘power and commerce of the British nation’ consequently inaugurated a narrative of freedom and empire for a Britain emerging from a Pyrrhic victory over Napoleonic France and grappling with financial and humanitarian crisis in India. To Raffles was attached the imperial mythos that the British individual, although denied the authority of retreating imperial dominion in the East, could always count on liberty to turn his country’s fortunes around. Sophia Raffles’s narrative lasted well over a century, until Indian independence in 1947 and the 1956 Suez crisis made it redundant. But to the historian in the 1950s, the crisis of empire facing a Britain emerging from a Pyrrhic victory over Nazi Germany cannot fail to have resonated with the crisis of empire that had confronted Raffles. What we find is Sophia Raffles’s narrative of freedom and empire being reconceived, more than 120 years later, by, among others, Charles Wurtzburg¹⁶ and D.G.E. Hall, as a narrative of freedom. Although denied the authority of retreating imperial dominion in the East, the British individual could still always count on liberty to turn his own fortunes around.

As with Sophia Raffles, Hall’s narrative was based on a fundamental point, which was that Raffles had founded Singapore on 29 January 1819 to establish a free port for free trade. The rationale had proceeded from Raffles’s three objectives. In his 1955 account of the ‘Background to Singapore’,¹⁷ Hall drew on an inevitable ‘commercial revolution which occurred in the Indian Ocean in the mid-eighteenth

¹⁵ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 375.

¹⁶ Charles E. Wurtzburg, *Raffles of the Eastern Isles* (1954), ed. Clifford Witting (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁷ D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (1955) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 4th ed., 1995), 530.

century’, and which had set the stage for the spirited entry into the narrative of the British agents of free trade, called the Country (or Private) Traders. ‘The revolution was the work of British private captains and merchants, who,’ Hall claimed, ‘gained control over her ‘country’ trade and played a vital part in developing her commercial relations with China.’ To their expansion of Britain’s trade with China, Hall had credited the plugging of the deficit in the balance of payments which had been run up by the British East India Company. But in order to facilitate their agency, it was necessary ‘for the British to have a naval station on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal’ from which could gush forth the country traders. There was ‘the clear need in the second half of the eighteenth century,’ Hall thus reasoned, ‘for a harbour which would combine the advantages of a repair station with those of a trading centre for the Malay Archipelago, and at the same time would lie on a main sea route to China.’¹⁸ In meeting these three trade objectives, only Singapore succeeded where Penang and Balambangan had failed.

Hall’s harbour was pivotal for streamlining into one metanarrative three progressive epochs of British commerce: the liberalising trade of the eighteenth century, imperial trade of the nineteenth century, and national trade in the twentieth century. At the turn of each epoch, continuity was provided by Singapore’s symbolic stature as a free port for free trade. The classical theme of liberty conquering an empire, or *libertas et imperium*, which this grand history invoked, also satisfied the necessity in Hall’s own era of national trade.¹⁹ Interestingly, an influential paper by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson which appeared in 1953 had described free trade as an economic manifestation of imperial power. It had the effect of aligning and justifying the continuity between Britain’s imperial preference of the past with Britain’s national trade

¹⁸ Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, 533

¹⁹ See David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).

of the future.²⁰ As with Hall's 'commercial revolution', these events were anchored in Singapore's free port. Indeed, Singapore's free port would soon directly substantiate the 'authoritarian capitalism' of the independent republic itself.²¹

Hall's restatement of Raffles's three objectives as facilitating a historical British free trade was instantly influential. To be sure, the association between Raffles's act of occupying Singapore and the motive of free trade had never actually been decisively proven. However, in 1959, Harry J. Marks established a causal link in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 17 March 1824.²² The Treaty had stipulated three aims: (1) 'the recognition of the principles of free trade,' (2) 'the acquisition of Singapore,' [sic] and (3) 'the ridding the Dutch of their possessions on the continent of India'.²³ Together they realised the 'value of the English station' at 'the gateways to the South China Sea, to China and its trade'. The Treaty's unquestionable agenda of British free trade for Singapore, so strikingly made in three parts, was seen to bear out the fulfilment of Raffles's three trade objectives. Hence was linked Raffles's strategic act of occupying Singapore to the motive of free trade.²⁴ Accordingly, he was cast by Marks as 'a practising free-trade economist'. This personality of 'economist' was subsequently elaborated by Mary

²⁰ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6 (1953) 1-13. See also Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850* (1970) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). In 1962, as if taking his cue from Hall, Eric Hobsbawm also asserted how 'the British were content to occupy points crucial to the naval control of the world and to their world-wide trading interests, such as... Singapore'. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1996), 107.

²¹ See Garry Rodan, *The Political Economy of Singapore's Industrialization: National State and International Capital* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989)

²² Harry J. Marks, *The First Contest for Singapore, 1819-1824*, Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde, Vol. XXVII (S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959).

²³ *Ibid.*, 13. Dutch 'possessions on the continent of India' referred to the Dutch colonies which were occupied in war by Britain between 1795 and 1803, but returned to the Netherlands in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814, an event that caused much resentment in Raffles.

²⁴ 'The particular resolution of the difficulties which was adopted, whereby Great Britain acquired Singapore, took its origin in the impetuous action of Raffles.' Marks, *First Contest*, 251.

Turnbull when she claimed that Raffles had ‘established in Singapore a free port following the principles of Adam Smith and *laissez-faire*’.²⁵

Curiously, the postcolonial historian never seemed to have questioned just how huge an antinomian leap he or she had taken, backwards, from the Anglo-Dutch Treaty to Raffles’s objectives, a leap which rendered the outcome of free trade so incredibly foreknown, and Raffles’s actions so impossibly providential. Instead, causality was assigned to Singapore’s geographical location. Turnbull ordained that ‘Singapore was conveniently placed as a centre for trade with the eastern archipelago and only a few miles from the main sea route through the Straits [of Malacca] to China.’²⁶ Raffles had simply spotted Singapore’s geographical potential where nobody else had the time, and ascribed his three objectives to realise it. For Turnbull, this potential was historical, and portrayed Singapore’s mythical past long before its founding by Raffles, indeed long before the interests of the country trader.²⁷ ‘From time immemorial,’ she decreed, ‘the seas and islands at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula were a magnet for commerce, in the heart of a region rich in natural resources, astride the busy sea route that linked the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Indonesian archipelago.’²⁸

But a free port does not predicate free trade. As true a fact of nature that Singapore’s strategic location may be, its continued basis in Raffles’s three objectives made any attribution to it of free trade a historiographical and not a natural circumstance. Turnbull had simply extrapolated the historical interpretation of Raffles’s three objectives into Singapore’s hazy past. The consequence has been the cementing of free trade in Singapore’s historical identity. Ironically, this has diminished the role of

²⁵ C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore: 1819-2005* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 50.

²⁶ C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore: 1819-2005* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 29.

²⁷ See Nicholas Tarling, ed., *Studying Singapore’s Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012).

²⁸ Turnbull, *History of Modern Singapore*, 24.

the actor who effected free trade, as the causal inference shifted toward the universal ideal of liberty.²⁹ No longer was free trade contrived.³⁰ Rather, it was seen to be a ‘teleological’³¹ necessity, with Raffles merely an incidental agent appointed in the tide of history to rediscover at Singapore’s ‘strategic location at the crossroads of trading networks’ its historical ‘political stability’ and the ‘balance of power’ among the ‘sovereign Asian princes’ which this stability afforded.³² In the *longue durée* resulting from the postcolonial reworking of Sophia Raffles’s narrative of liberty and empire, Raffles’s three objectives for Singapore as a free port for free trade seemed to have become appropriated as three eternal factors of Singapore’s strategic geographical location. Where they had bridged Hall’s three historical epochs, they now perpetuated Turnbull’s ancient commerce as modern commerce, and consequently cast ‘Singapore’s 700-year experiences... as a coherent, continuous narrative’ of historical globalization.³³

This narrative, however, is still vulnerable to the same prolepsis arising from Hall and Turnbull’s confusing of the effect of free trade for the cause. For it turns out that the Anglo-Dutch Treaty’s three objectives for Singapore did not necessarily correspond to Raffles’s three objectives for Singapore. If we return to Raffles’s passage above, we find that Sophia Raffles had, in her *Memoir*, altered her husband’s subsequent explanatory paragraph to one which explained his three objectives in terms of proving to the ‘varied and enterprising population of the Archipelago’ the ‘power and

²⁹ It was no longer argued that Singapore’s ‘fortunes lie in its predisposition as the confluence point of regional and international networks traversing east and west,’ and therefore Singapore could ‘actively adapt itself to changes in the external environment’; but rather that ‘the state of its existence... and even the very spatial form that it takes... have largely been predetermined by the external circumstances’. Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, and Tan Tai Yong, *Singapore, A 700-Year History: from Early Emporium to World City* (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore, 2009), 215.

³⁰ See Karl Hack’s essay, ‘Framing Singapore’s History,’ in Tarling, *Studying Singapore’s Past*, 17-64.

³¹ Kwa Chong Guan et al, *Singapore*, 215.

³² See Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), and Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

³³ Kwa Chong Guan et al, *Singapore*, 215.

commerce of the British nation' vis-à-vis the 'encroachments of the Dutch'. Raffles said no such thing. He claimed that his three objectives were intended to evince to the 'varied and enterprising population of these islands', Britain's 'commercial and political views' vis-à-vis the 'vaunted power and encroachment of the Dutch'. Sophia Raffles's substituting of Raffles's 'views' with British 'power' is nuanced, but it differentiates Raffles's interest in Singapore from the Anglo-Dutch Treaty. The latter was a demonstration of the power of British free trade, of *libertas et imperium*. In 1819, however, Raffles's weapon was intellectual and ideological, and the might of 'power' he had instead imputed to the Dutch:

This measure [of three objectives] was in some degree necessary, to evince to the varied and enterprising population of these islands, that our commercial and political views in this quarter had not entirely sunk under the vaunted power and encroachment of the Dutch, and to prove to them that we were determined to make a stand against it. By maintaining our right to a free commerce with the Malay States, and inspiring them with a confidence in the stability of it, we were justified in contemplating its advancement to a much greater extent than had hitherto been enjoyed.³⁴

Committee on Foreign Trade

The central event between Raffles's occupation of Singapore and the Anglo-Dutch Treaty was the Select Committee on Foreign Trade, conducted at both Houses of Parliament at Westminster between 1820 and 1823. The inquiry into the trade of China and the East Indies was concluded in 1821. The resulting Report of the Committee which sat at the House of Lords recommended the 'Maintenance of a Free Port eligibly situated amongst the Indian Islands under British Protection'. It stated that 'the Importance of such a Station... may be estimated by the rapid Rise of the Port of Singapore [sic] during the Year that it has been in the Possession of the British

³⁴ Raffles, *Statement*, 55.

Government, and opened for the Purposes of general Trade.’³⁵ The Report of the Committee which sat at the House of Commons concluded similarly. It proposed ‘the occupation of a convenient port, to be administered by an officer of the Crown;’ but added ‘the establishment of a British consulate in Java... and such arrangements with the Netherland government, as may ensure to British subjects an access, upon equal or fair terms, to the possessions of that government, and an unrestricted intercourse with independent native states.’³⁶

We are misled, however, in assuming that the Select Committee’s proposal for a free port in Singapore was the predetermined consequence of a consensus for free trade. The Committee had in fact opened up a debate on British trade which uncovered a varied cast of actors with diverging interests and ideas. The debate, nonetheless, initially involved the country’s main commercial rivals: the free trade of the British country trader, and the regulated trade of the British East India Company. Between June 1820 and May 1821, some thirty eight commercial personalities were interviewed as to their views regarding the trade of China and the Eastern Islands. At issue was not the deregulation *per se* of the Company’s British monopoly on China tea – though that was already on the agenda since 1812 and would come into effect in 1833 – but whether the China and eastern trade was a viable undertaking for the country trader at Europe’s markets.

The question of deregulation and the singular focus on China signified a particularly passionate cause for the country traders’ political lobbyists and patrons in

³⁵ House of Lords, *Report, relative to the Trade with the East Indies and China, from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to enquire into the Means of Extending and Securing the Foreign Trade of the Country, and to report to the House; together with the Minutes of Evidence taken in Sessions 1820 and 1821 before the said Committee* (11 April 1821) (London: House of Lords, reprinted 5th June 1829), 5.

³⁶ House of Commons, *Third Report from the Select Committee appointed to consider the Means of Improving and Maintaining the Foreign Trade of the Country: East Indies and China*, Vol. 3 (London: House of Commons, 10th July 1821), 207.

Britain, the Free Trader faction, who had come to strongly influence parliament and government after the Napoleonic wars. By 1818, the top three positions at the Board of Trade were occupied by the leading luminaries of British free trade: Frederick Robinson (President of the Board, becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1823), Thomas Wallace (Vice-President of the Board), and the foremost ideologue among them, William Huskisson (Member the Board, becoming President in 1823).³⁷ All three presided over the Select Committee at the House of Commons, but it was largely through Huskisson's efforts that the parliamentary committee was formed. In Huskisson, wrote Alexander Brady, Adam Smith 'had no disciple more true to his doctrines in the sphere of statesmanship'.³⁸ Huskisson's utterances paraphrased Smith, and they signified the first time that the ideas from Smith's ground-breaking book, *The Wealth of Nations*, were formulated into government policy.

Like Smith, Huskisson did not have an absolute conception of free trade. He was a free trade imperialist rather than a free trade idealist. He saw the selective liberalisation of trade to advance the wealth of the colonies as well as attract the trade of other nations. To Huskisson, Brady attributed not Britain's nineteenth-century creed of *liberalism* inherent in the 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws,³⁹ but the *liberal reform* which led to liberalism. Through a series of deregulating Acts for shipping and duties that was concurrent with the period from Singapore's founding in 1819 to the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in 1824, Huskisson (with Robinson and Wallace) radically dismantled the

³⁷ See Stephen M. Lee, *George Canning and Liberal Toryism, 1801-1827*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History (UK: Boydell Press, 2008).

³⁸ Alexander Brady, *William Huskisson and Liberal Reform* (1967, 2nd ed.) (London: Routledge, 2014), 168.

³⁹ The Corn Laws referred to a period of British protectionism over domestic grain production, which became notorious as the cause of economic inflation and depreciation. The period is framed by the Importation Act of 1815 (55 Geo. III c. 26) and its repeal act, the Importation Act of 1846 (9 & 10 Vict. C. 22).

revered foundations of a two century-old commercial system.⁴⁰ ‘It was high time,’ he declared in June 1823, ‘to establish more liberal principles, and to show that commerce was not the end but the means of diffusing comfort and enjoyment among the nations embarked in its pursuit.’⁴¹

Set against these changes, was the unbending resistance of the East India Company. Most noticeably set against the free traders was Charles Grant, the former three-time Company chairman whom Peter J. Marshall described as ‘the Company’s great champion’.⁴² Grant himself had claimed it was his duty to defend ‘that species of exclusive privilege, called the East India Company’s monopoly’.⁴³ During an earlier inquiry in 1810-12, on the renewal of the Company’s India Charter by a Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company,⁴⁴ Grant had authored and argued the Company’s case to retain its privileges.⁴⁵ During the Select Committee on Foreign Trade in 1820-21, he attended five interviews (by far the most of anyone appearing before the Committee) to discourage the country trader from entering the China, Indo-China, and East India markets.

There was no love lost between Grant and the free traders. Interestingly, instead of responding to their arguments in their language of political economy, Grant seemed exasperated by its logic. Huskisson, taking a leaf out of *Wealth of Nations*, had zealously expressed his belief in ‘unrestrained competition not only between capital and

⁴⁰ Notably the historic series of repeal acts under 1 & 2 Geo. IV (1821) c. 37 (Customs Act), c. 65 (East India, etc., Trade Act); 3 Geo. IV (1822) c. 41, 42 (Repeal of Acts Concerning Importation Act), c. 43 (Navigation and Commerce Act), c. 44, 45 (Trade Act); 4 Geo. IV (1823) c. 24 (Warehousing of Goods Act), c. 77 (Importation, etc. in Foreign Vessels Act, also known as the Reciprocity Duties Bill), c. 80 (Lascars Act).

⁴¹ William Huskisson, *The Speeches of the Right Honourable William Huskisson, with a Biographical Memoir* (London: John Murray, Vol. 2, 1831), 205.

⁴² P.J. Marshall, *Problems of Empire: Britain and India, 1757-1813*, Vol. II of *The East India Company: 1600-1858*, ed. Patrick Tuck (1968) (London: Routledge, 2001), 93.

⁴³ Charles Grant, ‘A Report of a Committee of Correspondence of the Court of Directors, 9 February, 1813’, in Marshall, *Problems of Empire*, Appendix, 225.

⁴⁴ Officially, the ‘Select Committee appointed to enquire into the present State of the Affairs of The East India Company,’ from which five reports were published between 1810-12.

⁴⁵ Ainslie Thomas Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia, 1962), 265.

industry of different classes in the same country, but also by extending that competition, as much as possible to all other countries'.⁴⁶ The rationale was to increase the size of bilateral trade to the Eastward in order to increase domestic production and consumption. Grant did not actually dispute the rationale, but his experience forewarned him of its impracticability.⁴⁷ In two extraordinary testimonies at the House of Lords,⁴⁸ Grant dismissed the country trader's naiveté and demolished the free trader's 'sanguine Expectations'. 'They speak of rendering the Eastern Trade free,' he exclaimed of the free trade lobby, 'and that nothing else is requisite to its Increase. What is the Freedom which it now wants?'

Grant's complaint against the free traders' petitions was that 'the Authors do not appear to have been actual Traders to the Eastern Islands, or to have had any personal Knowledge of the greater Part of them.' 'The vast Number of Islands in the Eastern Archipelago, peopled only by Natives, and the Continental Kingdoms of Tonquin, Cochin China, Siam, and Pegu,' he observed, 'they [free traders] do not appear to have ever visited, or... to have acquired any accurate Information concerning them.' In fact, 'a great deal appears to have been unknown by them, but a great deal conjectured; and imperfect Knowledge, and Ignorance and Conjecture, all to have led to erroneous Conclusions, biassed [sic] by an eager Desire to get rid of the remaining Privileges of the East India Company, and by a sanguine Spirit of Adventure, which sees no Difficulty, and anticipates nothing but Success.' Grant concluded that 'the Representations and Opinions which have been brought forward in support of the

⁴⁶ Huskisson, *Speeches*, 334. For the reference to Smith, see Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994), 726 (Book IV, Chapter IX).

⁴⁷ Posterity would prove that Grant was correct, for it took a war with the Chinese empire a generation later to force open bilateral trade.

⁴⁸ 6 July 1820 & 26 February 1821.

Practicability of a great Extension of Trade to those Countries may justly be said to be on the whole essentially defective.⁴⁹

Commonwealth of the Malay Archipelago

Remarkably, Grant's tirade against free trade was not unequivocally made in favour of the Company's mercantilist trade. It is true that his first priority was to protect the Company's sole rights to China tea. He was resolute not only that the Company remain Britain's only buyer in the China market, but also that nothing, certainly not the free traders' agitations, should upset the Company's delicate relationship with the Chinese vendor (who was the state). However, where the Malay Archipelago was concerned, Grant surprisingly made it clear that the Company saw no commercial benefit. 'The Company as a commercial Body,' he affirmed, 'have no particular Interest in this Question, their own Trade to the Eastern Islands being very limited'.⁵⁰

This position reflected the financial crisis then threatening to derail Britain's second (Indian) empire. Grant had, since the Indian wars of the Marquess Wellesley (Governor-General of Bengal in 1798-1805), opposed every expansion by the Company, whether territorial or commercial. The Company, he wrote to the Marquess of Hastings (Governor-General in 1814-1823, who resumed Wellesley's policy of expansion by war), was 'no longer liable to be engaged for the payment of new debts contracted on account of the territory, nor indeed could the commerce of the Company possibly sustain such a responsibility'.⁵¹ The question of another territorial

⁴⁹ House of Lords, *Report*, 249-250.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵¹ Grant to Hastings, April 1817, Henry Morris, *The Life of Charles Grant, Sometime Member of Parliament for Inverness-shire and Director of the East India Company* (London: John Murray, 1904), 349.

establishment for British trade in the Malay Archipelago (after Penang), therefore, was never in Grant's sights.

Grant, nevertheless, became edgy when it was proposed to allow the country trader free passage and free trade in the Malay Archipelago. In response, Grant argued 'whether Adventurers from England will be able to enter into Competition either with the Dutch Residents in those Islands, or with the British Traders from India.' He proceeded to compare the British country trader with 'the British Merchants of India, who... have long carried on an active Commerce with the Eastern Islands, are acquainted with all their Wants, and do not fail to supply them, as far as the Inhabitants have the Means of Purchase'. In fact, he insinuated 'whether British Residents in India, possessing the superior Qualities of their Countrymen, and well acquainted with the Asiatic Character and Manners, which have various Features of Resemblance or Affinity all through Southern Asia, may not, in dealing with that People, have an Advantage over occasional Visitors from Europe'.⁵²

Why Grant should commend the British merchant of India and disparage the British country trader, when he saw little commercial interest for the Company in the Malay Archipelago, is significant. If we look closely at Grant's two last-quoted sentences above, a vision of the Malay Archipelago becomes apparent which is very different from what we commonly associate with the mercantilism and monopoly of Europe's East India Companies. Grant's vision depicted not the commodity (or article of wealth or mobile property), as was usually the primary object of the Company's concerns. Instead, Grant's subject was the native inhabitant. And, significantly, the native inhabitant was no longer the labouring producer for the monopsonist buyer such as the VOC. But rather, he was an individual purchaser with 'means' and 'wants'.

⁵² House of Lords, *Report*, 249.

In considering an establishment for trade, therefore, Grant appeared to have done so primarily on account of the native consumer, rather than the British and European consumer. In contrast to the free trader's Eurocentric vision of British country traders bringing China tea to sell in European markets, Grant saw a native market comprising the Malay Archipelago, where the native inhabitant would consume British goods vended from India and sell their local produce in return. A second station after Penang, which had long served as layover for the Company's tea traffic, merely duplicated the same tea transit function but for the country trader. It effectively did nothing for the people of the Malay Archipelago. Instead, 'An English European Settlement within the Archipelago,' Grant explained, 'would in all Probability attract a great deal of the Native Trade, and be a superior Place of Resort for the Merchants of this Country.'⁵³ This dual function of the British station, to facilitate native trade besides British trade, was imperative to the original design for a new station. It was not to be exclusive to British trade, but rather it should 'become a considerable Resort of Natives, who have settled there, and are under the Protection of the Company, carrying on Trade and Cultivation'.⁵⁴

This picture, envisaged by the 'Company's great champion', of a native market and native inhabitants engaged in free exchange with each other and with British traders, is rather revolutionary. It marked a radical change, not in the Company's monopolistic and contractual approach to commerce – because that still existed with respect to China – but in the Company's approach to *people*, as it were. By Indian standards, the Company's humanitarian record was woeful.⁵⁵ In this case, however, it

⁵³ Ibid., 248-249.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁵ Since the 1770s the condition of the people of India had been a much-discussed subject, both in India, as in the controversy between Harry Verelst and William Bolts – see Patrick Tuck's Introduction in *The East India Company*, Vol. 3, ed. Patrick Tuck (London: Routledge, 1998), v-xxv – and in Britain, with

was (potentially) exceptional. Unlike China, where the Company had secured monopoly, and unlike India, where it secured dominion, the Company had no judicial authority over the trade or territory of the Malay Archipelago.⁵⁶ And yet, remarkably, it was prepared to protect the freedom of the native (not western) inhabitant to settle, trade, and cultivate. It is easy to write this off as the cynical prelude to empire, or colonialism's civilizing mission. But we should recall that the Company neither could afford nor did it intend to extend power over trade or territory. Grant's proposition makes it clear that the Company had envisioned a self-contained market – a self-conscious polity even. Indeed, Grant proceeded to define 'the *national* Interests' to which such a polity would adhere, and the *governance* which that would require:

My Meaning is, that whereas at present the Islands exceedingly numerous scattered over the Eastern Seas are almost all very ill governed, and that whole Region in a State of Anarchy, if there was any commanding Station in the Eastern Archipelago, under the Government of such a Power as the British, which, acting upon the Principles of Justice and of Liberality, might afford an Asylum and a general Resort for many of the trading Part of that numerous Population, and be the Means of repressing Disorder and Piracy, which now so much prevail, and of encouraging a legitimate Trade, the general Interests of Commerce and of Humanity in that Region would be promoted.⁵⁷

Where the Company under Grant was concerned, therefore, the prospect of an establishment in the Malay Archipelago did not concern a free port for the British country trader. Neither did it involve an export hub of the Company,⁵⁸ nor a territorial colony for the Crown. Instead, Grant had envisioned a centre of governance that would preside over the free activity of the native population if only to protect his welfare and wellbeing – or 'humanity' – from the influence and unbridled activity of the British

the India Bills and the impeachment of Warren Hastings – but they did not translate into legislation until the reforms of Munro, Elphinstone and Bentinck in the 1820s.

⁵⁶ At least not since 1814, when Java and the Moluccas were restored to the Dutch.

⁵⁷ House of Lords, *Report*, 149.

⁵⁸ Known in mercantile terminology as *comptoir*, or counter.

trader. As we saw, Grant had rather resented the free trader's 'erroneous' and 'defective' views of the native inhabitants of the 'Eastern Archipelago', which contrasted with his direct knowledge and identification of their 'character' and 'manners'. It thus appears that the intervention he was proposing on their behalf, far from insinuating their colonisation, arose out of his identifying their native interests with the national interest: i.e. the British interest. In this respect, Grant's vision of the Malay Archipelago resembled a Malay *commonwealth*, one which entailed the recreation (or creation) of a Malay nation as an independent polity, but in the British civic image familiar to the Scottish Grant, which rendered the polity not so independent.

This inclusive national approach to exclusive native peoples rather challenges postmodernist accounts of colonialism and orientalism. What is unusual was Grant's conflating of the concepts of nation with colony, of nation-building with empire-building. But this is not inexplicable. The familiarisation and naturalisation of foreign and diverse archipelagos in terms of a national order has been attributed by John Pocock to an 'oceanic and global' mode of British historical thought, which sees 'the development of the colonies into self-conscious political societies,' and 'the conversion of the "empire" into a "confederation".'⁵⁹ An independent Malay Archipelago confederated within an 'oceanic and global' British commonwealth would still retain its native sovereignty and cultural identity,⁶⁰ if only because it both adopted and added to the civic personality of a British maritime commonwealth that, comprising a family of nations, 'gives law to the sea', as opposed to an empire of trade to which 'the sea gives

⁵⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Discovery of Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 155.

⁶⁰ An analogy is the United Tribes of New Zealand, before the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). Another is Scotland, after the Act of Union of 1707. The Maoris attracted the interest of the British at the same time as the Malays.

law'.⁶¹ As in the case of Scotland, which the Scots saw in terms of a 'stateless nation' upon union with England in 1707, Scottish culture both reinforced (through its unique system of education) and was reinforced by the Scottish conception of a 'North British' personality in an 'oceanic and global' British commonwealth.⁶²

Penang, Grant said, was 'too far remote from the Centre of the Eastern Archipelago to answer the Idea' of the Malay Commonwealth.⁶³ Opportunistically, he suggested Singapore: 'I think such a Station has lately been acquired by Sir Stamford Raffles at Sincapore' [sic]. This connection to Raffles is crucial, because it attributes the source of Grant's Malay Commonwealth directly to Raffles himself. For, on 19 July 1820, two weeks after his first interview at the Lords, Grant wrote to Raffles a letter which revealed him to have acted expressly upon the instruction of Raffles. 'You will easily conceive that it has not been possible for me to enter fully with you into the various subjects of the letters and papers you have sent me,' began Grant:-

I have, however, done all that I believe you expected from me, that is to uphold your views of what our national policy ought to be with respect to the Eastern Archipelago – views, the leading principles of which I entertained before your return to India, as favouring not only the fair *commercial* interests of our country, and of a vast region of Asia, but the *moral* and *political* benefit of its immense

⁶¹ The dictum is by James Harrington from his *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), which spelled out the tenets of British republicanism: 'the sea gives law to the growth of Venice, but the growth of Oceana gives law to the sea.'

⁶² See Martha McLaren, *British India & British Scotland, 1780-1830: career building, empire building, & a Scottish school of thought on Indian governance* (Ohio: University of Akron Press, 2001). And Tom Devine, *Scotland's Empire: 1600-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003). Linda Colley also explains how, 'for some Scots... it was less the job and trading opportunities that empire provided, than the *idea* of empire that proved most compelling... A British imperium, in other words, enabled Scots to feel themselves peers of the English in a way still denied them in an island kingdom... For most of its period of existence, as in retrospect, the empire was always emphatically British' (rather than *English*). Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 131.

⁶³ What, of which the site of Singapore supposedly represented the centre, has never been convincingly explained. D.G.E. Hall placed this centre as a free trade oasis apropos the Dutch monopoly, so that it was 'outside the gates' or "'inside the gates' of the Dutch empire." However, a less laborious answer is indicated in the petitions by country traders against the Company's charter, which prohibited them from proceeding to 'any Place on the Continent of Asia between the Indies and Malacca'. Grant's 'Centre' not merely implied a geographical centre, but a centre of governance that had to be located *east* of Malacca, outside the charter's restricted zone. 'Memorial of the Merchants & Manufacturers of Leeds to Privy Council for Trade', in House of Lords, *Report*, 528. (See n.2.)

population... Of late, in an examination before a committee of the House of Lords, I gave my opinion of the value, in a *moral, political, and commercial* view, of a British establishment in the locality of Singapore, under the auspices of the Company. From all these circumstances and others, I augur well as to the retention and encouragement of the station your rapidity has preoccupied.⁶⁴

Ends of Empire

Grant's reference to 'a *moral, political, and commercial* view' denotes a composite conception of the 'value' in a 'commanding Station in the Eastern Archipelago'. As his above-quoted passage shows, Grant understood this value in terms of 'national interests' relating to three concerns: 'Humanity', 'Government', and 'Commerce'. (By contrast, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty realised the 'value of the English station' in terms of free trade, Singapore's strategic location, and the repossession of Dutch colonies in continental Asia.) The 'Idea' which Grant had envisioned for the Malay Archipelago seemed to be configured in threes. There were three views (moral, political, commercial), three national interests (humanity, governance, commerce), and then three principles (justice, order, liberality). Given that Grant's 'Idea' had originated with Raffles, we may suppose its threefold configuration to have corresponded to Raffles's three objectives for Singapore.

It may, therefore, be inferred that Raffles's naval station was expected to have exercised the power of government across the Malay Archipelago, and overseen a political order in which the liberality in commerce of Britain's foreign trade with China (which passed through the Malay Archipelago), was tempered by the humanity and justice that signified the native and 'legitimate Trade' within the Malay Archipelago. This threefold configuration, we will see, was a development on earlier concerns of Raffles's government in Java. British Java adopted a far more rigorous government than

⁶⁴ Grant to Raffles, 17 July 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 445. My italics.

British Singapore, but the ends which they pursued were the same. What end was Raffles's three objectives intended to achieve?

Raffles consistently said that his 'object is not territory, but trade'.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, he also differentiated the markets of China, Europe, India, from the markets of the Malay Archipelago,⁶⁶ and differentiated the trade carried by Europeans from that carried by natives.⁶⁷ But above all, he repeatedly vowed to develop the native's 'individual industry' and protect the 'fruits of his labour'.⁶⁸ Where the Malay Archipelago was concerned, these aims divided policy into two contradictory positions: (1) deregulation for the European merchant, and (2) protectionism for the native market. Protectionism necessarily implied government intervention. However, there is a difference between protecting a high-cost manufacturing economy,⁶⁹ which the discourse of political economy condemned as 'mercantilism', and protecting a subsistence agricultural community, which had nothing to do with mercantilism. The latter, in fact, had everything to do with *population*.

Here we encounter a discourse that predated political economy, that was focused on the people, and involved government, law, power, the state and body politic, and that was long known by the title of Aristotle's *Politics*. This meeting of two traditions of discourse – politics and political economy – explains Raffles's complex and eclectic approach to policy-making, the contradictory appearance of his policies and speech, and the complicated intertwining of his ideas.⁷⁰ Raffles consistently distinguished the

⁶⁵ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 379.

⁶⁶ See n.8.

⁶⁷ E.g. 'National interests and jealousies may obstruct the European merchant at the principal ports, but the native trade of such extensive coasts must always continue in a great degree unfettered, and at liberty to seek the best markets'. 'On the Administration of the Eastern Islands in 1819', in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix, 8.

⁶⁸ New Revenue System, 15 October 1813, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 216.

⁶⁹ Such as France, or a high-cost mercantile economy such as Holland.

⁷⁰ John Bastin gives a flavour of the many dimensions, contexts, and layers of Raffles's ideas, and the problems they cause, in his 'Introduction' in John Bastin, *The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in*

‘political point of view’ and ‘political part of the service’ from the commercial context. The distinction was not one separating the processes of government from commerce, but rather one between two different conceptual frameworks. For example, where the commercial (or political economic) view sees government as interfering in the economy, the political view sees the individual as interfering in the order of society. Today the former view is familiar to us, but not the latter view. However, as we saw from their criticism of the individual ‘adventurer’, Raffles and Grant well understood the latter view. Far more than that, their understanding of it took the ideological forms known as *civic humanism* and *Christian humanism*.

As I show in the next two chapters, Raffles’s thoughts and policies, as well as those of his superior, the Earl of Minto, Governor-General of Bengal, had, even before the Company’s expedition to invade Java in 1811, taken the perspective of a critique against what the historians Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff have identified as the ‘new economic arguments’ that emerged with Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, that is, political economy. Raffles and Minto had, I argue, approached these arguments ‘in the context of an intense eighteenth-century debate about the inequality and luxury of modern commercial societies’.⁷¹ They did not dispute the ingenuity of Smith’s productive cycle. However, they disagreed with the rationale behind Smith’s ‘defence of modernity’,⁷² whereby ‘self-interest’, informed by a certain ‘moral sense’ and

Java and Sumatra: An Economic Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), ix-xx. Bastin had earlier attempted to give some order to Raffles’s ideas: see John Bastin, *Raffles’ Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission* Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde, Vol. XIV (S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954). H.R.C. Wright, in appreciating the difficulty of the task, remarked how ‘questions of land tenure are complicated, and the evidence about Raffles’s reforms presents peculiar difficulties’. H.R.C. Wright, review of *Raffles’s Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java, and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission*, by J. Bastin, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. 28, No. 1 (169) (March, 1955): 222-230.

⁷¹ Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, “Needs and justice in the ‘Wealth of Nations’,” in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, eds. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2-26.

⁷² For the ethical basis of Smithian free trade, see Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

applied to the ‘division of labour’, was able to automatically regulate like an ‘invisible hand’,⁷³ the free exchanges between individuals. Private self-interest indeed led to unintended consequences of public benefit, as Smith insisted, but Raffles cynically believed it equally led to public vice. ‘Self-interest does not fail to seize every possible opportunity of extortion,’ he had said.⁷⁴ For this very reason, Raffles could never equate the free market with benevolence, only with avarice.

Raffles and Minto’s criticism of the market fundamentalism inherent in Smithian free trade renewed the debate on the immorality of commerce which had previously attended the impeachment of the Company’s first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, for financial corruption. It also implied a broader conception of ‘political economy’ as a discourse encompassing what classical political economy shuns as ‘mercantilist’ issues about employment, development, and the poor laws⁷⁵ – issues which are, conversely, fundamental concerns in political discourse. According to Hont and Ignatieff, this perception of political economy apprehended ‘the vantage point, either of the classical civic humanist ideal of a virtuous republic... or of the Christian ideal of society as a positive community of goods.’ As we see in the next chapter, Raffles had in Java criticised both the East India Company and former VOC’s commercial line as a civic humanist. Subsequently, after the restitution of Java to the Netherlands in 1816, he criticised the imperial designs of the Dutch from a Christian humanist position.

This pluralism of viewpoints in Raffles corresponded to what he held to be the political view, the moral view, and the commercial view. Today they correspond, more

⁷³ Although the phrase occurs only three times in Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, it has come into popular usage as denoting self-interest’s unintended consequence of public benefit to society.

⁷⁴ Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, Vol. I (London: John Murray, 1830), 302.

⁷⁵ For the understanding of political economy as a continuity of the mercantile literature, see Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (Routledge, 1994), and Lars Magnusson, *The Political Economy of Mercantilism* (Routledge, 2015).

generally than categorically, to the dialectic between what the history of British political thought refers to as the discourses of civic humanism (or classical republicanism), Christian humanism, and political economy.⁷⁶ Where the East India Company was concerned, Raffles nevertheless saw these discourses in black and white. Through political economy and its jurisprudential framework, the Company could legally justify its private interests of commercial profit, capital, and property.⁷⁷ Civic humanism, on the other hand, held the Company morally accountable to its public interest in the diverse communities, such as Java, that had come under its political authority. The civic humanist in Raffles not only saw the wellbeing of this body politic as resting on its independence,⁷⁸ but also that its independence could be corrupted by the private interests of both the country trader⁷⁹ and the Company itself.

But while Raffles grasped the problems of commerce as a civic humanist, he did not set out to resolve them as one. Raffles's response was to merge the Company's private commercial interest with the public political interest; and to join to the Company's mercantilist and liberal policies, a policy of governance. Hence, when in 1810 Minto appointed him 'Agent to the Governor General with the Malay States', Raffles said the appointment was 'chiefly intended to cover more political Views' (in

⁷⁶ Of the English civic tradition and origin, and its close relation to the protestant discourse, see John Pocock's Introduction to James Harrington, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'*, ed., J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Also J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). For the dialectic between the civic and commercial discourses, see J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Of the protestant discourse, see Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁷⁷ Political economy apprehends a law paradigm, which rationalises property as realizations of natural law, to be freely pursued and legally protected (indeed against the competing private interest of the private trader) by means of contracts and rights rationalized under its jurisprudential framework. See Samuel Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*, ed., James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Arild Saether, *Natural Law and the Origin of Political Economy: Samuel Pufendorf and the History of Economics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

⁷⁸ See Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷⁹ That is, Raffles's 'interlopers', 'adventurers', and 'lanun'(pirates).

addition to the Company's commercial views),⁸⁰ and that his acceptance of the position had 'commenced my political career' (in addition to his career as a Company Merchant).⁸¹ The distinction between, and amalgamation of, the political view and the commercial view is a recurring motif in Raffles's writings. During the invasion of Java, Raffles referred to 'views of so enlarged a nature as seems equally to demand, and justify a bolder policy both of a commercial and political kind than we could have lately contemplated.'⁸² When in 1818 he returned to the East Indies as commercial resident of Bencoolen, he saw himself to have also resumed his role as 'Political Agent for the Malay States'.⁸³

Raffles was not the sole originator of this composite mode of policy. His intellectual source was Minto. As one of the managers who impeached Warren Hastings in 1785, Minto was very well aware of his mentor, Edmund Burke's, complaint against the Company that 'no trace of equitable government is found in their politics, not one trace of commercial principle in their mercantile dealing: and hence is the deepest and maturest wisdom of Parliament demanded, and the best resources of this kingdom must be strained, to restore them'.⁸⁴ The Burkean restoration of legal,⁸⁵ political, and moral order to the affairs of a Company that had gone astray, has been described by Jennifer Pitts in terms of the 'ends of empire'.⁸⁶ 'Burke's campaign against abuses in India,' she explained, 'involved the dual projects, legal, political and moral, of subjecting the East

⁸⁰ Raffles to William Edward Philips, 9 January 1811, MSS Eur F148/5.

⁸¹ Raffles to Minto, 15 December 1810, MSS Eur F148/3.

⁸² Raffles to Minto (Raffles's 'Malay policy' paper), 10 June 1811, revised 20 September 1811, MSS Eur F148/7. Raffles was Lieutenant-Governor of Java from 1811 to 1816.

⁸³ 'I left England under the full impression that I was not only Resident at Bencoolen, but in fact Political Agent for the Malay States'. Raffles to John Adam, 16 November 1818, cited in John Bastin, *Raffles and Hastings, Private Exchanges behind the Founding of Singapore*, National Library Board (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2014), 104. Raffles was Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen from 1818 to 1823.

⁸⁴ Edmund Burke, 'Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill' (1783), in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (United States: Penguin, 1999), 376.

⁸⁵ See n.65.

⁸⁶ Jennifer Pitts, 'Burke and the Ends of Empire', in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, eds. David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 145-155.

India Company to parliamentary control and attempting to instil in the British public some respect and sympathy for ‘our distressed fellow-citizens in India’.’ In other words: of subjecting commerce to government, or political economy to politics, and instilling respect and sympathy for humanity.

Empire, seen by Burke, was failing. But not because of the classical explanation of ‘Decline and Fall’, whereby liberty, as the means to empire, had been corrupted.⁸⁷ The venerated ‘project of combining empire and liberty’ was seen by Burke ‘as a Sisyphean struggle’. Burke, who ‘theorised empire as a political form’, saw instead a ‘crisis of moral and political imagination’ whereby empire’s moral and political forms were destroyed by the unbridled liberty accorded to both Company and private trader’s legal rights over trade and property. Neither empire nor liberty, therefore, presented themselves as policy goals to Minto and Raffles. Rather, through the Company, empire provided the means to reconcile the institutions of governance and humanity with commerce. ‘Burke’s writings on empire,’ said Pitts, ‘offer some of the clearest evidence of his belief in the mutual dependence of legal, political and moral relations’.

The restoration of legal, political, and moral order in the body politic, I show in chapter three, thus explained Minto’s decision to occupy Java in 1811. It also provided the underlying motive for Raffles’s occupation of Singapore in 1819.⁸⁸ But what reality could such an abstraction possibly summon? Interestingly, Burke was famously consumed in his final years by a real example of a legal, political, and moral order which he believed was destroyed by the enthusiastic pursuit of certain ideas of political

⁸⁷ John Pocock describes ‘a great historical narrative of Decline and Fall, in which Rome had been destroyed, not by a mere vicissitude of temporal affairs, but by causes inherent in its own greatness, even in its own liberty.’ J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Rome: the republic as ideal and as history’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

⁸⁸ My argument (in my thesis, see n.1, n.58) that Raffles had pursued a consistent policy in Java, Sumatra, and Singapore, challenges John Bastin’s argument (in *Native Policies*, see n.57) that Raffles had pursued direct rule in Java and indirect rule in Sumatra because of different local conditions. (See n.125)

economy: *l'ancien régime* France.⁸⁹ Consequently, Burke supplied a vision of the 'way of life' that a properly-restored order of society would have afforded, which he called the 'European Commonwealth'.⁹⁰ It rested on three institutional 'commonalities': monarchical government, Christian morality, and common law, all naturally-related to each other by the manners natural to each institution.⁹¹ This institutional order presented a scholastic theory of the state in the form of a commonwealth which confers on its peoples 'peace and concord', or *pax et concordia*. It rivalled the classical theory which sees empire being created out of the liberty of the people, or *libertas et imperium*.⁹²

Empire, therefore, rather than being the outcome of liberty, was seen by Minto to provide the means and opportunity for restoring the *peace, security, unity, happiness, and common good*, which are implied in the institutional order of the confederated commonwealth. 'But there we are; there we are placed by the Sovereign Disposer,' Burke had said of Britain's presence in India, 'and we must do the best we can in our situation. The situation of man is the preceptor of his duty.'⁹³ To Minto, Burke said, 'If I were of your Age and had your Talents and your Manners, I should not despair of seeing India a happy Country in a few years.' Likewise, before Minto returned to Calcutta upon settling a provisional government in Java, he had told Raffles: 'but in the mean time let us do as much good as we can.'⁹⁴ In Singapore, Raffles's objectives of the naval station, China trade, and Malay trade, effectively satisfied the Burkean restoration of 'equitable government', 'commercial principle', and the 'cause of humanity'. They

⁸⁹ See Richard Whatmore, 'Burke on Political Economy', in *Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, 80-91.

⁹⁰ Edmund Burke, *Letters on a regicide peace* (1795). He also likened it to a 'republic' and a 'politick communion'. Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 911.

⁹¹ Jennifer Welsh, *Edmund Burke and International Relations: The Commonwealth of Europe and the Crusade against the French Revolution* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 71-72.

⁹² On 'peace', rather than 'liberty', as a 'style of political theory' and a 'fundamental political value' or 'highest value in political life', see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25-28, 56-65.

⁹³ Burke, 'Fox's East India Bill', 373-374.

⁹⁴ Raffles to Minto, 2 July 1814, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 228.

were formulated by Raffles as a ‘national policy’ prior to returning to Bencoolen in 1818. Five months after occupying Singapore, he invoked ‘the Great Author and Disposer of all events’.⁹⁵ In June 1823, he told both ‘European and Native Merchants of Singapore’ that ‘I have done... [not] more than what my duty required of me’.⁹⁶

National Policy

Raffles’s three objectives for Singapore, therefore, were not originally directed at achieving free trade. Raffles was not, as Marks claimed, ‘a practising free-trade economist’, and he had not, as Turnbull claimed, ‘established in Singapore a free port following the principles of Adam Smith and *laissez-faire*’.⁹⁷ Yet, interestingly, neither was Singapore the free trader and country trader’s first object of desire during the period from its founding in 1819 to the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in 1824. Their petitions and interviews to the Committee on Foreign Trade show that they had contended, above all, for access into Canton. What they desired was a share of the Chinese market and a free port for this purpose which they later acquired in Hong Kong. Invariably, their arguments attacked the Company’s monopoly on China tea, and played out the political-economic dichotomy between free trade and mercantilism which has been indispensable to the history of Britain’s empire in the east.

Except – and history has overlooked the fact⁹⁸ – that this dichotomy concerned Canton and not Singapore. Where Singapore was concerned, other dichotomies

⁹⁵ Raffles to Sir Robert Inglis, 12 June 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 385.

⁹⁶ Raffles to ‘Alexander Morgan, Esq, and other European and Native Merchants of Singapore’, 9 June 1823, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 547.

⁹⁷ C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Modern Singapore: 1819-2005* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 50.

⁹⁸ Perhaps because the mistaken but longstanding presumption, that the country trader was prohibited from entering Canton by the Company’s monopoly there, was transposed to Singapore. The error concerning Canton was picked up by C.D. Cowan: ‘The East India Company did not possess at this time a monopoly of all English commerce at Canton, but only of the trade with the United Kingdom.’ C.D. Cowan, review of *The first contest for Singapore, 1819-1824*, by Harry J. Marks, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1963), 466-467. See also the

operated, which involved political economy, civic humanism, and, indeed, as we will see in chapters six and seven, a Scottish epistemological form of Christian humanism called *Common Sense*. Singapore's design was to restore the order between the institutions to which these discourses were believed to relate:⁹⁹ 'commercial principle', 'equitable governance', and Christian philanthropy. Unsurprisingly, the Burkean restoration, which moralised about commerce and aimed to cultivate and regulate benevolence in businessmen, was hardly attractive or practical to either country trader or the Company's mercantile establishment in Penang. Commercial interests of all descriptions had their eyes on Canton, and Raffles was hard-pressed to swallow his pride and persuade them to look to Singapore. 'Let the Commercial interests for the present drop every idea of a direct trade to China,' he ranted, 'and let them concentrate their influence in supporting Singapore, and they will do ten times better.'¹⁰⁰

Raffles's envy of Canton exposes a competition between two worldviews, one a political-economic construction of the future and the other a moral and institutional order from the past. The first was clearly on the ascendant, and Raffles's disdain of Huskisson's legislation for trade liberalisation¹⁰¹ suggests Raffles's desperate realisation that his order was redundant. Yet, at the same time, there is a hint that Raffles had expected otherwise. Charles Assey, Raffles's devoted assistant whom he had sent to London, had this to say when news arrived there that Raffles had occupied Singapore:

Company's statement on the error, 'in supposing that the Company have any Controul over much of the Trade' in China. George A. Robinson and Thomas Reid to George Canning, 7 June 1820, House of Lords, *Report*, 526.

⁹⁹ Nelson Phillips, Thomas B. Lawrence and Cynthia Hardy, 'Discourse and Institutions', *The Academy of Management Review* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Oct, 2004), 635-652.

¹⁰⁰ Raffles to Rev. Thomas Raffles, 17 July 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 460.

¹⁰¹ 'I observe what you say regarding trade and the opening which now offers by the late act,' he wrote to his brother-in-law, Peter Auber, in London of Huskisson's deregulatory East India, etc., Trade Act, which he called 'this unimportant act', for 'it merely grants to English ships indulgences which they formerly took upon themselves to enjoy.' Auber was at this time Assistant Secretary of the East India Company, and would later become Secretary. Raffles to Peter Auber, 6 December 1821, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 503.

Would it be possible to interest the Commercial World also, and to unite in a general feeling towards the Eastern Archipelago – I cannot help thinking that some of the members of Administration are aware of the importance of the moment and that Mr. Canning would be disposed to listen to the suggestion of his Liverpool friends on this subject.¹⁰²

Assey's dropping of George Canning's name, at this initial phase of Singapore's founding, is indicative of the latter's complicity in what Raffles was doing. Indeed, Canning, President of the Board of Control, appeared to be the most high-ranking among a handful of influential figures (which included Grant) who were aware of Raffles's intentions before he occupied Singapore.¹⁰³ These intentions were Raffles's three objectives. Grant, we saw, described them in terms of a 'national policy', as 'views of what our national policy ought to be with respect to the Eastern Archipelago – views, the leading principles of which I entertained before your return to India'. Raffles had first developed this 'national policy' in a document entitled *On British Interests in the Eastern Archipelago*. It painted a moral and institutional order of society in the form of a Malay Commonwealth. It was submitted to Canning in London in October 1817, a month before Raffles embarked for Sumatra.¹⁰⁴

The same 'national policy' was further enlarged and modified after Singapore was occupied, in a subsequent document entitled *On the Administration of the Eastern*

¹⁰² Charles Assey to Rev. Thomas Raffles, 9 August 1819, John Bastin, *Letters and Books of Sir Stamford Raffles and Lady Raffles*, The Tang Holdings Collection (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2009), 278. Canning was a long-serving MP for Liverpool (1812-1823). His 'Liverpool friends' in 1812 were invariably the country traders. However, by 1820 Canning was telling his constituents about 'the great moral disease' and 'the revival and re-establishment of that moral and religious sense which had been attempted to be obliterated from the hearts of mankind'; *Speech of the Right Hon. George Canning, to his constituents at Liverpool on Saturday, March 18th, 1820, at the celebration of his fourth election* (London: John Murray, 1820). Assey had possibly insinuated Canning's 'Liverpool friends' as being the circle of evangelists and abolitionists such as Rev. Thomas Raffles, who knew Canning, and whose tenure at Liverpool (1812-1862) coincided with him.

¹⁰³ There were at least four other figures, Sir Hugh Inglis, also former Chairman of the Company, his son Sir Robert Inglis, MP and high churchman, William Marsden, and the Duke of Somerset.

¹⁰⁴ British Library, 'Vansittart papers', Add MS 31237. Nicholas Vansittart, Baron Bexley, was Chancellor of the Exchequer (1812-23) and also President of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Islands in 1819.¹⁰⁵ Raffles personally delivered this document to the Marquess of Hastings at Calcutta in November 1819, and a copy was also forwarded to the chairman of the Select Committee which sat at the House of Lords, the Marquess of Lansdowne. Grant and Canning most probably received copies too. These proposals add some previously-lacking historical formality to Raffles's occupation of Singapore, which is generally acknowledged to have been unauthorized. Clearly, it was not unknown of beforehand. This suggests that between 1819 and 1824, it was not Singapore's occupation itself, but rather Singapore's original design of Burkean restoration, that was at stake. Its fate hinged entirely on Raffles's patrons, in particular Canning, putting up their hands and admitting their knowledge. In the event, Canning backed down.

There were two reasons for this. One was certainly the ideological pressure of free trade. Canning was the titular leader of the Liberal Tories, which included the very people then dismantling trade and tariff protection: i.e. Huskisson, Robinson, Wallace, and indeed, Grant's son, also Charles Grant. The other reason was because Canning had become sceptical of Raffles's 'national policy' – not for what it proposed, but for what Raffles assumed it had licensed him to do.¹⁰⁶ Certainly, Raffles's armed intervention in the Palembang succession in June 1818 exposed him (and Canning) to accusations of territorial intent.¹⁰⁷ The question of Raffles's 'right', however, has led the historical treatment of this period from 1819 to 1824 to focus overwhelmingly on the legality of Raffles's act in Singapore.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the byzantine wrangling between British and

¹⁰⁵ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix.

¹⁰⁶ Raffles's 'treaties & his acquisitions of territory, therefore, & all the pretensions to "agency in the Eastern Seas", are wholly of his own mere notion: the latter entirely self assumed & with the former word by statute.' Canning to Hastings, 30 January 1819, Bastin, *Raffles and Hastings*, 105-106.

¹⁰⁷ The incident led to a confrontation with a Dutch force, which arrested Raffles's military officer Captain Francis Salmond. Raffles published a 'Protest' as a result in the *Annual Register*. 'George Canning was so angry at the publication of the Protest that he wished to recall Sir Stamford Raffles from Bencoolen'. Demetrius Charles Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* (1897) (Amsterdam: Pepin Press, 1999), 277.

¹⁰⁸ See Marks, *First Contest*, and Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia, 1770-1890* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co, 1998).

Dutch authorities over the legal status of Singapore seems to have been inherited in the twentieth century by histories of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.¹⁰⁹

However, the rights and contractarian emphases on the period miss the woods for the trees. Raffles, upon occupying Singapore, actually predicted this digression: ‘Mynheer will probably enter into a Paper War on the subject, but we may I think combat their arguments without any difficulty’.¹¹⁰ In fact, back in 1817, he already dismissed the legal import of the old VOC treaties with the native rulers. ‘The present validity of most of these treaties,’ he stated in his *British Interests* paper, ‘may be well contested by the British Government.’¹¹¹ Raffles was clearly more interested in what was happening within the British and Bengal governments, in particular where concerning the political figures he counted on to support his ‘national policy’: Canning, Grant, Lansdowne, and Hastings. What followed was the shifting of the political-economic discourse from Canton to Singapore, but this in itself revealed a politics of free trade that was not as clear-cut as generally believed.

Politics of Free Trade

Canning and Grant did attempt initially to converge the discourse concerning Canton with the discourse concerning Singapore. As mentioned, despite the Company’s exclusive monopoly on UK-bound China tea, the country trader was never prohibited from entering Canton and purchasing tea for European markets. The obstacle facing the free trader and country trader in China was not the East India Company, but rather the

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, S. Jayakumar and Tommy Koh, *Pedra Branca, The Road to the World Court*, MFA Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Letter from Raffles quoted in Charles Assey to Rev. Thomas Raffles, 9 August 1819, Bastin, *Letters and Books*, 278. ‘Mynheer’ is the Dutch term of address for ‘My Lord’, though, Raffles’s use of the term seems to be more cynical than respectful.

¹¹¹ Boulger, *Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*, 268.

imperial authorities at Canton.¹¹² Grant made it very clear to the Committee that Chinese authorities could terminate tea sales to the Company were the country trader to appear at Canton. To pre-empt this risk, Canning discussed with a Secret Select Committee of the Company's Court of Directors, which included Grant,¹¹³ the opening of an 'intermediate port' where China tea could be wholesaled for re-export by the country trader. In May 1820, just prior to the start of the Commission and to the first negotiations with the Dutch, he wrote officially to the Company chairman and deputy chairman, George Abercrombie Robinson and Thomas Reid,¹¹⁴ for:

Permission to British Subjects to take in Tea at any Port in the Eastern Archipelago, and to bring it to any Foreign [non-British/non-colonial] Port; whether the Tea should be collected through the ordinary Channel of the Country Trade, or whether a Depôt should be formed by the Company, at Prince of Wales's Island, for example, or any other Place, may be Matter for Consideration.¹¹⁵

This initiative handed to the Company was rejected by it with indignation.¹¹⁶ Among its reasons were those subsequently cited by Grant to the Committee: 'the Hopelessness of such Expectations' in the free trader's argument, and 'whether the British Trader could enter the Market in competition with the Parties already engaged in it'. On the China market, Grant evidently toed the official mercantilist line; but his collusion with Canning in May 1820 suggests an attempt to find in Raffles's order of society a means of accommodating this line with the free trader's conflicting interest. The principle of an island base in the Malay Archipelago, where the country trader can

¹¹² 'The monopoly of the East India Company in England, and of the Hong merchants in China, precludes the idea of anything like fair competition in our own ships, or at the port of Canton – not but the East India Company can and perhaps will assist as far as in them lies; but their ships are too expensive'. Raffles to Dr Thomas Raffles, 17 July 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 460.

¹¹³ The others were James Pattison, Campbell Marjoribanks, and William Fullarton Elphinstone. Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, 91.

¹¹⁴ Canning's proposal may have been induced in favour of his friend, George Abercrombie Robinson.

¹¹⁵ Canning to Robinson and Reid, 17 May 1820, House of Lords, *Report*, 519-520.

¹¹⁶ Robinson and Reid to Canning, 7 June 1820, House of Lords, *Report*, 520-527.

engage in the re-export trade in China goods, was not opposed by the Company.¹¹⁷ Where the Company overreached, was its insistence on a different species of British private trader to operate from this base: the British merchant of India.

Here, some comment is necessary about what were called the ‘Agency Houses’ of Calcutta and London that came to be synonymous with the individualism and private interest of the country traders as well as becoming a mainstay in the narrative of liberalism and empire. Tony Webster has described the agency houses as private commercial partnerships of ‘European private traders not in the service of the East India Company’, but who ‘engaged in commercial activities which did not infringe the EIC’s monopoly of trade between Britain and India.’¹¹⁸ They had evolved in the gaps in the Company’s trade, enabling its outsourcing of purchases, production, shipping, and especially what they became well-known for: investment, finance, and foreign exchange. For that reason, Webster has called the British merchant of India ‘gentleman capitalists’.¹¹⁹

To the gentleman capitalists, Webster ascribed ‘the destabilising impact of British commerce upon the political structures of south east Asian states’, and the consequent ‘intervention and conquest’ which led to ‘British imperial expansion in south east Asia.’ Here was a different causal agent of empire from D.G.E. Hall’s country trader. However, the British merchant of India has been so closely associated with ‘the emerging British commitment to free trade’,¹²⁰ that he has been indiscernible from the country trader, and imperceptibly represented as the face of the free trader.

¹¹⁷ Although it clearly forbade the use of Penang for this purpose.

¹¹⁸ Tony Webster, ‘Gentlemanly Capitalists, Merchant Princes and Anglo-Indian Business Culture in the Early Nineteenth Century: John Palmer’s Multiple Constructions of Identity’, in *Historical Perspectives on Social Identities*, ed., Alyson Brown (UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 61-78. The term was originally coined as ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ by Peter J. Cain and Antony G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Abingdon: Routledge, 3rd ed., 2016).

¹¹⁹ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, 20-21.

¹²⁰ As also by D.G.E. Hall, Charles Wurtzburg, and the postcolonial historiography.

Webster distinguished the British merchant of India by differentiating the agency houses from the ‘provincial and industrial’ manufacturers and merchants in Britain who formed the country trade. The distinction is important, because here were two opposed but self-interested groups each claiming the mantle of free trade: one financial, utilitarian (after James Mill), and Anglo-Indian; the other industrial, specialized (after Adam Smith), and British. Where Singapore was concerned, the fate of Raffles’s national policy fell upon the Anglo-Indian merchant sponsored by Grant and the Company.

Webster credited the Anglo-Indian agency houses as the source of Canning’s ultimate decision to claim Singapore for Britain. Webster had based his argument on three points. Firstly, that subsequent to a futile first meeting with the Dutch in July 1820, Canning was inclined ‘to abandon Singapore’. Secondly, some received intelligence then led to Canning expressing, in April 1822, that ‘our best chance of retaining Singapore appears to me to be the protraction of the negotiation.’¹²¹ Webster had imputed to Canning’s suggestion of ‘protraction’ a ‘policy of calculated delay and obstruction’. It lasted until September 1823, when Canning was finally moved to negotiate for Dutch recognition of Britain’s claim on Singapore. The cause of this sudden change was, thirdly, inferred by Webster to the influence of the London sister companies of the Calcutta agency houses, especially the ‘highly influential East India Trade Committee which lobbied the British negotiators during the negotiations of 1823/24.’ There are anachronistic issues with this account, however, which seems over-reliant on the argument of ‘calculated delay and obstruction’.

Webster’s chronology does not take into account the timing of the two Reports of the Select Committee on Foreign Trade, published by the House of Lords on 11 April

¹²¹ Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, 99.

1821 and by the House of Commons on 10 July 1821. As we saw earlier, the Report of the Lords had stipulated the option of Singapore as a free port. It actually represents the first instance since Canning's May 1820 proposal, where some central decision-making had been affirmed with respect to Singapore. The goal was still Canton, and the Committee recommended that 'Regulations might be established' there, 'by placing the Free Trade of Canton under the Superintendence of a Consul'. But failing that, the Committee specified 'the Maintenance of the Establishment at Sincapore [sic], to which Vessels frequently come down from China in Five Days, or of any other Free Port as advantageously situated'.¹²² The Report of the Commons, as we saw, paraphrased the Report of the Lords, stipulating 'the occupation of a convenient port, to be administered by an officer of the Crown'.

Now, these provisions were officially dated April and July, 1821, roughly one year after Canning's proposal (and the Company's rejection), and roughly one year before Canning resumed, it was claimed, his interest in Singapore vis-à-vis the Dutch and on behalf of the British merchant from India.¹²³ The British authorities, therefore, had already designated the ratification of Singapore by April 1821, three years before the Anglo-Dutch Treaty. Raffles was right: Mynheer's 'Paper War' was merely a diplomatic postscript.¹²⁴ But what is important to note, however, is that the conclusions and recommendations of the Select Committee, including the establishment of Singapore, were made entirely for the benefit of the country trader from Britain, and not the British merchant from India. The Report of the Lords was candid, 'that the British

¹²² House of Lords, *Report relative to the trade*, 9.

¹²³ Canning, however, cannot have been idle as claimed. The Report of the Commons in fact refers to 'such arrangements with the Netherland government, as may ensure to British subjects an access, upon equal or fair terms, to the possessions of that government, and an unrestricted intercourse with independent native states', which 'have been matter of negotiation'. House of Commons, *Third Report*, 207.

¹²⁴ The legal dispute of Mynheer's 'Paper War' nevertheless also indicated Dutch foreknowledge of Britain's intentions for regional influence in what they believed to be the 'unlawful annexation' of Singapore – though I argue that they did not at first understand the nativist nature of this influence, but rather assumed it to be territorial. The events of 1818-19 are examined in detail in Chapter 8.

Free Trader might be permitted, even previous to the Expiration of the Charter, to embark in those Branches of the Trade which the Company neither carries on itself nor appears to be immediately interested in'.¹²⁵

What these events in London effectively played out was the denouement of Raffles's 'national policy'. When Raffles occupied Singapore in January 1819, he was disowned by Canning for his methods but not necessarily for his motives. Canning and Grant appear to have attempted to reconcile Raffles's design of a Malay Commonwealth with the free trader's desire to trade in Chinese goods, by converging the function of an 'intermediate port' with a location in the Malay Archipelago. At this point, the focus of the political-economic discourse about Canton shifted to Singapore, but there the British conception of Smithian free trade came up against the Anglo-Indian interpretation of 'free trade'. As Raffles's previously-scorned 'adventurers' and 'interlopers' took centre-stage, the 'crisis of moral and political imagination' which his national policy was formulated to resolve seemed to fade away. While the Company procrastinated, the British free traders seized the initiative, and planted the political-economic discourse firmly in Singapore.

This development is reflected by wider far-reaching events. Undoubtedly, the ideological influence of the Select Committee was paramount. Under the Board of Trade, their deregulatory Acts were burgeoning and prospering. But there was also the impetus from mounting petitions, included in the Reports, by scores of associations of provincial merchants and manufacturers from around the United Kingdom, otherwise known as the country trader.¹²⁶ It was this free trade group which turned the tide for Singapore. Pressure by the agency houses in 1823 was too little, too late. In fact,

¹²⁵ House of Lords, *Report relative to the trade*, 6.

¹²⁶ Yukihiisa Kumagai, *Provincial Merchants and Manufacturers' Campaigns for Access to the Asian Market, 1790-1833*, Library of Economic History, Vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

already in mid-1821, news was being received in London of financial corruption involving the premier agency house in India, John Palmer & Co., over a colossal loan to the Nizam of Hyderabad. The scandal implicated Lord Hastings, and made a mockery of the moral pretensions of the Company's humanitarian personages. Canning and the Court of Directors immediately demanded the cancellation of the loan, and Hastings's career effectively ended at that moment.¹²⁷ His replacement by Canning, proposed in late 1821, possibly explains Canning's 'protraction' of the negotiations with the Dutch.¹²⁸

This episode destroyed the credibility of both agency house and Company, and marked the turning point when political economy, in the ideological form of liberalism, and the British free trader began to dictate the public discourse and dominate British policy. In 1822, Charles Williams-Wynn replaced Canning. In 1823, William Amherst took over Hastings's office and John Crawford replaced Raffles. All were free traders. In 1824, Canning's 'closest friend', Huskisson,¹²⁹ oversaw not only the Anglo-Dutch Treaty (17 March 1824) but also other free trade agreements including with Prussia (2 April 1824), Sweden (24 April 1824),¹³⁰ and Denmark (16 June 1824).¹³¹ By 1829, Huskisson would salute the 'commercial intercourse between China and Singapore [sic], that glorious instance of the immense advantages derivable from Free Trade'.¹³²

¹²⁷ Paul David Nelson, *Francis Rawdon-Hastings, Marquess of Hastings: Solider, Peer of the Realm, Governor-General of India* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 182. See also letter by Canning to the Prime Minister, 28 November 1821, *The Letters of King George IV 1812-1830*, ed. Arthur Aspinall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 968.

¹²⁸ These plans were interrupted by Castlereagh's sudden death in 1822.

¹²⁹ 'To the extent that there was a Canningite position on economic affairs it was a Huskissonian one, as Canning was greatly influenced in his thought on such matters by the much more profound understanding of economic affairs possessed by William Huskisson.' Stephen M. Lee, *George Canning*, 148.

¹³⁰ The 'Public Documents' for these treaties were published in *The Annual Register of World Events: A Review of the Year, Volume 66* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1825): Appendix, 91-99.

¹³¹ Brady, *William Huskisson*, 94.

¹³² Huskisson, *Speeches*, 451.

All said and done, however, Raffles did not seem affected by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty's triumph of free trade. When he arrived in England in August 1824, he wrote a letter about the matter to Canning, who replied thus: 'I am greatly pleased and gratified to learn that the Treaty with the Netherland Govt. respecting our Interests in the Eastern Seas, appears to you to be just in its principles, and satisfactory in its terms.'¹³³ Had Raffles become a convert to Free Trade? An important passage from Raffles's *Statement of Services* of 3 November 1824 – in which he reiterated his three objectives for Singapore and paid tribute to Charles Grant's testimony at the Committee on Foreign Trade – indicates no.¹³⁴ The Anglo-Dutch Treaty, which Huskisson saw as the final fulfilment of 'commercial intercourse between China and Sincapore [sic]', was for Raffles simply the means to a balanced order of things. British commerce was merely one element in his three objectives, but one which received disproportionately all the attentions of the historian of liberty and empire. The moral and political elements, which formed Minto's 'original design'¹³⁵ and 'great cause'¹³⁶ in Java, were seen by Raffles to have been fulfilled in the form of a Malay Commonwealth centred in Singapore. As I discuss in my conclusion, Singapore had attracted what Grant foresaw to be 'a great deal of the Native Trade' and had become 'a considerable Resort of Natives, who have settled there, and are under the Protection of the Company, carrying on Trade and Cultivation'. This other realisation of Singapore has been missed, if not neglected, in the history. To Raffles, it constituted 'proof' that what was begun in British Java – the restoration of a moral and institutional order of society as the response to a British venture of critique – was successfully repeated in Singapore. In the

¹³³ Canning to Raffles, 11 October 1824, Boulger, *Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*, 277. Raffles's letter to Canning had opened by way of an apology for the Palembang incident, to which Canning replied that 'I have long forgotten every particular of your conduct in the Eastern Seas, except for the zeal and ability by which it was distinguished.'

¹³⁴ Stamford Raffles, *Statement of Services*, 54 (see n.14), 71.

¹³⁵ The term 'original design' was attributed by Raffles to Minto in his letter to Minto of 13 February 1814, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 224.

¹³⁶ Raffles to Minto, 21 April 1812, MSS Eur F148/30.

following testimony, he revealed how it was the native peoples of the Malay Archipelago, not the British country trader, who made Singapore into the successful port it became:

The principles by which my conduct has been regulated throughout the whole series of my services, as well in Java and Sumatra as in Singapore, have been sound and just, and... conducive to the happiness and improvement of the various classes of society subjected to our rule. The British administration will, I trust, long be revered in Java and respected abroad, for the equity, liberality, and benevolence of its principles; and in proof of the confidence which it has inspired, I will only refer to the rapidity with which the population of the surrounding countries recently flocked to Singapore at the sight of our flag.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Stamford Raffles, *Statement of Services*, 67-68. (See n.76)

Chapter Two

Raffles and Adam Smith: Decline and Fall of Java

It is an interesting fact of Britain's colonial past that Sir Stamford Raffles, the Lieutenant-Governor of Java, was a keen reader of Adam Smith's ground-breaking treatise, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). *Wealth of Nations* was quoted by Raffles at four places in his 1817 account of his government of Java, *The History of Java*.¹ These references, which Raffles applied to his descriptions of Java's historical condition, represent an intellectual conduit between Adam Smith's context of the Enlightenment and Britain's conquest and subsequent occupation of Java in 1811. The association has naturally led historians to place Raffles's thought and policies within the framework of political economy inaugurated by the *Wealth of Nations*, but a causal connection has never proven to be clear cut. As mentioned, the history of Britain's interventions in the East Indies in 1811-1819 records the struggle by the historian to overcome the contradiction between the liberal ideas of Smith and the Enlightenment, such as open markets and individual freedom, with Raffles's authoritarian policies in Java, such as state monopoly and neo-feudal land tenure, as well as his progressive policy of emancipation.

However, in considering Raffles's policies, the historian has never questioned the premise of the political-economic framework which he deduced from Raffles's

¹ Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, Vol. I (London: John Murray, 1830). Chapter V on 'Commerce' contains three quotes from *Wealth of Nations* (Book III, Chapter IV ('How the Commerce of the Towns Contributed to the Improvement of the Country') & Book IV, Chapter VII ('Of Colonies'), twice). Appendix B on 'Japan Trade' contains one quote from Book I, Chapter V ('Of the Real and Nominal Price of Commodities, or of their Price in Labour, and their Price in Money').

association with Smith and the Enlightenment. In this chapter, I argue that, though the connection between Raffles and Smith and the Enlightenment was valid, it had been misinterpreted. By examining how Raffles had read Smith's propositions in general, and comparing that to how he had observed the historical economy of Java, I show that Raffles had not treated *Wealth of Nations* as an economic manual, but rather approached it as a critic of the arguments of political economy and the ideas of the Enlightenment which it represents. Instead of political economy, Raffles's utterances constitute the mode of speech, or 'way of talking about politics',² of a political discourse unique to eighteenth-century Britain, known today as civic humanism. I show that it is the civic humanist's bugbear, that commerce both frees and enslaves humanity, which defines the actual context in which Raffles had apprehended the *Wealth of Nations*.

Historiography of Raffles's economics

The historical interest in Raffles's association with Smith's ideas during his administration of Java, hinges upon Raffles's legislation of a land rent regulation on 11 February 1814, which he referred to as the 'amended system of revenue collection'.³ It projected the individual cultivator as the source of the colony's fiscal revenue, and thus required him to be freed of feudal obligations to enjoy the fruits of his own labour and industry, and be given the choice of crop to cultivate for the market. Because these requirements were seen to convey concepts articulated by Smith of the 'division of labour', of supply and demand, and the freedom of trade, hence, in 1939, John Furnivall

² J.G.A. Pocock, 'The concept of a language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice' (1987), in J.G.A. Pocock, *Political Thought & History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 87. For more on contextualism as a historical methodology, see Pocock's 'Introduction: The state of the art' in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-36.

³ Stamford Raffles, *Substance of a Minute, on the Introduction of an Improved System of Internal Management and the Establishment of a Land Rental on the Island of Java* (London: Black, Parry, and Co., 1814), 1.

stated confidently that ‘Raffles derived his guiding principles from Adam Smith.’⁴ ‘His intention was to encourage trade,’ Furnivall argued of Raffles, ‘and thereby to improve the welfare of the people’. Quoting Raffles, Furnivall said that he ‘expected to achieve this by introducing “an improved system of political economy throughout the Island, with the intention of ameliorating the condition of all its inhabitants, by affording that protection to individual industry, which will ensure to every class of society the equitable and undisturbed enjoyment of the fruits of labour”.’ This important passage was later cited by Gillian Patricia Hart to justify Raffles as an ‘enthusiastic adherent of Adam Smith’.⁵ Anthony Milner similarly claimed that Raffles’s ‘thinking was shaped by the liberal economic philosophy of Adam Smith’.⁶

The historian’s association of Raffles’s policies with Smith’s ideas also permitted his wider association with the ideas of the Enlightenment. John Bastin, for example, suggested that Raffles’s land rent had facilitated the Javanese individual’s ‘economic and social progress’.⁷ The suggestion evokes a historical paradigm fundamental to the thought of Smith and the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, known as stadial theory. It conceives man to ‘progress’ through (generally) ‘four stages’ of social development, ‘each corresponding to a different mode of subsistence,’⁸ as he acquired knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences – in the case of the Javanese

⁴ John Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69.

⁵ Gillian P. Hart, *Power, Labor, and Livelihood: Processes of Change in Rural Java* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 22.

⁶ Anthony Milner, ‘Who Created Malaysia’s Plural Society?’, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Volume 76, Part 2, No 285 (December 2003): 18. More recently, a compendium by Singaporean academics published on the occasion of Singapore’s fiftieth anniversary, makes the direct claim that ‘Adam Smith had written about free trade in *The Wealth of Nations* (1783), and Raffles adopted this new policy’; Linda YC Lim, ed., *Singapore’s Economic Development: Retrospection and Reflections* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2016), 19. (*The Wealth of Nations* was first published in 1776.)

⁷ John Bastin, *The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra: An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), xiii.

⁸ Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science & The Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2. ‘To each of these modes of subsistence... there corresponded different sets of ideas and institutions relating to law, property, and government, and also different sets of customs, manners, and morals.’

individual, from the mode of agriculture to the mode of commerce. Thus, the aim of Raffles's policies, said Bastin, was 'of improving the condition of the people committed to his charge.'

Both Bastin and Furnivall saw Raffles's concern for the human condition to have followed in the steps of the Dutch republicans and liberals, notably the officials Dirk van Hogendorp and Herman Daendels. But while Furnivall attributed the influences of the Dutch and Raffles to Adam Smith, Bastin attributed them to Rousseau. 'Above all,' said Bastin, 'Raffles was a product of the late-eighteenth-century humanitarian movement, which had found its inspiration in the writings of Rousseau and in the myth of the 'noble savage'.' 'The humanitarian movement owed much to Rousseau's teachings concerning the perfectibility of human nature and the brotherhood of man,' Bastin continued, and where Raffles was concerned, 'he was firmly convinced that an enlightened western government dealing directly with the mass of the population could achieve rapid economic and social progress.'

The ready assumption that Raffles must have imbibed the ideas of Smith and the Enlightenment because he had read the *Wealth of Nations* inevitably ran into problems when his regulatory and authoritarian policies in Java jarred against the liberating philosophy of the Enlightenment. Raffles's 'devotion to Smith's doctrines such as 'free trade' was undermined by his devotion to his employer, the English East India Company,' suggested Mary Quilty. 'He seems to have used Smith to try to persuade the East India Company to regulate the archipelago, rather than condemn them.'⁹ Furnivall, after having committed both Raffles and the Dutch to Smith's universal principles, subsequently found himself obliged to qualify, rather confusingly, that 'Raffles worked on the principles of Adam Smith because they were both native products of the same

⁹ Mary Quilty, *British Economic Thought and Colonization in Southeast Asia, 1776-1850* (Unpublished thesis, University of Sydney, 2001), 93.

political climate and economic circumstances’, whereas the Dutch ‘were liberally inclined because they were convinced by the arguments of Adam Smith, but they inherited different traditions’.¹⁰

For Furnivall’s trouble, Bastin, as mentioned, seemed inclined to drop Adam Smith in favour of Rousseau. Yet even then, Raffles’s contradictions continued to baffle attempts to adapt his general politics to Enlightenment philosophy. Bastin was compelled to follow Furnivall with a proviso regarding the ‘basic conflict in [Raffles’s] policies [in Java and Sumatra] between emancipating the peasantry from their traditional allegiances, and supporting the native aristocracy, or, in Raffles’ words, between the doctrine of the ‘individual rights of man’ and ‘despotism’.’ Ultimately, ‘it is fruitless,’ Bastin conceded, ‘attempting to explain this difference of policy in terms of a change in Raffles’s basic humanitarian outlook. The reasons for the change must, in fact, be sought in the different social and economic conditions which he found in the two colonies.’¹¹

The problem of the historical narrative thus stems from the discrepancy between the intellectual idea and the practical reality, between the universal ideals of the Enlightenment and the particular politics of Raffles. In readily assuming that, because Raffles’s framework was that of Smithian political economy, hence his politics must be liberal, the historian had given himself the impossible task of uniting two diverging roads. Only Raffles’s Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814 admits an entitlement to Adam Smith, and this on the basis of Raffles’s claim that its settlement with the individual cultivator was comparable with India’s *ryotwari* settlement, which

¹⁰ Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, 92.

¹¹ Bastin, *Native Policies*, xiii.

its originator, Thomas Munro, had ascribed to Adam Smith.¹² The Amended Revenue System, however, was the last of six major policies implemented in Java. Prior to it were five policies, which were unquestionably contradictory to the Smithian ideal. All six policies are listed as follows:

1. The devaluation of Java's Paper Currency, which commenced immediately upon the surrender of the Franco-Dutch government of Java in September 1811;
2. The withdrawal of Java's Paper Currency between November 1812 and February 1813;
3. The sale of government lands to European purchasers between 4 November 1812 and 16 February 1813;
4. The first land rent regulation of 15 October 1813, promulgated as the New Revenue System, which devolved the source of fiscal revenue to the communal level of the villages;
5. The limited issue of new Paper Currency, known as the Lombard Paper, between March and November 1813;
6. The second land rent regulation of 11 February 1814, promulgated as the Amended Revenue System, which devolved the source of fiscal revenue to the individual level of the cultivator.

Raffles's first five policies, even the sixth, as we shall see, were somewhat radical in a communitarian and conservative way. All were reactionary to the market, and all were interventions by government. None was satisfied by the framework of

¹² Munro to Kirkman Finlay, 15 August 1825: 'I remember... the appearance of "The Wealth of Nations"... it was no wonder that Adam Smith had written such a book, as he had had the advantage of their society, in which the same doctrines were circulated with the punch every day. It is surprising to think that we should only just now be beginning to act upon them'. G. R. Gleig, *The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, Bart. and K. C. B. Late Governor of Madras* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 273.

political economy, and none removed the East India Company's monopolies. We will see in chapter three that they were not entirely at Raffles's bidding, but had been directed by Minto's 'great cause' and 'original design' of 'radical reform' of the political structure of Java's society. Generally, Minto's 'radical reform' described Raffles's policies as related collectively in a series, but how they progressed was also the outcome of Raffles's interpretation, rather than his strict observance, of Minto's wishes. They were also affected by an opposing interpretation of those wishes by Dutch officials.¹³ All in all, however, Raffles's policies were united by the same cause and the same effect. Their implementation and effect will be dealt with (where they involved money) in chapter four and (where they involved land) in chapter five. In this chapter and the next, Raffles's policies are introduced for the purpose of examining the contexts, respectively, of his and Minto's critiques of the human condition. What were the causes those policies were supposed to have addressed, collectively, in Java? What were they supposed to achieve, collectively?

Both questions have consistently dogged the historian, both British and Dutch. One enduring dilemma concerned how Raffles's New Revenue System, which was considered reactionary, and his progressive Amended Revenue System were related, if at all. Why was it, Bastin framed the problem in 1954, 'that between October 15 [1813] when the proclamation ordering village settlements was promulgated, and February 11, 1814, when the land rent Minute was penned, Raffles' ideas on the question of the revenue settlements changed considerably'?'¹⁴ Another problem concerned the charge of corruption brought against Raffles on 17 December 1813 by the military commander in Java, Robert Gillespie, in consequence of Raffles's policies. Gillespie had criticised

¹³ At this stage I attribute them all as Raffles's policies because they were instituted under his governorship – though, we will see, the first was entirely Minto's and the third was advanced by the Dutch councillor, Herman Muntinghe.

¹⁴ John Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission* (S-Gravenhage: VKI, Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 146 .

Raffles's policies for aiming at a 'perpetual monopoly' (of coffee), for being calculated to discourage competition, and for leading to a 'stagnation of commerce', the withdrawal of money, and 'great public distress'. Interestingly, these observations, antagonistic to Raffles, actually represent the few instances when the *bona fide* language of Smithian political economy emerged in the historical text.¹⁵

That is not to say, however, that Adam Smith was not valid to Raffles's government in Java. Nor should we accept Bastin's paradoxical conclusion that though European humanitarianism, which owed its philosophy to the Enlightenment, had inspired Raffles, it had no causal connection with his political decisions. The appearance of *Wealth of Nations* in Raffles's *History* signifies the extension of Smithian and Enlightenment thought as a real causal factor to Britain's invasion and occupation of Java. Mary Quilty has suggested that Raffles had a 'superficial reading of Smith',¹⁶ that 'Raffles was not a thorough going Smithian in his economic views.'¹⁷ That Raffles was not a Smithian is certainly supported by his contradictions, but that does not mean that Raffles had not a profound understanding of Smith. A careful study of Raffles's text will show that the idiom of *Wealth of Nations* – such as the 'monopolizing spirit', Smith's dictum 'to make smaller profits on a larger capital, than larger profits on a smaller capital,' and the moniker 'shopkeeper'¹⁸ – had already appeared in his reports to the Governor-General, the Earl of Minto, as late as 1811, *before* the fall of Java. The *History*'s references to *Wealth of Nations* were not thus a one-off event, but the latest in

¹⁵ Gillespie's "Memorandum on the Sale of Government Lands," in Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents concerning his administration as Lieutenant Governor of Java, addressed to the Chief Government of India to refute the charges brought against him by Major-General Gillespie* (privately published in Batavia, 1814), 47-49.

¹⁶ Quilty, *British Economic Thought*, 78.

¹⁷ Quilty, *British Economic Thought*, 93.

¹⁸ Raffles to Minto (Raffles's 'Malay policy' paper), 10 June 1811 (revised 20 September 1811), British Library, 'Raffles-Minto Papers', MSS Eur F148/7. 'Monopolizing spirit' occurs in Book IV, Chapter III of *Wealth of Nations*; the sizes of profits from capitals in Book II, Chapter III, and Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III; 'shopkeeper' in Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III.

a tradition of Raffles's consulting of Smith which stretched back at least seven years. What was Adam Smith's value to Raffles?

Division of Labour

The problem of Raffles's contradictions, it becomes clear, lies not with him. It lies with the historian who should be asking: how had Raffles understood *Wealth of Nations*?¹⁹ The chapters from *Wealth of Nations* which provided Raffles's quotes for his *History* lend a clue. They relate to the 'division of labour' between town and country, between commercial and agricultural nations, between colony and mother-country.²⁰ The principle of division of labour is the founding principle of *Wealth of Nations*. At the microeconomic level, it involves the quantitative expansion of one man's productivity through the specialization of tasks, and the qualitative division of productive resources into labour, land, and capital, that results from specialization. Its significance for Smith is that the commodities which materialize from the division of labour encapsulate within them a labour value to which all the productive resources are reducible. This labour value, being the denominator which relates and equates the supply of commodities with their demand, renders them quantifiable in terms of a common value of exchange. The self-regulating pricing system which proceeds from this relation describes Smith's innovation of the equilibrium of the free market.

At the macroeconomic and international levels, the division of labour thus differentiated between the productive resources of nations. Nations were generally divided between low-cost, agricultural, labour-intensive economies on the one side, and

¹⁹ For the first solid assessment of Raffles's reading of Adam Smith, see Mary Quilty, *British Economic Thought*, 70-78.

²⁰ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994); Book III, Chapter IV ('How the Commerce of Towns contributed to the Improvement of the Country'); Book IV, Chapter VII ('Of Colonies').

high-cost, commercial, capital-intensive economies on the other (where commerce, for Smith, generally meant manufacturing). This comparative advantage among nations obliges them to specialize, and from their specialization, a self-regulating free trade between their respective productions was expected to result. On this basis, Smith argued that low-wage economies (in countryside and colony) should produce agricultural goods for high-wage economies (in town and mother-country), which should in turn produce manufactures for the former.

Interestingly, Smith's explications of the international division of labour that provided the passages for Raffles's *History* were applied by Raffles to a rather contrary scheme. They were quoted to support his descriptions of an *undivided* personality of ancient Java, a Java that was both agricultural *and* commercial, yet also unspecialized. Raffles's ancient Java may have been premised to signify Smith's 'rude state of society, in which there is no division of labour, in which exchanges are seldom made, and in which every man provides every thing for himself'.²¹ But the correspondence fails. Raffles had acknowledged that in Java 'there is little division of labour among a rude people'.²² However, he also determined that Java had 'very early emerged from barbarism, and rose to great commercial prosperity,' *and* became a 'great agricultural country.'²³ Raffles's Java had clearly not followed the social progression of stages from barbaric to pastoral, to agriculture, and to commerce, which Smith's division of labour rendered natural and necessary of human society everywhere. And yet, even without the division of labour, which alone (it was argued) determined the refinement of the arts and sciences in human society, the 'rude people' of ancient Java had possessed a 'high degree of civilization and of advancement in the arts, which, from the monuments of its progress which still exist, there is every reason to believe it once attained.'

²¹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 299 (Book II, introduction).

²² Raffles, *History of Java*, 266.

²³ *Ibid.*, 211, 217.

Raffles's depiction of Java is contrary to Smith's conception of rude society and its place in the international division of labour. Raffles, in fact, was explicit that the division of labour was never significant in Java; nor did he expect it would ever become significant. 'In a country like Java,' he said, 'where the structure of society is simple, and the wants of the people are few, where there is no accumulation of capital and little division of professions, it cannot be expected, that manufacturing skill should be acquired, or manufacturing enterprise encouraged, to any great extent.'²⁴ In fact, Raffles believed that it was the accumulation of capital and international division of labour – introduced with the entry first of Portuguese power and then Dutch mercantilism – which wrecked Java's undivided personality and turned the island into a specialized but poor agrarian colony. In considering 'the extent of the commerce enjoyed by Java, at the period of the establishment of the Dutch in the eastern seas,' he rued that 'it would be painful to point out how far, or to show in what manner, that commerce was interfered with, checked, changed in its character, and reduced in its importance'.

In going against the grain of the Smithian rationale that specialization rewarded wealth, while non-specialization brought none, Raffles had effectively disagreed with, even dismissed, Smith's principle of the division of labour. This disagreement puts some perspective on Mary Quilty's observation that, by comparison, Raffles's 'subordinate John Crawford, used Smith with far more theoretical dexterity'.²⁵ Raffles was less dexterous with respect to Smith's theories not because he did not understand them, but because he disagreed with them. In this respect, Raffles's disagreement was merely the latest in a tradition of polite critique against Smith that began with Hugh Blair's famous remark that *Wealth of Nations* was 'too much like a publication for the

²⁴ Ibid., 163.

²⁵ Quilty, *British Economic Thought*, 93.

moment'.²⁶ For Smith's great treatise, Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff explained, 'was a scandal in his own time'.²⁷ 'Smith's division of labour theory and his natural price model' had in fact provided 'new economic arguments' which 'were developed in the context of an intense eighteenth-century debate about the inequality and luxury of modern commercial societies'.

As a text used by Raffles, therefore, *Wealth of Nations* should not be treated as the standard for conducting commerce in the Eastern Islands, but as an argument that responded to the prevailing criticism over 'the inequality and luxury of modern commercial societies'. Raffles's writings and policies fall into this prevailing critical view, and should be read as a vindication of it against the assertions of Smith's theories – it likewise follows that Crawford should be read as a defence of Smith's theories against the prevailing critical view taken by Raffles. But what was this prevailing critical view of modern commercial society?

If we identify Raffles's policies in Java in terms of the division of labour, we find that each policy actually addresses one of the three factors of production that emerge from that division. These factors, delineated by Adam Smith, constitute the productive resources of *labour*, *land*, and *capital*. Thus, Raffles's first and second policies, the devaluation and withdrawal of paper currency, concerned money, which Smith considered to be a form of circulating capital. His third, the sale of government lands, created titles of permanent estates in perpetuity, known in India as the permanent or *zamindari* settlement. Raffles's fourth and sixth policies, the New Revenue System of 15 October 1813 and the Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814, assigned the tenure of land leases first to the village unit, known in India as the *mahalwari*

²⁶ Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life* (UK: Penguin, 2010), 239.

²⁷ Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, "Needs and justice in the 'Wealth of Nations'," in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

settlement, and subsequently reassigned it to the individual, which Raffles claimed as representing the *ryotwari* settlement.²⁸ Raffles's fifth policy, his limited issue of new paper currency, concerned money again.

In each case, Raffles's policies did not free and advance the respective resource according to Smith's free market ideal whereby labour, land, and capital are balanced in perfect liberty, equality, and justice.²⁹ They did rather the opposite. The first and second policies disabled capital. The fourth and sixth policies assigned the condition of land leases to labour.³⁰ Only the third policy, the land sales, and the fifth policy, the new paper currency, were indicative of the division of labour but in reality these were not the outcome of the free market but initiatives of government control. As I explain in chapter five, they were ancillary to the penultimate sixth policy, the Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814. Indeed, the first five policies all played a part in putting in place the conditions and structure for the crowning policy that was the Amended Revenue System.

All in all, Raffles policies together effectively reversed the division of labour. In doing so, they ended the person's subjection to the category of 'labour', and labour's subjection to the other categories of 'land' and 'capital'. What we are dealing with here is an early notion of alienation of the divided self. The division of labour was seen to have divided the person into three estranged ideas of the self. The political philosopher,

²⁸ Raffles to Minto, 13 February 1814, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 224.

²⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 726 (Book IV, Chapter IX).

³⁰ Where land tenure was concerned, John Locke's Labour Theory of Property does not enter into policies originating with Raffles. As I explain here, Raffles's belief in the cultivator's ancient possession of land revealed a republican context where property was secured to a person's authority, rather than the jurisprudential context where a person's rights was secured to the authority of property. In Chapter 5, I show that Raffles did not see Locke's concept of private property as natural, but rather as the prerogative and allodial title of government. Thus, in Raffles's fourth and sixth policies, native titles were leasehold and distributed at the levels of the individual and village. The exception was Raffles's third policy, which alienated land to Europeans and had actually originated with Muntinghe. Muntinghe's freehold scheme rather exploited Locke's justification for private property, and is opposed to Raffles's fourth and sixth policies which, I argue, reflected the agrarian law of James Harrington and Richard Price.

Hannah Arendt, distinguished this alienation as between the ‘human condition of life’ that is ‘labour’, and the ‘human condition of worldliness’ that is ‘work’. i.e. the labouring animal, *animal laborans*, and the producing human, *homo faber*. So long as it subsisted, this alienation prevented ‘human action’ and thus the very ‘condition of human existence’.³¹ To borrow Arendt’s construction, Raffles’s criticism of Smith’s division of labour rested upon the alienation and subjection which it rendered mankind. Alienation and subjection manifested as indebtedness and slavery, and Raffles’s object of loathing was the yoke of debt which he saw to have proliferated throughout Java. There, financial debt and debt slavery subjected, respectively, the European colonist and native Javanese to the owners of capital who wielded power of command over labour and land.

This power, Raffles’s policies sought to overturn. He saw the disabling of capital as ending the alienating subjection of labour by capital. His devaluation and withdrawal of paper currency, originally issued to the amount of 8.5 million Spanish Dollars, literally devalued and withdrew the colony’s public debt contracted through that issue of paper money. Consequently, Raffles saw the joining of landownership to labour as restoring the unity between human life, human worldliness, and human action. His land rents not only ended the forced deliveries of contingents to which native labour was bound by feudal duty to the Regents (and by contracts between the Regents and the VOC), but returned the fruits of native labour to the native individual. His policies returned to men, as it were, the wholeness of the self previously undermined by the division of labour, and thus recovered their self-consciousness and self-dependence, which in the text was repeatedly referred to as the security of person and property.

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7-11.

Orang Merdika

Apprehending Raffles's policies as interventions into a human condition of alienation and subjection, and of indebtedness and slavery, discloses a historical conceptual framework known as *civic humanism*. John Pocock defines it thus: 'Civic humanism denotes a style of thought... in which it is contended that the development of the individual towards self-fulfillment [sic] is possible only when the individual acts as a citizen, that is as a conscious and autonomous participant in an autonomous decision-taking political community, the polis or republic.'³² To the civic humanist, the wholeness of the self is epitomised by the person of the citizen. His self-consciousness and self-dependence distinguish his highest good of virtue, and they are delivered through his possession of property. 'The citizen possessed property,' explained Pocock, 'in order to be autonomous and autonomy was necessary for him to develop virtue or goodness as an actor within the political, social and natural realm or order.'³³ Property assigned to the citizen's person and to his active participation in public affairs the authority of his autonomy. 'He did not possess it in order to engage in trade, exchange or profit,' Pocock continued; 'indeed, these activities were hardly compatible with the activity of citizenship.'

The civic humanist conception of autonomy pervades Raffles's writings. In his 1808 paper on the Malays of Malacca, for example, Raffles described 'their independence and Estates on which they depend for their livelihood and respectability', and acknowledged their authority as 'Proprietors of Property or connected with those that are, and those possessing independence from their Gardens, fishing and the small

³² J.G.A. Pocock, 'Civic Humanism and Its Role in Anglo-American Thought', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 85.

³³ J.G.A. Pocock, 'The mobility of property and the rise of eighteenth-century sociology', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 103.

traffic of the Place'.³⁴ The small property portrayed in these images is evocative of the agrarian ideal, by James Harrington, the seventeenth-century political theorist of English republicanism, of the free man's 'Twenty acres of ground'. The small property would 'Of necessity enforce dwellers; and... of necessity enforce the dweller not to be a beggar or cottager, but a man of some substance,' such that they would constitute 'the yeomanry, or middle people, who, living not in a servile or indigent fashion, were much unlinked from dependence upon their lords and, [were] living in a free and plentiful manner'.³⁵ The land, Raffles repeated in 1815, assigned to the native individual in the Malay Archipelago his authority 'to maintain an independent establishment, under the term of *Orang Merdika*, or free man.'³⁶

This civic humanist conception of freedom, or *merdeka*, is unlike the contractarian right of liberty and consent understood in political economy. It resembles what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin has distinguished as a positive, rather than negative, conception of freedom. Positive freedom is freedom that expresses the personal will and actions of the individual in his authority as a public citizen in the public domain. Negative freedom, on the other hand, describes the limit in which an individual's actions, and the actions of others, are permitted in observation of his natural rights.³⁷ Positive freedom connotes a moral and political self-consciousness of the citizen's public personality, whereas negative freedom defines an individual's private legal space

³⁴ Raffles to Minto-in-Council, 31 October 1809, MSS Eur F148/3. The date has been mistakenly recorded. Raffles's Malacca paper was produced in October 1808 at the end of a three month stay in Malacca, and conveyed to Minto in February 1809, via Norman Macalister at Penang and John Leyden at Calcutta. It consequently brought Raffles to Minto's notice. It was formally acknowledged by the Company in November 1809.

³⁵ James Harrington, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'*, ed., J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 55.

³⁶ Raffles's 'Address' to the Batavian Society, 11 September 1815, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 173. Raffles's use of the term *Orang Merdika* adopts the same meaning understood by the Dutch in *Mardijkers*, that is, of men freed from slavery, which denotes the positive concept of liberty. See J. J. van Klaveren, *The Dutch Colonial System in the East Indies* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 24.

³⁷ See Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958), in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-217.

in which situates his private property. Berlin's conceptual differentiation was applied in other forms: by Arendt to the separation between the 'private' realm and the 'public' realm, by Harrington to the 'Goods of Fortune' and the 'Goods of the Mind', and by Pocock to the authority of right which natural law assigns to property in itself and the authority of the person in his possession of property. The general dichotomy that emerges distinguishes conceptions of wealth and property according to the two frameworks of civic humanism and political economy.³⁸

Raffles, it is true, never produced anything theoretical on politics or political economy. However, we can single out five texts from him that are soundly in the civic humanist tradition. In chronological order, they are:

1. A monograph 'On the Maláyu Nation with a Translation of their Maritime Code', which traced the history of Malay laws and customs, and originated in 1806 at the urging of John Leyden.³⁹ A draft was submitted to Minto (probably) in September 1810,⁴⁰ and a final version was published in 1816 in the *Asiatick Researches*.⁴¹
2. Raffles's 1808 'Malacca' paper mentioned above,⁴² which drew up a positive portrayal of an undivided and unspecialized community of *Orang Merdika*.
3. A 'Malay policy' paper on the 'Malay States' dated June 1811, during the voyage to Java, and revised in September 1811, which was written specifically for Minto by Raffles as 'Agent to the Malay States'.⁴³

³⁸ See John Pocock's chapter on 'Virtues, rights, and manners: A model for historians of political thought', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 37-50.

³⁹ Leyden to Raffles, 7 March 1806, National Library of Scotland, 'Correspondence of John Leyden', MS 971. Cited in I.M. Brown, *John Leyden (1775-1811): his life and works* (Unpublished PhD thesis; University of Edinburgh, 1955), 444.

⁴⁰ Raffles to Minto, MSS Eur F148/9.

⁴¹ Stamford Raffles, 'On the Maláyu Nation, with a Translation of its Maritime Institutions', *Asiatick Researches, or Transactions of the Society; instituted in Bengal*, Volume 12 (Calcutta, 1816), 102-158.

⁴² Raffles to Minto-in-Council, 31 October 1809, MSS Eur F148/3.

4. An untitled and undated document contained in the British Library folio labelled 'Reports on Java', the date of which can be estimated to 1811, and which concerned the Chinese revenue farms.⁴⁴ Both (3) & (4) discussed commerce's corruption of the body politic, and provided the fodder for Raffles's fifth text.
5. His chapter on 'Commerce' in the *History*, which described the degradation of ancient Java from an unspecialized but prosperous self-conscious state to a specialized but poor agricultural colony.

Raffles's first and second texts are well-known in the history. However, their portrayal of the Malay as a morally self-conscious and politically self-dependent being has never been recognized. But while the Malay individual in Malacca, unshackled from Dutch rule since 1795, was observed by Raffles in 1808 as *Orang Merdika*, he did not observe the same of the native individual in Java until 1815, when technically the Javanese became self-dependent as a result of his Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814. Before the British invasion, if the native Javanese were not bound by feudal duty to the Regents, they were indebted to the creditors of the land on which they subsisted. The cause the indebtedness of both Javanese native and European colonist are rigorously represented in Raffles's third and fourth papers. These texts have been neglected in the history, but, as I discuss them in this chapter, they portrayed the human condition of alienation, subjection, indebtedness, and slavery in Java as the result of the corruption of man by unbridled commerce. This theme is developed into a narrative of the modern degradation of an ancient constitution in Raffles's fifth text, 'Commerce'. 'Commerce' stands out as the platform where Adam Smith's language of political economy was used by Raffles to defend the civic humanist conception of Javanese society and history and to indict the corruption and abuses of commerce against the

⁴³ Raffles to Minto (Raffles's 'Malay policy' paper), 10 June 1811 (revised 20 September 1811), MSS Eur F148/7.

⁴⁴ Raffles's Chinese revenue farms paper, MSS Eur F148/8.

claims of political economy itself. This engagement by Raffles of both discourses was a source of the paradoxes that saturate his text.

That there were civic humanists or classical republicans in the employ of the East India Company who condemned commercial society in favour of the body politic is an intriguing proposition. Certainly, the Company's surveyor of Mysore and Java, Colin Mackenzie, had expressed great admiration for the previous reforms of Java's Franco-Dutch republican government.⁴⁵ Raffles's civic humanist standpoint, however, strictly observed the English or Atlantic tradition.⁴⁶ From it, we can finally explain his interest in the *Wealth of Nations*. Raffles was simply a critic of what Hont and Ignatieff called Adam Smith's 'defence of modernity against those who condemned commercial society from the vantage point, either of the classical civic humanist ideal of a virtuous republic... or of the Christian ideal of society as a positive community of goods.'⁴⁷

Raffles's civic humanist vantage point, we will see in the next sections, is encapsulated in the dualism of commerce as the instrument of both liberty and liberty's antithesis, slavery.⁴⁸ Commerce conducted virtuously with 'frugality' was seen to mark a person's self-dependence. But commerce also brought 'luxury', 'avarice', and 'prodigality': these viciously corrupted the person's self-dependence and made him

⁴⁵ Mackenzie to Minto, 25 April 1813, MSS Eur F148/47. Of the 'Plan... on the Subject of the Monopoly & of the Manner of Settling the Lands', Mackenzie said that, 'on comparing Mr. Hogendorp's Account in 1801, Mr. Nederburg's Report [of the Committee on India Affairs of the 31st August 1803 which sat at the Hague], & General Daendels's Organization in [1]809 – in the course of 8 Years a considerable reform & alteration had taken place in Java, which tho' perhaps attended with individual hardship, yet on the whole has gradually paved the way from a Vicious Mode of Administration, to at least clearing the way & removing the rubbish for an Edifice of a more permanent, Solid & beautiful Structure... Like those Storms & Convulsions that change & agitate the face of Nature, involving Nations & Regions in destruction, but finally ending in tranquillizing & purifying the Atmosphere, & in the restoration of Order, of Culture, of fertility; so it is fortunate in Political Changes that the Anarchy, discord & horrors that follow weak & vicious Governments generally terminate in a better Order of things.'

⁴⁶ See J.G.A. Pocock, 'Spinoza and Harrington: An Exercise in Comparison', *Bikdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 102 (1987), 435-449.

⁴⁷ Hont and Ignatieff, 'Needs and justice', 2-26.

⁴⁸ See John Pocock on Charles Davenant in his chapter on 'Land, Trade and Credit', in J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 423-461.

dependent. Against this self-destructive cycle, Smith had brought to bear the productive cycle of political economy. To be sure, Raffles never disputed the merits of Smith's productive cycle. His main complaint was the credibility of its foundational principles, and the relativism of the moral space claimed by those principles for modern civil society. In finding holes in Smith's productive cycle, Raffles validated the civic humanist suspicion of commerce's vicious cycle and exposed Smith's disguising of this vicious cycle as 'mercantilism'. What emerged from Raffles's critique of political economy was a broad conception of 'political economy' that was undivorced from the older political discourse of governance in the body politic,⁴⁹ which he called 'an improved system of political economy'.

Self-interest and the dualism of Labour and Stock

Raffles's critique of political economy concerned what Hont and Ignatieff called the 'central questions' of *Wealth of Nations*, which asked why, in spite of its inequalities between property, labour, and productivity, commercial society was still able to maintain the subsistence of the labouring masses and at a level superior to the former systems of 'slaves' and 'savage tribesmen'. This 'paradox of commercial society', describing the curious compatibility between 'economic inequality' and 'adequate subsistence', between the 'rights of the rich' and 'needs of the poor', encapsulates the innovative effect that is owed to two defining principles of the philosophy of Adam Smith. The first, we have already seen, is the division of labour. The specific employments of the resources of labour, land, and capital, which are attributed to the

⁴⁹ For this broad conception of 'political economy', see Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (Routledge, 1994), and Lars Magnusson, *The Political Economy of Mercantilism* (Routledge, 2015). 'Labour balance of trade' refers to the proportion of wages of exported goods, which are effectively paid by foreign demand, over wages of imported goods – it is contrasted with the proportion of export sales over import purchases, which constitute the 'balance of trade'. Also known as the 'export of work'.

division of labour, were expected to return a manifold increase on the quantity and value of productions over the quantity and value of the resources employed. This increased production, realized through the free market, not only reimbursed the productive labour and supported the labourer's subsistence, it also replenished the capital employed. But more than that, the surplus effectively constituted a revenue which returned a profit to the owner of the capital, paid the rent of land, and, Smith added curtly, supported the expense of unproductive labourers.

To actuate and perpetuate this productive cycle, however, Smith underpinned the division of labour with another principle from his earlier treatise, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). This principle addressed the consequentialist motive for man to divide his labour, increase productivity, employ resources, exchange goods, and so on. Smith's motive was supplied by the old vice of self-interest. Smith's moral philosophy, nevertheless, deconstructed the deontological act of self-interest and introduced the consequentialist idea of 'self-love'. In the moral judgment of the spectator, he argued, if self-love 'had no other effect than to make the individual take care of his own happiness, it was merely innocent, and though it deserved no praise, neither ought it to incur any blame.'⁵⁰ As self-love, self-interest effectively acquired a moral relativism, which became very handy in *Wealth of Nations*. It was to blamelessly increase one's own personal wealth, that men were driven to desire economic efficiency and to invest their property of capital and land in employing productive labour to achieve it.

Private self-interest, therefore, lent itself to the division of labour, and collectively this led to a material surplus being distributed to the prosperity and happiness of the population, such that the 'rights of the rich' cohered with the 'needs of

⁵⁰ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (USA: Penguin, 2009), 356.

the poor'. This principle, whereby private interest results in unintended consequences of public benefit in the public interest,⁵¹ is the great innovation, after the division of labour, in *Wealth of Nations*. It is known as the 'invisible hand'. Against the division of labour and self-interest, however, Raffles dissented. What he saw of the East vindicated the recurring moral arguments of the civic humanist that the division of labour left the labouring poor vulnerable to market manipulations of prices and employment, and that self-interest was a deceptive pretext for avarice by the rich. 'Self-interest does not fail to seize every possible opportunity of extortion,' Raffles quoted in his *History*.⁵² Indeed, Hont reminds us that '*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* was difficult and was often denounced, then as now, as a dead end for the further development of moral philosophy.'⁵³ The moral philosopher, Thomas Reid, whom we will meet in chapter six, concluded of 'Dr Smith's System of Sympathy' that it was 'only a Refinement of the selfish System.'⁵⁴

What Raffles took to be the weakness in Smith's productive cycle was Smith's misplaced optimism that the division of labour and self-interest naturally, rationally, and necessarily apprehended the idea of wealth in terms of *labour*, or the valuableness of labour. That is, tasks of labour will always be specialized; capital and land, which are divided from labour, will always be reducible to labour; and all three resources of capital, land, and labour, will always be employed toward increasing labour productivity, production capacity, and quantity of produce. The snag lay in Smith's altruistic treatment of the antithetical concept to labour which is that of *stock*. For

⁵¹ The principle was originally conceived, under a slightly different context, in 1714 by Bernard Mandeville as to how 'Private Vices... may be turn'd into Public Benefits'. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (UK: Penguin, 2007), cclxix.

⁵² Raffles, *History of Java*, 302.

⁵³ Istvan Hont, 'The Adam Smith Problem', in *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, ed. Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

Smith, stock was effectively ‘labour stocked and stored up, to be employed, if necessary, upon some other occasion.’⁵⁵ Stock initially took the form of commodities, and, on being accumulated and exchanged, acquired the form of capital. The utilisation of capital thus represented the utilisation of labour stocked and stored up. In subsequently employing productive labour and improving the quantity and value of productions, capital thus fulfilled the division of labour and reproduced the productive cycle.

To this end, Smith took pains to insist that ‘the person who employs his stock in maintaining labour, necessarily wishes to employ it in such a manner as to produce as great a quantity of work as possible. He endeavours... both to make among his workmen the most proper distribution of employment, and to furnish them with the best machines which he can either invent or afford to purchase.’⁵⁶ Smith, we shall see in chapter four, was not entirely consistent with this argument. But as a labour theory of value, it made no concession as to whether stock, in the form of capital, may no longer behave like a store of labour, but rather as ‘property’ (in the sense of a privately-possessed asset). In which case, rather than fulfil the division of labour, the owner of stock is only interested, out of self-interest, to increase the value of his stock as his personal fortune. This he can do to the greatest effect by procuring the command of stock over labour and, indeed, over the division of labour. In other words, would not Smith’s division of labour and invisible hand equally apprehend wealth in terms of the purchasing power of property?

This duality of the concept of wealth, which exposes the ambiguities affecting the division of labour and invisible hand in Smith’s productive cycle, was in fact noted by Smith. In *Wealth of Nations*, Smith had identified two modes of valuation which he

⁵⁵ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 360 (Book II, Chapter III).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 300 (Book II, introduction).

termed ‘value in exchange’ and ‘value in use’.⁵⁷ ‘Value in exchange’ relates to what is known as the Labour Theory of Value, where commodities are valued by the labour (including the store of labour that inheres in capital) which was expended in their production. Smith’s productive cycle takes for granted the labour theory of value. A commodity which supplied a demand at market, possessed a labour value equal to a nominal quantity of money offered for that commodity. The exchange value of the commodity was thus the nominal price paid which was also its labour value. ‘Value in use’, on the other hand, relates how we are to value, for example, the nominal quantity of money offered to purchase the above commodity. Money at the time took the form of specie. Specie was commodity money, made of metal and cast in coin. And as a commodity, specie assumed the identity of stock and possessed a utility which was derived from consuming a commodity. This utility increased with stockpiling that commodity, and hence, the use value of specie translated to its purchasing power.

Obviously, use value and exchange value represent two separate frameworks of valuation. *Wealth of Nations* contains Smith’s famous paradox as to the incompatibility between the use value of water and the exchange value of diamonds. But Smith, in response, was very careful to tie money to its function within the productive cycle, and therefore render the value of money as collateral with the value of labour. What he essentially disowned from the productive cycle was the use value of stock, which conceives of wealth in terms of property, and identifies what is now known as the Power Theory of Value.⁵⁸ He distinguished exchange value (labour theory of value) and the productive cycle as signifying real wealth. By comparison, use value (power theory of value) signified the false wealth of hoarded property – known as the ‘Midas fallacy’ – which holds up the productive cycle as it subjects the circulation or flow of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 31 (Book I, Chapter IV).

⁵⁸ See Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, *Capital as Power: A Study of Order and Creorder* (Routledge, 2009), 228.

industrious or productive labour to its command. Smith was very well aware of the monetary power accorded to 'the person who either acquires, or succeeds to a great fortune'. 'Wealth, as Mr Hobbes says, is power,' he admitted, and 'the power which that possession [of fortune] immediately and directly conveys to [its owner], is the power of purchasing a certain command over all the labour, or over all the produce of labour which is then in the market.'⁵⁹

The power of fortune did not trouble Smith, however. Conceiving value in terms of power, and hoarding money as treasure, in order to command the labourer and his produce, were, he argued, features of an unnatural and insecure pre-commercial society. In this society, a characteristic 'prodigality' and 'misconduct' ensured that stock was quickly consumed before it could be accumulated to any harmful degree. 'Accumulation is thus prevented in the hands of all those who are naturally the most disposed to accumulate,' explained Smith. Only the characteristic 'parsimony' and 'industry' in a natural and secure commercial society ensured the sustained accumulation of stock through savings; whereupon, Smith then reiterated, 'every man of common understanding will endeavour to employ whatever stock he can command,' for 'a man must be perfectly crazy, who, where there is a tolerable security, does not employ all the stock which he commands.'⁶⁰ The 'common sense of mankind', he argued, ensured that labour stored up in stock was always restored as labour employed. 'The perpetual allotment and destination of this fund [capital] is always guarded,' Smith averred, 'by a very powerful principle, the plain and evident interest of every individual to whom any share of it shall ever belong. No part of it can ever afterwards be

⁵⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 34 (Book I, Chapter V).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 309 (Book II, Chapter I).

employed to maintain any but productive hands, without an evident loss to the person who thus perverts it from its proper destination.’⁶¹

Mercantilism vs Governance

What Adam Smith claimed to have differentiated were the social conditions apropos *mercantilism* on the one hand, and an ideal *commerce* on the other. Pre-commercial society, in which wealth was hoarded as power, was embodied by mercantilist and feudal society. But because this society’s ‘prodigality’ and ‘misconduct’ limited its tendency to hoard, it was thus unnatural, irrational, unnecessary, insecure, and eventually doomed on its own accord. Mercantilism was thus an anomaly from the feudal past. It represented a ‘false political economy’, the result of true political economy having been perverted by the prejudices and private interests of antiquated merchants and manufacturers, whose ‘monopolizing spirit’ Smith naively believed ‘may very easily be prevented’. A true commercial society must therefore materialize from the demise of mercantilism, if only because its ‘parsimony’ and ‘industry’, which ensured that capital accumulated will always employ labour, was natural, rational, necessary, secure, and inevitable.

What we find in this scheme are two applications of Smith’s ‘powerful principle’ of self-interest. Self-interest in mercantilist society though vicious was self-defeating, while in commercial society it was blameless and self-perpetuating. What was innovative about this construction was how it provided virtuous ‘frugality’ a way out of the civic humanist trap of being corrupted by vicious ‘luxury’, ‘avarice’, and ‘prodigality’. In circulating and distributing the wealth of labour, the invisible hand and division of labour perfected commerce as a reproductive productive cycle. The ‘rustic’

⁶¹ Ibid., 369 (Book II, Chapter III).

‘frugality’ of ‘rude’ society, therefore, could theoretically advance into the ‘parsimony’ and ‘industry’ of a true commercial (or ‘civilized’) society. Society no longer needed to fluctuate between states of ‘rustic’ ‘frugality’ and ‘ostentatious’ ‘luxury’. If, indeed, self-interest driven by the power of stock perverts commerce and corrupts society into stockpiling and concentrating wealth in stock – i.e. into creating mercantilist and feudal society – this self-interest was nevertheless unstable due to ‘prodigality’ and ‘misconduct’, and must eventually revert to employing labour. In determining that true commercial society, industrious and free, was inevitable and within reach of mankind – in spite of the aberration of mercantilism and feudalism – Smith had resolved the dualism of commerce. He also laid the historical foundation of stadial theory.

Raffles never objected to the productive cycle. In fact, both British and Dutch republicans assumed it to be the true model. Unfortunately, events in Java demonstrated that Smith’s mercantilism was not a fleeting anomaly, nor was his principle of self-interest necessarily drawn by the ‘common sense of mankind’ towards the employment of labour. Java’s owners of stock certainly did not trouble themselves over the spectator’s moral judgment of their actions. For them, the ‘Midas touch’, not the ‘Midas fallacy’, prevailed. Capital was hardly employed to raise productivity or production. Rather, it purchased the power of command over labour and the labourer’s produce. In turn, labour was indentured to increase, by forced deliveries of contingents, the stock and power of capital. The division of labour too had no meaningful relevance within Java. Rather, as I show in the next sections, an international division of labour led to intended consequences of a division between native labour and foreign capital, and of the subjection of ‘rude’ primitive society to the demands of ‘civilized’ commercial society. Java’s native inhabitants ended up embodying the low-cost agricultural labour

for a high-cost commercial market in an international division of labour which was commanded by the foreign owners of capital.

Smith's self-interest and division of labour, Raffles thus observed in Java, had not provided for the industrious labourer's wellbeing, so much as they rewarded the proprietor of stock with power. What Raffles found unacceptable about classical political economy was not so much its fantasies of altruistic commerce. Because it recognized only the labour theory of value, so mercantilism, which apprehends the power theory of value, is eschewed as an effective reality. Civic humanists such as he saw that the ideological clamour for deregulation that was then being brought to bear against the Company's authority in India, was detached from the real circumstances of society and imperfectability of man. It merely served to clear the way for unbridled mercantilist behaviour – the 'monopolizing spirit' – including by the private 'adventurer'. Java was a case in point. It proved clearly that society was not progressing towards commercial perfection, nor did mercantilism and feudalism show any sign of becoming redundant on their own accord. Instead, self-interest and the division of labour were making society regress, in which case it was modern mercantilist society that appeared to have succeeded to an idealized ancient constitution. We are thus back to the old vicious cycle between virtuous frugality and vicious luxury, between the 'goods of the mind' and the 'goods of fortune'. For his idealism, Adam Smith's historicism and stadial theory were defective.⁶²

⁶² Perhaps explaining the reason for Mary Quilty's observation, that 'the 'four stages theory' rarely makes an appearance in the works of... Raffles.' *Textual empires: a reading of early British histories of Southeast Asia* (Monash Asia Institute, 1998), 45.

Private Stock and Public Debt

The vicious cycle which Raffles observed to have occurred in Java took the outward form of what in political economy is termed the problem of underconsumption. Underconsumption is the theory that effective market demand for goods relative to their supply is inadequate, leading to economic recession or stagnation. It contradicts the perfectibility and efficiency of the market, and historically constituted a critique of classical political economy. Raffles recognized underconsumption in Java, however, when he repeatedly complained of ‘the total want of demand for the produce of the colony’. ‘The coffee alone,’ Raffles wrote, ‘would have afforded us an importation of specie of nearly two millions of Spanish Dollars annually. At present it is literally rotting in the stores.’⁶³ The problem was inherited by the British when they took over Java, but its causes go back to the Dutch period. Two decades of international conflict was certainly a factor, but underconsumption was primarily the result of the paradox of thrift.⁶⁴ This refers to the vicious cycle whereby increased private savings prevent spending, or what is known as aggregate demand, which decreases production, employment, income, and thus, total savings.

The inadequate demand observed by Raffles in Java, and its effects of the oversupply of commodities and shortage of money in circulation, was the result of the productive cycle slowing down. The cause of this was the lack of spending, or investment in the employment of labour, that will sustain the consumption that is the necessary impetus to production. What caused the lack of spending was not the lack of stock, but simply that stock was being saved, or hoarded, in private vaults. Notwithstanding Adam Smith’s optimism, this hoarding was not undermined by

⁶³ Raffles to Elton Hammond, Oct 1813, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 191.

⁶⁴ The authority on underconsumption, aggregate demand, and the paradox of thrift was Keynes, who attributed the last to Mandeville. See John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936) (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), 358-371.

‘prodigality’, nor did ‘parsimony’ reward investment and employment. Instead, the ‘Midas touch’ held sway among Java’s owners of stock. Their instinct to hoard stock as treasure rather than invest it as capital, to lend stock as money to earn interest rather than purchase machinery, infrastructure or raw materials, to procure the command over labour rather than employ labour: these point to a conception of wealth in terms of the power of stock rather than the value of labour.

In Java, therefore, there was plenty of stock, only it was not in the productive cycle.⁶⁵ Naturally, a concerned government will try to get the cycle turning again, and this will require government to spend publicly by releasing the stored value locked up within private stock.⁶⁶ This effectively implied injections of stock in the form of money into the market. The problem with Java, however, was that two centuries of mercantilism had constrained private stock, and indeed public labour, within a nexus of power that comprised of:

1. Dutch officials who controlled the monopoly on produce through private contracts with native chiefs, and the alloidal title over government land as well as trusteeship of probate land,
2. Chinese clan captains who monopolized the revenue farms and port duty farms through private licenses from the Dutch, and
3. the native rulers who possessed the feudal authority over the cultivator.⁶⁷

This nexus of power, which blurred the distinction between public and private wealth, between government and business, politics and economics, supplied the

⁶⁵ Raffles’s reports to Minto prior to the Expedition to Java indicate that the British were very well aware that this stock existed, though as treasure.

⁶⁶ This was the significance of Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*.

⁶⁷ Raffles to Minto (Raffles’s ‘Malay policy’ paper), 10 June 1811 (revised 20 September 1811), MSS Eur F148/7.

foundation of the rentier state that was Java.⁶⁸ Its propensity for rent-seeking was described by Robert Farquhar in terms of a ‘monopoly within the monopoly of the Dutch Company’.⁶⁹ What it made impossible for the Franco-Dutch government to do was to raise public money in the modern sense of a debt agreement between a government that guarantees and sells a bond, and a market that subscribes to and buys that bond. The reason was because both the guarantor and subscriber to the bond, both seller and buyer, debtor and creditor, drank from the same fountain that sprang from their control over Java’s stock and labour. Dutch officials, Chinese captains, and native rulers, by association of their exclusive contracts and farm licences, all constituted, in one way or another, the same market interest *as well as* the same government authority.⁷⁰

What effectively ensued as capital raising was a private exchange between the Franco-Dutch government and the owners of capital, which it then passed off as a public transaction. Government offered government land to the owners of capital, who offered cash in return. Now, the historian has long believed that the Franco-Dutch government had sold land for, rather than borrowed, cash. This is mistaken, because the cash was never paid up front, but in instalments over a specified period.⁷¹ The land,

⁶⁸ For background on the historical rentier state, see James M. Buchanan, Robert D. Tollison, and Gordon Tullock. *Toward a theory of the rent-seeking society* (Texas A&M Economic Series No. 4, Texas A&M University Press, 1980); and Robert Burton Ekelund and Robert D. Tollison. *Mercantilism as a rent-seeking society: Economic regulation in historical perspective* (Texas A&M Economic Series No. 5, Texas A&M University Press, 1981).

⁶⁹ Farquhar to Minto, 8 November 1810, MSS Eur F148/2.

⁷⁰ Their legacy of rent-seeking appears to have survived and flourished in the post-colonial age. See Edmund Terence Gomez and Kwame Sundaran Jomo, *Malaysia's political economy: Politics, patronage and profits* (Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁷¹ Stipulated on the notes issued on 3 December 1810 after the agreement between Daendels and Han Kik Ko, Captain of Surabaya: ‘Begrepen onder de somme van een millioen Rijksdaalders zilver geld, waar voor door het Hollandische Indische Gouvernement het Regentschap Pobolingo is verkocht, te betalen in tien jaren bij uitloting, volgens Publicatie van heden, alle zes maanden met vijftig duizend Rijksdaalders zilver geld, en zulks onder Speciaal verband der Landen Probolingo, Besoeckie end Panaroekan, en garantie van het voorschreven indische Gouvernement.’ (Translated: ‘Conceived under the sum of one million Rijks Dollars silver money, for which the Dutch Indies Government had sold Probolingo Regency, payable in ten years by instalments of every six months for fifty thousand Rijks Dollars silver

therefore, was pledged to a sale, rather than sold outright, and the specie thus received in advance was effectively a loan. The terminology refers to the charge on the land as a 'hypothecate', and this was the term used by Minto.⁷² At the time of the British Expedition to Java, the value of this curious exchange was being touted at Rix Dollars 8.5 million.

What the Franco-Dutch government then proceeded to do was to publicly issue bills on the specie receivable, that is, debt notes on money borrowings, to the quantity of Rix Dollars 8.5 million. At this point, the conception of money as specie or a commodity, which carried no connotations of debt, changed into one of paper money, which pledged the issuer to a debt. The conception of property as land ownership, changed to one of security for credit. For such reasons, paper money had been a highly contentious innovation in Britain. There, it was issued by the bank that buys the government bond, and it effectively represented the bills of national debt. These bills circulated in the public and eventually returned to government as tax receipts which redeemed the debt. Java's Paper Currency, also known as Probolingo Paper after the territory that was pledged in sale, was rather different in its origin and nature, and proved to be even more controversial.

In the case of Java, government did not issue a bond but a hypothec. The owners of capital who contracted the hypothec did not issue bills on it. Their cash instalments were paid directly to government. Instead, government then issued bills on the specie received. Probolingo Paper was thus issued as a kind of representative money, that is, a claim on specie. However, government's cash borrowings had not been fully received, and neither were they fully paid for in a completed exchange with land. Technically,

money from today's published date, such as relating specially to the Countries of Probolingo, Besoeckie and Panaroeckan, and guarantee underwritten by the Indies Government.')

⁷² Minto, 'Drafts on Prize Property', MSS Eur F148/14.

government still owed money to the owners of capital for their cash advances. Probolingo Paper was therefore a public security against specie privately-borrowed, a public note payable for future receipts of specie privately-borrowed, and a hypothec on public land, all combined into one. If the creditor bank (or capitalist interest) had issued the bills, as was the case in Britain, then they signified credit notes bearing on government debt; i.e. the public bearers of paper money became creditors of government.⁷³ Probolingo Paper, however, was issued by government, the debtor. As such, they signified debt notes owed to the owners of capital. Government had effectively distributed its repayment obligations to the public. Probolingo Paper was a certificate of debt which indebted its bearers to the private owners of capital.

Undoubtedly, the Franco-Dutch government will have hoped that its paper bills would establish a value and currency as money in the public and inject much-needed impetus in the productive cycle. But Probolingo Paper never solved the problem of underconsumption. Rather, it depreciated drastically and caused inflation. Java's ailing economy never repaid the Franco-Dutch government's decision to exploit property as a source of money supply. The reason was obvious to Raffles. Java's accumulated stock was never at all employed outside the nexus of power and its rentier system. In Britain, the stream of paper money flowed from government debt to bank credit to public taxes paid back to government. In Java, it flowed from government debt to rentier taxes paid back to the owners of capital. Instead of injecting stock into the system, stock's command over labour was increased to command the lives of people. 'The colony became a burden on the mother country instead of assisting her,' wrote Raffles, 'and the

⁷³ Although they also became debtors to their future generations.

Company which had so long governed it being itself ruined, threw the load of its debts and obligations on the rest of the nation.’⁷⁴

Monopolizing Spirit and Rulers of Mankind

To the mercantile society of colonial Java, however, the introduction of Probolingo Paper seemed not to have caused much controversy. Indeed, the European and Chinese colonists appeared more anxious whether the invading British will recognize the legitimacy of the paper money. Condemnation of it was limited to the small circle around Raffles. Through his civic moralist lens, Raffles perceived paper money as a perversion of property and the result of the legacy of corruption from the collusion between the Dutch government, native landlord, and the Chinese moneyed interest. But Raffles’s complaint would have carried little weight had it focused solely on a public debt to which the colonists were indifferent. That was not the case. For Raffles had also conceived of Java’s public debt in terms of a narrative whereby the native body politic was enslaved to the will of the foreign private creditor.

It will be observed that where Raffles had addressed Java’s political economy – as he undertook in his chapter on ‘Commerce’ – he had rather insinuated the imperfectability of Smith’s microeconomic mechanisms than refuted their perfectibility. These insinuations, as we have seen, were nuanced and do not stand out. The reason is because Raffles’s references to what he believed, from the vantage of the civic humanist ideal, to be the theoretical flaws in Smith’s division of labour and self-interest adopted the same microeconomic terms Smith used to explain these theories. As Hont and Ignatieff observed of the civic humanist critique against political economy, ‘so-called traditionalists were quite capable of arguing their position on the same terrain as their

⁷⁴ Raffles, *History of Java*, xxvii.

political economist opponents.’⁷⁵ Raffles deployed Smith’s idiom of labour, capital, property, supply and demand, prices, etc., for the same subversive reason he deployed Smith’s passages from *Wealth of Nations*, which was to reflect a straw man onto the mirror that he was holding up to the claims of political economy.⁷⁶ Raffles’s method rather invokes the method observed by John Pocock of Edmund Burke (whom we will meet in the next chapter), who had ‘employed the language and categories of political economy in order to analyse the revolutionary threat [of the French Revolution] and respond to it.’⁷⁷ Where Burke’s civic humanism had overlapped with political economy, was ‘not upon trade or the investment of capital in commerce, but upon its investment in government, patronage, and warlike expansion; from this, it was argued, arose the corruption which destroyed the commercial empires of Athens and Rome.’ A similar overlap had applied in the case of Raffles’s ‘Commerce’.

The point where Raffles’s language of civic humanism parted with the language of political economy occurred at the macroeconomic level involving the balance of trade, underconsumption, unemployment, fiscal policy, and monetary policy. Raffles’s observations as to what he believed had caused the ruinous state of Java, and his prescriptions of an ‘improved system of political economy’ in response to these causes, occur at this level. As I argued above, Raffles had believed that the international division of labour had allowed the power of capital stock to undermine Java’s ancient prosperity and turn it into a rentier colony. We shall now see how Raffles’s conceptualisation of these causes adopted unreservedly the idiom of civic humanism.

⁷⁵ Hont and Ignatieff, ‘Needs and justice’, 15.

⁷⁶ A similar textual strategy of transposing or ‘superimposing the language of civic humanist historicism on the language of eighteenth-century political economy’ is described by Istvan Hont to apply to David Hume’s essay ‘Of Commerce’. Whether Hume had provided a model for Raffles is impossible to know, but Raffles’s chapter in his *History* in which his references to Smith occur, i.e. ‘Commerce’, treats of the same question treated by Hume, that is, ‘the very stability of the *commerce* of commercial society’. Istvan Hont, ‘The ‘rich country-poor country’ debate,’ in *Wealth & Virtue*, ed. Hont and Ignatieff, 272.

⁷⁷ J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Burke’s analysis of the French Revolution’, in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 195.

Perhaps, as Smith's conception of mercantilism as an anomaly demonstrates, these causes lie beyond the apprehension and vocabulary of political economy. Hence, whereas Smith had described altruistic relationships of an international division of labour between mother country and colony, manufacturing and agriculture, town and countryside, Raffles instead described the mercantilist relationships of the power, patronage, corruption, and subjection, of international capital stock.

In *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith had idealized the economic relationship between colony and mother country in terms of an abundant virgin country bestowed by a parent to an offspring. The colony inherited the role of agriculture, which had become costly in the mother country. In its 'natural and free state', the colony would take over the mother country's former production of 'rude' produce at low cost, allowing the latter to specialize in higher cost manufactures. 'Agriculture is the proper business of all new colonies,' Smith said; 'a business which the cheapness of land renders more advantageous than any other. They abound, therefore, in the rude produce of land, and instead of importing it from other countries, they have generally a large surplus to export.'⁷⁸ In turn, because 'land is still so cheap, and, consequently, labour so dear,' the colony can 'import from the mother country almost all the more refined or more advanced manufactures cheaper than they could make them for themselves.'⁷⁹ By dividing her labour with her colony, the mother country not only expanded her production and productivity, she also created a new market for her new manufactures. 'It is rather for the manufactured than for the rude produce of Europe, that the colony trade opens a new market,' said Smith. In each case, new capital was constituted from new produce to carry on new employment, and neither mother country nor colony

⁷⁸ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 658 (Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III).

⁷⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 629 (Book IV, Chapter VII, Part II).

needed to withdraw any capital or labour from each other. Two economies were thus created from one.

The problem with this picture, however, is that Smith credulously assumed the mother country's fine manufactures will find a ready demand at the colony. If we consider America and the West Indies, the balance of trade was seldom favourable to British imports, but rather to colonial exports. The international division of labour between British manufacturing and American/West Indian agriculture was an unequal division from the start. It created a comparative disadvantage for Britain, which led British capital to procure the command over American/West Indian labour through the trade in African slaves. How more unequal then was the international division of labour, when the Dutch arrived at what Raffles believed was a flourishing Java, and found they had nothing to sell but plenty to buy? Raffles's ancient Java was not a virgin country with huge agricultural potential like America. Before the Europeans arrived, it was already an undivided 'great agricultural country' and 'great commercial country'. As mentioned, what Raffles found unforgivable of the Dutch was to have divided this undivided whole, by acquiring possession over its commerce, and consigning its agriculture to the native population. Through the VOC's commercial contracts, the Dutch were able to command the monopoly on Java's agricultural produce, and thus command an indirect power over its people. This narrative upturned everything Smith had said about the altruism of commercial society toward rude society and colonial agriculture. The 'mean rapacity, the monopolizing spirit of merchants and manufacturers, who,' Smith insisted, 'neither are, nor ought to be, the rulers of mankind,' indeed made them rulers of Java.

To be sure, the Dutch did not command labour directly. Direct control of the native Javanese remained with the native rulers, or Regents, who vended the produce

and enforced the deliveries. The regents were clients of the Dutch, and derived their authority from the feudal title acceded by the Dutch, ‘under the pretext,’ the Dutch republican, Dirk Van Hogendorp, explained, ‘of allowing the natives to retain their own laws and customs’.⁸⁰ Thus, when the Dutch alienated their allodial title over East Java, and transferred lands there (though in abeyance) to the Chinese captains in return for cash loans, they effectively sold their feudal overlordship, and what responsibilities that had entailed, over to the Chinese captains. Thence appear the arch-villains in Raffles’s civic moral ‘reality’. They were the powerful clan bosses of the Chinese establishments in East Java,⁸¹ the faceless Creditor of the Franco-Dutch government, who became foreign masters of a ‘Malayan’ country through the formidable power of their capital stock. Hardly were these new foreign capitalist-turned-landowners disposed to observe native laws and customs. To the ‘supple venal and crafty Chinese’, Raffles thus imputed the oppression and enslavement of the native people, as the following passage shows profoundly:

Of the degree of oppression which [the Chinese] are in the habit of exercising towards the peasants some idea may be formed from the following fact. The Staple grain of Java is rice, and the established rate of ground rent for rice grounds in Java is 1/10th of the crop. Wherever the Chinese are the landholders however they exact as rent 5/8th of the produce of the ground. Wherever the Chinese have found extensive Settlements in Java accordingly, the Native Javanese have no alternative but that of abandoning the district or becoming slaves of the soil. Besides, the monopolizing spirit of the Chinese frequently exercises a very pernicious control over the necessaries of life and the produce of the soil even in the vicinity of Batavia.⁸²

⁸⁰ Raffles, *History of Java*, 301.

⁸¹ See Claudine Salmon, ‘The Han Family of East Java. Entrepreneurship and Politics (18th-19th Centuries)’, *Archipel* 41 (1991), 53-87.

⁸² Raffles to Minto (Raffles’s ‘Malay policy’ paper), 10 June 1811 (revised 20 September 1811), MSS Eur F148/7.

What emerges from Raffles's writings on this subject is a narrative of subjection, dependency, and deterioration. In this respect, they adopted the classical republican context of an oriental despotism which undermined the independence of a native body politic. The rise in power of the Chinese by exploitation; their corrupting of the Dutch *imperium*; the enslavement of the native individual to the foreign Chinese yoke; the undermining of the native character by Chinese vices, etc.: these moral and political consequences were portrayed by Raffles in terms of what Hont and Ignatieff referred to as the 'Polybian cycle of decline into corruption'.⁸³

Polybian cycle of decline

It is in Raffles's 'Report on Java' and his 'Malay policy' paper, referred to above, that we finally see Raffles's doctrinaire civic humanism emerge. Both papers were constructed on the theme of Polybius's cycle. It relates the history of the paradoxical effect of commerce on the state. On the one hand, the austerity and work ethic which attend to commerce had, in hand with conquest, led to the rise of the virtuous and independent state that was the Roman Republic. On the other hand, the luxury, ostentation, and venality that also attend to commerce consequently corrupted this virtue and independence, and led to demagoguery and the betrayal of the state.⁸⁴

The influence of classical Greek and Roman literature was fundamental in questioning British attitudes toward commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In England, a neo-Roman classical republican discourse had kindled the moral tension between the political authority of a public citizenry and the legal rights to

⁸³ Hont and Ignatieff, 'Needs and justice', 6.

⁸⁴ See John Burrow, *A History of Histories* (England, Penguin, 2009).

private property.⁸⁵ This discourse has been described by John Pocock at length, in terms of ‘a history of property theory organised around the duality of classical and commercial politics’.⁸⁶ In Scotland, the duality took a more metaphysical dimension. The neo-Roman discourse adapted to what George Davie called the ‘parallel debates about Scottish freedom in the temporal and in the spiritual sense’ – i.e. the realms of church and state, representing ‘twin currents of Scottish argumentation, concerned with faith and morals, and with politics and law’.⁸⁷ The moral and intellectual crises resulting from these dualities supplied the overarching dilemma of the age, the answers for which it fell upon ‘philosophers’ and ‘economists’ to find. Thus, Adam ‘Smith,’ Davie explained, ‘defined the dilemma of industrial society as being that of specialisation and mechanisation which although it enriched a country materially impoverished it intellectually’, rather than morally. As we saw, Smith’s reconstructed ‘self-interest’ soothed (or nullified) moral fears toward the market and profit, and unravelled the classical vicious cycle into a linear track of social progress in which mercantilism and feudalism were but intermediate short-lived stages before free commerce.

Raffles is a prime example that Smith’s political economy did not convince everybody. Instead of dealing merely with the neo-Roman dualism of a virtuous commerce and vicious commerce, civic humanists now had to contend with Smith’s new version of it in terms of the duality of free commerce and mercantilism. Hont and Ignatieff, quoting E. P. Thompson, have described ‘an encounter between the new political economy and a ‘moral economy’ of the crowd’.⁸⁸ But it can be argued that this encounter merely demonstrates two ways, one ancient and realistic, the other modern

⁸⁵ See James Harrington, *Harrington: ‘The Commonwealth of Oceana’ and ‘A System of Politics’*, ed., J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁸⁶ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 108

⁸⁷ George E. Davie, *The Scottish Enlightenment and other essays* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), 4.

⁸⁸ Hont and Ignatieff, ‘Needs and justice’, 14.

and idealistic, of looking at the same thing.⁸⁹ It has in fact been suggested that Adam Smith's thought can be seen through 'a framework of moral and economic relationships', in which 'the structure of a commercial polity was more complex than conventional political wisdom allowed.'⁹⁰ In his lifetime certainly, modern ideas invariably invited comparison with older ideas. Raffles, for one, never shied from quoting from ancient Roman literature, and applying the quote to the present in Java, as in this passage on marriage customs from his *History*:

The multiplication of divorces is mentioned by the poets, the moralists, and the historians of the Roman empire, as one of the greatest causes and symptoms of the corruption and degeneracy of the period in which they lived; and certainly it had proceeded to great lengths, when Seneca could say that a woman computed her age, not by the annual succession of consults but of husbands. The Javans, though a simple people, are in this respect too like the profligate and dissolute Romans.⁹¹

Raffles's passage, in picturing the Javanese as having degenerated into profligacy and dissolution, alludes to the Polybian cycle of decline into corruption. It portrays Java at a point on the Polybian cycle where its people, having been corrupted with vice, have lost their independence and virtue and are degenerating into moral decay. These moral themes were elaborated and articulated in the canon of Roman historians and poets who came after Polybius. Very generally, they consisted of: Sallust's corruption of public office by private interests; Livy's detachment of the Roman character from the institutions and customs of Rome's ancient constitution, the deterioration of Roman moral fibre, and the enslavement of Romans to the creditor; and

⁸⁹ As mentioned, the dichotomy generally delineated between the realms of natural law and personal virtue, of commerce and politics, individuals and the body politic, the private and the public, society and state. As we shall see in Chapter Six, the Scottish Enlightenment traced the epistemological origin of this dualism to Hume's scepticism and the Cartesian problem of mind and body, and indeed to the Scholastic fusion of reason with faith, and to Plato's Allegory of the Cave.

⁹⁰ Nicholas Phillipson, 'Adam Smith as a Civic Moralist,' in *Wealth and Virtue*, ed. Hont and Ignatieff, 201.

⁹¹ Raffles, *History of Java*, 320. Raffles also quotes from Juvenal in 317, 320; and Virgil in 321.

Tacitus's lament on the degradation of virtue and independence into vice and slavery. All these elements of the Polybian cycle were prominent in Raffles's third and fourth texts.

We have already seen how Raffles had conceived an ancient Java which was whole and independent. Raffles in fact referred to 'the ancient constitution of society in these islands,'⁹² and in his 'Malay policy' paper, he identified a Malay Archipelago that in 'ancient times' had constituted a Malay Empire with an 'ancient and powerful state' and 'ancient and native provinces', of 'ancient authorities', 'ancient government', 'ancient title', and an 'ancient and peculiar religion'. 'It may be safely affirmed,' he continued, 'that about the period when the Europeans first began to frequent these countries, they were not only much more populous, but the governments were more strong and steady and the inhabitants in general much farther advanced in civilization.' Decidedly, Raffles was unmoved in his censure of the Dutch for having ruined this Livian past. 'The Dutch,' he condemned, 'solely attentive to their own commercial interests have in their intercourse with these regions invariably adhered to a more cold blooded, illiberal and ungenerous policy than has ever been exhibited towards any country, unless we except the conduct of the European nations towards the Slave Coast of Africa.' And yet, the blame was not laid entirely upon the Dutch. For Raffles's scrutiny also fell upon the Chinese, who he blamed for corrupting the Dutch. Interestingly, where austerity and work ethic in commerce had raised the Dutch Republic to the pinnacle of success, its downfall had also proceeded from commerce: in this case, from the collusion of the Dutch with the Chinese. Raffles thus explained,

In all the eastern Dutch Settlements, their [Hollanders'] favorite policy has been to depress the native Malay or Javanese inhabitants and give every encouragement to the Chinese, who are only itinerants and not children of the soil, and who

⁹² Raffles, *History of Java*, 352; *Substance of a Minute*, 127.

follow the general practice of remitting the fruits of their industry to China instead of spending them where they were required. The Chinese in all ages equally supple venal and crafty failed not at a very early period to recommend themselves to the equally crafty venal and speculating Hollanders. They have almost from the first been the agents of the Dutch and in the Island of Java in particular they have almost acquired the entire monopoly of revenue farms and government contracts.

Singling out the Chinese as foreign was significant. Raffles was identifying the Chinese as the owners of capital stock, and for an important reason: to locate the source of Chinese wealth in Java, not China. He believed it was ‘the greatest importance to be early on our guard against this pernicious and increasing influence which preys on the very vitals of the country, draining and exhausting it for the benefit of China, to which country it has been supposed that they usually remit more wealth than the power which is at the expence [sic] of maintaining the government of the country.’ Raffles’s nativist discrimination of wealth, interestingly, took its cue from *Wealth of Nations*, which warned of the ‘very precarious and uncertain possession’ of capital, which can be removed, ‘and, together with it, all the industry which it supports, from one country to another’, and no part of which ‘can be said to belong to any particular country, till it has been spread, as it were, over the face of that country, either in buildings, or in the lasting improvement of lands.’⁹³ If Chinese wealth was native to Java, how then had the Chinese amassed it? Raffles acknowledged that ‘the Chinese must at all events be admitted to be industrious,’ which, in the framework of Smith’s productive cycle, was unfaultable. However, Raffles was careful to observe that Chinese industry was not free, but ‘left to their own laws and regulations of their own chiefs’.⁹⁴ Chinese capital, Raffles saw, did not accumulate from the employment of Chinese labour, but from the

⁹³ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 452 (Book III, Chapter IV).

⁹⁴ Interestingly, Raffles’s description rather conjures the idea of a Chinese body politic, or commonwealth, too. The overseas Chinese concept of *Kongsi* has an established scholarship. For background, see Tai Peng Wang, *The Origins of Chinese Kongsi* (Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1994).

‘glaring corruption’ between the Dutch public office and Chinese private interest. ‘The Chinese,’ he remarked, ‘devote themselves to the accumulation of wealth without being very scrupulous concerning the means.’

In his ‘Report on Java’, Raffles proceeded to give a Sallustian portrayal of this means. ‘In all Dutch Settlements the Collections are farmed out, and the Farms professedly sold by open Outcry [auction], free to all descriptions of Persons except Company’s Servants,’ he explained, ‘but Chinese in Secret Understanding with those who have the Selling, become invariably the Renters. They bring the habit with them from China of never approaching Men in power but with a Bribe’. Indeed, ‘The Chinese do every thing underhand with peculiar Address’. In such manner, they acquired the licences of the economy and institutionalised bribery. ‘It had therefore become habitual for the China Captain to purchase the Broom or Farm of Import and Export Duties and generally the smaller Farms,’ wrote Raffles: ‘he courts the Ruling Men with immense presents or participations; And these under apprehension for his fidelity, become reciprocally a connection that will give every point of Appeal in his favour’. The collusion between Dutch authority with Chinese bribery thereby developed into a Sallustian relationship of dependency between the Dutch patron and his Chinese client. ‘The Captain China had always been favor’d by the Residents’ illicit interference in the Sale’. And though, Raffles related, ‘This was put an end to by Marshal Daendels by his establishing open Outcry,’ yet even then, ‘the matter was settled in private and an auction took place. The effect of this plan is as evident as the consequence, for supposing what it does not admit, a real competition.’

Stifling competition inevitably involved violence. ‘Rival Bidders’ to an auction, continued Raffles, ‘if in fact such could exist, seeing the futility of their interference, would of course be glad to reconcile the same to their interest by a quiet demise,

evading the ill will of the Powerful.’ ‘By this enjoyment of all the advantages above Stated,’ Raffles continued, thus the ‘Chinese in Java have attained to a degree of that consequence which riches give, beyond what a proper management of them would admit.’ In a veiled riposte to Smith, Raffles was adamant that ‘This Wealth has not been accumulated by fair Trade. It is from the exclusive enjoyment of farms and Contracts, all of which, both of Revenue and Cultivation, the Chinese,’ Raffles repeated, ‘are the chosen people for, and they carry and remit to their own Country perhaps as much of the Wealth that Alien industry extracts from the Eastern Archipelago, as the Powers who are at the Expence of maintaining the Dominion.’

To the British civic humanist, this development assaulted his most passionate fear, which was ‘the Commonwealthman’s dominating concern lest power usurp liberty’.⁹⁵ But Raffles did not create the Chinese bogeyman. He had in fact borrowed from the documented views of Van Hogendorp. ‘These observations [by Van Hogendorp] on the means by which the Chinese have obtained such influence to the Eastward necessarily lead to more general remark on the policy or otherwise of checking the political Authority which they are daily assuming,’ Raffles noted, whereby ‘Occasion has been taken to notice the restrictions which the Dutch Government deemed it adviseable to establish for preventing the Eastern Islands from being drained and exhausted to the advantage of China’. Interestingly, where the VOC were reprehensible for having allowed the Chinese to amass such wealth and power, Raffles rather empathised with the Franco-Dutch republican governments of which Van Hogendorp and Daendels were part: ‘Bad as the Dutch are represented to have been, they rise high in the Scale in comparison with the Chinese’. The reason for Raffles’s empathy was the acknowledgment by the Dutch republicans of an unforgivable

⁹⁵ Robert E. Shalhope, ‘Toward a republican synthesis: the emergence of an understanding of republicanism in American historiography,’ *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* (1972), 69.

Tacitean injustice. The foreign Chinese, who were not ‘children of the soil’, had subjected the real ‘children of the soil’, i.e. the native Javanese, as ‘slaves of the soil’, to their power. In the neo-Roman metaphor, the authority which had resided in the personality of the independent native, and had entitled his claims on the bounty of the land, was now implied to have been replaced with the authority accorded by the property of the foreigner.

No longer were the Dutch concerned with commercial competition against the British East India Company. Dirk Van Hogendorp’s Batavian government in the early 1800s saw instead a moral crisis between people and property, and set out to right wrongs. ‘The Dutch Government have long had serious cause to regret the Sale of the Company’s Lands to the Chinese,’ said Raffles, ‘and the Report of the Commission appointed about the Year 1802 to investigate the State of the Country in the neighbourhood of Batavia, affords an affecting & distressing picture of the mischiefs which have arisen from the power of the Chinese,’ ‘a power every day increasing in its influence and ability to prey on the vitals of the Country.’ One can almost picture a Hogarth caricature in Raffles’s mind of the towering silken figure of ‘Captain China’ sneering over the humble Javanese native, as he caressed his chests of treasure and plucked at strings attached to the puppet arms of ‘Heeren’ and ‘Adipati’. ‘The influence of the Javanese Regents and Native Authorities has long been done away in the vicinity of Batavia,’ Raffles said, ‘and the Dutch themselves have at length been induced to compassionate the Situation of the less assuming and timid Javanese. Opposed to Chinese cunning and policy he has no chance and sooner or later involves himself and family so as to be wholly dependent on the Chinese.’ This moral conscience, which had moved Van Hogendorp to act, no less affected Raffles.

In 1811, Raffles did not appear to know how to deal with the Chinese. Certainly, the Chinese problem was grave and pressing, and there is a fascinating quote by Raffles of Van Hogendorp's report⁹⁶ as to just how the Chinese 'have become a very dangerous people and are to be remarked as a pest to the Country that there is no radical cure but their extermination from the interior.' But this, the report added, was 'a measure which cannot be effected.' Raffles's initial response to the moral crisis lay not with the Chinese, but in the Livian inference of moral decay. The real cause of human decline was commerce, and its axioms of self-interest and the engrossing power of stock. In the neo-Roman idiom, John Burrow explained this decline as meaning: 'in luxury lay the seeds of corruption, and in corruption the seeds of downfall.'⁹⁷ Far from the promise of social progress which Adam Smith had argued was to be found in the refinement of the arts and sciences, and far from the anomaly which he believed mercantilism to have construed, material wealth had inflicted upon mankind a perceptible and lasting decline. At stake was the moral fibre of a whole people, implied in their 'sense of present malaise', and contrasted with their memory of a virtuous past. Morality, once absolute, had become relative. The vices, 'such as Gaming and the Retail of Opium and Arrack', which once were deliberately farmed as a mitigating measure, were now accepted 'as

⁹⁶ Whether Raffles knew of Van Hogendorp's reforms before the invasion of Java has been a matter of debate. John Bastin believed he did not, and was misled by Herman Muntinghe, the Third Councillor in Raffles's government. Robert Van Niel referring to Bastin, agreed: 'Muntinghe did not convey to Raffles the ideas of either Nederburgh or Van Hogendorp, and there is no evidence that Raffles had any awareness of either man's ideas until 1815. In this respect I follow Bastin's arguments completely and am willing to concede his contention that Muntinghe disliked Van Hogendorp. Since the 'detailed' settlement which Raffles advanced in 1814 seemed to copy the ideas of Van Hogendorp, the question of the transference of this idea of individual landownership has often been raised. In this regard the role of Muntinghe needs some explanation. It is Bastin's view that Muntinghe was advancing Van Hogendorp's ideas but keeping their origin obscure.' Robert Van Niel, 'Dutch Views and Uses of British Policy in India around 1800', in *India and Indonesia during the Ancien Regime* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 27. Clearly, Bastin and Van Niel were not aware that Raffles was already making references to Van Hogendorp's report in 1811. One of Raffles's first reports to Minto as 'Political Agent with the Malay States' enclosed 'the Statement of Mr Hogendorp which I have annexed with the view of exhibiting a general Idea of what the Island of Java under a liberal Policy has been supposed to be equal to in the hands of the Dutch.' Raffles to Neil Edmonstone, 'Memorandum on the Trade, Produce and Revenue of Java', 10 February 1811, MSS Eur F148/6.

⁹⁷ Burrow, *History of Histories*, 97.

encouragements for the production of Revenues'. 'The Magistrate's bribe to wink at little deviations has almost become an established fee,' Raffles lamented.

Clearly, the Dutch had lost their moral fibre. 'They had so far degenerated from that enterprising Character,' Raffles described in an earlier report, 'that the Marshal [Daendels] found still greater difficulty in restoring them to some degree of activity and reforming the degrading abuses and corruptions which had crept into every part of the State. And had he not possessed a Mind as fertile in invention as determined in its object,' Raffles said, 'they could never have been roused from the fatal lethargy into which they had fallen.'⁹⁸ National decline, nevertheless, was reserved for the Malays. In his 'Malay policy' paper, Raffles designated 'The causes which have tended most to the depression of the Malays and the deterioration of their character', and proceeded to list seven causes: 'civil commotions', non-observance of 'primogeniture', 'piracy', the 'system of domestic Slavery', want of a 'System of Laws', want of a 'System of commercial regulations', 'monopolies of the Malay Rajahs'. Raffles indeed went on to legislate against these causes, but these laws rather occupied a secondary than primary place in his administration.⁹⁹ As mentioned, Raffles's administration in Java was marked by six defining policies.

Improved System of Political Economy

What Raffles intended by his 'improved system of political economy' was simply some realistic attention to the flaws in Smith's market equilibrium and productive cycle. The problems of mercantilism and feudalism could not be left to the invisible hand and division of labour to fix. Instead, the visible hand of the legislator was needed to ensure

⁹⁸ Raffles to Minto, untitled and undated report on Java, but which can be fixed to Raffles's stay at Calcutta in 1810; MSS Eur F148/3.

⁹⁹ See Raffles's *Proclamations, Regulations, Advertisements, and Orders, Printed and Published in the Island of Java, by the British Government*, Vol. 1 (Batavia: A. H. Hubbard, 1813).

that the power of stock (or capital) was not monopolized by private interests, and that labour was industriously employed in the productive cycle by the self-dependent cultivator himself (and not by capital as a component of divided labour). We see the first objective in Raffles's first and second policies involving the withdrawal of money, and the second objective in his two land rent policies. Collectively, Raffles's policies had as their end object the good *governance* with regard to the condition of the people.

The entry into the discussion on political economy of governance and the condition of the people as essential factors of economics, has a pedigree in European Cameralism.¹⁰⁰ The tradition in Britain and France, however, apprehends political economy in terms of national *wealth* and, consequently, in Britain, as a critique of interventionism. Thus, in *Wealth of Nations*, mercantilism and feudalism, which represented interventions toward national wealth, were disavowed as anomalies. Raffles denounced, rather than disavowed, mercantilism and feudalism. To him, they were not anomalous, but the vicious power of stock masquerading as anomalies. Interventionism, if it were necessary, should not focus on national wealth, but on national *population*. It was not wealth that needed protection and governance, but people. Raffles's 'improved system of political economy' thus apprehended both national wealth and national population – both 'commerce' and 'politics' – not just national wealth. It explains why his governance with respect to the condition of the people – to national population – had been confused with mercantilist intervention, and how this proved to be another source of his contradictory references in support of both free trade and regulation.¹⁰¹

Furnivall was thus correct to interpret from Raffles's passage about his 'improved system of political economy', that 'his intention was to encourage trade, and

¹⁰⁰ Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (Routledge, 1994), 7.

¹⁰¹ Compare, for example, Mary Quilty's conclusion that though he criticised mercantilism, 'Raffles does not want to see that the general definition of 'mercantilism' applies to the English joint-stock companies as well as the Dutch.' Quilty, *British Economic Thought*, 78.

thereby to improve the welfare of the people'. But Furnivall was incorrect that 'Raffles derived his guiding principles from Adam Smith.' Raffles's 'improved system' in fact resembled the '*dirigisme* approach to economics' of Smith's forgotten Scottish rival, Sir James Steuart.¹⁰² Steuart's concerns with macroeconomic or 'public' issues of the poor laws, development, and a proto-Keynesian determination of employment with respect to the 'labour balance of trade', drew on an older British tradition of political discourse concerning the role of the state in the economy. They were very much evident in Raffles's policies.¹⁰³ Company officials as he would have been familiar, if not well-versed, with Steuart's publications and principles, especially those deliberately 'composed for the use of the Honourable the East-India Company'.¹⁰⁴ As we shall see in the fifth chapter, Raffles's 'improved system' invoked an influential construction of political economy which advanced Steuart over Smith at the time. This was the political economy of Dugald Stewart, the preeminent Scottish moral philosopher and editor of Adam Smith. It apprehended both national wealth and national population as concerns of equal standing, concerns that were subsequently applied to the East by Stewart's students: the Earl of Minto, John Leyden, and the dukes of Somerset and Lansdowne – all of whom were Raffles's mentors.

¹⁰² Magnusson, *Mercantilism*, 7. John Bastin lists Steuart as an influence of Raffles, but does not explain how.

¹⁰³ For the 'political economy' of Sir James Steuart, see Andrew S. Skinner, 'Sir James Steuart: author of a system', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 28, No. 1, February 1981 (Wiley), 20-42; and James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy* (1767), ed. Andrew S. Skinner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

¹⁰⁴ Apart from Steuart's classic, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, Steuart made two proposals for the Company: *A Plan for Introducing an Uniformity of Weights and Measures within the Limits of the British Empire* (London: John Stockdale, 1790), and *The Principles of Money Applied to the Present State of the Coin of Bengal* (1772).

Chapter Three

Minto and Edmund Burke: Security of Property and Person

The British invasion of the Dutch colony of Java in August and September of 1811 was Britain's first successful expeditionary campaign of the Napoleonic wars since the failed expedition to Walcheren in Holland in 1809.¹ It also marked Britain's last major expeditionary campaign before Sir Arthur Wellesley's decisive advance from Portugal into northeast Spain and France in 1813. In military terms, the Java invasion was a significant event. John Bastin noted that it 'was by far the largest armament ever to enter the Eastern Seas and its size was never matched until the Second World War.'² Yet there were several circumstances surrounding the invasion which indicate that it was not a strictly military operation, but had rather provided the means to a political end. These circumstances, which have never been properly addressed, are stated as follows:-

1. That the Governor-General of Bengal, the Earl of Minto, who personally organised the expeditionary force to Java and directed the island's capture from the

¹ The expeditionary force which invaded Réunion, or Isle de Bourbon in March 1810, and Mauritius, or Isle de France, in November 1810, formed the rump of the expeditionary force which then remobilised for the Java invasion. To all intents and purposes, all three military expeditions were organised under Minto's authority and represented one concerted campaign.

² John Bastin's Introduction in William Thorn, *Conquest of Java* (Hong Kong: Periplus Editions, 2004), xvi.

Franco-Dutch government, was a public official and civil administrator who did not have command of the Company's military nor the Crown regiments;³

2. That Minto's decision to occupy and administer Java after the Franco-Dutch government's capitulation, had deliberately contravened instructions by the Secret Committee of the East India Company's Court of Directors to destroy and abandon the colony when the Franco-Dutch power had been defeated;

3. That Minto had occupied Java not in the name of the British Crown or as a representative of the United Kingdom government, as was the practice; but had incorporated Java as a dependency of the Bengal government in his capacity as Governor of Bengal and in the name of the East India Company.

These circumstances disclose a political context which ran counter to the narrative of national sovereignty and economic survival that distinguishes Britain's discourse of the Napoleonic wars. History has understood the conquest of Java as the third and final part of a single expeditionary campaign that included the conquest of the French islands of Réunion and Mauritius. All three islands were understood as having been equal targets for one sole purpose, which was to eliminate the threat of French and Dutch military power in the Indian Ocean.⁴ Indeed, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the East India Company, William Astell and Jacob Bosanquet, had instructed Minto in no uncertain terms that,

We merely wish to expel the Enemy from all their Settlements in those Seas, to destroy all the Forts, Batteries & Works of defence, and to take possession of all Arms, Ammunition, warlike Stores, Naval, or Military, and to demolish all the Stores and Magazines of every description, Wishing to leave the possession of these Settlements to the occupation of the Natives. For that purpose, care ought to

³ The views on the expedition of the commander-in-chief of Bengal, Sir George Hewitt, were curiously not directly transmitted to the commanders of the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay, but conveyed first to Minto on Minto's request, who then acted in Hewitt's name.

⁴ For example, see Bob Moore, Henk van Nierop, *Colonial Empires Compared: Britain and the Netherlands, 1750-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

be taken to conciliate the Natives, letting them understand, that the sole object in view is to prevent those Settlements from falling into the hands of the French, and assuring them of protection, if inclined to defend themselves. The Arms, and Ammunition taken from the Enemy might be distributed among the Natives, if such a measure should be deemed necessary or adviseable.⁵

These instructions to obliterate the enemy's colonial power and abandon the colony to the 'natives' were consistent with British international policy, initiated during William Pitt the Younger's last government (May 1804 – January 1806), of attacking the Franco-European states at their colonies.⁶ The intention was not so much to deny the enemy their colonial resources – which was the rationale during the Seven Years' War (1757-63) and the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802) – than to free those resources to international (read British) commerce. This combination of war and trade arose in reaction to Napoleon's Continental System.⁷ The Continental System was Napoleon's attempt to consolidate the numerous European states that had come under his influence into single common market. It was also a protected market, which singled out British exports from entering Europe as well as restricted European shipments to the United Kingdom. As a trading power, Britain's survival depended on breaking down Napoleon's embargoes and blockades. Other than indirect retaliatory blockades, this involved direct assaults upon the naval bases⁸ and colonial ports⁹ of the Franco-European powers, as well as the 'liberation' of their very colonies. In all cases, the military operation asserted the cause of British sovereignty and trade, and was an end in itself. An exemplar of this policy were the three British expeditions against the Spanish

⁵ William Astell and Jacob Bosanquet to Minto, 31 August 1810; MSS Eur F148/2. These instructions originated with Bosanquet, and Astell was merely a rubber stamp. Bosanquet, wrote Cyril Philips, 'had much greater experience of the India House machinery than Astell and soon proved himself the more dominant and energetic of the two.' Cyril H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784-1834, Vol. VI* (1940), ed. Patrick J.N. Tuck (London: Routledge, 1998), 172-3.

⁶ Notably the Cape Colony (1805), Rio de la Plata (1806, 1807), San Domingo (Hispaniola, 1806, 1809).

⁷ Officially designated policy by Napoleon's Berlin Decree in November 1806, but operating well before.

⁸ Battle of Copenhagen (September 1807).

⁹ Gressie (Gresik) in Java, (December 1807), Danish Virgin Islands (December 1807), French Martinique & Guadeloupe (February 1809).

Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata (River Plate, comprising Buenos Aires and Montevideo), the first of which took place in June 1806.¹⁰ They were militarily unsuccessful, but they fed latent native aspirations for self-government, which later led to the creation of independent South American states and, more importantly, new export markets for British manufactures.

Britain's struggle against Napoleon's Continental System has since been immortalised as a struggle between free trade and protectionism.¹¹ Notwithstanding that the liberalisation of Britain's foreign trade was not realized until from 1810 onwards, or that it was Britain's commercial system – framed by the Navigation Acts and the only effective East India Company left in the world – which was accused of mercantilism by Napoleon,¹² British policy has invariably been based upon the claims of economic survival and national sovereignty. George Canning's 'famous Latin American policy' or 'New World policy', alluded to above, is a case in point.¹³ And while it may be argued

¹⁰ It followed the reconquest of Cape Colony from June 1805 to January 1806, and was followed by a second expedition to Montevideo in January 1807 and a third to Buenos Aires in June 1807. See John D. Grainger, *British Campaigns in the South Atlantic 1805-1807* (Great Britain: Pen & Sword, 2015). The suggestion that the Montevideo expedition had aimed at creole rather than colonial autonomy sets it apart from the Buenos Aires expeditions. It also stands apart as an initiative of the Grenville government, where the first Buenos Aires expedition was the initiative of the Pitt government. See John Street, *Artigas and the Emancipation of Uruguay* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959). Another expedition fitted out in 1808 under Arthur Wellesley was sent to the Spanish viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico) and New Granada (Venezuela), but was diverted to Portugal when the French invasion of Portugal and Spain rendered those states and their colonies no longer the enemy. British foreign policy towards the colonies of Spain and Portugal from 1807 onwards was largely the design and domain of George Canning. See William W. Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, 1804-1828* (Frank Cass, 1967). It was also strongly influenced by representations to Pitt's government in 1804-5 by the South American revolutionary, Francisco de Miranda. See Karen Racine, *Francisco de Miranda: A Transatlantic Life in the Age of Revolution* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).

¹¹ Most authoritatively in Eli F. Heckscher, *The Continental System, An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922)

¹² Napoleon had purportedly said, 'Pray tell me, then, if for a grand army of Frenchmen, starting from Teflis, there be not an opening up to the Ganges, whose banks it will be sufficient to touch with a French sword, in order to thrown down throughout India the entire edifice of the English mercantile grandeur?' *The Bombay Quarterly Review, Vol. VII, January to September, 1858* (Bombay: Smith, Taylor, and Co., 1858), 81.

¹³ Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain, 1783-1870* (England: Longman Pearson, 3rd ed., 2001), 250.

whether it was the historian's framework¹⁴ and not the historical reality which was the source of the dichotomy between free trade and protectionism, in the case of Astell and Bosanquet's instructions to destroy Java's naval and mercantile foundations and free commerce for the natives, the dichotomy had applied *ipso facto*.

The dichotomy, however, did not apply to Minto's motives. As stated above, the national and economic cause for war and trade apprehended in Astell and Bosanquet's instructions was at odds with the political object by which Minto had understood to be served by the invasion of Java. In this chapter, we shall see that what Minto had sought in the East Indies was the restoration of an ancient and constitutional order of society which had its theoretical underpinnings in the political thought of the Irish-born British parliamentarian, Edmund Burke. I will discuss the ideological arguments which opposed Minto's order of society to the national-economic cause, and show how this contest which had originated in Calcutta from a question of governance, then developed in Britain as a public complaint about conquest and commerce, was fought over in India within the ranks of the East India Company, and subsequently fulfilled in the conquest of Java.

Unexplained Respite

Before he was Governor-General of Bengal, the Earl of Minto was President of the Board of Control. In January 1806, Pitt the Younger had died, and Pitt's former collaborator William Grenville tried to create the national government Pitt had also tried to establish in his final ministry. The outcome was a short-lived government known as the Ministry of All the Talents. It attempted to unite the two whig factions that separated in 1791 as a result of the parting of ways between Charles Fox and Edmund

¹⁴ For example, Brian Harrison, *Holding the Fort: Melaka under Two Flags, 1795-1845*, MBRAS Monography No.14 (MBRAS, 1985).

Burke.¹⁵ Minto succeeded at the Board of Control to the Viscount Castlereagh, but his term was terminated as soon as it began. News arrived¹⁶ that the Governor-General of Bengal, the Marquess Cornwallis, had died in October 1805, and a dispute flared between the Foxites and the Court of Directors as to Cornwallis's replacement.¹⁷ The choice eventually fell upon Minto himself. He sailed for India in February 1807, and hardly had he reached the Cape when his government fell. Minto's appointment, however, was upheld by the new government that took office in March 1807. It was led by the Duke of Portland and staffed by Pitt's followers, including Canning, Castlereagh, and Robert Dundas, who became President of the Board of Control. This circumstance of Minto's tenure in India, as a whig official in a Pittite administration, has been mistakenly considered to have influenced his decisions on India's external policy.

As Governor-General, Minto was rather unreceptive of proposals to renew Pitt's policy to, as Canning famously put it, 'call in the New World to redress the balance of the Old.'¹⁸ One meticulous report, by Robert Farquhar in 1807, anticipated Astell and Bosanquet and recommended that,

the liberal line of policy for Great Britain to adopt, would be to demolish to their very foundation, all the petty Dutch Forts scattered throughout Java & the other parts of the Eastern Archipelago, and to restore the Territories attached to them to

¹⁵ See Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 766.

¹⁶ In all references to communications, give 4 to 8 months for delivery by sea, depending on the season, direction, and route. Very critical 'packets' were sent overland, which was not secure, but took under 3 months.

¹⁷ Charles Cornwallis's appointment as Governor-General was an urgent decision made at the end of 1804 to replace Richard Wellesley. Cornwallis arrived in India in July 1805 and died in October. His second-in-council, Sir George Barlow, was favoured by the Court of Directors - and directed by the Company's constitution - to take over and continue Cornwallis's policies. The Foxite faction (followers of Charles Fox, led by the Viscount Howick, Charles Grey) in the Grenville government, however, nominated the Earl of Lauderdale for the office. As a compromise, and opportunely, Grenville picked Minto in June 1806.

¹⁸ George Canning, *Select Speeches of the Right Honourable George Canning, with a preliminary Biographical Sketch*, ed. Robert Walsh (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1844), 467.

their native Sovereigns, securing only one or two strong holds in the eastern part of Java or of the island of Madura.¹⁹

Farquhar's proposal was not acted upon. Yet this inaction did not imply any downplaying of the French threat on the part of Minto. In 1807, the year of the Treaties of Finkenstein and Tilsit which marked Napoleon's alliance with Persia and Russia and renewed his designs for Indian conquest, Minto was acutely aware of the vulnerability accorded to India by its exposure to Persia and Russia,²⁰ and even more so from French and Dutch naval facilities in the Indian Ocean. Arriving at Calcutta in July 1807, he had highlighted to the then chairman of the Company, Edward Parry, that 'every project of the enemy which requires a naval and military force, will find facilities in the possession of the Mauritius.'²¹ And yet, while Minto did consistently continue to discuss the French and Dutch naval threat, he did not act against the French islands of Mauritius and Réunion until 1810 and against the Dutch colony of Java until 1811. This circumstance has long troubled the historian. Amita Das framed it thus: why was it, that 'under the aegis of Minto' the invasion of Java and the French islands was 'granted a respite for four years'?²²

Minto's Victorian biographer, the Countess of Minto, explained that 'these plans had been laid aside... because of the financial difficulties' of the Company and 'some

¹⁹ Minto noted on this paper that it was received in England. Farquhar reveals that he submitted a similar paper to Castlereagh, who replied. Farquhar resubmitted an edited version of the same paper to Minto on 8 November 1810. Another such document was submitted to Grenville in London by John Hayes, of the Company's marine, on 26 January 1807. Farquhar was involved in the capture of Mauritius in 1810, while Hayes was involved in the capture of Mauritius in 1811. MSS Eur F148/2.

²⁰ See correspondence to Minto from Secret Committee, 24 September 1807, and Dundas, 9 December 1807, and from Minto to Dundas, 1 November 1807 and 10 February 1808; cited in Amita Das, *Defending British India Against Napoleon: The Foreign Policy of Governor-General Lord Minto, 1807-13* (1962), ed. Aditya Das (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 44-46.

²¹ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India: Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1807 to 1814*, ed. Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880), 241.

²² Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 178.

uncertainty as to the approval' of the new administration of returned Pittites.²³ Both these claims have stood the test of time. In 1940, Cyril Philips rephrased the home government's 'uncertainty' by referring to its 'adoption of an external policy which was neither enlightened nor active' with respect to French interference in Persia,²⁴ but which was contradictory, so much so that 'it is surprising that Minto carried out any of the orders on external policy which he received from home!'²⁵ Das, in 1962, paraphrased Minto's biographer and argued that:

In 1807, Minto did not feel comfortable in undertaking such an expedition without the previous sanction of the home authorities. When Minto's friends, the Grenvillites were in office, plans for the extirpation of all the European enemies of Britain from their military and commercial posts east of the Cape had been discussed favourably by them. However, the new ministers, particularly Castlereagh, the Secretary of War and Colonies, were known to be opposed to such projects. When Castlereagh was President of the Board of Control (1804-6), orders had been sent to the Government of India prohibiting any expedition against Batavia or any other place in the Eastern seas and until new directions arrived from home, those were considered standing orders.²⁶

Das' focus on Castlereagh vis-à-vis the Grenvillites narrows the problem of Minto's 'respite' to a question of partisan politics: that Minto was held back by a

²³ The Countess of Minto wrote that while 'Grenville and Grey... had entertained and discussed such 'plans' [for the reduction of the islands of Bourbon and Mauritius, and of Java,] with Lord Minto before he left England; but the Ministers who succeeded them were believed to have other views. Lord Castlereagh, who had become War Secretary, had in 1800 forbidden any operations eastward of India, and expeditions against the French islands had been positively indicted to the Indian Government'. Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto*, 241.

²⁴ Philips, *East India Company*, 175.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁶ Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 179. Das's 1962 study of Minto's foreign policy contains a wealth of research into and references to Minto documents at the India Office Records, National Library of Scotland, British Library, etc. However, Das appears to have rather approached these documents as a surveyor than as a critic, with the result that his narrative forms an aggregate of divergent possibilities as to why each event happened as it did, than one coherent argument of what was going on. For example, in explaining Minto's 'respite for four years', Das actually alludes to the question of finance which I develop in this chapter, but he then falls back on the authority of the Countess of Minto's 1886 explanation regarding Castlereagh (see 24n.), which he literally paraphrases against the grain of his other suggestions. The Countess of Minto's 1886 explanation, I argue, was a red herring inserted to support her Victorian portrayal of Minto as a liberal imperialist. It has also been paraphrased by Ferdinand Mount (see 37n.).

government with whose politics he did not share. However, his insinuation that the order prohibiting an expedition originated with Castlereagh is incorrect. The order was issued by the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors to the Marquess Wellesley (Governor-General of Bengal in 1798-1804) on 17 March 1803 – when the Treaty of Amiens with France was still in effect.²⁷ Moreover, Das's syllogism that an order, issued by Castlereagh when he was President of the Board of Control (1802-6), was a 'standing order' by virtue of Castlereagh's return to government as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1807-9), is unsound. Nonetheless, it might hold true if Pittite foreign policy was peaceable and Minto's foreign policy was warlike. But the reverse, in fact, was the case.

Castlereagh was hardly a pacifist minister for war. In September 1807, he in fact fitted out an 'India fleet' and gave 'my full consent to order the India fleet to sail.'²⁸ Castlereagh's papers indicate that the fleet was to have consolidated with the returning force from the third River Plate expedition at the Cape under Edward Pellew, admiral of the East Indies Station, before heading for Ceylon. Ceylon had provided the staging post on the last occasion when an expedition was assembled for the conquest of Java, Mauritius and Réunion.²⁹ This strategic bridging of expeditionary campaigns in the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean was a hallmark of Pittite foreign policy. The conquest of Cape Colony in 1805, and that expeditionary force's proceeding thence to the first

²⁷ Secret Committee to Wellesley, 17 March 1803; cited in Wellesley to Castlereagh, 25 July 1803; Richard Wellesley, *The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, K.G. during his administration in India, Vol. 3*, ed. Montgomery Martin (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1837), 193. The chairman and deputy chairman of the Court of Directors in March 1803 were John Roberts and Jacob Bosanquet. Bosanquet was also chairman in the year before. The Treaty of Amiens was signed on 25 March 1802 and terminated on 18 May 1803.

²⁸ Castlereagh to Mulgrave, 12 September 1807; Robert Stewart, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry, Vol. VIII*, ed. Charles William Vane (London: William Shoberl, 1851), 83-4.

²⁹ The expedition was aborted and diverted to the expedition to Egypt. Wellesley to David Baird, 10 February 1801; Richard Wellesley, *The Despatches, Minutes, and Correspondence, of the Marquess Wellesley, K.G. during his administration in India, Vol. 2*, ed. Montgomery Martin (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1836), 442.

River Plate invasion, was a Castlereagh project when he was still at the Board of Control.

What mission lay ahead after Ceylon for Castlereagh's 'India fleet' in September 1807 is unclear, but the evidence suggests the fleet would 'attack and take the Isle of France, and go and raze Batavia, which must be annihilated and restored to the inhabitants of the country'.³⁰ There are also indications that following this attack, the fleet may reconsolidate at New South Wales for a trans-Pacific assault on the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru.³¹ Minto sailed from England one month before the third River Plate fleet put out to sea (March 1807), and he will have known of larger plans to come. However, in August 1807, one month after arriving at Calcutta, 'he recalled Pellew's proposal for an attack on Batavia or Gressie.'³² The prospect of any attack on Mauritius and Java was put on hold. By December 1807, Castlereagh's 'India fleet' was reassigned to the less glorious capture of Portuguese colonies in Mozambique.³³ Not until the end of 1809, when the navy's Cape Colony station initiated blockades against the French bases and raided Rodriguez island in particular, and the navy's East Indies station likewise blockaded Java, did Minto begin to signal intentions of an expedition.³⁴

³⁰ 'Si ce projet réussit, si l'Amérique du Sud s'émancipe sous notre protection, ce succès nous rend sept à huit mille hommes, qu'on peut renvoyer au Cap, d'où, avec des renforts de l'Europe et de l'Inde, ils peuvent attaquer et prendre l'Isle de France, et aller razer Batavia qu'il faut anéantir et rendre aux habitants du pays, en n'y conservant qu'un comptoir fortifié dans l'Isle d'Onrust, pour que les Hollandais ne puissent jamais relever cet établissement.' Dumouriez to Castlereagh, 14 July 1807, Robert Stewart, *Memoirs*, 77. My translation: 'If this project succeeds, if South America is emancipated under our protection, this success gives us seven to eight thousand men, who can be sent back to the Cape, from where with reinforcements from Europe and India, they can attack and take the Isle of France, and go and raze Batavia, which must be annihilated and restored to the inhabitants of the country, maintaining there a fortified port at the Isle of Onrust, in order that the Dutch can never restore this establishment.'

³¹ See Alan Frost, 'The antipodean exchange: European horticulture and imperial designs,' in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, eds. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72-4.

³² Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 178.

³³ Castlereagh to Robert Dundas, 10 December 1807; Robert Dundas to Castlereagh, 12 December 1807; Robert Stewart, *Memoirs*, 92-4. See also Mabel V. Jackson Haight, *European Powers and South-East Africa: A Study of International Relations on the South-East Coast of Africa, 1796-1856* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 151.

³⁴ Minto to Secret Committee, 10 January 1809; cited in Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 184.

To all intents and purposes, Minto seemed to have deliberately obstructed the interests of his king and navy.³⁵ Indeed, it is argued here that Minto suspended the expedition because he was opposed to the Pittite agenda of economic survival and national sovereignty. This opposition is broadly distinguished between ideas, rather than a narrow division between a Tory government and a Whig government. It is true that Minto's suspension of the expedition had coincided with the period in government of the Pittites, Castlereagh and Canning. They left office in March 1809;³⁶ the Portland government fell in October 1809; and Minto abruptly resolved to undertake his expedition in January 1810.³⁷ This line of reasoning would explain why Minto countermanded, through Pellew, Castlereagh's 'India fleet' in August 1807. However, it cannot explain the fact that the government which came to power in October 1809 was equally Pittite in complexion as Portland's ministry, if not more. Castlereagh's successor at the Board of Control, Robert Dundas,³⁸ and at the department for War and the Colonies, the Earl of Liverpool, were both disciples of Pitt. Five months after Minto began assembling his expedition, they also confirmed an expedition to Mauritius and

³⁵ 'Minto was criticised for postponing the proposed attack on Batavia in 1807,' in Rainbow, S. G., *English Expeditions to the Dutch East Indies during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (MA thesis, London University, 1933), 161-2, cited in Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 179, 29n.

³⁶ Owing to a duel between the two, over rivalry and intrigue concerning Castlereagh's failed Walcheren expedition in August 1809 and Canning's campaign in Portugal. Though their personalities clashed, the two Pittites were nevertheless united in their understanding of Britain's war against Napoleon and their conception of the New World that potentially lay within the old empires of the European states. But while Canning's hobbyhorse was the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, Castlereagh's attentions were directed at the Dutch empire.

³⁷ 'This projected enterprize the expediency of which was submitted in a dispatch addressed by the Governor General from Madras to the Secret Committee under date the 23rd of January 1810'. Minto to Secret Committee, 23 January 1810, cited in Minto to Barlow, 17 January 1811; MSS Eur F148/2.

³⁸ Robert Dundas' father, Henry Dundas, was Pitt's closest ally and whose combination of the three offices of Treasurer of the Navy, President of the Board of Control, and Secretary of State for War, defined the Pittite agenda respecting India and the colonies during the French Revolutionary Wars. See J.A. Lovat-Fraser, *Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville* (1916) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 136.

Réunion in June 1810.³⁹ Minto did not countermand Liverpool's expedition. In fact, he appropriated it to his own expedition.

It thus appears that at issue was not whether this or that party was favourable or 'opposed to such projects', but what purpose any one expedition was intended to fulfil, and whose interests this purpose had served at the time. By this argument, Minto's expedition had envisioned a rival purpose to the Pittite agenda of economic survival and national sovereignty. Minto's 'respite' was thus a question of opportunity arising out of contending ideological views, as opposed to a matter of 'uncertainty' on the part of Castlereagh, or the expediency of 'circumstances' resulting from French interference in Persia.⁴⁰ The contention between interests and ideological views can be located in the tensions between the colonial government and the home government. However, they are complicated further by a third agent, which is the Court of Directors of the East India Company (or 'Direction'), in particular its Secret Committee and its chairmen and deputy chairmen (or 'Chairs'). As we saw, Astell and Bosanquet consequently weighed in on the expedition project with their instructions of 31 August 1810. We have three levels of authority, therefore, suddenly deciding to invade the enemy in the Indian Ocean in 1810: (1) the Governor-General of Bengal, (2) the British Government, and (3) the Court of Directors. Cyril Philips has described how 'pressure groups or "interests" in centres as far apart as Calcutta, Westminster and Leadenhall interacted and influenced policy.'⁴¹ The rivalry between these interests, engaged between the personalities who presided over these centres at different times, explains, among other issues, why decisions to invade or not to invade the enemy in the Indian Ocean were made.

³⁹ Liverpool to George III, 12 June 1810, Arthur Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III, Volume Five, 1808-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 614.

⁴⁰ Philips, *East India Company*, 175.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, viii.

The fact is that the invasion of Java was an old hat that had been mooted and opposed since Wellesley's mustering of an expedition force for Java, Mauritius, and Réunion at Trincomalee in October 1800⁴² – before the Peace of Amiens. The chairman of the Company at the time, whose unforthcoming approval led to the expedition being aborted, was Hugh Inglis. The deputy chairman who in 1803 forbade Wellesley from undertaking any more expeditions was also the deputy chairman who instructed Minto on his conduct of the expedition in 1810: Jacob Bosanquet. The chairman who in 1807 recommended the reassignment of Castlereagh's 'India fleet' to the Portuguese colonies⁴³ was also the figure who oversaw Minto's appointment as Governor-General in July 1806: Charles Grant.⁴⁴ In the period between 1794 and 1812, Inglis, Bosanquet, and Grant were each 'the most influential Director of the day.'⁴⁵ Their competing interests within the Company 'direction', and their influence on the home and colonial governments, were far more significant than have been supposed. In the case of the invasion of Java, it was crucial. Minto did not go out, as one contemporary writer imagined, 'to avenge all those past humiliations' by the French, or that 'he was out for glory and he was out for gold, too.'⁴⁶ Minto invaded Java to effect for the East Indies the settlement which Charles Grant had demanded, in the case of India, of 'restoring order, tranquility [sic], and security to the convulsed continent of India.'⁴⁷

⁴² *Memoirs and Correspondence of Richard Marquess Wellesley, Vol. 2*, ed. Robert R. Pearce (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), 60. See also C.J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1966), 43-4. The expedition was aborted by the naval commander on account of orders (or lack thereof) from home. Hobart to Wellesley, 5 May 1802, Wellesley, *Minutes Vol. II*, 1700. See also Edward Ingram, *The British Empire as a World Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2011), 211-231; and Peter A. Ward, *British Naval Power in the East, 1794-1805: The Command of Admiral Peter Rainier* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013). See 34n.

⁴³ Robert Dundas to Castlereagh, 12 December 1807; Robert Stewart, *Memoirs*, 93-4.

⁴⁴ Grant to Sir George Barlow, 26 July 1806, Henry Morris, *The Life of Charles Grant, Sometime Member of Parliament for Inverness-shire and Director of the East India Company* (London: John Murray, 1904), 264.

⁴⁵ Philips, *East India Company*, 175.

⁴⁶ The last aspersion is unsubstantiated. Ferdinand Mount, *The Tears of the Rajas: Mutiny, Money and Marriage in India 1805-1905* (Great Britain: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 110.

⁴⁷ Grant to George Udny, 29 January 1805; Morris, *Charles Grant*, 259.

The Pruning Knife

The sudden enthusiasm in 1810 by all three centres at Calcutta, Whitehall, and Leadenhall Street for an expedition against the enemy possessions in the Indian Ocean, did not describe a united front or a race. However, as we shall see, neither was it coincidental or uncontested. The evidence at first indicates that the expedition was initiated separately in London and in Calcutta.⁴⁸ Minto's decision can be fixed to January 1810 at the latest, while Liverpool's decision can be fixed to between February and April 1810 at the earliest. Liverpool's motive was the same as Castlereagh's in 1807, which was the perennial threat of French cruisers based in Mauritius and Réunion.⁴⁹ An enquiry on 2 February 1810 by the Court of Directors into the huge losses of commercial shipping in 1807-9⁵⁰ had deemed a military solution necessary.⁵¹ The mission was assigned by Liverpool in June 1810 to Samuel Auchmuty,⁵² the commander of the only successful operation in the River Plate invasions of 1807. Auchmuty, moreover, had in the period 14 February 1810 to 10 April 1810 been specifically appointed by the Court of Directors to the Madras Council as commander

⁴⁸ Minto's initial notification of the expedition to the Secret Committee was made through his letters dated 23 January 1810, and 6 February 1810. These were not received until after the Secret Committee's letter to Minto, dated 14 June 1810, which notified him of Liverpool's expedition, was sent. Minto does not seem to have received this letter. He learnt of Liverpool's expedition from Astell and Bosanquet's letter dated 31 August 1810. Astell and Bosanquet to Minto, 31 August 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

⁴⁹ Secret Committee to Minto, 27 March 1809; Minto to Secret Committee, 24 March 1809; cited in Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 153.

⁵⁰ 'Copies of the Minutes of Enquiry by the Directors of the East India Company, and their Officers, as to the loss of the Ships Calcutta, Jane Duchess of Gordon, Bengal, Lady Jane Dundas, Experiment, and Lord Nelson, at a joint Committee of Warehouses and Shipping, the 2d February 1810.' *Minutes of the Evidence Taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Petitions relating to East-India-Built Shipping* (Great Britain: House of Commons, 20 July 1814), 269-274.

⁵¹ 'The capture of these islands is become an object of great publick importance in consequence of the number of ships belonging to the East India Company which have been taken in the course of the last three years by cruisers from the above-mentioned islands.' (See 43n.)

⁵² 'The Earl of Liverpool's Letter to Sir Samuel Achmuty of the 8th June', cited in Astell and Bosanquet to Minto, 31 August 1810; MSS Eur F148/2. (See also 43n.)

of the forces in Madras,⁵³ and it is reasonable to suppose that his appointment had presupposed his selected role in the expedition.

Minto's motive, ostensibly, was also the French cruisers. However, as mentioned, the French military threat had been an ongoing concern since 1807.⁵⁴ Minto's true reasons were far more extensive and political: Raffles referred to them as Minto's 'great cause'⁵⁵ and 'original design'.⁵⁶ Where Liverpool had limited the scope of the expedition to Mauritius and Réunion, the real object of Minto's expedition was the capture of the Dutch colony of Java. The Java operation could only commence on condition of the fall of Réunion and Mauritius.⁵⁷ This 'ulterior expedition' to Java, however, was kept a secret, even from the expedition force. It was not until after Réunion was taken in July 1810, and the expedition force regrouped in August for the subsequent attack on Mauritius, that Minto revealed his 'meditated Expedition against the Island of Java' to the commander of the Mauritius operation, John Abercromby,⁵⁸ military chief at Bombay. The Royal Navy's East Indies station chief, William O'Bryen Drury,⁵⁹ the governor of Cape Colony, the Earl of Caledon,⁶⁰ and the new governor of Mauritius, Robert Farquhar, were notified in October, when the Mauritius operation commenced. Few details too had been given to the Secret Committee, until Minto prepared a minute at the end of that month.⁶¹ On 17 January 1811, when news of the French surrender at Mauritius trickled in, Minto sent duplicates of the same letter to the

⁵³ 'State Papers for 1810, Papers relating to East India Affairs,' *The Asiatic Annual Register, for the Year 1810-11, Volume 12* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812), 211.

⁵⁴ See Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 173-194.

⁵⁵ Raffles to Minto, 13 February 1812; Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 222.

⁵⁶ Raffles to Minto, 21 April 1812; MSS Eur F148/30.

⁵⁷ Neil Edmonstone to W. Thackeray and F. Warden, 16 January 1811; MSs Eur F148/2. Minto to Secret Committee, 22 January 1811; MSS Eur F148/2.

⁵⁸ Minto to Abercromby, 3 September 1810 and 5 October 1810; MSS Eur F148/2. The only other people who were privy to the Java scheme at this time was Robert Farquhar, John Leyden, Archibald Seton, and the members of the Calcutta Council, Henry Colebrooke, John Lumsden, and the Commander-in-Chief of Bengal, George Hewitt.

⁵⁹ Minto to Drury, 5 October 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

⁶⁰ Minto to Caledon, 19 October 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

⁶¹ Minto to Secret Committee, 26 October 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

governors of Bombay and Madras, Jonathan Duncan and Sir George Barlow, and the governor of Ceylon, Thomas Maitland,⁶² officially informing them of the ‘projected Enterprize’ to Java.

Minto’s furtiveness regarding his Java scheme is significant. His taciturn approach toward his colleagues and superiors suggests that his conception of his ‘extended Enterprize’ to Java was sensitive to their approval, vulnerable to being hijacked, and singly important to his Bengal government. Significantly, the timing of Minto’s notifications was calculated not against the enemy but to the various establishments of British authority in India and Africa, which were: the Royal Navy stations at the East Indies and the Cape, the Crown colonies of Ceylon and Cape Colony, and the Company presidencies (provinces) of Bombay and Madras (Fort St George). All establishments were involved in the armament for Mauritius and Réunion, but Minto’s deliberate and commanding communication with each establishment – to recognise that the Java operation would be led and financed by his government with the military resources of Madras alone – does not so much demonstrate the eminence of his offices as Governor-General of Bengal and President of Calcutta (Fort William), which answered to the Court of Directors and Board of Control, as it asserts the independent authority and power of the *de facto* Government of Bengal.

Conceptualising Bengal as the self-determining government of a state-like polity that included Madras and Bombay – rather than as a Company presidency vis-à-vis the other Company presidencies of Bombay and Fort St George – in a way that was comparable to His Majesty’s Government of the United Kingdom and the Crown’s viceroalties of Ceylon and the Cape, is rather extraordinary. We will later see how this constitutional innovation had originated from 1783 with Edmund Burke’s (defeated)

⁶² Minto to Duncan, 17 January 1811; Minto to Barlow, 17 January 1811; Minto to Maitland, 17 January 1811; MSS Eur F148/2.

India Bill. Nevertheless, it usefully allows us to identify what interests which an expedition to Mauritius and Java would have served at the three levels of the home government, the Court of Directors, and the Bengal government. Generally, at every level these interests are distinguished between the public interest and the private interest, or the political interest and the commercial interest. This distinction was indicated, for example, at the end of Astell and Bosanquet's letter to Minto:

Your Lordship in Council will be careful to direct that a Separate and distinct account be kept, and transmitted to the Court of Directors, as soon as possible, of any extraordinary expenses incurred in an Enterprize to the eastward, in order that such expenditure may be brought forward in any account to be adjusted between the Public & the Company.⁶³

The category 'Public' referred to the Crown governments, primarily His Majesty's Government in London. The category 'Company' is self-evident. However, as we shall see, it is a mistake to take for granted that 'Public' necessarily meant the public interest, and 'Company' meant the private interest. Rather, either establishment was internally riven by conflict between the public and the private interests: in the form of Minto's Bengal government, the Company was a public entity entirely. The adjusting of expenditures between the 'Public' and the 'Company', nonetheless, usually referred to the apportionment of the cost of maintaining arms in India. The accounting practice is explained in the Report of a Select Committee appointed in 1832. 'The expenses of the King's regiments serving in India,' it said, 'which are defrayed in this country [Britain], are repaid to his Majesty's Government by the East-India Company, and constitute part of the "territorial [Indian] charges in England"'.⁶⁴ Similarly, 'the expense of the King's naval force employed in the Indian seas is paid by the public; but if it is

⁶³ Astell and Bosanquet to Minto, 31 August 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

⁶⁴ *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East-India Company, 16th August 1832* (London: J.I Cox and Sons, Jan. 1833), 48.

augmented upon the requisition of the Court of Directors, the expense of such augmentation is chargeable upon the territorial [Indian] revenues.’ To mount an expeditionary campaign, therefore, cost money. And money, Minto did not have in 1807. The lack of finance explains his suspension of the expedition. Das, quoting a letter by Minto to the Secret Committee dated 26 October 1807, explained that:

Minto wrote to Pellew as well as to Robert Dundas, that the Government of India was not only financially and militarily unable to undertake such a large-scale operation on its own, but also that he felt ‘the want of due authority to engage in such an enterprise, and our incompetence to adjust many points of the highest political importance which it must involve’, for instance whether the Crown or Company would be represented and take responsibility for the captured territories and settlements, who was to bear the expenses or if shared, a description of the proportionate burden.⁶⁵

But if Calcutta lacked financial resources in 1807, why did Minto then prevent Castlereagh’s ‘India fleet’, which was funded by the ‘Public’, from proceeding to ‘attack and take the Isle of France, and go and raze Batavia’? The reason was because Minto did not want Java to be demolished and abandoned,⁶⁶ or if it was not to be demolished and abandoned, to become a crown colony under crown government,⁶⁷ which would be the case had the King’s military service undertaken the expedition. This possibility resurfaced in June 1810, when Liverpool received the King’s approval for the home government’s expedition to Mauritius and Réunion. Royal approval extended over the public funds required, and naturally had the Court of Directors’ approval. Minto did not learn of Liverpool’s expedition until Auchmuty arrived at Madras on 31 January 1811.⁶⁸ By then, however, Minto’s own expedition had already secured

⁶⁵ Amita Das, *Defending British India*; 180.

⁶⁶ Minto to Secret Committee, 22 January 1811; MSS Eur F148/2.

⁶⁷ Draft, Minto to Secret Committee, 3 September 1811; MSS Eur F148/14. Minto’s Minute, 6 December 1811, Fort William; MSS Eur F148/15.

⁶⁸ Minto to Secret Committee, 22 January 1811; MSS Eur F148/2.

Réunion and Mauritius, and – as this first phase of the expedition was a joint undertaking involving forces from the Cape, Ceylon, the three Presidencies, and the navy’s East Indies and Cape stations – secured them for the British crown. Liverpool’s expedition, which was only authorised to invade Mauritius and Réunion, was made redundant. Minto’s expedition, however, entered a second phase as it focused on Java. For Minto, if Java was to be invaded, it must be invaded by the Company’s military service, or not at all. This was the case in 1811. But between 1807 and 1810, Minto could not afford a Company-funded expedition to Java, and neither would he support a one funded by the ‘Public’.

What motivated Minto to withhold Java from the Crown in favour of the Company is revealed by Charles Grant. Grant was Chairman of the Company when the dispute broke over the Ministry of All the Talents’ candidate for Governor-General in 1806, and he appeared to be responsible for first nominating Minto to the job.⁶⁹ In 1807, Grant became Deputy Chairman to Edward Parry – in 1808 he was re-elected Deputy Chairman again, and in 1809, he became Chairman for the second time. In September 1807, Grant wrote to George Barlow, who had just taken over the government of Madras (1807-13) on being superseded by Minto at Calcutta,⁷⁰ to undertake,

Retrenchments, large retrenchments, and a large surplus after providing for the interest of the debt, are absolutely necessary... Either there must be a large available surplus, or the Company cannot go on. We are looking very anxiously to the details of your retrenchments, of which we have received hardly any part. If they do not appear sufficient, we must apply the pruning knife here. It is exceedingly material that an account of your retrenchments, and the evidence of a

⁶⁹ ‘The Administration at length decided on their line, which was to adhere to the act of revocation; but to give up the recommendation of Lord Lauderdale and to propose a man who, they had reason to believe, would be agreeable to the Court and the public, namely, Lord Minto, whose character, by the way, with the Directors was, perhaps, very much settled by the reports my colleague and I made of him whilst we were in the Chairs.’ Grant to Barlow, 26 July 1806; Morris, *Charles Grant*, 266.

⁷⁰ Replacing William Petrie, who was acting governor after William Bentinck, the son of the Duke of Portland, was recalled in September 1807.

clear and good surplus, should arrive within the time our affairs come under the consideration of Parliament.⁷¹

What Grant had demanded of Barlow at Madras was the reduction of that presidency's budget deficit by cutting its spending, a policy known today as 'austerity'. Grant had demanded the same of Barlow's predecessor at Madras, William Bentinck (1803-07), the son of the Duke of Portland. This policy of retrenchment was not exclusive to Grant or to Madras. It represented the burden of the Court of Directors' concerns ever since the Company consolidated its empire over Mysore in 1799, and Oude and the Carnatic in 1801. Retrenchment became necessary not because of profligacy, but for the same reason which deems it necessary in the present day: that is, to settle debt. Retrenchment and the settlement of debt were the two fundamental tasks entrusted to Minto on his appointment as governor-general. Grant's 'pruning knife' was the practical reason why Minto could not afford to mount a Company-funded expedition to Java between 1807 and 1810. The matter of debt, on the other hand, explains why – as will be shown in the next sections – Minto would not morally support a publicly-funded one. Minto's invasion of Java, therefore, was not determined by the international threat of the Napoleonic wars or by the national-economic policies of the British government. It must instead be understood in terms of the domestic policy of his Bengal government, and as the export of this policy. To understand this policy, we need to digress into the subject of the Company's Indian Debt, the British Indian discourse of commerce and governance, and the intense contest of ideas fought in the British Parliament for the future of India.

⁷¹ Grant to Barlow, 4 September 1807, Morris, *Life of Charles Grant*, 268.

‘This Magnificent Plan of Universal Plunder’

The decisive role of debt in the formation of Britain’s Indian empire has had an indifferent career in the history of British India. Certainly, debt had always supplied a key chapter in the history of the British Indian economy. Between 1814 and 1829, for example (the period of government under the Marquess of Hastings and the Earl Amherst), the Company’s Territorial Debt rose from £30.9 million to £47.3 million (or from £3 billion to £5 billion in today’s value).⁷² These amounts may not seem to be much, until we consider that over the same period, the Company’s Territorial Revenues grew from £17.8 million in 1814 to £22.7 million in 1829 (accounting for a total of £311 million), and Territorial Expenditure grew from £16.5 million in 1814 to £25.9 million in 1829 (totalling £304 million).⁷³ Notwithstanding that a simple deficit is already noticeable for 1829, if we charge the debt (not counting the interest) to the net revenues, then the Indian government had been suffering a fiscal deficit of £29.9 million in 1814 which ballooned to £50.5 million in 1829, or 168% of income in 1814 to 222% of income in 1829. At these rates, as Grant said, ‘the Company cannot go on.’

What has not been understood, however, is how India’s debt had been a positive determinant of its politics. The Court of Directors and government ministers were obviously anxious to settle the question of debt, but for different reasons and by various approaches. Charles Grant represented the political view – which today might call the common sense view – that the Indian debt needed to be liquidated in order to discharge the public obligation attached to the debt and free up revenues for public spending by the Indian governments. Surprisingly, Grant was in the minority. The problem with the Indian debt is that it was also the Company’s debt, and therefore a ‘private’ commercial debt. In this regard, there were creditors within the Company who were merely keen to

⁷² *Report... on the Affairs of the East-India Company*, 42.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 32, 34.

reduce the debt to a serviceable level where revenues were sufficiently able to pay the interest on the debt without bankrupting government. Connected to the creditors were stakeholders of other Company securities such as stocks, bills of exchange, insurances, etc.⁷⁴ This broad approach represented, in the figures of Bosanquet and Inglis, the commercial view of the Company's historical function, which was to maximise profits from selling dearly and buying cheaply – a rationale that also advocated the deferring of costs into facilities of credit, and the balancing of new liabilities with increased assets.

These two general approaches to the Indian Debt, the political view and the commercial view, correspond to the Company's dual interests, formally categorised in 1813, of the 'Territory of India' and the 'Commerce of the East India Company'.⁷⁵ The political view saw the Company as being responsible for the governance of the territories and peoples that had come under its authority. The commercial view continued to see the Company as being responsible only to its shareholders through its conduct of trade. This distinction in fact marked a watershed in the history of the Company, when the inclusion of Mysore, Oude, and the Carnatic into its empire opened a humanitarian dimension in the Company's affairs which clashed with its traditional commercial function. John Leyden, landing in Madras in 1803, drew some satirical observations of these 'two divisions'.⁷⁶ First there was 'the mercantile party,' he wrote, 'consisting chiefly of men of old standing, versed in trade, and inspired with a spirit in no respect superior to that of the most pitiful pettifogging pedlar, nor in their views a whit more enlarged'. Adam Smith had raised the 'pedlar' to a respectable 'shopkeeper', but the derogatory 'spirit' that inspired him – Smith's 'monopolising spirit' –pointed to

⁷⁴ Cyril Philips designated these groups as the Indian interest (comprising the creditors to the Nabob of Arcot and the friends of Warren Hastings) and the City interest (comprising the City and Shipping interests). Philips, *East India Company*, 24.

⁷⁵ *Report... on the Affairs of the East-India Company*, 31.

⁷⁶ Leyden to Ballantyne, 24 October 1805; Walter Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. Vol. IV: Biographical Memoirs Vol. II* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1834), 182.

the same old vice of private self-interest. These were ‘men whose sole occupation is to make money,’ Leyden continued, ‘and who have no name for such phrases as national honour, public spirit, or patriotism’. Invariably, usury tainted them: ‘men, in short, who would sell their own honour, or their country’s credit, to the highest bidder, without a shadow of scruple.’ But ‘what is more unfortunate,’ noted Leyden, ‘this is the party that stands highest in credit with the East India Company.’ And yet,

There is another party, for whom I am more at a loss to find an epithet. They cannot with propriety be termed the anti-mercantile party, as they have the interests of our national commerce more at heart than the others; but they have discovered that we are not merely merchants in India, but legislators and governors, and they assert that our conduct there ought to be calculated for stability and security, and equally marked by a wise internal administration of justice, financial and political economy, and by a vigilant, firm, and steady system of external politics.

Hardly could this second ‘party’ of ‘legislators and governors’ be expected to wisely administer justice, finance, and political economy, when the Company’s ‘men of old standing’ were determined that it should ‘make money’. As Adam Smith noted, ‘the government of an exclusive company of merchants is, perhaps, the worst of all governments for any country whatever.’ How these two diverging views of the Company affected its interests during Minto’s government informs the British Indian discourse which had accompanied the ascendance of ‘legislators and governors’ in the wake of the Company’s territorial expansion. This discourse developed from a critical assessment as to the causes and effects of imperial expansion. According to Charles Grant, it originated in 1769 – four years after the Company had formally secured Bengal – as the legacy of Bengal’s fourth governor, Harry Verelst. ‘The year 1769, not 1772 or 1784, he insisted, was the year when British rule began ‘the principle of

consulting the welfare of the people'.⁷⁷ In Verelst's famous debate with the Calcutta judge, William Bolts, the welfare of the people was conceived and juxtaposed against the Company's pursuit of profit.⁷⁸ In due course a rhetoric emerged which defended the moral dignity and public authority of the body politic over the chartered rights and private property of the Company. The corruption of the Company was believed to be the cause of the moral decay of the body politic. This led to a narrative (in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, no less⁷⁹) that depicted the body politic as falling into subjection and dependency to the monopolising spirit of commercial self-interest.

The association of imperial expansion with debt in India is attributed to Edmund Burke.⁸⁰ It surfaced in the discourse during the sustained contest in the British Parliament as to *how* to end the independence of the Bengal government and regulate its affairs. The contest was marked by Burke's (nominally referred to as Fox's) India Bill of 1783, Pitt's India Act of 1784, and Burke's impeachment of Warren Hastings (Governor and then Governor-General of Bengal in 1772-85). These events were conveyed by Burke in his *Speech on Mr Fox's India Bill* (1783), his *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts* (1785), and his *Articles of Charge of High Crimes and Misdemeanors, against Warren Hastings, Esq.* (1786). All three texts impute the association of imperial expansion with debt to the policy of Warren Hastings. From Hastings had originated, it was purported, a scheme of protection in response to

⁷⁷ Ainslee Thomas Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1962), 28.

⁷⁸ See Patrick Tuck's Introduction in Volume III of *The East India Company: 1600-1858*, ed. Patrick Tuck, which includes and discusses the debate as documented between William Bolts, in his *Considerations on India Affairs*, and Harry Verelst in his *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal* (London: Routledge, 1998), v-xxv.

⁷⁹ 'So unfortunate are the effects of all the regulations of the mercantile system, that they not only introduce very dangerous disorders into the state of the *body politic*, but disorders which it is often difficult to remedy, without occasioning, for a time at least, still greater disorders.' Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994); 655 (Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III).

⁸⁰ See Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

perceived threats from one native state against the security of another native state. In return for a sum of income, or ‘subsidy’, the Company’s military was sent to the native court along with a ‘Resident’ to ensure that the subsidy was paid and collected. It transpired that there was little income to be had, and the Company through affiliated ‘private’ agents consequently advanced loans to the native ruler to pay for the subsidy. Burke saw these loans to be the true objective of Hastings’ scheme. The necessity for loans was depicted as having been manufactured by the Company through political intrigue and contracted under the threat of war – ‘the abuse made of the right of war and peace’.⁸¹ ‘The invariable course of the Company’s policy is this,’ explained Burke:

Either they set up some prince too odious to maintain himself without the necessity of their assistance; or they soon render him odious, by making him the instrument of their government. In that case troops are bountifully sent to him to maintain his authority. That he should have no want of assistance, a civil gentleman, called a Resident, is kept at his court, who, under pretence of providing duly for the pay of these troops, gets assignments on the revenue into his hands. Under his provident management, debts soon accumulate; new assignments are made for these debts; until, step by step, the whole revenue, and with it the whole power of the country, is delivered into his hands.⁸²

The effect of the Company’s credit was the source of Burke’s complaint. Because the native ruler’s revenues were derived from his subjects, his debt with the Company became a tax on his people which neither they nor he could afford to pay. Burke portrayed a condition of destitution and misery among the clients of the Company’s credit. ‘There are none who have ever confided in us who have not been utterly ruined,’ he raged. Burke understood the implication of these events from a higher plane. He conceived that the Company had, in colluding with the native courts

⁸¹ Edmund Burke, *Speech on Fox’s India Bill*, in *Select Works of Edmund Burke: A New Imprint of the Payne Edition, Volume 4* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 90.

⁸² Burke, *Fox’s India Bill*, 96.

against their rivals, corrupted them through usury and undermined their self-dependence. The narrative of debt as a mode of corruption, as the cause of moral decay, and a form of slavery, was rather unique to Burke.⁸³ This association, which was particularly represented in his *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts*, marked the entry into the British Indian discourse of an Anglo-Atlantic tradition of republican speech.⁸⁴ He turned the classical construction of Greco-Roman self-consciousness being enervated by Oriental luxury on its head,⁸⁵ and famously argued that the Company's peddling of credit on punitive terms rendered it an agent of Asiatic vice and immorality, who found its prey among the guileless rulers of the native states. These rulers, Burke proceeded to list as follows:

There is proof more than enough in the condition of the Mogul; in the slavery and indigence of the Nabob of Oude; the exile of the Rajah of Benares; the beggary of the Nabob of Bengal; the undone and captive condition of the Rajah and kingdom of Tanjour; the destruction of the Polygars; and lastly, in the destruction of the Nabob of Arcot himself, who when his dominions were invaded was found entirely destitute of troops, provisions, stores, and (as he asserts) of money, being a million in debt to the Company, and four millions to others; the many millions which he had extorted from so many extirpated princes and their desolated countries having (as he has frequently hinted) been expended for the ground-rent of his mansion-house in an alley in the suburbs of Madras.⁸⁶

The Company's corrupting of the native consciousness was only a short step away from its usurping native liberty. The distinction Burke drew between the vicious state of slavery among the Company's clients, from the virtuous state of independence among those who resisted it, sealed the British Indian discourse with the republican

⁸³ See F.P. Lock, *Edmund Burke, Volume II: 1784-1797* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 44.

⁸⁴ See John Pocock's essays, 'Hume and the American Revolution: The dying thoughts of a North Briton' and 'The political economy of Burke's analysis of the French Revolution', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 125-142, 193-214.

⁸⁵ See John Burrow's chapters on Polybius, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus in John Burrow, *A History of Histories* (England: Penguin, 2009).

⁸⁶ Burke, *Fox's India Bill*, 90.

stamp. ‘Compare the condition of all these princes,’ he raged in parliament, ‘with the power and authority of all the Maratta states; with the independence and dignity of the Soubah of the Decan; and the mighty strength, the resources, and the manly struggle of Hyder Ali’.⁸⁷ Manliness, independence, authority: these were the attributes of a free state.⁸⁸ More unforgivable as the Company’s peddling of credit, perhaps, was its vending of its military as a mercenary force – termed the ‘subsidiary force’ – to the native courts to ensure that its dues of debt were paid. ‘The military,’ Burke said, ‘feel that, in a country driven to habitual rebellion by the civil government, the military is necessary; and they will not permit their services to go unrewarded. Tracts of country are delivered over to their discretion. Then it is found proper to convert their commanding officers into farmers of revenue.’⁸⁹

The military’s corruption and decline into tax collectors evoked Edward Gibbon’s Gothic mercenaries who replaced the citizenry militia of Rome.⁹⁰ It is evident of the neo-Roman narrative of the ‘Polybian cycle of decline into corruption’. The Company’s commerce had corrupted the native state’s virtue. The contrast which Burke drew between masculine independent states and the effeminate dependencies of the Company was a reflection of the distinctions made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries between the purity of an ancient civilisation and the debased existence wrought by modern commerce.⁹¹ These ideas are traced to the common law tradition of the ancient constitution,⁹² and also to civic humanist conceptions of freedom and

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 194-211.

⁸⁹ Burke, *Fox’s India Bill*, 96.

⁹⁰ See J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Volume Three, The First Decline and Fall* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 462.

⁹¹ See John Pocock’s essay, ‘The mobility of property and the rise of eighteenth-century sociology’, in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 103-124.

⁹² See J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

governance which were revived through the work of James Harrington.⁹³ Both traditions had provided the civic humanist framework from which the modern ideas of political economy were criticised.⁹⁴ Within the wider context of the Enlightenment, therefore, the Company's 'magnificent plan of universal plunder'⁹⁵ was raised as an example of what can go wrong with free markets and commercial society. This view, interestingly, is still extant.⁹⁶

Spirit of Liberty versus Spirit of Conquest

The humanitarian dimension which Burke opened in British attitudes towards India initiated a period of reform and governance marked by his India Bill of 1783 and Pitt's India Act of 1784. If parliament did not correct the depravity of the Company, Burke had warned, 'the House will discover the effects, on every power in India, of an easy confidence, or of a rooted distrust in the faith of the Company.' Trust was restored by the Earl Cornwallis, Governor-General of Bengal in 1785-93. Cornwallis is remembered in the history for reconstituting the foundation for the civil administration of India and for centralising separated systems of government, judiciary, and revenue.⁹⁷ In sweeping reforms implemented between 1786 and 1792, 'he improved the administration; he forced the Company to give adequate pay to their servants, and made them honest officers; he founded the Civil Service of India as it exists to this day',

⁹³ James Harrington, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'*, ed., J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁹⁴ See Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁹⁵ *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts*

⁹⁶ William Dalrymple, in his forthcoming book, *The Anarchy: How a Corporation Replaced the Mughal Empire, 1756-1803* (London: Bloomsbury and Knopf), depicts the Company as the 'original corporate raiders'. See Dalrymple's article in *The Guardian*, 4 March 2015.

⁹⁷ See Arthur Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal: The Administrative and Judicial Reforms of Lord Cornwallis in Bengal, Together with Accounts of the Commercial Expansion of the East India Company, 1786-1793, and of the Foundation of Penang, 1786-1793* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931).

throughout which ‘he was involved in one war only’.⁹⁸ But Cornwallis is remembered less for the reason why he chose a *dirigiste* approach to reform, which was to establish ‘the right of the Company to demand complete security for the persons and property of their subjects, and all others living under their protection’.⁹⁹ I will discuss this in the next section. What Cornwallis effectively did was to identify the Company’s empire with the state and thus make it responsible for the welfare of its subjects. By giving to the subject an interest in the state, Cornwallis consequently developed a productive economy that generated a fiscal income to pay for the Company’s governance.

This relation of trust and protection was radical and unimaginable in Britain. In India, it represented a revolt at a structural level of ideas by the Company’s legislators and governors against the Company’s men of old standing. It vindicated the argument for governance over commerce. It justified the public good of humanity over the private interest of rights. In the world-historical perspective, it delineated an order of peace and security against the disorder of debt and war. These distinctions are conceptually complex. They have their origin in a pluralistic interpretation of the republican theme of freedom and power, or *libertas et imperium*. To explain these distinctions, Richard Bourke has in the case of Edmund Burke offered two incompatible ‘animating principles’¹⁰⁰ denoted by what was known as the ‘spirit of liberty’ and the ‘spirit of conquest’.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule, from the rise of the British power in 1757 to the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd, 1908), 9.

⁹⁹ Cornwallis to C.W. Malet, 18 December 1789; Charles Cornwallis, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis of Cornwallis, Volume 1*, ed. Charles Ross (London: John Murray, 1859), 565.

¹⁰⁰ I have borrowed the term ‘animating principle’ from Alan Ryan as one which best captures the meaning intended by Burke and Bourke of the eighteenth-century word ‘spirit’, made famous by Montesquieu. Alan Ryan, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present* (England: Penguin Books, 2013), 522

¹⁰¹ Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, 1.

Burke was a fervent advocate of the ‘spirit of liberty’. It inspired his support for the ‘rights of legitimate rebellion’ (as enshrined in the Glorious Revolution of 1688) and his opposition to the ‘standing policies of the Empire’. The ‘spirit of conquest’, Burke repudiated. This was not the same as the ‘rights of conquest’, which, with the ‘rights of imperial sovereignty’ and the ‘authority of empire’, Burke upheld in the ‘spirit of liberty’.¹⁰² The ‘spirit of conquest’ was reproached as an ‘attitude of usurpation’. It was for this reason that Burke opposed not only the policy of Hastings but also of the concept of ‘modern liberty’, which he believed produced the illegitimate ‘subversion of government’. Institutions and processes such as government and commerce, therefore, could be conducted in the ‘spirit of liberty’ or in the ‘spirit of conquest’. But not everybody accepted this pluralist argument. Classicists tended to understand the theme of *libertas et imperium* as singularly defined by the substantive idea, or nature – not the active ‘spirit’ – of liberty. In that narrative, empire through conquest and commerce was gained from liberty and virtue, and through corruption and decay was lost to slavery and vice. But this was exactly Burke’s point: ‘liberty’ and ‘virtue’ have been idealised for two millennia and still were ambiguous concepts in reality. For Burke, conquest and commerce, conducted in the ‘spirit of conquest’ as he accused of Hastings, can also corrupt and cause decay at the same time by usurping liberty and subverting authority. Empire, therefore, can also be gained through conquest and commerce in the form of war and debt. But such an empire was not the empire of man, but of an idea be it ‘liberty’ or ‘credit’ or ‘capital’ which has a ‘spirit of domination’ of its own.

Underlying the intellectual subtleties which Burke wrought of the theme of *libertas et imperium* was a profound legacy of ethics and politics. Machiavelli, for

¹⁰² Burke’s logic is encapsulated in this passage from his *Speech on Conciliation with America* (1775): ‘As long as you have the wisdom to keep the sovereign authority of this country as the sanctuary of liberty, the sacred temple consecrated to our common faith, wherever the chosen race and sons of England worship freedom, they will turn their faces towards you. The more they multiply, the more friends you will have, the more ardently they love liberty, the more perfect will be their obedience.’

example, did not find the ‘spirit of conquest’ abominable when, in his *Discourses on the first ten books of Titus Livy* (1531), he argued that ‘disunion and strife among nobles and people was the cause of Rome’s attaining liberty, stability, and power – a statement shocking and incredible to minds which identified union with stability and virtue, conflict with innovation and decay.’¹⁰³ Burke certainly saw a Machiavellian empire erected out of faction and discord to be self-destructive and without foundation. The true lasting empire was one of peace and unity. This was only achieved by upholding the ‘fierce spirit of liberty’ and suppressing the ‘spirit of conquest’. Peace and unity, as a civic humanist notion, has been traced by Quentin Skinner to the scholastic political tradition of the Florentine Republic. It revolved around the concept of the *common good*, and advanced the argument that ‘the attainment of peace and concord, *pax et Concordia*, represents the highest value in political life’.¹⁰⁴ ‘‘The basic aim’ in government,’ taught the Italian jurists, ‘must always be ‘peace and unity’.’

As we saw in the previous chapters, the contrast between the scholastic theme of *pax et concordia* and the classical theme of *libertas et imperium*, essentially played out the dichotomy between the public interest and the private interest which beset the political and economic discourses of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain. Classicists were often unable to see beyond the singular monistic reality of empire as being conquered by the idea of liberty. Hastings, for one, found the whole business of ‘animating principles’ to be utter nonsense. Furious at being made the scapegoat in Pitt’s India Act, he asked: ‘What devil has Mr. Pitt dressed for his exemplar, and clothed with such damnable attributes of ambition, spirit of conquest, thirst of blood, propensity to expense and troubles, extravagance and improvidence in creating

¹⁰³ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 194. See also

¹⁰⁴ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 56.

overcharged establishments, disobedience of orders, rapacity, plunder, extortion!!!¹⁰⁵ But those who recognised Burke's subtleties pondered over the practical question of: what is to be done?¹⁰⁶ The old Florentine dilemma as to 'how faction and discord can be avoided and peace secured' was no less fundamental to the British Indian discourse, and it behoved the Company's legislators and governors to ask 'how is such a unity between the good of the city and the good of its individual citizens in practice to be established?'¹⁰⁷

Cornwallis's administration was believed at the time to have established some kind of unity or balance between the destructive pursuit of commercial profit and the political end of the people's happiness. Such a unity had been seen by Burke in terms of the Aristotelian conception of the *common good*, which he famously and systematically defined as the 'great primaeval contract of eternal society'.¹⁰⁸ Cornwallis, however, has been historically understood to have adopted a less theoretical and less systematised conception of society. On the one hand, his instituting of a 'balance of power' among the native states, which he called the 'common cause'¹⁰⁹ (a common term with Burke), ensured the security of the Company's commercial interest and removed the necessity

¹⁰⁵ Hastings to Major Scott, 26 December 1784, G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings, First Governor-General of Bengal, Vol. III* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), 226.

¹⁰⁶ James Harrington had a famous parable of two sisters cutting a cake which described the prerogative of popular government in terms of the wisdom of putting the common good before the divisions of individual happiness. 'They that are capable of this kind of dividing or debating are few among many that, when things are thus divided and debated, are able to choose, which in the language of a commonwealth is to resolve. Hence it is that the debate of the few, because there be but few that can debate, is the wisest debate, and the result of many (because every man hath an interest what to choose, and that choice which suiteth with every man's interest excludeth the distinct or private interest or passion of any man, and so cometh up unto the common and public interest or reason) is the wisest result.' James Harrington, *The Political Works of James Harrington: Part One*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 416.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹⁰⁸ The 'primaeval contract of eternal society' refers to a well-known passage from Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). It captures Burke's conception of society as 'a contingent but lasting part of the moral order of the created universe that is willed by the Creator', and as 'a community because it has a common good and a government devoted to protecting and fostering that common good'. Francis Canavan, *The Political Economy of Edmund Burke: The role of property in his thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), 144.

¹⁰⁹ Cornwallis to Capt Kennaway, 28 January 1790; Cornwallis, *Correspondence Vol.1*, 471.

for war. On the other hand, Cornwallis's civil reforms to the governance of the Company's territories promoted the political interest of welfare. Both the private and public interests were regarded to have been managed separately. This approach, perpetuated under Cornwallis's successor, Sir John Shore, was seen by the historian to fall apart by the turn of the eighteenth century because 'there never had, in fact, been, and, considering the policy of the native courts, there never could be, anything like a real balance of power in India.'¹¹⁰

History's critical judgment against Cornwallis's administration is belied by the favourable opinion it gave to the policy of Shore's successor, the Marquess Wellesley. Wellesley had interrupted Cornwallis's interventions by the state and revived Warren Hastings' old routine of distributing protection and credit in exchange for power. Only, Wellesley innovated on Hastings' policy of 'plunder'. First, he 'privatised', or farmed out, the Company's usury to 'private' agents. Second, he attached a contractual lien whereby the native ruler's failure to pay the subsidy (and other loans) entitled the Company to determine his obligation and to confiscate his territory in commutation of his debt. This policy was known as the system of 'subsidiary alliance'. It was costly, and not only because of war, but because repossessing a ruler's territory also meant taking over other debts which was charged to that territory. By 1805, the Indian deficit had shot up to £2 million.¹¹¹ However, it was responsible for the Company's acquisition of the vast territories of Mysore, Oudh, the Carnatic, and parts of the Mahratta empire.

The consolidation of Britain's Indian empire under Wellesley has led to a rather apologetic history which justified the subsidiary system in terms of expediency and

¹¹⁰ See John Clark Marshman, *The History of India, from the earliest period to the close of Lord Dalhousie's Administration, Volume II* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1869), 72.

¹¹¹ Romesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, 399-405.

exigency, and excused it as an event of providence.¹¹² Charles Grant's Edwardian biographer, for example, redefined the Company's division between the mercantile party and the party of legislators and governors, as a division between merchants and empire-builders. This *a posteriori* construction deftly removed the humanitarian question attending the issue of debt and informed a new narrative which, like the narrative of Raffles's founding of Singapore, was concerned with who had imperial foresight and who had not. The Court of Directors, it was claimed, were so bound up with the Company's financial situation, that 'they had not yet realised the fact that the East India Company had become a great power in the world, and could no longer remain a mere body of merchants trading with the East.' Indeed, 'they were just beginning to grasp the reality of this amazing fact'.

This last declamation is a lot more significant than the dichotomy between power and trade which it confers on the moment of Wellesley's tenure. It in fact marks the watershed moment when the British Indian discourse departed from the scholastic framework of Burke's 'spirit of liberty', which associated civil society with *pax et concord*, and *libertas et imperium* with anarchy. At empire's high noon, the British Indian discourse now apprehended the classical framework of Wellesley's 'spirit of conquest'. *Libertas et imperium* was seen, again, to be the manifestation of virtue. Peace and security became incomprehensible as empire substantiated the cause of freedom and power through commerce and conquest, and, indeed, through debt and war. The Victorian historian of India, John Marshman, discrediting the argument of

¹¹² Morris, *Charles Grant*, 267. Speaking of 'the verdict of history', he adds that 'though Lord Wellesley may have been wrong in his relations with the Court of Directors, he was right in his principles of government; and the India of the present day is indebted to him for its stability and consolidation.' Grant, on the other hand, failed 'to grasp the idea of the supremacy of the British Government in India being really for the benefit of the people of that country; but we believe that, if he were able to see British India as it is now, he would be the first to acknowledge that his prophecies of evil augury were erroneous.' p255.

peace and stability to justify that of debt and war, described how upon Wellesley's arrival in Calcutta,

the European officers of the Company were in a state of complete insubordination, the spirit of the community was depressed by the visible weakness of the Government, and public credit was at so low an ebb that it was not possible to obtain money under twelve per cent. Lord Cornwallis had bequeathed a surplus revenue of a hundred and eighty-five lacs of rupees a-year to his successor, but under Sir John Shore's administration it had dwindled down, year after year, without any war expenditure, and for the first time in the history of British India peace had created a deficit.¹¹³

Dumped into the dustheap of history, the theme of *pax et Concord* took with it the humanitarian legacy of the Company's legislators and governors. The replacement of Leyden's division of 'legislators and governors' from 'men of old standing' by the Victorian-Edwardian division of empire-builders from merchants, reorganised the dichotomy between governance and commerce into one between trade and power. This eventually developed into the familiar dichotomy between protectionism and free trade, and the familiar tale of national sovereignty and economic survival. The historiography of the British Indian discourse is significant, because our task is to recover that earlier context which Leyden had framed.

Contrary to the Victorian-Edwardian historians, Wellesley's tenure was in fact met with much criticism at the time. Charles Grant, whom Cornwallis dubbed 'my most worthy and valuable friend' and regarded to be the most able administrator of India who did not want the governor-general's job, denounced Wellesley's subsidiary system as a 'scheme of ambition and aggrandisement, contrary... to the law of 1784 [Pitt's India

¹¹³ Marshman, *History of India*, 74. That Shore had incurred a deficit is arguable depending on which figures are used. Seen in perspective, he incurred neither a deficit nor a surplus.

Act], and in its principle unjustifiable.’¹¹⁴ From 1798 to 1805, Wellesley nearly doubled the Company’s gross revenue from £8.65 million to £14.95 million, but his gross expenditure matched this increase from £9.14 million to £16.12 million.¹¹⁵ Though the deficit (from £0.5 million to £1.2 million, not counting the debt) did not rise markedly, the huge increases in revenue and expenditure indicate the mammoth scale of subsidies under Wellesley. The acquisition of Britain’s empire through these means was abhorred by the Company’s legislators and governors in the figure of Grant. Wellesley’s ‘military successes have been surprisingly brilliant’, Grant conceded, and ‘the rapidity and extent of the conquests are astonishing’, but ‘I have great fears that they will prove only a splendid road to ruin.’¹¹⁶ ‘In reality, what was this policy,’ he asked, ‘but getting an ascendancy in every cabinet in Hindostan?’¹¹⁷ Grant’s concern was not so much the pecuniary cost of debt and war than the political and moral cost of debt and war. As he explained:

If this vast dominion had been the object of our national policy, or of the first Clive or of Lord Cornwallis, it might have been before acquired. But hitherto, independent of the question of justice, all such schemes of aggrandisement have been thought utterly contrary to our true interest. To acquire and retain the Government of a continent so extended and peopled as Hindostan, involves in it the idea not of established tranquillity, but of perpetual warfare, not of increasing prosperity from the arts of peace, but of continual expenditure both of wealth and of human life.

Grant’s criticism of Wellesley’s policy plays out a contest not between empire-builders and merchants, but between governance and commerce. ‘How were we to cultivate the arts of peace,’ he seethed, ‘if perpetually engaged in the politics and

¹¹⁴ Grant to Jonathan Duncan, 1 June 1804; Henry Morris, *Charles Grant*, 255-257.

¹¹⁵ Romesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, 399-405.

¹¹⁶ Grant to Jonathan Duncan, 1 June 1804; Morris, *Charles Grant*, 255.

¹¹⁷ Grant to George Udny, 1 June 1804; Morris, *Charles Grant*, 258.

disputes of all the Durbars of India?’¹¹⁸ Again, ‘if the first Clive, if Lord Cornwallis, had aimed at this,’ he argued, ‘they might have achieved it; but they had the spirit of sage legislators as well as of warriors – they were for cultivating a garden instead of turning the fruitful field into a scene of battle.’ The consequence, we have already seen. Grant was acutely aware that Wellesley’s legacy would be the demise of the Burkean paradigm of peace and security and the grand return of Hastings’ conquest and commerce. ‘The scenes recently transacted in India have given a new composition to our Empire there,’ he said, ‘and if that appears to be permanent, it will probably be followed by many important changes in the legislative constitution of British India, both at home and abroad.’

Consequently, Wellesley was recalled. Cornwallis, who Marshman sardonically said ‘was known to disapprove of Lord Wellesley’s system of policy, was entreated to proceed to India and deliver the Company from its fatal effects, as he had been sent out twenty years before to rescue the British interests in India from the mischievous consequences of Hastings’s plans.’¹¹⁹ Another Victorian historian described how Cornwallis ‘scarcely waited for the Marquis Wellesley to quit Calcutta before he began to reverse all that that nobleman had done... Treaties and arrangements were revoked, and alliances dissolved, so that his lordship, by his disregard of the actual state of things, sowed broadcast the seeds of future troubles all over India.’¹²⁰ But that is only half the story, told from the nineteenth century perspective of the ‘spirit of conquest’. What Cornwallis also did, on the orders of the Court of Directors, was to return Company policy to the road of the ‘spirit of liberty’ which he previously laid down.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Marshman, *History of India*, 182.

¹²⁰ Edward Henry Nolan, *The Illustrated History of the British Empire in India and the East, from the Earliest Times to the Suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1859, Vol. II* (London: Virtue & Co, 1859), 507.

The Permanent Settlement

Cornwallis's true legacy in India was his reorganization of the system of property into what was known as the Permanent Settlement. This was the alienation on a perpetual basis of large parcels of government land to a class of landholders, called the *zamindars*, in the tacit understanding that they improve the land for agriculture and from its productions supply the revenues to government. Much has been written about the Permanent or *Zamindari* Settlement in the history of India's economy, and always in terms of a system of revenue. Subsequent variations on the settlement which granted limited leases of small parcels to the individual cultivator (Individual or *Ryotwari* Settlement), or moderate-sized parcels to local communities (Village or *Mahalwari* Settlement), have entrenched the historical impression of all three policies as variations of a single system of land rent. While it is true that the Permanent Settlement was a revenue system of land rent that was accorded to an elite, it should be noted that, unlike the *ryotwari* and village settlements, revenue was only the effect and not the cause of the policy.

Cornwallis's institution of the Permanent Settlement formed the crux of what was called the Cornwallis Code, a set of forty-eight regulations promulgated in 1793.¹²¹ It represented a restoration of political stability following nearly three decades of unremitting famine and indigence since the ceding of the Nawab of Bengal's territories to the Company in 1765. The claim of restoration turns on a profound question of the historiography: did the sudden rise of British power in this period distort and diverge from the mode of Moghul governance, thus leading to anarchy; or was anarchy already the natural outcome of the collapse of the Moghul imperial system, in which case the British power had simply succeeded to the Moghul legacy? In an important volume that

¹²¹ Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, 95-98.

explores this theme, P.J. Marshall framed the question thus: were the events of the period ‘revolutionary’, or were they ‘evolutionary’?¹²² The weight of Indian national history falls on the first theory, that British power was revolutionary (read catastrophic) to the status quo, while non-national Indian history tended to adopt the second theory. Ironically, the ‘revolutionary’ theory exhibits the Burkean idiom of a destructive British spirit of conquest that had convulsed a peaceable Moghul spirit of liberty. Burke, however, would have added that the convulsion was corrected by a revolutionary British spirit of liberty.¹²³ Cornwallis, who was sent to India ‘in the two characters of governor and commander-in-chief,’ said Burke in 1794, ‘was going to a great war, where he might have occasion to treat with the country powers in a civil capacity’.¹²⁴ Cornwallis’s policies, I argue, were both revolutionary and evolutionary.

The historical configuring of the *zamindar* as the beneficiary of the Permanent Settlement has mistakenly and unremarkably associated Cornwallis’s policy with the Mughal revenue system. The Mughal system was feudal, wherein a locality’s tax bounty, known as *jagir*, was rewarded to nobles according to the gradation of their rank (or *mansabdar*). *Jagirs* later took the form of land, and when the influence of Mughal central power waned, the *jagir* principle evolved whereby nobles, having gained autonomy as *sardars* of successor states to the Mughal empire, farmed out revenue sources not only from the land but of trade to the *zamindar*. Christopher Bayly had described the *zamindars* as a kind of middle class, ‘as ‘a range of intermediate entities’ who were situated between ‘the revenue-based state and the mass of agrarian

¹²² P.J. Marshall, ed. *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹²³ ‘Like all conquests, the conquest over Bengal had been achieved through revolution. As an event, the revolution could be justified as an act of necessity, but it could only win legitimacy by establishing regular government, and thus by bringing the process of revolution to an end... this arrangement would involve fidelity to British principles while amounting to a restoration of the ancient Mughal constitution, established on the subcontinent before the tyranny of the independent Nawabs.’ Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, 660-1.

¹²⁴ Edmund Burke, ‘Speeches in the Impeachment of Warren Hastings’, in *The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, Volume 11* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1871), 273.

society'.¹²⁵ Bayly's *zamindars* ranged from 'great rajas controlling large blocks of territory and people, to peasant elites', as well as 'merchant communities, whose operations ranged from stalls in village markets to bulk trading in local towns, banking businesses in the capitals of provinces, export and import from the seaports'.

Bayly's modern and heterogeneous conception of the *zamindar* as a product of the period when successor states emerged out of Mogul collapse, rather serves the second 'evolutionary' theory. It apologises for the British supersession by presenting it as having saved Moghul decline. This historical construction, supported by the 'revolutionary' theorists' retort, however, has obscured Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement for the system of landed property which it actually was. The system of *farming out* (i.e. the privatising and licensing of taxes, production, and exchange) of which Bayly has described the *zamindars* as agents, was a system of revenue. His *zamindar* was more akin a rent-seeker than an agriculturalist or industrialist. This system of farms was in fact the initial source of the Company's wealth and monopoly. It identified with the spirit of domination and subversion of legitimate governments which Burke attached to the idea of modern liberty, and with the attitude of usurpation and rapacious policy of empire which he associated with the spirit of conquest. In this respect, Bayly's *zamindar* was Hastings' *zamindar*. He was not Cornwallis's *zamindar*. The reason is because, prior to the Permanent Settlement (1793), Cornwallis's reforms (1786-92) had already centralised revenue collection (as well as judicial and civil duties) under the Bengal government. Cornwallis's *zamindar* was therefore not a tax collector, but a trustee of the land whose entire interest was served by his single-minded improvement of it.

¹²⁵ P.J. Marshall, *Eighteenth Century*, 7. See also C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), from which his chapter on 'The Rise of the Corporations' is reproduced in Marshall.

What Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement was designed to create was a system of real or landed property that would facilitate that unadulterated productive cycle which had been described by Adam Smith. To achieve this, the ownership of land had to be purged of its susceptibility to surrender its interest in the land and the land's productions to a mortgage in return for cash advancements. Cornwallis's centralisation of revenue collection removed the revenue farms that had facilitated the accumulation of capital in private hands which were the source of mortgages and the lien that was placed on the security of all landholders from the minor *zamindari* to the Nabob of Arcot. There was no revenue farmer more notorious to the Company than the Company itself. Under Hastings and then Wellesley's subsidiary policy, the Company had gained territory by contracting to its debt the property of its clients and foreclosing on it. Cornwallis's reforms struck a blow above all to the revenue farmer who was also a Company employee, and he begrudged no bitterer enemy than the principal creditor to the Nabob of Arcot, Paul Benfield.¹²⁶

Returning money from private accumulation to public circulation, therefore, went some way to smother conceptions of private property in the form of capital and credit. In that sense, Cornwallis's reforms of 1786-92 were revolutionary. They effectively incapacitated the Company's spirit of conquest. Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement of 1793 subsequently established a system of landed property and reinstated the concept of property in terms of land. In that sense, the Permanent Settlement was evolutionary. It effectively restored a spirit of liberty in the Company. Having set aright

¹²⁶ 'I never had any conversation of private correspondence with you on the subject of the Nabob of Arcot's creditors, yet I can have no doubt that we must think alike about them, and that you only consented that their fraudulent and infamous claims should be put into any course of payment, because you could not help it... We have sent home Paul Benfield, but whilst the senior counsellor is a principal creditor, the cause will not want support. You may make the wisest laws, and send out the ablest instructions for the government of India, but they will be of little service unless you can get good governors, and a proportion, at least, of good counsellors.' Cornwallis to Dundas, 4 November 1788; Cornwallis, *Correspondence Vol.1*, 376.

the conditions for *pax et concord*, Cornwallis consequently laid the basis for returning the attentions of Government to freeing that interest which subsisted upon the land, that was the common weal of the people.

Security of Property and Person

The logic, which sees a proper order of things founded on property, originates with Edmund Burke. It draws together the two contrary spheres of human existence and consciousness, i.e. the public sphere and the private sphere, into a relationship between the land and the people. This relationship in itself was not original to Burke. It has a classical, biblical, republican and liberal pedigree in which the virtue, authority, independence, and right of man was understood as resting in the bounty of the land. For Burke, however, the relationship supplied the means to resolve the eternal conflict between the public interest and the private interest – often realised between the political interest and the commercial interest – which had persistently frustrated man’s attempts to conduct or govern himself. Burke conceived that the ownership of land by (some of) the people presupposed its improvement, and thereby provided the interest for (the rest of) the people to work and live on its productions. Property, therefore, was seen to be the foundation of industry (by which I mean industrious work), of the market, of prosperity, and of society. And because property, though privately-held – historically by the church and nobility – served the public interest, so society materialised in the public interest, though it naturally facilitated the individual private interest. This relationship was structurally not very different from Adam Smith’s productive cycle, in which the land provided, first, the subsistence of the people and, second, the surplus for the market. As Richard Bourke explained,

Without property, there could be no society; without its accumulation, there could be no prosperity. The advance of the under-privileged depended on its accumulation, which was best preserved from danger by placing it under the superintendence of the wealthy. The inviolability of heritable estates thus formed a rampart against the invasion of the assets of the vulnerable.¹²⁷

Like Smith, Burke saw the relationship between land and man to be ancient. But where Burke departed from Smith was in his belief that the manners, customs, and language which this relationship had normalised in the behaviour of man had represented the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the ages and were thus sacred and inviolable. From the institution of property and from civil society thus sprang culture, ethics, politics, history, law, the arts and sciences, commerce, and all other traditions of thought that are native to a civilisation. Their observance, which Burke denoted as a ‘wise prejudice’, did not represent the dogmatic prescription of some precept or other. Rather, it consummated what Burke famously called the ‘partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.’ The sum of these partnerships, or ‘reciprocal obligations’,¹²⁸ recalls that conceptual unity mentioned earlier in which was bound the *common good*, and which Burke termed the ‘great primaevial contract of eternal society’.¹²⁹ What this unity essentially denoted was a necessary order of things established by the first cause, and in which every conceptual entity had its proper place in the real world.

At the base of Burke’s order of society sat the institution of landed property. As mentioned, the accumulation of landed property presupposed its improvement which provided the political interest for people to produce, trade, and prosper. The problem

¹²⁷ Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, 715-716.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 722.

¹²⁹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L.G. Mitchell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 97.

with this scheme arose when surplus production was accumulated as stock, first in the form of commodities and then as capital. Capital was moneyed property. Its accumulation presupposed the increase of its value which provided the commercial interest for its employment of labour or its being lent as credit. This function of capital affecting the division of labour was developed by Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations*. Burke, however, as we saw, also recognised that capital could be employed in the spirit of conquest, in which case it did not employ labour so much as it procured, through debt, the command of labour and the charge on land.

This circumstance was not only aberrant to Burke's order of society, but pernicious to its existence. For where the security of property was realised in the real estate, the security of capital was recorded on paper as a credit note. A default on the capital which rents property merely evicts the owner of the capital from the real estate or transfers his person to a debtor's prison. People are still dealing with people according to the established modes of conduct. A default on the mortgage which borrows capital, however, transfers possession of the charged land to the creditor. In this case, property and people become exchangeable with, and enslaved to, an idea that is invented on paper and given the names of capital and credit.¹³⁰ To undermine and replace the institution of landed property, which was tried and tested as the design of the 'one great master; author and founder of society',¹³¹ by the idea of credit or any other form of 'floating' or paper property devised by man, was therefore fatal to the order of society.¹³² As John Pocock explained, Burke insisted 'that commerce – contrary to the modernist beliefs of 'our economical politicians' – must rest on and must not destroy

¹³⁰ See John Pocock's essay, 'Authority and property: The question of liberal origins', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 51-71.

¹³¹ Burke, *Reflections*, 93.

¹³² This was the crux of the work most recognised for carrying Burke's legacy, his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). See 122n.

the foundations of civilized manners laid by clergy and nobility [the landowning classes] in the medieval centuries'.¹³³

Burke's answer for preventing man's paper property from consuming Creation's landed property – for preventing the progeny from capitating the parent who gave birth to it¹³⁴ – lay in their *governance*. Burke's conception of governance was based on the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which 'was made to preserve our *antient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *antient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty.'¹³⁵ The rule of law was seen to be the bulwark against the arbitrary power of the Company, and indeed of the French Republic, under illusions of 'natural rights' and 'modern liberty', to confiscate private property and subvert legitimate governments. Burke's government, explained Bourke, 'enjoined two duties in particular: to uphold the institution of property and to preserve the population from oppression and violence.'¹³⁶ Burke's celebrated phrase from his impeachment of Warren Hastings – "Name me a Magistrate, and I will name property. Name me power, and I will name protection" – described government as the 'transcendent authority of duty'. 'Justice and security,' continued Bourke, 'were imposed as inescapable obligations on government by virtue of the sacredness of its trust.'

The trust in government to protect the people's justice and the security of property invokes Cornwallis's statement, quoted above, of 'the right of the Company to demand complete security for the persons and property of their subjects, and all others living under their protection'. The concept of the security of person and of property was

¹³³ Pocock, *Ancient Constitution*, 382.

¹³⁴ Burke used the allegory of Medea to describe the horror of looking 'on those children of their country, who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds, and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father's life.' Burke, *Reflections*, 96.

¹³⁵ Burke, *Reflections*, 30.

¹³⁶ Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, 669-670.

a legacy of the civic humanist and republican writings from the seventeenth century,¹³⁷ which was adopted by John Locke and Montesquieu. Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748),¹³⁸ of which the inception of the 'spirit' as an 'animating principle', was a particularly profound influence on Burke. Burke in fact articulated what the security of person and property entailed within their place in his order of things, and in light of his scepticism that this security and, thus, this order, no longer existed in Revolutionary France:

When, therefore, I shall learn that, in France, the citizen, by whatever description he is qualified, is in a perfect state of legal security, with regard to his life,— to his property,— to the uncontrolled disposal of his person,— to the free use of his industry and his faculties:— When I hear that he is protected in the beneficial enjoyment of the estates to which, by the course of settled law, he was born, or is provided with a fair compensation for them;— that he is maintained in the full fruition of the advantages belonging to the state and condition of life in which he had lawfully engaged himself, or is supplied with a substantial, equitable, equivalent:— When I am assured that a simple citizen may decently express his sentiments on public affairs, without hazard to his life or safety, even though against a predominant and fashionable opinion:— When I know all this of France, I shall be as well pleased as every one must be, who has not forgot the general communion of mankind, nor lost his natural sympathy, in local and accidental connexions.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ 'Most of the neo-roman writers content themselves with enjoining our rulers, in [Marchamont] Nedham's words, to uphold 'security of life and estate, liberty and property'. [Algernon] Sidney for example, speaks of 'the laws that enjoin the preservation of the lands, liberties, goods and lives of the people', while [Henry] Neville repeatedly speaks of 'lives, liberties and estates', invoking the phrase that John Locke was later to make canonical in his *Two Treatises of Government*.' Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21.

¹³⁸ See Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, eds. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller & Harold S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹³⁹ Burke to Mons. Dupont, October 1789; Edmund Burke, *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke; between the year 1744, and the period of his decease, in 1797, Vol. III*, ed. Charles William Fitzwilliam and Richard Bourke (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1844), 108.

Vast Commonwealth

Edmund Burke's mentorship of the Whig leader, Charles Fox, had provided the foil for sundry accounts of the Whig party at its most ideologically-riven period of the 1770s, 1780s, and 1790s. This was the period of the Company's financial and humanitarian crises in India, the American Revolution, Catholic Relief in Ireland, and the Revolution in France. Burke's public split from Fox over the last event and its ideological 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen',¹⁴⁰ however, shows that Fox was more a supporter than a disciple of Burke's ideas. If Burke had an ideological successor, there were three who fit the bill: William Windham, the Earl of Malmesbury, and the Earl of Minto.¹⁴¹ Of all three, Minto came closest.

Long before he became President of the Board of Control, Minto was 'one of the seven Parliamentary Directors (the Seven Kings as they were called) to be appointed under the provisions of Mr. Fox's India Bill.'¹⁴² Fox's India Bill of 1783 was the creation of Burke. Had it been passed, it would have abolished the Court of Directors and Court of Proprietors of the East India Company, and invested the 'transcendent authority of duty' for Britain's empire in India in a parliamentary authority comprising these seven Commissioners or Directors. Minto's knowledge of India affairs was therefore highly qualified. His speech in Parliament in favour of Fox's India Bill paraphrased Burke's own *Speech (on Fox's India Bill)*.¹⁴³ In 1784, he was appointed by Burke to 'manage' the impeachment of Warren Hastings that began in 1785. 'Lord Minto's early and intimate connection with Burke,' said his biographer, 'was the

¹⁴⁰ 'Fox proceeded to vindicate the theory of equal rights and the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, signalling the depth of division overwhelming the opposition. Later in the year, Burke suggested that these ideas derived from the writings of Rousseau.' Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, 854.

¹⁴¹ Following the rupture with Fox, they met regularly with Burke at Burlington House, whose owner, the Duke of Portland, became the titular figurehead of the Old Whigs. Portland's second son, William Bentinck, who was sacked as governor of Madras just as Minto arrived in India, was also a protégé of Burke.

¹⁴² Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto*, 8. Fox's India Bill was defeated and replaced by Pitt's India Act of 1784.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

keynote of his political career.’¹⁴⁴ It began as soon as he entered parliament as an MP in 1780.¹⁴⁵ He readily identified himself as a follower of Burke, writing in later years that ‘I believe that I was among those whom Burke loved best, and most trusted.’¹⁴⁶ Charles Grant wrote that Minto ‘was of the school of Burke, and thought to be somewhat theoretical, and was a respectable member of the old Opposition.’¹⁴⁷

It could hardly be more providential, therefore, that when in 1806 Fox nominated the Earl of Lauderdale – another manager of Hastings’ impeachment, but a Jacobin sympathiser whose public questioning of Burke’s moral compass instigated Burke’s last work, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796) – to replace Cornwallis as Governor-General, he should have been opposed by none other than a disciple of Burke. As fate would have it, the Company’s Direction which opposed Burke in 1783 supported Minto in 1806. Minto, nevertheless, did not regard his appointment as Governor-General in terms of the Fox-Burke rupture between the *New Whigs* and the *Old Whigs*, but rather in the context – a context he knew very personally – of the rigorous interventions by Parliament in India in the 1780s. In terms of his career, going to India as Governor-General capped a vocation of public service that was initiated in India affairs. In terms of his ideological beliefs, on the other hand, the office offered a second chance to finish off what Burke was unable to bring to an end in his failed India Bill of 1783 and Hastings’ acquittal in 1795: that is, to put on a permanent footing the spirit of liberty and to vanquish the spirit of conquest. Minto’s calling seemed almost to have been foretold. ‘If I were of your Age and had your Talents and your Manners,’ Burke had

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Gilbert Elliot, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1751 to 1806, Vol. I*, ed. Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871), 74.

¹⁴⁶ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Grant to Barlow, 26 July 1806; Morris, *Charles Grant*, 266. The ‘old Opposition’ refers to the term ‘Old Whigs’, by which the faction of Burke was known after the rupture with the faction of Fox, the ‘New Whigs’.

said to him in 1787, ‘I should not despair of seeing India a happy Country in a few years.’

Empire, rather than Parliament, provided the means to this end. Minto’s first duty in India was to press ahead with Cornwallis’s rehabilitation of his political policy of governance and reversal of Wellesley’s commercial policy of subsidy. There was no measure more rigorous during Minto’s tenure than his promotion of the Permanent Settlement.¹⁴⁸ This administrative rigor was matched by the absence of war. Cornwallis’s so-called ‘balance of power’ among the native principalities of the Indian subcontinent was resumed in what historians have held to be Minto’s ‘diplomatic confederacy of these states against the French’.¹⁴⁹ It should now become evident that the historical context of Cornwallis’s balance of power and Minto’s confederacy will be lost if they are not underpinned in the political theory of Edmund Burke. When they are, it will be seen that the balance of power and confederacy were merely the effects of a *pax Britannica* founded on what Burke conceived as the ‘vast commonwealth’.

Burke’s idea of the commonwealth derived from the ‘ancient metaphor of the body politic’,¹⁵⁰ where the national order of property and people which constituted them into civil society and into a form of the republic, is repeated for an international order constituting these republics.¹⁵¹ The point Burke made of the commonwealth, however, was that it cannot *a priori* be constructed, renovated, or reformed, as in an

¹⁴⁸ Romesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, 177-184. Although a Special Commission, appointed under Regulation X, 1807, and directed to fix the Permanent Settlement in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, famously concluded that it was ‘unseasonable’.

¹⁴⁹ Amita Das, *Defending British India*, 53.

¹⁵⁰ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24.

¹⁵¹ ‘A single man, cast out from the laws, the protection, and the commerce of his whole species, might in that solitary situation, with as rational and well-grounded a probability, propose to himself convenience and security, as any single state, in the present political and physical state of Europe, could expect independence and safety, unconnected with all the others.’ Edmund Burke, *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1772* (London: J. Dodsley, 1773), 3.

‘experimental science’.¹⁵² The commonwealth is not organic in the manner of the republican polity. It is a concept of the aesthetic that expresses the ‘ancient, permanent sense of mankind’ and the ‘great primaeval contract of eternal society’. This aesthetic acquires a serene ‘beauty’ as it civilises, through the spirit of liberty, and acquires a gothic ‘sublimity’ as it transforms itself, by the spirit of conquest.¹⁵³ What men can only do to consecrate the peaceful commonwealth is to accomplish a settlement (such as the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and Cornwallis’s Permanent Settlement) whereby the institution of property and civil society, and thus the security of property and person, are preserved or prescribed through a system of governance.¹⁵⁴

Burke’s descriptions of the commonwealth had referred to the ‘different states in such a community as Europe, who are also the great members of a larger commonwealth.’ The British Isles and the colonies in America formed two other such communities under the whole, as had the communities of India and the East Indies. Each community seemed to present various states of the commonwealth aesthetic. India, ravaged by the spirit of conquest, appeared to have been restored during Minto’s administration to the legal, political and moral order established by Cornwallis. Minto had applied Charles Grant’s pruning knife so effectively that within four years, he had transformed Wellesley’s £2 million deficit (£3 million when he took office) into a £2.77 million surplus.¹⁵⁵ This fiscal improvement signalled the increasing effectiveness and authority of government. The ends of empire, the Burkean restoration of legal, political,

¹⁵² Burke, *Reflections*, 61.

¹⁵³ On Burke’s conceptualisation of the aesthetic, see James T. Boulton’s ‘Introduction’ (1958) in Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁵⁴ An early portrayal of Burke’s commonwealth in the *Annual Register* (see 144n. – here I am assuming Burke’s authorship) used the term ‘political system’, which is consistent with his reference to a Hobbesian state of nature when the system breaks down. However, his later conception in *Reflections* of an order bound by common manners, customs, and ‘language’, renders it to be an international society. For analysis of Burke’s international society, see Jennifer M. Welsh, *Edmund Burke and International Relations: The Commonwealth of Europe and the Crusade against the French Revolution* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

¹⁵⁵ Romesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, 399-405. Minto was not solely responsible for the turnaround which was also credited to Barlow, and Bentinck before him.

and moral order to the affairs of a Company that had gone astray, seemed to have been reached. Leyden's legislators and governors, four decades after Verelst's complaint, had finally triumphed over the mercantile party. Or so it seemed. The new order had certainly diminished the private fortunes of the commercial interest. Like a cornered animal, the commercial interest instigated an outright rebellion among the ranks of British officers in the Company's military.

Ends of Empire

The affair known as the Madras Mutiny, which occurred between May and July 1809, has been historically represented as a popular dispute by disgruntled officers.¹⁵⁶ Its pretext can be traced to an earlier mutiny by sepoys at Vellore in July 1806. At the close of the Vellore Mutiny, the governor of Madras, William Bentinck, had removed the commander of Madras from his *ex-officio* seat in council. The decision was seen by the military at the time as a coup by the civil governor against their chief – which indeed it was. When, in early 1809, the commander of Madras, Hay Macdowall, dissented against his reduced dignity, the governor of Madras, George Barlow, reacted by prosecuting whole ranks of the officer corps. What followed was a full-scale insurrection by the army.

Government survived the insurrection. However, the events which followed the Madras Mutiny's closure seem so well-orchestrated and incongruous to the events which caused the mutiny, that we are led to ask if, through Barlow, Government had deliberately provoked its own subversion in order to turn events to its own advantage.

¹⁵⁶ For example, *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, points to 'the relative status of the officers of the king's and the Company's services', and states that 'Some of its senior officers had personal grievances, some allowances had been reduced, and the pay of the officers generally was less than that of those on the Bengal establishment, but their chief complaint was that the officers of the king's service monopolised the favours of the local government, and held most of the staff appointments'. Sir Wolesley Haig, *Volume 5: The Indian Empire 1858-1918, with chapters on the development of Administration 1818-1858*, ed. H.H. Dodwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 163.

The backdrop to this question requires another question, which is why, through Bentinck, was the military subordinated to Government? The answers to both questions are suggested in Charles Grant's subsequent account of the cause of the Madras Mutiny, which he traced directly to the Nabob of Arcot's debts and, by implication, all the way back to the subsidiary policy of Hastings and Wellesley.¹⁵⁷ What the history has not properly fathomed about the Madras Mutiny is that the military's grievances had not concerned remunerations and perks. It involved a long-festering resentment against the Bengal government's centralisation (read seizure) of their private revenue farms.¹⁵⁸ Of this policy, Bentinck's subordination of the military under Government was the most severe measure. Clearly, the military and commercial interests had not profited from Government's £2.77 million surplus. In retaliation, the British officers, spurred by their civilian cronies,¹⁵⁹ commandeered military bases throughout the Madras Presidency.

Yet, surprisingly, when the insurrection was defeated, Minto and Barlow did not prosecute the military. Instead, they went after two civilian figures: William Petrie, third councillor at Madras, who briefly became governor of Madras when Bentinck was recalled, and Avadanum Paupiah Braminy, a former *dubash* who was also the most powerful creditor of the Nabob of Arcot's debts.¹⁶⁰ These developments, again, can only be understood in the light of Edmund Burke's thought. Government had perceived the mutiny as the illegitimate subversion, through faction, discord, and the spirit of

¹⁵⁷ Charles Grant and William Astell, *A Letter signed by C. Grant, Esq., W. Astell, Esq... Directors of the East-India Company; containing a minute examination and full vindication of the measures adopted by Sir George Barlow, during the Dissensions at the Presidency of Madras* (London: Black, Parry, and Co., 1812), 54-55. See also John Malcolm, *Observations on the disturbances in the Madras Army in 1809* (London: William Miller, 1812).

¹⁵⁸ Notably the tent contract and military bazaars.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Grant and Edward Parry, *The Dissents, or Protests, of Edward Parry, Esq... and Charles Grant, Esq. Directors of the East India Company, against the Resolutions of the Court, by which the Right Honorable Earl Minto was recalled from the Government-General of India; Lieut.-General Sir George Nugent, Bart, from the Command-in-Chief of the Land Forces; and Sir George Barlow, Bart. & K.B. from the Government of Madras* (London: John Murray, 1813), 32.

¹⁶⁰ *Dubash* literally means 'translator'. Historically, however, the *dubash* was an influential go-between figure for the Company's mercantile activities, but because he was generally from the higher castes, he took the role of an administrative agent rather than a commercial agent.

conquest, of a legitimate government. Minto called it a ‘factious attack on Government.’¹⁶¹ Grant described a ‘flame of faction and revolt’.¹⁶² John Malcolm termed it a ‘civil war’ by the ‘the present combination of the officers of the Company’s army against the Government’.¹⁶³ In Burke’s conceptual framework, the mutiny amounted to a revolution against an established political order – even the mutineers had designated themselves as the ‘Committee of Public Safety’. More specifically, the revolution was spurious because it was bound up in conspiracy involving the private interest. The mutineers were identified as revenue farmers, but crucially they were recognised as doing the dirty work for what was known as the *moneyed interest* – that is, the capitalists, moneylenders, stockjobbers, indeed, Bayly’s commercial *zamindars*, and Burke’s eternal villain.

According to Grant, the moneyed interest was a vicious throwback to the subsidiary system.¹⁶⁴ It comprised the moneylenders who had provided the funds for the Company’s subsidies and the loans for the native rulers’ debts. When the Company took possession of the native rulers’ territories, it also took possession of the debts charged to those territories, and consequently, the claims of the moneylenders on the native rulers transferred to the Company. Under Cornwallis, the Company had rather discharged the

¹⁶¹ Grant and Astell, *A Letter*, 9.

¹⁶² Grant and Parry, *Dissents, or Protests*, 32.

¹⁶³ Malcolm to Lt-Col Barclay, 18 July 1809; John Malcolm, *Observations on the disturbances in the Madras Army in 1809* (London: William Miller, 1812), 141.

¹⁶⁴ ‘The Arcot Durbar was, for at least forty years, a source of corruption and faction in the Presidency of Madras. The baneful influence of its system has continued after the extinction of its power and the transfer of its territory. In disobedience of all the orders of the Company, Europeans became to an immense amount creditors of the Nabobs of Arcot. The liquidation of the bonds granted by those Nabobs occasioned, during their lives, repeated agitations in the Settlement of Madras. Since their decease, new and more violent feuds have sprung from the same source. Their real remaining debts were estimated to exceed the enormous sum of four millions sterling, part, no doubt, incurred for money borrowed, and fair services received. The Company, having acquired the territory, entered some years ago into an agreement with the creditors, for the liquidation of their claims. Commissioners were, in consequence, appointed to act in India and in England for the examination of them. Those in India were to sit at Madras... When they entered on their office about the month of April 1808, Madras swarmed with forged Nabob’s bonds, which seemed exceedingly to have increased from the time it was known that a plan of liquidation was on foot. The claims given in to the Commissioners have amounted in all to 29 millions sterling!’ Grant and Astell, *A Letter*, 54.

creditors (such as Paul Benfield) rather than the debt. Under Wellesley, the claims re-accumulated, to an extent apparently hidden from public knowledge until an inquiry, which was opened into the ‘Subject of the Carnatic Debts’ between September 1804 and February 1805, exposed the claims and brought about Wellesley’s downfall.¹⁶⁵

The claims of the moneylenders, however, were never (could never be) settled. Grant, in desperation over ‘the deplorable state of our finances, the ruinous extent of our establishments, the continual waste of Europeans,’ which debt had led to, merely depended on the ‘necessity of such a measure as your Lordship’s [Cornwallis’s] return to the administration of affairs.’¹⁶⁶ Barlow, while he pruned and retrenched to an extreme in Madras, was unable to detach the moneylender’s influence. As Cornwallis had said, ‘you may make the wisest laws, and send out the ablest instructions for the government of India, but they will be of little service unless you can get good governors, and a proportion, at least, of good counsellors.’¹⁶⁷ The moneylenders’ claims proliferated as credit notes, which, finding their way into the property of Company officials, planted a vested interest within the Company to pressure Government to reimburse the value of those notes. These credit notes represented early forms of paper currency in the market and financial sector. To the Company’s legislators and governors, however, paper currency evoked the subsidiary contract on a mass scale. They chose instead to recognize the credit notes as untenable paper from an industry of forged bonds. ‘From some questions respecting forgeries,’ therefore, Grant explained, ‘vehement disputes and animosities arose at Madras, and a numerous, active party, was hence formed against the Government.’

¹⁶⁵ House of Commons, *Papers presented to the House of Commons, respecting the Carnatic Debts* (London, 17 June 1806). The inquiry into the Carnatic Debts will not be concluded until 1830.

¹⁶⁶ Grant to Cornwallis, 16 September 1805; Morris, *Charles Grant*, 259-260.

¹⁶⁷ See 123n.

The final solution to the moneyed interest came from Minto. He saw it to lie in Burke's desiderata from 1783 to restore 'commercial principle' to the Company's 'mercantile dealing', and 'equitable government' in its 'politics'. By 'commercial principle', Burke had meant trade conducted without the spirit of conquest, i.e. without war and debt. Bentinck's subordination of the military to Government had showed the way, but it was miscalculated. The military had first to be divorced from Commerce. In February 1810, after receiving a flurry of despatches from Minto, Grant called for an extraordinary meeting at Leadenhall Street in which he moved to discharge Petrie from his seat in the Madras Council and instate a new commander in his place. The true role of Petrie in the saga of the two mutinies has not been clarified. Cyril Philips has dwelled on a difference of personality, rather than of interests, in Petrie's indictment by Minto, Barlow, and Grant. Petrie's stubborn support of the mutineers, and Grant's associating this support with the claims of Paupiah, however, impugns Petrie as an agent of the moneyed interest. Removing Petrie from power and discrediting Paupiah thus cut the Gordian knot tethering the military to Commerce. It now left only the task of conciliating the military to Government, and teaching it to know again the fierce spirit of liberty that corruption had extinguished. The means to this end was through empire: in this case, the invasion of Java.

Catharsis

Between February and April, 1810, at Leadenhall Street, Charles Grant replaced Petrie in the Madras Council with Samuel Auchmuty, a former military staff of Cornwallis. In February 1810, too, Grant concluded an inquiry into recent shipping losses. It invariably provided the pretext for the Earl of Liverpool to fit out a fleet for an expedition against

the French and Dutch island bases.¹⁶⁸ These two acts by Grant, which at first appear to be separate events, are connected by the figure of Auchmuty, and his appointments as commander at Madras and as commander of the expedition.¹⁶⁹ The mastermind was clearly Grant. On the other hand, if we remember that by January 1810, Minto had already set in motion his own arrangements for the expedition¹⁷⁰ – which he ‘pushed forward,’ he said, ‘by absolute determination’¹⁷¹ – then we can infer that the expedition to Mauritius, Réunion, and Java, was also initiated by Minto at Calcutta at the same time as in London if not earlier.

Was there a causal connection between Minto’s actions and Grant’s actions? The clue lies in Petrie’s dismissal, which not only removed the corrupting influence in the army, but freed a seat for Auchmuty’s appointment to the Madras Council as commander at Madras, and, by virtue of this, his appointment by Liverpool as commander of an expedition that Minto had already assembled in Madras. The point is, Petrie’s dismissal did not take place in Calcutta, but was effected by Grant in London. When Minto was instructing Abercromby and Drury in September 1810 to converge the arrangements for the Java operation in Madras, which had no commander since Macdowall left India in May 1809, he cannot have done so without knowing ahead that Grant would send down from London ‘the Officer entrusted with the Command of the Expedition’ with the King’s authorisation.¹⁷²

The meeting of Minto and Grant’s apparently separate actions in Auchmuty’s arrival in Madras as Petrie’s replacement in council, as commander at Madras, and as commander of the Java expedition, indicates a prior private communication between

¹⁶⁸ See 48n.

¹⁶⁹ See 50n.

¹⁷⁰ Minto to Lady Minto, 26 March 1810; Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto*, 243.

¹⁷¹ Minto to Lady Minto, 19 September 1810; Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto*, 244.

¹⁷² See 39n.

Minto and Grant. This can be fixed to the same period between August and October, 1809, when shiploads of official despatches on the Madras Mutiny were being rushed off to London. If Grant had not acted against Petrie, there would be no evidence that Grant or Minto had any foreknowledge of each other's intentions. But as has become evident, everything which had concerned the common good of India had more often than not involved the concerted actions, at different times, of Grant, Minto, Barlow, Cornwallis, and Bentinck. Interestingly, when Auchmuty arrived at Madras on 31 December 1810, Barlow wrote to Minto, without any sign of surprise or uncertainty, that he had 'judged it to be advisable to beg Sir Samuel Auchmuty to undertake the Superintendance of all the preparations... because he is to Command the expedition'.¹⁷³

Petrie's dismissal, Auchmuty's two appointments, and Minto's expedition were thus not unrelated, coincident events. Together they form intrinsic parts of the same plan to sever, in the spirit of liberty, the moneyed interest from the military and reattach the military's faith and duty in Government. In his official reports to the Court of Directors on the mutiny, Minto had alluded to the measures taken by Government in terms of 'what, in his opinion, would produce the best possible effect on the mind of the Army.'¹⁷⁴ A notion of redemption is inherent in this 'best possible effect', which invokes the theme of purgation or catharsis. And catharsis required an efficient cause. If Barlow's unusually punitive treatment of the officers which triggered the tragic events of the mutiny was not predetermined, it in any case succeeded in flushing out into the open the agents of the moneyed interest. What was clearly premeditated were Minto and Grant's coordinated actions, at the close of the mutiny, of setting in motion a grand plan for the army to redeem itself through an expedition to restore peace and order in the

¹⁷³ Barlow to Minto, 13 January 1811, MSS Eur F148/1.

¹⁷⁴ Cited by Francis Baring and Hugh Inglis, *Dissent of Sir Francis Baring, bart. and Sir Hugh Inglis, bart.*, in 'State Papers for 1810, Papers relating to East India Affairs,' *Asiatic Annual Register*, 230. Also cited by Grant, in Grant and Parry, *Dissents, or Protests*, 74.

East Indies. Interestingly, these actions were efficiently carried out before Grant's term as Chairman of the Court of Directors came to an end in April 1810. In December 1812, Grant testified that the result of these actions was to have achieved Minto's 'best possible effect':

The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Samuel Auchmuty, has lately testified to the return of subordination and good temper in the army, as well as to the harmony which subsisted between the Governor and himself. In the Civil Service, the disputes which had arisen among the creditors of the Nabob of Arcot, and some others persons,— disputes which had, in the period of turbulence, formed a Faction against the Government, were allayed, and all the civil business of the settlement transacted in peace. Sedition and Faction had, in reality, disappeared there [India].¹⁷⁵

For Minto, nevertheless, the conquest of Java represented the fulfilment of Burke's world. But it had to be conducted in the spirit of liberty, under the auspices of the Bengal government. A Crown-sponsored expedition will proceed in the national-economic cause – and in the spirit of conquest – to raze, annihilate, destroy, and demolish Java. In 1810, Minto's Bengal government had the money to afford the undertaking. It did not, however, have the naval capability. This required the participation of the Crown governments in London, the Cape, and Ceylon. From London, Grant's inquiry into shipping losses had obliged the Admiralty to send out a fleet. From Calcutta, however, Minto was able to command the cooperation of the Cape government and its naval station. But he was careful to limit their efforts and attentions to Mauritius and Réunion. Both islands became a territory by conquest of the Crown and Minto calculated on disposing them under the purview of the Cape in return for requisitioning the sea transports that had been mobilised from the Cape for the service

¹⁷⁵ Grant and Parry, *Dissents, or Protests*, 31. 'But their influence,' he added, 'which had early reached this country, still lived here [England]: incessant misrepresentation, through numerous channels, aided by opposition politics in some, personal enmity, or a desire of change abroad, in others, indolence in another large class'.

in the French Islands.¹⁷⁶ He sent the troops from the Cape back to the Cape, and thanked the governor of the Cape that he would take it from there and that the Company's troops from Bengal and Madras would finish the job in Java.¹⁷⁷ By sheer willpower, he then assembled at Madras the largest military force ever to sail into the Malay Archipelago.

Except it was not the English King's military force. Aside for an artillery company from Ceylon and the 78th Highlander Regiment from Goa, four thousand native infantry and four thousand European soldiers, the major proportion coming from Madras and the rest from Calcutta,¹⁷⁸ disembarked at Java on the orders of he whom Leyden had entitled the 'Good Maha Rajah of Bengal'. Minto was going to the Malay Archipelago, continued Leyden, 'like another Secunder Zulkaram, to reign in Malacca and conquer Java, and drive out all the cruel Dutch and treacherous French, and take away all embargoes and restrictions on trade, abolish piracy, and bring peace and happiness to all the *anak-Malayas*.'¹⁷⁹ Minto's bringing of 'peace and happiness' to replace the Franco-Dutch commercial monopoly was symbolic of the establishing of the order of *pax et Concordia* in place of the disorder of *libertas et imperium*. The focus on the wellbeing of the people, and on the good governance of their affairs, signified not only their settlement with the 'great primaeval contract', but also the consecration of the commonwealth. 'My Aim has been to Settle the general System of Administration in the new Province,' Minto wrote,

¹⁷⁶ 'The execution of this further Most important Service therefore seems to depend upon the Measure of Supplying either a considerable proportion or the whole of the Garrisons of the French Islands from the Troops of the Cape, and I am willing to hope that no local exigency may appear to your Lordship and Major General Grey to render this arrangement inconsistent with the Security of the interests Committed to your Charge.' Minto to Caledon, 19 October 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

¹⁷⁷ Minto's determination that the Java expedition must consist solely of the Company's Madras and Bengal troops provided the central concern of his communications to Abercromby, Drury, Caledon, Maitland, Barlow, and Duncan between September 1810 and January 1811. Drury's decision to mobilise King's regiments from Madras, Ceylon, and Bombay, 'relying no further on the return of the Armaments from the Isle of France', provoked a strong reaction from Minto who countermanded him and brought his weight to bear on his original instructions being abided by. Madras Council to Minto, 13 January 1811; MSS Eur F148/2.

¹⁷⁸ Minto to Abercromby, 5 October 1810; MSS Eur F148/2.

¹⁷⁹ Leyden to Raffles, undated but estimated at March 1811; Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 25-6.

to put that System in motion, to Confide its present direction to able and faithful hands, and to point the Researches, the views, the deliberations & when it could be done without rashness, the Measures of the local Administration to the most essential objects of Public interest, present and future, embracing alike the welfare of our own Country and of the several Nations European & Asiatic, with whom we have thus contracted a Relation, which imposes upon us the duty of protection, and inspires the Sentiments of guardianship, and Affection.¹⁸⁰

Edmund Burke's thought is clearly reiterated in Minto's speech. With Minto's conquest of Java and its dependencies, the Malay Archipelago had become subject to Burke's legacy. And nothing had defined Burke's legacy more prominently than the institution of property and the security of property and person. They are encapsulated in a passage by Minto respecting the devastation by both Dutch and French of the kingdom of Banten, at the northwest of Java, and his intention to restore to Banten the legal, political and moral order which was Burke's ends of empire.

The Country of Bantam, universally and warmly attached to our Cause, has in the mean while been thrown into a State of Anarchy, destructive of its prosperity, and scarcely leaving any Security for property or person. The present lamentable Condition of an extensive territory capable of all the Advantages which soil & industry within, and Commerce on the Coast can afford, Advantages once, and not long since, possessed by its Inhabitants, may demand an early Settlement, of its Government.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Minto's Minute, 6 December 1811, Fort William; MSS Eur F148/15.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Chapter Four

Minto and David Hume: Java's Paper Currency

During the British East India Company's conquest of the Dutch colony of Java in August and September of 1811, the Governor-General of Bengal, the Earl of Minto, directed a separate campaign for the capture of the island from the Franco-Dutch government.¹ Even as armed battles were being fought, Minto waged a political battle for what he called the 'Custody of Public Property'.² William Robison, the Secretary to Government and Sir Stamford Raffles's erstwhile rival, was sent by Minto into the districts to command all Dutch officials to 'Keep in good Preservation'³ 'all public property of every kind: Treasure, arms, ammunition, stores, provisions, as will [sic] as the objects of commerce [and] the property of the state wherever situated'.⁴ Public property also included 'the public property of the late Government placed in the Territories of the respective [native] Princes at whose Court they reside.'⁵

Java's 'public property' was clearly subsidiary to Minto's intentions for the invasion and occupation of the island. What had he hoped to achieve by taking custody of it? Interestingly, Minto's claim on Java's 'public property' was not made for king and country. One of the defining events involving the provisional government which he set up in Java under Raffles, was its bitter clash with the crown regiments in the military over Java's 'public property'. Minto and Raffles refused to acknowledge the captor's

¹ Java, as a colony of the Kingdom of Holland, became a formal part of the French Empire in 1810.

² Minto's Minutes, 6 December 1811, British Library, 'Raffles-Minto Papers', MSS Eur F148/15.

³ Robison, 'Circular to Overseers of Coffee, Government Woods, etc. etc.', 3 September 1811, MSS Eur F148/13.

⁴ 'Articles of Capitulation', 17 September 1811, MSS Eur F148/14.

⁵ Auchmuty to Minto, 21 September 1811, MSS Eur F148/14.

right of plunder in war which they claimed.⁶ Instead, Minto staked his own claim over Java's 'public property', for the sake of a single policy which he stipulated in the third and fourth of his four Proclamations issued on 11 September 1811 upon the fall of the Franco-Dutch government.⁷ These Proclamations were as follows:

[No. 3] The Government Paper and the Paper issued by the Orphan chamber, shall be received at the Treasury, and shall be a legal tender in all transactions amongst Individuals, to the following extent... Namely to an amount not exceeding four Millions and a half of Rix Dollars in Government Paper, and four Millions of the Orphan Paper. Six Paper Rix Dollars and a half shall be valued in exchange at one Spanish Dollar in Silver, and arrangements shall be immediately formed, for stamping the old Paper, with the value now fixed or for exchanging the old Paper for new at that rate.

[No. 4] Sicca Rupees shall be given and taken in exchange from Spanish Dollars at the Rate of Two Sicca Rupees and One Stiver for one Spanish Dollar Silver; The value of the Sicca Rupee being fixed at Thirty one Stivers and a half, The Batavian, Surat and Arcot Rupee continuing to Circulate as heretofore, at the value of (30) Thirty Stivers. This order is not intended to effect any previously existing Contracts or agreement, but solely to apply to the Circulation of Sicca Rupees after this date.

'Paper' referred to the paper currency that had been issued by the Franco-Dutch government. What Minto's third and fourth Proclamations committed to do was first to redeem the bulk of this paper currency, amounting to 8,500,000 Rix Dollars (Paper) out of an estimated total issue of 8,754,073 Rix Dollars (Paper). The immediate means by

⁶ Minto wrote: 'The measures which have been adopted by the Lt Govr in C are the following: 1st. In consequence of a representation from the Prize agents, he order'd the immediate resumption of the property claimed... and directed that it should remain under the custody of the officers of Govt. 2ly. He refused to deliver it over to the Prize agents...' Of this 'decision of which in the first stance, we are entirely compotent'. Minto's 'Draughts', 24 July 1812, MSS Eur F148/14.

⁷ The first Proclamation declared that Java henceforth was 'to form part of the territorial possessions of the Honble the English East India Company, and the said Island and possessions will be subject to such Laws, Regulations, and form of Government, as may be hereafter established, by His Britannic Majesty in Parliament, or by the Honble the East India Company.' The second Proclamation lists the 'provisions' made 'For the satisfaction of the Inhabitants and people of Java... in testimony of the sincere disposition of the British Government to promote their prosperity and welfare'. Both are general proclamations of conquest. The third and fourth are specific to policy. All four Proclamations appear in MSS Eur F148/13, 14, 15.

which Minto had hoped to achieve this was to receive paper into the treasury in exchange for Java's 'public property' – hence, his anxious race to take custody of it. Next, the redeemed paper currency was to be revalued at a new stipulated exchange rate of 6½ Rix Dollars (Paper) against 1 Spanish Dollar (Silver) and reissued as such to its holder.⁸ Lastly, this reissue was to be accompanied by the introduction of sicca rupees, which were silver coins equivalent to half a Spanish silver dollar, and imported from the Company's treasury in Bengal ostensibly to remunerate the costs of the invasion and occupation. Taken together, these three measures pointed to the problem of hyperinflation, and to the decision by Minto to tackle it through a devaluation of Java's paper currency and a restoration of money to a metallic standard, in this case a silver standard. The implications of Minto's policy are enormous. Not only do they underline the true purpose of the conquest itself, they provide the point of reference for Raffles's policies toward money and land which picked up where Minto left off.

The significance of money to Minto and Raffles, nevertheless, has been poorly understood in the history. John Bastin has credited Raffles for having introduced a 'money economy' into Java, a theory also attributable to John Furnivall.⁹ Both Bastin and Furnivall also suggest that this development had continued the policy of monetisation initiated by Herman Willem Daendels, the former Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (January 1808 – May 1811). As we shall see in chapter five, what which may be qualified as 'money economy' in Daendels's and Raffles's policies is highly debatable. Where Raffles was concerned, the Company's Commander of the Forces in Java and second member of Council, Robert Gillespie, complained bitterly that 'Specie had since disappeared from the market', and 'Paper had been thus wholly

⁸ It was originally issued at 1 Rix Dollar (Paper) = 1 Rix Dollar (Silver) = 0.75 Spanish Dollar (Silver).

⁹ John Bastin, *The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra: An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), xiii. John Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69.

withdrawn from the market; and has caused great public distress.’¹⁰ Herman Muntinghe, the third member of Council, described ‘the utter want of money among the lower classes of Inhabitants’, such that their landlord ‘is utterly prevented from raising a single farthing on the rent of their habitations.’¹¹ In this regard, it is true that there was no consensus as to what constituted money and property at the time. The turn of the nineteenth century was a remarkable period wherein the contested ideas of the previous century were contested as policy. In Java, disputes over money and land polarised the military administration of Gillespie against Raffles’s civil administration. Gillespie rejected as totally unorthodox Raffles’s withdrawal of money and public sale of government land, and on 17 December 1813 he formally charged Raffles for what he saw to be corruption. In the literature on the affair, both Gillespie and Raffles claimed to understand the ‘real nature’ of Java’s paper currency where the other had not.

As mentioned in chapter two, this chapter deals with the implementation and effect of Raffles and Minto’s policies where they involved money. Here, I examine the particular event of devaluation as decreed in Minto’s Proclamations by tracing its ideological origins. Minto was the celebrated student of the Scottish philosopher, David Hume, and the latter’s economic arguments about money provide an important framework for understanding Minto’s approach toward what he thought was happening in Java, and what he thought was to be done. It will be seen that although Minto’s policy was actuated by economic reasons, they were also politically motivated. Minto’s papers from his short stay in Java showed that his redemption of Java’s paper money and his establishing of a silver standard were collateral to the ‘discharge of debts’. That

¹⁰ Gillespie’s ‘Memorandum on the Sale of Government Lands,’ Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents concerning his administration as Lieutenant Governor of Java, addressed to the Chief Government of India to refute the charges brought against him by Major-General Gillespie* (privately published in Batavia, 1814), Part III, 47-49.

¹¹ ‘Letter from Mr. Muntinghe in defence of his conduct’, 20 March 1815, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VIII, 37.

the conquest and occupation of Java was not intended to free the island from Franco-Dutch rule so much as to free the peoples of Java from debt slavery has been a consistent theme in this thesis. In that context, we shall see that Minto's policy was designed not only to reverse the debt mortgages of the Franco-Dutch government and end what Edmund Burke had condemned as the 'continual transmutation of paper into land, and land into paper',¹² but to dismantle the economic structure established by the Franco-Dutch republican government and restore another system in its place.

Dutch Paper Money

When at the end of July 1811 the British East India Company's expedition fleet anchored off Java's shoreline, the concern arising among the European and Chinese populations of the colony overwhelmingly centred on the rights of property. Such rights, properly speaking, pertained to the public property in an economy dominated by a colonial state government that had replaced the Dutch East India Company. Where private individuals were concerned, their interests did not constitute rights but simply that: interests vested in those rights. Against these interests, Minto concentrated his efforts to secure public property. 'Though large Store Houses of Public property were burnt by the Enemy,' he reported to the Court of Directors, 'we were fortunate in preserving some Valuable granaries and other Stores'. But generally Minto was hapless against the 'Individuals who had taken it, or had acquired it with a knowledge of its' [sic] having been pillaged from the public stores'. Moreover, 'all the rich Stores of the former Government having suddenly become the property of the Navy and Army,'

¹² Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L.G. Mitchell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 192.

British 'Prize Agents were in the possession of all the valuable produce found in the Stores of the former Government'.¹³

As mentioned, Minto wanted the stores of commodities, which he termed 'moveable' property, in order to redeem Java's paper money, which he termed 'floating' property.¹⁴ In the event, the money and stores secured by Minto was sufficient to redeem only 3,000,000 Rix Dollars (Paper), out of 8,754,073 Rix Dollars (Paper).¹⁵ Partly, this was because while Minto was desperately securing money and stores, the Franco-Dutch government was desperately giving everything away. The Dutch Governor-General at the time, Jan Willem Janssens, fleeing from military defeat, withheld from surrendering before he could honour the 'debts of the [Franco-Dutch] Government to Individuals,' and committed to have 'money & effects delivered to them in acquittal of just debts'. A significant amount of 'money & stores,' Minto reported, 'which by order of Genl Janssens at Oenerang on the 11th Sepr 1811, were issued at Sourabaya, between the 18th & 21st of the same month, in satisfaction of debts due by the late Government of Java, to Individuals.'¹⁶ Janssens surrendered on the 18th.

Evidently, the policy adopted by the Franco-Dutch government had contrasted and diverged from the policy of Minto. Janssens's delivery of public property to satisfy and acquit debts pointed to Java's paper money, which, as we saw in chapter two, were debt notes and signified public debt. Unlike paper money today, which is fiat money, or money that is issued by government under the law of the sovereign state, Java's paper money was issued by government as the acknowledgment of debt to private creditors. In

¹³ 'Letter from Mr. Muntinghe in defence of his conduct', 20 March 1815, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VIII, 34-35.

¹⁴ In his *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts*, Burke had referred to 'a sort of floating debt' where India was concerned. The distinction between movable/immovable property has origins in Roman Law.

¹⁵ 'Letter from Mr. Muntinghe in defence of his conduct', 20 March 1815, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VIII, 34.

¹⁶ Minto's 'Draughts', 24 July 1812, MSS Eur F148/14.

the case of Probolingo Paper, the creditors were the Chinese Captains of East Java from whom Daendels, Janssens's predecessor, had solicited instalments of silver cash in return for land. This mode of state finance, interestingly, had a precedent and parallel in the Cape Colony under the Dutch.

Paper money was first issued at the Cape in 1782 to circulate the VOC's volume of production and trade. The first paper money to be issued through mortgages of land occurred in 1792. When British forces invaded the Cape in 1805, Janssens was governor-general and he had just contracted a new mortgage. 'To raise funds, the places "Rustenburg" and "Paradys," near Cape Town, were offered for sale, and not long afterwards paper currency to the amount of £80,000 had to be issued.'¹⁷ The British crown government that took over did not intervene. 'Burghers and other inhabitants were confirmed in their rights and privileges, paper money was to remain current until instructions from England could be received'.¹⁸ In the event, two more issues of paper money were made in 1810 and 1814, though not without heated debate.¹⁹ Minto, who had stopped over at the Cape in May 1807 on his way out to India, was able to witness first-hand the implications of Janssens's paper money.

By comparison, Java's paper currency in 1811 actually outnumbered the Cape's paper currency in 1814 by nearly three times: 8.7 million Rix Dollars against 3.2 million Rix Dollars. If we take Smith's assertion that this money represented the colony's capitalised annual product, and assuming specie was negligible, then Java's economy was three times the size of the Cape's. On the question of paper money, however, Java emulated the Cape. Java's Probolingo Paper, named after the district in

¹⁷ Alexander Wilmot and John Centlivres Chase, *History of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope: From its Discovery to the year 1819 and from 1820 to 1868* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869), 231.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 237. Paper money was only withdrawn in 1830.

¹⁹ See Peter Warden Grant, *Considerations on the state of the colonial currency and foreign exchanges, at the Cape of Good Hope* (Cape Town: W. Bridekirk, 1825).

East Java that was to have been sold to the Chinese Captains, was only one of two forms of debt notes issued by the Franco-Dutch government. The other was the Orphan Chamber Paper, which as we will see later involved a different design. But both, generally termed Batavian Paper Currency, were essentially the same acknowledgment of public debt raised upon mortgages of government land, as the Cape's Rustenberg Paper and Paradys Paper.

Unlike the British crown government at the Cape, however, Minto's Company government in Java did not abstain from intervening in the paper currency. Minto regarded Daendels's land-for-paper transactions as incomplete and not satisfying a proper sale of land. Instead, he designated Daendels's arrangements with the creditors and underwriters of the mortgages as a 'hypothec' (hypothecate)²⁰ which pledged, rather than sold, government land for cash loans, rather than cash. When the conquest rendered those lands the territory of the East India Company, and the original agreements stood to be 'extinguished' by *force majeure*, Daendels's creditors thus stood to forfeit any repayment on their cash advances. The only recourse to compensate for this loss was to recover as much public property, especially the paper money which represented their demand on government.²¹ It turned out to be of little use, because Minto consequently devalued all the paper currency, and thus the colony's capitalised wealth, by 80%.

²⁰ Minto's 'Draughts', 24 July 1812, MSS Eur F148/14.

²¹ Janssens, to his credit, went to lengths to honour Daendels's debt. He seems to have extorted silver from Solo, his final destination before his surrender. (The nature of the VOC's operation, which paid for spices in bullion, meant that money accumulated at the native courts.) 'In the Emperors dominions, the hard Cash is general and plentiful, the Ministers have important administrations, they have money themselves, and are connected with those that are furnished with it. I address my self to them, with invitation to inform me, if they Should not be able, to provide the means to assist the Government most Spedily and efficaciously.' Janssens to Van Braam, 22 July 1811, MSS Eur F148/13. See also Peter Carey, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the End of an Old Order in Java, 1785-1855* (Leiden:KITLV Press, 2008).

The claims of the creditors – and indeed the claims of the British Prize Agents too – continued to absorb Minto and Raffles’s attentions following the conquest. Jacob Andries Van Braam, the former President of the Council of the Dutch East Indies and Resident at Solo (effectively No. 2 after Daendels), made his way to Calcutta to persuade Minto and the Bengal government to repeal the devaluation and re-establish the nominal value of Batavian paper money at its original issue.²² Minto refused to do so. Among his papers are to be found lengthy ‘draughts’ and ‘minutes’ arguing against the points of the many claimants.²³ Minto did not deny that ‘The Loan was made, as others [sic] loans to the Public are, on the general faith and Credit of Government, and [that] the payment was to be made’. However, he firmly held ‘that these debts, although constituting just demands on the part of the Creditors, are due only from the Dutch Govt but not from us, and cannot therefore fall within the description of private property to which protection was promised in our names.’ While he acknowledged that the creditors’ changing fortunes were caused ‘*quorum pars magna*’ by Britain, which qualified them to some ‘relief’, Minto was resolute that their claim had perished with the government with whom they had contracted their loans.

By today’s standards, Minto’s stance would be judged as harsh and unfair. However, paper money was a most notorious innovation ever since its impact on Scotland’s economy in the mid-eighteenth century. The advent of paper money in England came much later in 1797, following its introduction in the Cape Colony and that of the *assignats* in Republican France.²⁴ A bullion shortage and the financial demands of commerce and government expenditure, exacerbated by the wars with

²² Van Braam to Charles Ricketts, 9 June 1812, MSS Eur F148/13. Van Braam went on to England to petition the British government.

²³ Minto’s ‘Draughts’, 24 July 1812, MSS Eur F148/14.

²⁴ The *assignat* was very similar to Cape Paper in that it was issued through the mortgaging of government land. However, it was highly controversial because the land was confiscated from the Church. The only significant work on the *assignat* in English is by Seymour Edwin Harris, *The Assignats* (Harvard University Press, 1930). By contrast, Pitt’s paper money was issued against bullion reserves.

France and the National Debt, had led William Pitt the Younger to controversially suspend pound sterling's convertibility to gold and silver and introduce paper money into circulation. Each of these experiences proved to have been contentious. Paper money, although found to be useful, was discovered to also promote adverse effects. In the Cape, for example, 'trade and fiscal deficits were monetised by printing money, credit extension accelerated, the exchange rate fell sharply and inflation spiked.'²⁵

The phenomena associated with paper money of price inflation and debt were the bugbear of all governments. On the other hand, it was also appreciated that paper money was the elixir to value creation and prosperity. This conundrum was the source of much inquiry in the eighteenth century into the connection between value and price, the most notable of which was Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. The question of paper money, however, seemed merely to confound an already complex and contentious historical discourse on the relations of money in society and the state and their moral implications.²⁶ Even at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was not properly understood what money was, what it should be, and how it should be treated. In 1810, a Bullion Committee, comprising the most talented and most experienced figures on the subject, was set up to 'enquire into the cause of the high price of bullion, and to take into consideration the state of the circulating medium, and of the exchanges between Great Britain and foreign parts'.²⁷ The result was less of a consensus than an industry of published opinion christened as the Bullionist Controversy which sprang up on the subject. Nevertheless, the Committee recommended the restoration of a gold standard,

²⁵ Roy Havemann and Johan Fourie, 'The Cape of Perfect Storms: colonial Africa's first financial crash, 1788-1793' (ERSA (Economic Research South Africa) Working Paper 511, March 2015) https://econrsa.org/system/files/publications/working_papers/working_paper_511.pdf (accessed October 26, 2017).

²⁶ Paper money was introduced Sweden and the American colonies in the second half of the seventeenth century, and a century later in the Western European nations. For a useful collection of writings on the subject of money, see *Early Economic Thought: Selected Writings from Aristotle to Hume*, ed. Arthur Eli Monroe (New York: Dover Publications, 2006).

²⁷ See House of Commons, *Report, together with Minutes of Evidence, and Accounts, from the Select Committee* (London: J. Johnson and Co., 8 June 1810).

which was fulfilled in 1821, but inflation and debt continued to frustrate all economies – indeed, some will say, to the present day.

David Hume and Adam Smith

The context of unresolved debate applies to Java's economics and Minto's policy. We do not know, from a dearth of data, what the economic reality actually was in Java under Daendels and Janssens. What we have are nuggets of conflicting opinions from Minto, Van Braam, Daendels, Raffles, Muntinghe, Gillespie, etc., as to what they perceived was happening. Moreover, their different approaches to paper money in response, cannot be categorised historically according to the economic theories which came much later, and cannot therefore be easily compared. Theory and practice in both British and Dutch experiences are unmoored to each other or to any conceptual frame of reference as to be able to determine what they actually represented. We are fortunate, however, that there is an indirect frame of reference from which to infer why Minto perceived the state of Java's economy to be in a poor way, what he believed to be the cause, and how he expected to correct the problem. I refer to the economic thought and arguments of David Hume, who, as mentioned, had taught Minto.

Minto's father, Sir Gilbert Elliot, was a member of the Scottish intelligentsia in his own right and the friend of Hume, Adam Smith, and other luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment. Elliot's correspondence with Hume had since formed part of the literary canon on Hume's thought. Minto knew Hume as a child, and as a teenager he and his brother were placed by their father under Hume's tutelage in Paris in the mid-1760s. Hume had by then published the works that made him renowned as a philosopher,

economist, and historian.²⁸ Under his care, Minto not only met the celebrated *economistes* of France – as well as Adam Smith during Smith’s sojourn in Paris – but he also apprehended their ideas and arguments first-hand. Indeed, Minto appeared to have been Hume’s only intellectual disciple. Hume’s Victorian biographer wrote that Minto was ‘foremost in that body of accomplished gentlemen whose friendship and companionship afforded Hume so much pleasure and instruction’.²⁹ Minto’s Victorian biographer said that

not only was [Minto] resorted to as friend and companion, but as an authority and “master critic.” To him were submitted, for counsel and criticism, the MS. of Home’s tragedy of ‘Douglas,’ the MS. of Robertson’s ‘History of Charles V.,’ and the ‘Dialogues on Natural Religion’ of David Hume. Hume moreover desired [Minto] to undertake the part of interlocutor in these same dialogues’.³⁰

While, as we saw in chapter three, Minto had imbibed the political theory of Burke, and in the philosophy of the human mind (which I shall discuss in chapter six) he sided with Hume’s rival Thomas Reid, where economic theory was concerned, Minto was clearly Hume’s torch-bearer. Dugald Stewart, the biographer and editor of Adam Smith, and the distinguished professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University who also taught Minto in political economy,³¹ noted that as a result of Hume’s tutelage, Minto

²⁸ They were *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (1741), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), *Political Discourses* (1752), *The History of England* (in six volumes, 1754-62).

²⁹ John Hill Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1846); 319.

³⁰ Countess of Minto, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto from 1751 to 1806, Vol. I* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), 27.

³¹ Dugald Stewart had the chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh in 1785-1820. He was also an accomplished mathematician, having the chair of Mathematics at Edinburgh in 1775-1785. Stewart’s brilliance as polyglot and pedagogue left two legacies: (1) the eclectic range of subjects he taught - including the broad conception of ‘political economy’ discussed in chapter two, and the Philosophy of Mind of the Scottish School of Common Sense discussed in chapters six and seven – and (2) his celebrated circle of students. Minto attended Stewart’s classes on political economy in 1800-1. Leyden attended Stewart’s classes on moral philosophy in 1792. Stewart’s influence touched most of the

seems to have united with his other well-known talents and accomplishments a taste for abstract disquisitions which rarely occurs in men of the world, accompanied with that soundness and temperance of judgment which in such researches are so indisputably necessary to guard the mind against the illusions engendered by its own subtlety.

For example, the term used by Minto to describe rising prices demanded for goods, was not 'inflation' but the relative 'depreciation' of the value of the money needed to pay for those prices. Minto's impression derived directly from observations of the inflation in Scotland of the late 1740s, wherein no sufficient quantity of money was able to buy a good, and hence the impression of disparity between the value of money and the price of a good. This empirical approach to cause and effect comes down directly from David Hume. We can see it applied to the correspondence between supply and demand, which, in an ideal efficient market, had to be equal.³² Raffles's complaint, for example, that Java's coffee was 'literally rotting in the stores'³³ denoted underconsumption and thus cleavages in Java's economy.

What is most useful in adopting the context of Hume's thought for Minto's policy is the tension that exists between the theories of Hume and Adam Smith. What the *Wealth of Nations* said about money included Smith's reply to Hume's discussions on the subject in the latter's *Political Discourses*, a debate which was conspicuously referred to by Dugald Stewart in his lectures on political economy. Their debate is

personalities involved in our history (and all the Scottish ones). Other than Minto and Leyden, they included James Mill, Lansdowne, Lauderdale, John Crawford, Webb Seymour (brother of the Duke of Somerset), and Sir Robert Inglis (son of Sir Hugh Inglis). Raffles, on Minto's instructions, gave Stewart's son and keeper of his papers, Matthew Stewart, a job in Java (Raffles to Minto, 20 February 1812, MSS Eur F148/30). See also Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Cambridge University Press, March 1982), 43-69.

³² For the 'law of markets' or Say's law, which says that supply creates its own demand, see Jean-Baptiste Say, *A Treatise on Political Economy; or the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Wealth*, trans. C. R. Prinsep (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot & Co, 1851). Also Thomas Sowell, *Say's Law: An Historical Analysis* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972).

³³ Raffles to Elton Hammond, Oct 1813, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, F.R.S. etc: particularly in the Government of Java, 1811-1816, and of Bencoolen and its Dependencies, 1817-1824; with details of the Commerce and Resources of the Eastern Archipelago, and Selections from his Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1830), 191.

actually more than useful, as two examples of Smith's model colonies in the *Wealth of Nations*, and of the economic relationship between colony and mother country, were the Cape Colony and Java (an opinion Hume did not share). 'The Dutch settlements at the Cape of Good Hope and at Batavia,' wrote Smith, 'are at present the most considerable colonies which the Europeans have established either in Africa or in the East Indies'.³⁴ It has been suggested that Smith's theory to deploy specie for the international trade and paper money for the domestic trade was emulated in the first issue of paper money by the Cape's governor in 1782, Joachim Van Plettenberg.³⁵

Indeed, the connection between Adam Smith's ideas and the Dutch colonial paper money economies does emerge in the text. Minto's adversary on the matter, Van Braam, had imagined that there was no real depreciation at all, but rather an undue panic. 'The critical circumstances of the Colony and the fear of the abolishment of the paper currency were the chief causes of its depreciation,' he argued. This position rather evoked Smith's account of the Scottish inflation that, contrary to what Hume believed, the 'very sensible rise in the price of provisions, [was] owing, probably, to the badness of the seasons, and not to the multiplication of paper money.'³⁶ In fact, Van Braam's remark that a paper money which can 'keep its value, particularly when protected by Government... will greatly facilitate and be of considerable utility to commerce', also reiterated the comment by David Ricardo, the most prominent neo-Smithian political economist to sit in the Bullion Committee, that 'a well regulated paper currency is so great an improvement in commerce that I should greatly regret if prejudice should

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³⁵ See Andries Johannes Bruwer, *South Africa: A Case for a National Gold and Banking Policy* (H.A.U.M., 1957), 21. Also Government of the Cape Colony, *Records of the Cape Colony: Nov.-Dec. 1825*, (London: Public Record Office, 1904), 120.

³⁶ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994); 354 (Book II, Chapter II). 354

induce us to return to a system of less utility.’³⁷ This idea was shared by the Dutch burghers at the Cape, and plainly the British administrators there. It was also exhibited by Raffles’s nemesis, Gillespie.³⁸ In view of these similarities, we may well depend on a general framework that roughly divides those who advocated paper money in the colonies on Smithian principles and those who opposed it on Humean principles.

In the following sections, I shall attempt to explain what Minto had understood to be happening to Java’s economy and what he thought was to be done, by applying to the arguments of Hume with respect to four related issues which had prompted Minto’s concerns about money. These were the economic phenomenon of inflation, and what Minto saw to be its political causes, which were paper money, public debt, and the financial moneyed interest. As we shall see, inflation was merely a collateral effect with what Minto believed was the suppression of diligent industry, refined commerce and a frugal merchant class by financial capitalism. It was to free this virtuous commerce, by eliminating the elements of vicious commerce, which had led him to devalue Java’s paper currency.

Inflation

In chapter two, it was explained that Adam Smith had identified two ways by which the value of a good was conceived. Coffee, for example, was given a nominal price, or

³⁷ David Ricardo, *The Works of David Ricardo, Esq., M.P.*, ed. John Ramsay McCulloch (London: John Murray, 1846); 404. Ricardo was known to have supported the bullionist position concluded by the Committee. However, this evolution of thought – his ‘metalistic indignation’ – was based on the Smithian principle of limiting specie-based trade to international transactions and basing domestic trade on paper. ‘It was Ricardo, in his pamphlet on ‘Proposals for an Economical and Secure Currency’, published in 1816, who... recommended a monetary system under which precious-metal money should be entirely eliminated from actual domestic circulation. This suggestion of Ricardo’s was the basis of that monetary system... that is usually known nowadays as the gold-exchange standard.’ Ludwig Von Mises, *The Theory of Money and Credit*, Trans. J.E. Batson (Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2009), 475.

³⁸ Gillespie possessed a copy of Van Braam’s petition to Liverpool, a circumstance that suggested shared interests and opinions on the subject. He later appended the text verbatim as his own in his charges against Raffles.

value in exchange, based on the labour expended in its production. The specie which traditionally paid this price, however, was based on its use value, or the intrinsic value of the metal itself. In both cases, the notions of labour value and intrinsic value are conceptual notions. However, they are also conceptually different, and it will be apparent that any exchange which tries to equate one to the other will be hard-pressed to do so for the lack of a common denominator that would allow a valid comparison. For this reason, the market mechanism at the point of exchange could not be precisely represented.³⁹ In the seventeenth century, the economic writer Sir William Petty deemed this ‘the most important Consideration on Political Oeconomies, viz. how to make a Par and Equation between Lands and Labour, so as to express the Value of anything by either alone.’⁴⁰ Richard Cantillon, regarded to be the precursor to the classical political economists, introduced the concept of the ‘altercation’ (of the marketplace). It essentially reduced the exchange to the common satisfaction between two parties in a barter. ‘Though this method of fixing the prices of things in the Market has no just or geometrical basis,’ wrote Cantillon, ‘in general these prices do not differ much from the intrinsic value.’⁴¹

Cantillon’s conceptualisation of the market exchange as an ‘altercation’ effectively forced an equality between labour value and intrinsic value. Adam Smith, for whose productive cycle the act of exchange was indispensable, as it joined consumption to production, was aware of the contradiction. Hence, he insisted that stock – which included money – was ‘labour stocked and stored up’ and that it could never in the long run be employed other than in maintaining labour. This rationalisation

³⁹ The correspondence between the value of money and price of a good was more precisely and usefully determined in the nineteenth century by John Stuart Mill, William Stanley Jevons, and Alfred Marshall.

⁴⁰ For historical background, see Hong-Seok Yang’s ‘Appendix: The Cost-of-production Theories of Value in Petty, Cantillon, Quesnay, Steuart and Smith’, in Hong-Seok Yang, *The Political Economy of Trade and Growth: An Analytical Interpretation of Sir James Steuart’s Inquiry* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1994), 60-92.

⁴¹ Richard Cantillon, ‘On the nature of commerce in general’, in Monroe, *Early Economic Thought*, 262.

of value in terms of labour paved the way for the division of labour and the ‘perfect liberty, equality, and justice’ in which were balanced labour, land, and capital. By this rationalisation, the prices of things, Smith argued, resolved into wages of labour, profits of capital, and rent of land, which could be compared on a common basis. Even so, the determination of prices was still a vague science. Smith’s theory of exchangeable value consisted of laborious approximations from a commodity’s ‘natural’ price to its ‘real’ price, and from its ‘nominal’ price in money to its ‘market’ or ‘actual’ price, whereby ‘real’ price should ultimately ‘coincide’ with ‘actual’ price. ‘In exchanging, indeed, the different productions of different sorts of labour for one another, some allowance is commonly made for both,’ Smith admitted. ‘It is adjusted,’ he continued, paraphrasing Cantillon, ‘not by any accurate measure, but by the higgling and bargaining of the market, according to that sort of rough equality which, though not exact, is sufficient for carrying on the business of common life.’

The problem that confronted Smith was the difficulty of applying labour value with regard to money. Money, one could almost hear him sigh, was ‘a subject in its own nature extremely abstracted.’⁴² The result was the speculation of value and price and a confusion of terms. Dugald Stewart described how Smith could not disentangle his system from the duality of labour value and use value, and, indeed, detach these concepts from words and definitions. Referring to Smith’s ‘metaphysical argument’ that ‘equal quantities of labour must at all times be of equal value to the labourer’, Stewart remarked:

What are we here to annex to the term value?... we are told that this word has two different meanings; sometimes expressing the utility of a commodity, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods. The first of these is called value in use, the other value in exchange... I have some doubts, however, with respect

⁴² Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 32 (Book I, Chapter IV).

to its accuracy; for what is value in use, but a circuitous expression for utility; and what possible advantage can arise from substituting the former phrase for the latter? On the other hand, is not the idea of value in exchange sufficiently conveyed by the word value; which in speculations of this sort is seldom or never employed as synonymous with intrinsic utility, and which itself seems to involve the very nature of the comparison?... The principal advantage of the common mode of speaking over that employed by Mr. Smith is, that the latter, after distinguishing the two kinds of value, often makes use of the word without any limiting epithet; and thereby not only puzzles his readers, but imposes on himself.⁴³

What Smith had imposed on himself, in spite of his insistence that the labour theory of value applied to both sides of the equation between price and value, was the contradiction of the ‘altercation’ between labour value and use value. The result of these indefinite values was inequality, and therefore inflation (or depreciation) and underconsumption (or overproduction). The source of Smith’s contradiction lies with his conception of money. As a species of stock, money was essentially a store of value, and although Smith argued that what was being stored was labour, the sense of a quality being stored nonetheless denoted an innate or intrinsic attribute. Thus, to a chapter on the ‘rent of land’, Smith is found oddly attaching a description of specie in which he claimed that their ‘qualities of utility, beauty, and scarcity, are the original foundation of the high price for those metals, or of the great quantity of other goods for which they can everywhere be exchanged.’⁴⁴ Stewart jumped on this to detect bullionism in Smith, for saying ‘that the intrinsic value of gold and silver was the quality which fitted them for their employment as coin.’⁴⁵

⁴³ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures on Political Economy, Vol. I.*, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), 355.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 198 (Book I, Chapter XI, Part II).

⁴⁵ Stewart, *Lectures*, 335.

Stewart had an axe to grind not merely with Smith's duality of labour value and intrinsic value, but the implication of this duality. Money, if conceived as a store of value and accumulated as treasure, accorded to its possessor utility and power. By itself this was not immoral. But if the commodities purchased by money were conceived in terms of labour, we then had mercantilism, feudalism, and slavery. Indeed, Stewart caught Smith out for making 'an abrupt conclusion, with which it is not easy to trace its connexion [sic], that the value of a commodity to those who possess it, and want to exchange it, is precisely equal to the quantity of labour which it can enable them to command.' To 'command' labour, rather than 'employ' labour, is an important distinction in the language of Smith's political economy. It signified the utility or power theory of value. Accorded to money, it supported the claim which the majority of commentators at the time – most prominently Smith – had insisted was false: which was that it is money, not labour, that constituted real wealth. In a momentary lapse, Smith crucially undermined the division of labour and the productive cycle which the *Wealth of Nations* had set out to demonstrate. 'It is difficult to reconcile this passage,' Stewart remarked, 'with the analysis which Mr. Smith has given' that stock will always employ, as opposed to command, labour.⁴⁶

As a student of Dugald Stewart, Minto was aware of the contradiction between labour value and intrinsic value which Adam Smith had imposed upon the equality between the value of money and price of commodities. For that reason, Minto rejected Smith's theory of prices. Instead, he understood the more traditional and matter-of-fact view of prices that derived from Bullionism. To treat money as bullion or treasure, it has long been persuasively argued, led to the mercantilist evils of hoarding, scarcity, and high interest rates. However, where inflation owing to the speculation of price and

⁴⁶ Ibid., 354.

value was concerned, the bullionist approach limited it. The reason is because, in an exchange where specie was treated as a commodity and exchanged with another commodity such as coffee, there was a sufficiently common basis for a quantifiable comparison between the relative qualities of their weights and measures. In this case, each commodity became representative of the other, value equalled price, and no altercation or higgling was required over imaginary values and prices. The demanded price of coffee, and the supply of specie, adjusted in proportion to the quantities of either commodity that was brought into the transaction.⁴⁷ Rising prices of goods went hand in hand with increasing money supply, falling prices with decreasing money. The downside of this proportion was that trade became limited to finite quantities of specie and coffee. But the finiteness ensured that the price adjustment contained within itself a self-regulation against undue inflation.

This proportional relation was elucidated as a coherent system by David Hume.⁴⁸ It later came to be known as the Quantity Theory of Money. For Hume, the proportional relation was a phenomenon of nature that was only possible due to the quantifiable nature of the metals. For its innate quality, specie was nature's only agent of this relation. But specie as a commodity with innate value was historically also man's wealth. For this reason, Hume neither affirmed if money had intrinsic or labour value, but rather a 'fictitious value' arising from apprehending money, in the form of stamped coinage, as a sign or representation of the commodity with which it was to be exchanged.

⁴⁷ Very simply: $\text{Price}_{\text{coffee}} \times \text{Quantity}_{\text{coffee}} = \text{Value}_{\text{specie}} \times \text{Quantity}_{\text{specie}}$. Assuming $\text{Quantity}_{\text{coffee}}$ and $\text{Value}_{\text{specie}}$ do not change, a rise in $\text{Quantity}_{\text{specie}}$ will cause a proportional rise in $\text{Price}_{\text{coffee}}$.

⁴⁸ Most prominently in Hume's essays 'Of Money', 'Of Interest', and 'Of the Balance of Trade', in David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. I, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 309-344.

Complications arose, however, where paper money was concerned. Paper money, though stamped, was neither a commodity nor a sign or representation of it. It was the *idea* of value affixed in print. Hume, in fact, exposed the idea represented by paper money to be the value of debt and credit. Paper money was essentially ‘paper credit’ and, therefore, ‘counterfeit money’. It was unnatural. What we thus have in an exchange involving paper money is the idea of value being offered for a good. In this situation, because ideas have no finite or real existence – although this was in dispute, as we shall see in chapter five – the proportional relation between money and goods in exchange no longer pertained. Neither supply nor demand is substantiated by real quantities of money and goods. The market exchange becomes an increasingly abstract event: indeed, it begins to resemble Cantillon’s altercation or Smith’s higgling.⁴⁹ Money and prices no longer offset each other, but an inequality widens between value and price. As a student of Hume, Minto took a bullionist approach to money and understood how paper money upset the proportional relation between money and commodities. ‘To endeavour artificially to encrease [sic] such a credit,’ said Hume of paper money, ‘can never be the interest of any trading nation; but must lay them under disadvantages, by encreasing money beyond its natural proportion to labour and commodities, and thereby heightening their price to the merchant and manufacturer.’⁵⁰

For the political economists who averred that true wealth was labour, to which money was merely subsidiary, price inflation signified the expansion of the productive cycle rather than the depreciation of money. To them, the demand of industry and commerce will always encounter a supply of money in the form of paper securities with which to finance it. Because this supply was always equivalent to the real assets

⁴⁹ Moreover, if the good offered was valued in conceptual terms of labour, then what we have is one idea of value being offered for another idea of value.

⁵⁰ Hume, ‘Of Money’, *Essays*, 311-2.

corresponding to the demand of industry and commerce, so money, in the form of paper bills, cannot be inflationary. This argument was later known as the Real Bills Doctrine.⁵¹ The division between the real bills proponents and the bullionists, nevertheless, was irreconcilable. To the latter, price inflation could not be the effect of economic growth. It was simply the effect of paper money's inability to maintain any consistent behaviour – i.e. the viscosity of Hume's 'oil' – in response to the demand for commodities. What was really happening was money losing every sort of value, and this was caused by its replacement with paper.

Paper Money

Paper money, Hume said, was paper credit and signified public debt. Of all of these he was an extraordinary critic, though not one quite so extreme as Minto's other mentor, Edmund Burke.⁵² As with Burke, Hume was particularly apprehensive that the economic inequalities of paper money extended well beyond the cleavage between price and value to manifest as political injustices. Because paper money represented paper credit, issuing paper money to excess implied ever greater assignments of public debt. In response, Hume saw 'many disadvantages which attend our public debts in the whole interior economy of the state', and 'the prejudice that results to a state considered as a body politic, which must support itself in the society of nations, and have various transactions with other states in wars and negotiations.'⁵³ These disadvantages and prejudice Hume witnessed in Scotland in the late 1740s, and he believed they were a symptom of paper money banishing specie from the national economy. 'Those institutions of banks, funds, and paper credit,' he remarked, 'render paper equivalent to

⁵¹ For some background, see Roy Green, 'Real Bills Doctrine', in *Money*, eds. J. Eatwell, M. Milgate and P. Newman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 310-313. Also Chapter III in Von Mises, *Theory of Money and Credit*, 297-319.

⁵² See chapter three.

⁵³ Hume, 'Of Public Credit', *Essays*, 366.

money, circulate it throughout the whole state, make it supply the place of gold and silver, raise proportionably the price of labour and commodities, and by that means either banish a great part of those precious metals, or prevent their further increase. What can be more short-sighted than our reasonings on this head?’⁵⁴

Now, Hume did not see the diminution of specie to be a diminution of wealth. In a situation where paper money did not factor, the diminution of specie lowered the price of labour and commodities. This situation Hume explained was favourable for employment and the balance of trade.⁵⁵ Low prices must elicit the influx of foreign specie, and that would eventually raise prices again. But more importantly, ‘it must first quicken the diligence of every individual, before it encrease the price of labour.’⁵⁶ This so-called quickening of diligence described a concept of passion that was central to Hume’s theory of ‘refinement in the arts’ and critical to his conception of social progress.⁵⁷ As ‘labour and industry gain life,’ Hume explained, ‘the merchant becomes more enterprising, the manufacturer more diligent and skilful, and even the farmer follows his plough with greater alacrity and attention.’ The necessary outcome was commerce, industry, frugality – all conditions for reproducing the refinement in the arts – and what Hume termed the ‘moneyed interest’. The latter referred to a new emerging merchant class which, by lending money at low interest, ‘keeps alive a spirit of industry in the nation, and increases the stock of labour, in which consists all real power and riches.’

The problem, however, was that when specie was diminished by, and substituted with, the expansion of paper money, the cycle of ‘quickenning’ did not occur. Prices, instead of falling with diminishing specie, rose (or stayed high) with increased paper.

⁵⁴ Hume, ‘Of the Balance of Trade’, *Essays*, 337.

⁵⁵ Known as the Price-Specie Flow Mechanism.

⁵⁶ The effect is similar to Keynes’ multiplier effect.

⁵⁷ See Hume, ‘Of Refinement in the arts’, *Essays*, 299-308.

Hume, however, saw this to be the effect of an ersatz cause. ‘Public stocks, being a kind of paper-credit, have all the disadvantages attending that species of money,’ he said; ‘they banish gold and silver from the most considerable commerce of the state, reduce them to common circulation, and by that means render all provisions and labour dearer than otherwise they would be.’⁵⁸ Hume’s criticism of paper money originated from his applying the Quantity Theory of Money to a finite economy comprising the exchange of real goods. Under this framework, specie acted as a causal agent in circulating commodities, setting prices, and settling balance of payments, while paper money remained as bills of debt or credit. Substituting paper for specie, therefore, introduced a red herring: prices were tricked to rise, as it were, by a false impression of ‘plenty of money’. For this reason, Hume called paper money ‘artificial’, ‘counterfeit’, and ‘a cheat’.⁵⁹ He said:

This has made me entertain a doubt concerning the benefit of banks and paper-credit, which are so generally esteemed advantageous to every nation. That provisions and labour should become dear by the increase of trade and money, is, in many respects, an inconvenience; but an inconvenience that is unavoidable, and the effect of that public wealth and prosperity which are the end of all our wishes. It is compensated by the advantages, which we reap from the possession of these precious metals, and the weight, which they give the nation in all foreign wars and negociations. But there appears no reason for increasing that inconvenience by a counterfeit money, which foreigners will not accept of in any payment, and which any great disorder in the state will reduce to nothing.⁶⁰

Against Hume, Adam Smith countered by arguing that ‘a paper money consisting in bank notes, issued by people of undoubted credit, payable upon demand without any condition, and in fact always readily paid as soon as presented, is, in every

⁵⁸ Hume, ‘Of Public Credit’, *Essays*, 365.

⁵⁹ Hume to James Oswald of Dunnikier, 1 November 1750, *The Letters of David Hume, Volume I, 1727-1765*, ed. J.Y.T. Greig (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 142-144.

⁶⁰ Hume, ‘Of Money’, *Essays*, 311.

respect, equal in value to gold and silver money'.⁶¹ On this basis, therefore, 'the quantity of gold and silver, which is taken from the currency, is always equal to the quantity of paper which is added to it'. Hence, 'paper money does not necessarily increase the quantity of the whole currency' and thus does not depreciate the value of money. Smith's position on paper money described the Real Bills Doctrine mentioned above. It held that paper bills can never be issued to excess because the bill itself presupposed a real transaction. Paper money, Smith insisted, 'can never exceed the quantity which the circulation of the country can easily absorb and employ.'⁶² But Hume was not concerned about paper money adding to existing money, but rather of paper credit replacing or banishing existing money. 'Public securities are with us become a kind of money,' he rued, 'and pass as readily at the current price as gold or silver.'⁶³

A detailed account of this debate between Smith and Hume was included in Dugald Stewart's lectures on political economy. Of Smith's ideas about money, Stewart was brutally critical. 'This reasoning of Mr. Smith,' Stewart remarked, 'involves some material mistakes and oversights.'⁶⁴ The Real Bills Doctrine, for example, was later contradicted by the excess issue of bills. 'The assertion, in particular,' said Stewart, 'that the whole paper money of every kind that can easily circulate in any country, never can exceed the value of the gold and silver of which it supplies the place, is an assumption completely refuted by our actual experience since Mr. Smith's time'. But Stewart was especially galled that Smith deliberately ignored the depreciation of money in his own time which disproved the Real Bills Doctrine. 'Another oversight of still greater consequence,' Stewart continued, 'I mean the inattention manifested by Mr.

⁶¹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 353 (Book II, Chapter II).

⁶² Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 331 (Book II, Chapter II).

⁶³ Hume, 'Of Public Credit', *Essays*, 363.

⁶⁴ Stewart, *Lectures*, 388.

Smith to that remarkable depreciation in the value of money which has taken place’, and ‘to what causes this depreciation is to be ascribed, whether to the substitution of factitious instead of real money, or to the weight of our public burdens’. ‘The fact is too obvious to the most careless observer to admit of a moment’s controversy,’ he insinuated.

‘The truth seems to be,’ Stewart concluded, ‘that Mr. Smith has been led to his general conclusion, by too partial attention to the price of corn as a standard of the value of money.’⁶⁵ But crucially, ‘he was farther confirmed in his opinion by the partial view which he took of the nature of paper-credit’. ‘Proceeding on the supposition that factitious money could only supply the place of that quantity of gold and silver which would otherwise have circulated in its stead,’ Stewart explained, Smith ‘could perceive no possible way in which it could have any tendency to depreciate the value of money; and... it appeared to him, as a necessary consequence, that the common complaints of a depreciation in the value of money were altogether founded in ignorance and prejudice.’⁶⁶ This was damning stuff by the first editor of the *Wealth of Nations* and the first biographer of Adam Smith, the person most qualified to speak about Smith and the *Wealth of Nations* – but utterly misunderstood in history to have been responsible for the ‘Stewart-led sweep of Smithianism in Great Britain’.⁶⁷ Stewart’s celebrated students, in fact, will have taken with them Stewart’s final verdict on Smith’s conception of money:

During the eventful interval which has elapsed since the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*, the question concerning the effects of paper currency on prices has

⁶⁵ Smith used the price of corn as his model to explain the nature of prices and their relation to the labour theory of value and to money. As seen above, Stewart was critical of Smith’s ‘metaphysical’ use of the term ‘value’, which rather convoluted the relation between money and labour.

⁶⁶ Stewart, *Lectures*, 389.

⁶⁷ Murray N. Rothbard, *An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought, Volume I* (Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1995), 480.

assumed completely a new aspect, inasmuch, that granting all Mr. Smith's principles in their fullest extent, no fair inference whatever could be drawn from them at all applicable to the present condition of the commercial world; as his whole reasoning on this subject proceeds on the supposition, that the issues of bank-notes are limited by the obligation of paying them in specie on demand. But the problem still remains concerning the effects on prices of a paper currency that is not convertible at pleasure into gold and silver.⁶⁸

Public Debt

In the debate between Smith and Hume over paper money, Stewart took the position of Hume. His lecture notes point to where the difference between Smith's and Hume's arguments lay, which was in their conceptions of money. As we saw earlier, Stewart had exposed Smith for taking an ambivalent position on money. Despite Smith's insistence that value was based on labour, he also understood money to have intrinsic worth, to have utility, and to reward to its possessor the power to command labour – i.e. the mercantilist properties of what was known as 'commodity money'.⁶⁹ Money, for Smith, was a store of value. For Hume, on the other hand, money functioned strictly as a medium of exchange and a scale of valuation (or unit of account).⁷⁰ These functions, of what was known as 'symbolic money', were believed by Hume to be performed exceptionally by specie.⁷¹ But when paper bills replaced specie, money also assumed the function of storing value and, indeed, the paper bill's essential function, which was to assign debt. 'In the monied interest,' Smith wrote, 'the money is, as it were, but the deed of assignment, which conveys from one hand to another those capitals which the

⁶⁸ Stewart, *Lectures*, 388-389.

⁶⁹ Stewart did not deny the intrinsic quality of bullion as a metal and a commodity, but he rejected the relevance of this quality when bullion was converted into money. 'I certainly agree with Mr. Smith,' wrote Stewart, on the precious metals, 'excepting where he says, that the intrinsic value of gold and silver was the quality which fitted them for their employment as coin.' Stewart, *Lectures*, 336.

⁷⁰ 'Money is not, properly speaking, one of the subjects of commerce; but only the instrument which men have agreed upon to facilitate the exchange of one commodity for another.' Hume, 'Of Money', *Essays*, 309.

⁷¹ On this point, that only specie could perform the job of symbolic money, Stewart disagreed with Hume.

owners do not care to employ themselves.’⁷² Smith’s use of the term ‘capitals’ had the effect of diminishing the significance of the ‘many different loans’ served by the money that conveyed the ‘capitals’. But his use of the term ‘deed of assignment’, which denotes the legal instrument that conveys debt, made very clear what he intended money to do.

Thus, when paper bills banished or replaced specie, money’s function changed from one of exchange and accounting, to one of debt and value-keeping – i.e. it changed from symbolic money into commodity money. Money’s self-correcting price-specie flow mechanism, it was believed, broke down. By Hume’s reasoning, this development was regressive. Without the ‘oil’ that was symbolic money, the ‘great wheels of trade’ slowed to a halt. ‘If the coin be locked up in chests, it is the same thing with regard to prices, as if it were annihilated,’ Hume said, and ‘as the money and commodities, in these cases, never meet, they cannot affect each other.’⁷³ The result was a propensity to hoard or to spend, a combination which supplied a demand for usury at high interest rates in a supposedly commercial society. Hume’s moneyed interest of frugal merchants and industrious individuals changed into what was nominally to Smith a capitalist interest, but one whose ‘habits and manners’ recalled that landed society once epitomised by miserly usurers and prodigal landowners. For Hume, what was unforgivable about paper money was its disruption of the ‘quickenings of diligence’ and ‘refinement in the arts’. Commerce and industry were believed to regress to an indolent and ostentatious state of society. ‘The greater part of the public stock being always in the hands of idle people, who live on their revenue,’ Hume wrote, ‘our funds, in that view, give great encouragement to an useless and inactive life.’⁷⁴ Similarly, ‘where a

⁷² Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 383 (Book II, Chapter IV).

⁷³ Hume, ‘Of Money’, *Essays*, 316-317.

⁷⁴ Hume, ‘Of Public Credit’, *Essays*, 365.

government has mortgaged all its revenues... it necessarily sinks into a state of languor, inactivity, and impotence.’⁷⁵

By Hume’s account, Smith’s commercial end stage portrayed a neo-mercantilist economy. It will be recalled that Smith had comprehended a mercantilist-feudal stage to have preceded commercial society.⁷⁶ Smith did not reject this stage, but rather he considered it an anomaly from the feudal past and representing a ‘false political economy’. Mercantilism’s flaw lay with the instability of treasure. Treasure, being hoarded and lent, gave its possessor the power to command labour, but this, according to Smith, cannot last. Money must eventually employ labour, and this it must do when the division of labour unleashed productivity, expanded production, and ushered in true commercial society. But it is questionable whether money, no longer hoarded as treasure and lent, but accumulated as ‘capitals’ and circulated as ‘deeds of assignment’, necessarily employed labour or still commanded it. As Stewart pointed out, Smith proved to be ambivalent on this matter. But if the power of money over the labour of man did not dissipate with the division of labour, then Smith’s true commercial society hardly promised anything radically more different than a sophisticated form of mercantilist society.

Hume, writing twenty-four years before Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, and a couple of years after meeting Smith, foresaw this society of paper securities and public debt. Today we would recognise it as *financial* capitalism, but in the epoch of Hume and Smith, it was distinguished from what is correctly termed *industrial* capitalism. At the end of the day, financial capitalism and industrial capitalism, and their moneyed interests based on capital and labour, merely reflected the old neo-Roman dualism of a

⁷⁵ Ibid., 369.

⁷⁶ See chapter two.

vicious commerce and a virtuous commerce. *Wealth of Nations* had simply tried to make vicious commerce less selfish, less avaricious, and morally more acceptable. But, in his essay *Of Public Credit*, Hume compared the modern policy to ‘mortgage the public revenues’ with the ancient policy to ‘hoard up treasures’, and remarked that ‘if the abuses of treasures be dangerous... the abuses of mortgaging are more certain and inevitable; poverty, impotence, and subjection to foreign powers.’⁷⁷ In some extraordinary passages, Hume proceeded to outline exactly what would happen, in uncompromising language that would have been very familiar to British republicans such as Edmund Burke and Jonathan Swift:

In this unnatural state of society, the only persons who possess any revenue beyond the immediate effects of their industry, are the stockholders, who draw almost all the rent of the land and houses, besides the produce of all the customs and excises. These are men who have no connections with the state, who can enjoy their revenue in any part of the globe in which they choose to reside, who will naturally bury themselves in the capital, or in great cities, and who will sink into the lethargy of a stupid and pampered luxury, without spirit, ambition, or enjoyment. Adieu to all ideas of nobility, gentry, and family... by this means the several ranks of men, which form a kind of independent magistracy in a state, instituted by the hand of nature, are entirely lost; and every man in authority derives his influence from the commission alone of the sovereign. No expedient remains for preventing or suppressing insurrections but mercenary armies: no expedient at all remains for resisting tyranny: elections are swayed by bribery and corruption alone: and the middle power between king and people being totally removed, a grievous despotism must infallibly prevail. The landholders, despised for their poverty, and hated for their oppressions, will be utterly unable to make any opposition to it.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Hume, ‘Of Public Credit’, *Essays*, 362

⁷⁸ Hume, ‘Of Public Credit’, *Essays*, 367.

Hume's allusions to corruption, despotism, and the 'dissolution by power and paper of all the natural ties among men',⁷⁹ are evocative of Burke's own denunciations of paper money thirty-eight years later. In the civic humanist vocabulary, they refer to what John Pocock has termed 'paper-money despotism'.⁸⁰ The conceptual continuity between Hume and Burke in this regard explains Minto's own aversion to paper money and public debt. Minto's decisions to strike at both, in India and Java, resonate to Hume's stark warning as to the consequences awaiting the 'abuses of mortgaging' the public revenues:

As it would have required but a moderate share of prudence, when we first began this practice of mortgaging, to have foretold, from the nature of men and of ministers, that things would necessarily be carried to the length we see; so now, that they have at last happily reached it, it may not be difficult to guess at the consequences. It must, indeed, be one of these two events; either the nation must destroy public credit, or public credit will destroy the nation. It is impossible that they can both subsist, after the manner they have been hitherto managed, in this, as well as in some other countries.⁸¹

Moneyed Interest

The figures of Jacob Van Braam and the other 'Colonists of Java', in their conceiving of value in terms of utility and wealth in terms of money, which when accumulated gave them great power of command over labour and the produce of labour, represented what was impugned at the time as the 'moneyed interest'. The term derived from an ancient one: the 'Monied Man'. It was used by Aristotle and Xenophon to refer to the figure of the usurer and the activity of usury. In the seventeenth century, Sir William Petty applied 'monied men' to merchants and the market in general, which rationalised the

⁷⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 288.

⁸⁰ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 200.

⁸¹ Hume, 'Of Public Credit', *Essays*, 370.

age-old debate about usury into questions about value, money, interest, etc.⁸² The usurer, however, never managed to avoid being set apart as a particular class. The philosopher John Locke said that the ‘usual struggle and contest... in the decays of wealth and riches, is between the landed man and the merchant, with whom I may here join the monied man’.⁸³ This struggle, however, was generally recognised to have been lost by the landed man. Land and usury became increasingly associated through the mortgage. In the eighteenth century, the association fuelled republican perceptions of collusion between power and wealth, between the landowner and the usurer. From this had spawned a new fiend, which Jonathan Swift described in terms of ‘the business of such [men of estates] as were then in power to cultivate a monied interest’.⁸⁴ The moneyed interest’s object was public credit, or public debt. It signified the nationalisation of usury, and it revived the argument as to whether wealth constituted labour or money.

David Hume, in validating or controverting the causes, effects, or associations of general ideas and impressions in society, regarded the moneyed interest as the interest of individuals who had amassed stocks of money, or stocks of commodities which are convertible to money, to such a degree as to set them apart from other individuals. This development, Hume explained, was natural. ‘It is only requisite,’ wrote Hume, ‘that the property or command of that quantity [of gold and silver], which is in the state, whether great or small, should be collected in particular hands, so as to form considerable sums, or compose a great monied interest.’⁸⁵ These particular hands, however, did not belong to the private usurer who lent at high interest. They belonged to the public banker who

⁸² In a paper on Ireland, he proposed to dispose ‘moneyed men to be rather Merchants than Usurers, rather to trade than purchase’. Wililam Petty, *The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty*, ed. Charles Henry Hull, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), 221.

⁸³ John Locke, ‘Considerations of the lower of Interest, and raising the Value of Money’, in John Locke, *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, Vol. 4 (London: Rivington, 1824), 71.

⁸⁴ Jonathan Swift, *The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen* (London: A. Millar, 1758), 159.

⁸⁵ Hume, ‘Of Interest’, *Essays*, 323.

lent at low interest. ‘This [monied interest] begets a number of lenders,’ he said, ‘and sinks the rate of usury’. What Hume was in fact distinguishing were the two contending views of wealth, that which was in terms of labour and that in terms of money. From this distinction, there followed two views of lending and borrowing, and therefore of the moneyed interest, which was that of the banker and that of the usurer.

The premise in Hume’s argument lay in his extricating the supply of money from its interest rate as two separate ideas. The supply of money obeyed the Quantity Theory of Money: it was, we have seen, proportional to the price of a commodity. ‘The rate of interest,’ on other hand, Hume said, ‘is not derived from the quantity of the precious metals.’⁸⁶ Rather it was determined by the supply and demand of debt. This separation of money’s value from its interest rate was significant, because it refuted the long-held belief that interest rate was dependent on the money supply and the value of money. Adam Smith described how it exposed the arguments of ‘Mr. Locke, Mr. Law, and Mr. Montesquieu, as well as many other writers, [who] seem to have imagined that the increase of the quantity of gold and silver, in consequence of the discovery of the Spanish West Indies, was the real cause of the lowering of the rate of interest through the greater part of Europe.’⁸⁷ This, and the reverse supposition that the scarcity of money caused high interest rates, had long provided the basis for the argument that money (in the form of specie) was wealth and should be protected from leaving its home country.

In explaining why interest rates rose or fell, Hume depicted two situations of the relationship between lenders and borrowers. In one situation, ‘prodigal’ individuals borrowed money to ‘consume at present what should suffice for many years’. In the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 321

⁸⁷ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 385 (Book II, Chapter IV).

other situation, 'industrious' people borrowed money to employ labour in commerce. The 'prodigal', Hume unsympathetically identified as landholders from an agricultural society which was lacking industry and refinement in the arts. Because their 'prodigality and expense make a continual demand for borrowing', so the demand for debt in this case tended to exceed supply. 'In a state,' said Hume, 'where there is nothing but a landed interest, as there is little frugality, the borrowers must be very numerous, and the rate of interest must hold proportion to it.' The problem in this situation was that the lender was invariably the usurer, and the money lent was hoarded treasure. It was not usefully employed, but was squandered 'in idle show and magnificence'. The second borrower, on the other hand, tended to be the man of industry and commerce. But where 'prodigal' landowners in agricultural society could find only 'miserly' lenders to borrow from, 'industrious' individuals could find in commercial society 'frugal' lenders from the 'useful' class of merchants. 'Merchants,' said Hume,

beget industry... and, at the same time, by their frugality they acquire great power over that industry, and collect a large property in the labour and commodities, which they are the chief instruments in producing. There is no other profession, therefore, except merchandize, which can make the monied interest considerable, or, in other words, can encrease industry, and, by also increasing frugality, give a great command of that industry to particular members of the society... Thus, an encrease of commerce, by a necessary consequence, raises a great number of lenders, and by that means produces lowness of interest.⁸⁸

What Hume was delineating were two states of society. Agricultural society was prodigal and indolent. Its landed interest treated money like wealth, and a high interest was charged for it by the usurer. Commercial society, on the other hand, from a refinement of the arts, was industrious and frugal. These qualities established a

⁸⁸ Hume, 'Of Interest', *Essays*, 326

moneyed interest, but because it saw wealth as man's capacity for productive labour and not money, so it charged a low interest. Hume's delineation of these two states of society was developed by Adam Smith into his stadial theory of man's social progress from an agricultural stage to a commercial stage. But there the similarity ended. Smith's agricultural and commercial societies resembled Hume's only in name and not in its landed and moneyed interests. Smith, as Stewart pointed out, was ambivalent as to whether money had intrinsic value and constituted wealth in its own right, or whether money merely represented the exchange value of labour. This ambivalence somewhat undermined the historicism of his four stages and, therefore, the very notion of social progress. In a passage from *Wealth of Nations*, Smith is found conceding that what wealth was did not matter, but rather that it should be put to good use:

Whatever we may imagine the real wealth and revenue of a country to consist in, whether in the value of the annual produce of its land and labour, as plain reason seems to dictate; or in the quantity of the precious metals which circulate within it, as vulgar prejudices suppose; in either view of the matter, every prodigal appears to be a public enemy, and every frugal man a public benefactor.⁸⁹

The source of Smith's ambivalence can be traced to the division of labour that supplied the framework for his market mechanism. As we saw, the principle of divisible labour, in allowing the productive resources of land, labour, and capital to be measured in terms of labour value, provided the equality that enabled these resources to be exchanged. However, it also created a catch-22. On the one hand, land and capital could not be measured without the altercation between labour and utility. Yet, accepting this altercation contradicted the very principle of divisible labour. For Smith, therefore, money possessed intrinsic value as well as was exchangeable for labour value. Hume had considered money as only a medium or 'instrument' of exchange, having 'none of

⁸⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 371 (Book II, Chapter III).

the great wheels of trade’, but representing ‘the oil which renders the motion of the wheels more smooth and easy.’⁹⁰ Smith, however, designated money as also a commodity, ‘a particular branch of the general stock of the society’.⁹¹ It constituted a ‘national’ circulating capital, which passed from owner to owner as ‘the great wheel of circulation’.⁹² And ‘as such capitals are commonly lent out and paid back in money,’ Smith claimed, ‘they constitute what is called the monied interest.’⁹³ Where Hume’s moneyed interest described the interest of the merchant, which was industrious labour, Smith’s moneyed interest was the interest of the financier. Like Petty’s ‘monied man’, it was ‘distinct, not only from the landed [interest], but from the trading and manufacturing interests’. These three interests, it should be apparent, represented Smith’s three factors of production of capital, land, and labour. For Smith, the moneyed interest was thus not the same as for Hume. It identified with the interest of finance capital, where for Hume it was the interest of industry capital.

Devaluation

Minto’s devaluation of Java’s paper money was exceptional because it was carried out as like a recoinage. Instead of withdrawing a quantity of paper from circulation to adjust its real value against its nominal value, Minto chose to stamp a new nominal value on all paper. This decision to re-enumerate paper’s nominal value was rather unusual. For a public measure, it was cumbersome. Yet it hacked off paper’s nominal value by 80%. In the event, the stamped paper depreciated even further to 90% of its original nominal value and eventually needed to be withdrawn entirely. But the stamping was clearly

⁹⁰ Hume, ‘Of Money’, *Essays*, 309.

⁹¹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 310 (Book II, Chapter II).

⁹² Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 314 (Book II, Chapter II).

⁹³ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 382 (Book II, Chapter IV).

aimed at the value of debt which the paper itself enumerated, and thus at the very individuals who had a vested interest in it.

When the creditors of Java got wind of Minto's intention to intervene in its paper money during the invasion, they sent their most senior official, Jacob Andries Van Braam, who was the President of the Council of the Indies and Resident at Souracarta (effectively No. 2 after Daendels), to England. Van Braam submitted a petition to the Earl of Liverpool – who, interestingly, had in 1805 published a bullionist work entitled *Treatise on the Coins of the Realm*. Van Braam appealed for the British government to recognise Java's paper currency and honour the former Franco-Dutch government's commitment to its nominal value. The obligation, Van Braam informed, consisted of two general issues of paper.⁹⁴ The first issue amounted to 6,000,000 Rix Dollars (Paper). Van Braam claimed that, as a result of inflation, the Franco-Dutch government had devalued this amount to 2,500,000 Rix Dollars (Paper) by removing 3,500,000 Rix Dollars (Paper) from circulation. The second issue amounted to 4,000,000 Rix Dollars (Paper). Van Braam thus declared a total of 6,500,000 Rix Dollars (Paper) under obligation. More importantly, he asserted their nominal value to be equivalent to 6,500,000 Rix Dollars (Silver), or 4,875,000 Spanish Dollars (Silver).⁹⁵

Raffles disputed Van Braam's figures. Referring to the Franco-Dutch government's 'general Books', he claimed that there had been no significant removal of the first issue from circulation and that at least 4,500,000 Rix Dollars (Paper) remained from the first issue. Together with 4,000,000 Rix Dollars (Paper) from the second issue, the total amount of paper under obligation was calculated at 8,754,073 Rix Dollars (Paper). Of this amount, Minto had proclaimed to devalue 8,500,000 Rix Dollars

⁹⁴ Van Braam to Liverpool, 22 April 1813, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix WWW, 359-362. Van Braam to Ricketts, 9 June 1812, Calcutta, MSS Eur F148/13.

⁹⁵ These claims later led to 'a tangled controversy over financial claims and counter-claims' during the Anglo-Dutch negotiations in 1820-24. Marks, *First Contest for Singapore*, 2.

(Paper) to an equivalent in paper of 1,700,000 Rix Dollars (Silver), or 1,307,000 Spanish Dollars (Silver). Minto always maintained this figure to be the real value of Java's depreciated paper, and indeed Raffles and Muntinghe argued that the true figure was even half of that, i.e. 850,000 Rix Dollars (Silver). Minto had shrunk Java's total money supply by 80% (taking Raffles's calculated total of 8,500,000 Rix Dollars). But more significantly, he effectively liquidated 80% of Java's public debt.

The underwriters of Java's paper currency, who were the creditors of Java's public debt, were naturally dismayed. But to understand exactly how they stood to lose, the two issues of paper by the Franco-Dutch government need to be properly distinguished. As we saw in chapter two, the first issue proceeded from the hypothecate – i.e. the pledge of land as security for a debt – which government transacted with the Chinese Captains in return for cash advances. That the Captains had regarded their advances as instalments in the purchase of land was immaterial on the part of government. So long as the cash advanced had not transacted the full transfer of land, it constituted a loan. This, unfortunately, was the situation that befell the Captains. Minto deemed the risk which they took on government as 'voluntary', and their advances to be 'voluntary loans'. And because it was government, as the debtor, not the Captains, who were the creditor, which had issued the paper on these loans, so the paper were not bills of credit but debt notes. Van Braam's assertion that the amount issued had been devalued to 2,500,000 Rix Dollars (Silver) looked suspiciously to be an attempt to knock off nearly half the debt owed by the Franco-Dutch government and the public to the Chinese Captains.

The second issue of paper proceeded from the government agency known as the Orphan Chamber.⁹⁶ It referred to the long-established public trust to which the management of the estates of Dutch colonists who had died intestate were entrusted. These estates were leased or mortgaged by the trust,⁹⁷ which also accumulated the rent or interest payable to the heirs (if they existed). On the security of these estates and the funds they generated, Van Braam claimed, the Orphan Chamber issued paper money to finance mortgages for would-be-buyers of government land. Van Braam had hoped to persuade Liverpool to recognise the value of the Orphan paper at the value from when it was first issued, i.e. at par with silver. Naturally, if the Orphan paper was devalued, then loans made out by the Chamber were also devalued to the benefit of the borrower. As the trustee, the Franco-Dutch government was morally culpable for this loss. However, as it turned out, the concerns of Van Braam and other officials who had authorised the issue had more to do with the private interest than the public interest.

According to Raffles, the Orphan paper was never used to finance mortgages. ‘The mortgages which existed on the loans then out remained untouched,’ he said; and yet ‘Government [was] still in receipt of the interest derivable therefrom under the original arrangement.’⁹⁸ Mortgages were not being drawn, or they were contracted to phantom mortgagors.⁹⁹ It followed that ‘a large portion of this [Orphan paper] was lying

⁹⁶ Raffles to Hastings, 25 March 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part V, 1-21.

⁹⁷ ‘One third, of those Estates, are mortgaged to the Orphan Chambers, to the Church, or to other Similar Charitable Institutions’. Abraham Couperus to Leyden, 18 March 1811, MSS Eur F148/2. Couperus was the last Dutch governor of Malacca (1788-95). In 1796 he was brought by the British to India where he seemed to have made friends with Leyden when Leyden arrived in 1804. In 1808 he joined Daendel’s Council of India at Batavia. However, his letter to Leyden in 1811 was signed in Calcutta, and indeed Raffles’s intelligence reports have Couperus being in Bengal during this time.

⁹⁸ Raffles’s ‘Answer to the 13th Head of Enquiry’ on ‘The expediency and propriety of the stoppage of the issues of Paper Money from the Orphan Chamber’, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VI, 152-154.

⁹⁹ Van Braam informed that the mortgaged amount was ‘more than half of the sum advanced and on the collateral Security of two persons of property, and which bears interest at six per cent per anum [sic].’ Van Braam to Ricketts, 9 June 1812, Calcutta, MSS Eur F148/13. That only ‘two persons of property’ had backed a mortgage of more than 2 million Rix Dollars raises alarm bells as to the propriety of the arrangement.

idle in their [Orphan Chamber's] Treasury... and it was this amount that the Government ordered to be transferred to the General Treasury'. At the same time, government also 'caused the original funds of the Orphan Chamber which existed in Silver, to be transferred to the Public Treasury and exchanged for Paper'.¹⁰⁰ Raffles's information suggests that what had transpired was this. The Franco-Dutch government had assigned the Orphan Chamber to issue paper money purportedly to finance purchases of government land. These purchases never drew on their mortgages. Instead, the paper issued for the mortgages were procured by government using the Orphan Chamber's own cash. Subsequently, government disbursed the Orphan paper to the public for other purposes.

'The agency of the Orphan Chamber therefore,' Raffles explained, 'was only the means of introducing an increased quantity of Paper Currency'.¹⁰¹ The Franco-Dutch government simply could not, as was evident in the Probolinggo issue, command the public's faith in the value of paper money which it issued. It therefore used the Orphan Chamber, which possessed 'some degree of respectability to it', to issue paper money instead. For a creditor to issue paper money on cash advanced to government was not in itself unusual – it in fact described the practice of the Bank of England. Had Probolinggo paper been issued by the Chinese Captains and not by government, it might have better maintained its value. The Orphan issue seemed to be the Franco-Dutch government's second attempt at establishing a stable paper currency. Juxtaposing the Orphan issue against the devaluation that, Van Braam claimed, government had intended for Probolinggo paper, it was evident that the Franco-Dutch government had intended to restructure its outstanding debt to the Chinese Captains with new credit from the

¹⁰⁰ Raffles's 'Observations on Mr. van Braam's paper respecting the Currency of Java', 9 April 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix WWW, 362-365.

¹⁰¹ Raffles's 'Answer to the 12th Head of Enquiry' on 'The Policy of the Measures adopted with respect to the Treasury Notes and Lombard Bank', Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VI, 141-150.

Orphan Chamber. Yet such public objectives could never be met, given the arbitrary and fraudulent way in which Orphan paper was issued.

The problem with Orphan paper was that its credit did not hold any better than Probolingo paper. ‘Many might conceive that the Paper actually had a security in the lands mortgaged when it was disbursed,’ Raffles explained, ‘but the slightest examination will prove that it stood as a Currency, when in circulation, exactly on the same footing as the Government [Probolingo] Currency’.¹⁰² Orphan paper depreciated because, Raffles argued, it ‘was actually created by the Orphan Chamber by an order of the Government, for the purpose of its being lent to supply a want of Funds in the Public Treasury, and was transferred without any other pledge than the order itself.’ Therefore, ‘it had no connection with the sacred funds of the institution’.¹⁰³ The result was ‘that paper was first disbursed without any reference to the standard of silver’.¹⁰⁴ And as a result of this non-reference to a metal standard, Orphan paper was not issued to the value of its assets but rather in excess of it.¹⁰⁵ From its over-issue, the paper’s credit thus fell.

But what was really unforgivable about the Orphan issue, was the despotism which its transfer to government had subjected the beneficiaries of the Orphan Chamber. The transfer essentially constituted the purchase by government of the credit initially raised for government by the Chamber. Government thus bought its own debt. But it in turn indebted the beneficiaries, on account of the claim upon the security of their properties and funds which the Orphan paper granted its holder. From ‘their having issued Paper on the authority and by order of the Government,’ Raffles argued,

¹⁰² Ibid., 145.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 145.

¹⁰⁴ Raffles’s ‘Observations on Mr. van Braam’s paper respecting the Currency of Java’, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix WWW, 363.

¹⁰⁵ Raffles’s ‘Answer to the 13th Head of Enquiry’, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VI, 152-154.

the beneficiaries of the Orphan Chamber ‘were consequently Debtors to the Government’.¹⁰⁶ The scheme had been possible only because of the power of attorney which government wielded over the Orphan Chamber. For their betrayal of the public trust, Minto was unsympathetic to the Franco-Dutch officials. Where he had deemed the Probolingo issue as ‘voluntary loans’, Minto regarded the Orphan issue reprehensibly as ‘forced loans’.¹⁰⁷ His Proclamation to devalue the paper currency was thus intended to correct the injustice. Minto’s valuation of 8,500,000 Rix Dollars of Java’s total paper currency at 1,700,000 Rix Dollars, while it proportionately wrote off 3,600,000 Rix Dollars of debt owed by government to the Chinese Captains, also wrote off 3,200,000 Rix Dollars of debt owed to government by the Orphan Chamber. Minto’s Proclamation was seen through by Raffles. ‘I have felt a great anxiety to restore the Orphan Chamber to its ancient footing,’ Raffles had said, ‘and to re-establish its funds on the principles of its original institution.’¹⁰⁸

Apart from the Chinese Captains, therefore, those who stood to lose out from Minto’s devaluation were Van Braam and the other officials who authorized the transfer of Orphan paper. Privileged by their government positions to disburse the Orphan paper into public circulation, Van Braam and other officials subsequently entered into private contracts, which included ‘Loans to the former Government’.¹⁰⁹ ‘Mr. van Braam,’ Raffles revealed, ‘in common with the other Colonists of Java, in possession of Paper Currency at the Period of the conquest, and having demands on individuals in that Currency, were naturally interested in restoring the value to its original standard’. As far as Minto and Raffles were concerned, the depreciated Orphan paper was never Van

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁷ Minto distinguished two classes of public debt: ‘voluntary loans’ from the China Captains, and ‘forced loans’ exacted by government from the Orphan Chamber. Minto’s ‘Draughts’, 24 July 1812, MSS Eur F148/14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Raffles’s ‘Observations on Mr. van Braam’s paper respecting the Currency of Java’, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix WWW, 364.

Braam's to disburse and therefore not his to lose. In a sense, it was the common people's to gain. Hence, the certain satisfaction in Raffles's tone when, arguing against Van Braam's petition to Liverpool, he contended:

Was it not sufficient for a new administration to take upon itself, under these circumstances, the actual value of the debt in the Market, viz. about Sp. Drs. 1,300,000 [or 1,700,000 Rix Dollars Silver], without attaching to itself the incumbrance [sic] of 8,500,000 Rds. and to benefit whom? – in general persons who came into the possession of the Paper at a reduced value'.¹¹⁰

The Memorial of 22 October 1813

Did Minto's devaluation achieve his objectives of eradicating inflation, removing paper money, liquidating public debt, and eliminating the financial-capitalist moneyed interest? A fascinating letter exists which answers the question in its entirety. This letter took the form of a memorial, or petition, to Raffles by what appeared to be representatives of Batavia's Dutch middle class comprising leading merchants, landowning farmers, and senior officials.¹¹¹ Their grievance was the 'want of ready money' or the 'scarcity of Money', in both forms of paper currency and specie, in circulation in the market. The desperation of the memorialists attests to the utter success of Minto's policy in eradicating paper money. Raffles confirmed in March 1814 that 'the amount of 8,500,000 has actually been received into the Treasury'.¹¹² Unfortunately, the policy also eradicated specie. 'Silver coin,' the memorialists complained, 'has also since disappeared out of circulation.'

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 364.

¹¹¹ 'Memorial of the Inhabitants of Batavia', Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix BBB, 286.

¹¹² Raffles's 'Answer to the 12th Head of Enquiry', Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VI, 145.

It may be supposed that the eradication of paper money implied the liquidation of public debt. It is true that Raffles's government was free of the debt previously sustained by the Franco-Dutch government. Where the Chinese Captains were concerned, Raffles appeared to have surrendered the hypothecate by completing the sale of Probolinggo. In February 1812, he decreed that 'the Contract entered into the Administration MARSHALL DAENDELS, bearing date 3d December, 1810, for the sale of the Districts of Probolinggo, be respected'.¹¹³ Presumably some payment of silver was involved, because by the end of April 1812 the value of Probolinggo Paper subsequently rose to '40 to 50 Spanish Dollars, for 100 Dollars Probolinggo Paper'.¹¹⁴ Raffles then proceeded to hold a series of lotteries 'for the Liquidation of the Paper Currency, called Probolinggo Paper'. In this manner not merely was public debt liquidated, the financial moneyed interest's grip over government was also broken.

Yet, the creditors remained busy. The memorialists described how, as a result of the want of money, 'several of the most wealthy Inhabitants are at present threatened with Suits at Law by their Creditors for the adjustment of their outstanding affairs', and 'a considerable number of less wealthy Inhabitants, who are again their Debtors, will be in the same manner sued for the settlement of their accounts.' Public debt may be liquidated, but private debt had clearly burgeoned. What appears to have happened is that as paper was being withdrawn, people were compelled to borrow cash on the security of their possessions to facilitate their transactions of industry and commerce. At the same time, because paper was being withdrawn, specie began to be hoarded. Predictably, those who could afford to lock coin away in chests were also the same

¹¹³ *Proclamations, Regulations, Advertisements, and Orders, printed and published in the island of Java, by the British Government, and under its Authority, Vol. I from September 1811 to September 1813* (Batavia: A. H. Hubbard, 1813), 45. The settlement was previously made by Daendels, and the lottery initiated by him, on 3 December 1810. Van Braam had described that Daendels had already intended to have Probolinggo paper withdrawn, and replaced by Orphan paper. Raffles simply completed the measure, but he appears to have renegotiated the terms with the advantage of a conquering power.

¹¹⁴ Java Govt Gazette, Vol. 1, 23 May 1812, MSS Eur F148/30.

figures who could afford to lend out cash. The outcome was what Hume had described to be the causes of high interest: ‘a great demand for borrowing, little riches to supply that demand, and great profits arising from commerce [i.e. monopoly profits]’, circumstances which he insisted ‘are a clear proof of the small advance of commerce and industry, not of the scarcity of gold and silver.’¹¹⁵

Hume’s ‘small advance of commerce and industry’ referred that indolent and ostentatious society of miserly usurers and prodigal landowners, in which the ‘great wheels of trade’ had halted, and the ‘quickenings of diligence’ and ‘refinement in the arts’ had frozen. Hume had been adamant that this mercantilist state of things was the result of paper money’s issue and its banishing of specie, and not of the scarcity of money. But the memorialists begged to differ. ‘A proof of the real scarcity of Money may be found in the excessive increase of Interests on Loans,’ they wrote, ‘which did not in former times generally amount to more than 6 per cent per annum, while now instances could be mentioned in which 1 per cent per mensem or 12 per cent per annum has recently been offered on Mortgage of Landed Property to the value of six times the amount [offered] – but for which, notwithstanding, ready Money could not be obtained.’

The irony is profound. Hume had impugned the financial moneyed interest and its paper money system for undermining the proportionality of specie on which had depended the diligence of industry, refinement of commerce, and frugality of the industrial moneyed interest. Minto consequently destroyed the financial moneyed interest and its paper money, but instead of prices lowering and specie returning to quicken industry, refine the arts, and freeing the industrial moneyed interest, the opposite was true. In October 1813, the date of the memorial, inflation had crushed

¹¹⁵ Hume, ‘Of Interest’, *Essays*, 322.

what remained of the Rix Dollar paper note to 10% of its original par value in silver, and silver coin ‘disappeared out of circulation’. Industry and commerce, freed from the degenerative hold of financial capitalism, failed to flourish. Instead, the memorialists bemoaned their ‘certain ruin’ and the ‘stagnation of traffic and agriculture which must be the inevitable consequence thereof.’ Even the ‘Chinese population of Batavia and its Environs... who keep up the Trade in Cloths, the Sugar Culture, and the Distillery of Arrack, by their industry and wealth – it is to be feared that unless efficacious measures be taken for their relief, these last remaining branches of the active trade of Batavia will ere long entirely cease.’

The Memorial of 22 October 1813, by the intended beneficiaries of Minto’s devaluation of Java’s paper money, represented a grave indictment of the policy. From an economic standpoint, Minto’s policy was an absolute disaster. The theoretical basis on which Minto had staked his approach was entirely discredited. Indeed, the memorialists proceeded to dispute its validity, if only to persuade Raffles to revert to the former approach of the Franco-Dutch government to issue paper money again. Raffles, as we shall see in the next chapter, did reissue some paper currency but, closely adhering to Minto’s position, of a very minute quantity.¹¹⁶ The memorialists contended that although Raffles ‘may be of opinion that the Credit of the Paper Currency would be affected by an increase of the amount now in circulation... even the new Government Paper Currency, with the exception of the Treasury Notes, is at present, notwithstanding the small amount thereof already issued, at a discount greater than that which was borne by the old Batavia Paper Currency in an equal lapse of time’. Therefore, they claimed,

¹¹⁶ To the amount of 410,000 Rix Dollars Paper assuming par value with Rix Dollars Silver. It represents 6% of Van Braam’s claimed figure of 6.5 million Rix Dollars Paper of bona fide money. Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix AAA, 285.

‘the origin of this discount must be looked for in other concurring circumstances, which have not a regular connection with the quantity in circulation.’

The assertion that inflation was unconnected with the quantity of money in circulation effectively refuted the Humean conception that proportionality of the Quantity Theory of Money, in conditions where there was no excess issue of paper whatsoever, could not lead to inflation. Interestingly, the memorialists invoked the Real Bills Doctrine associated with Adam Smith, whereby money supply should represent the colony’s capitalised annual product. ‘Your Memorialists are respectfully of opinion that the amount of Specie necessary for the circulation of the place must, at all events, be sufficient to represent in general circulation the possessions and outstanding Credit of the Inhabitants,’ they wrote. This representation, they implied, was true of Java’s paper money before Minto’s devaluation. Significantly, Java’s paper money had only depreciated as a result of external shock, or ‘casual circumstances’: on its own it would not depreciate because it had been equivalent to the real assets corresponding to the economy of the island and was, therefore, of true value.

Undoubtedly this amount of Old Batavia Paper Currency was originally the representation of a mass of real possessions and wealth – but... it must be considered that such real property was not equivalent to the intrinsic value of that Paper, when the credit thereof was depreciated, but to the original value of the same, when it was first brought into circulation, and that although by casual circumstances the agio [exchange rate] on this Currency may have risen, and the intrinsic value of the same is consequently diminished, still the real and permanent property, which was originally represented by this Paper, remains in existence.

The most damning criticism, however, was when it was pointed out that whether the proportionality of money to commodities was held to be true, or held to be false, in which case it should represent the real assets of the colony, neither policy had been

sensibly established by Minto and Raffles. ‘The amount of Specie at present in circulation in Batavia and its Environs,’ they charged, ‘is neither proportioned to the possessions and wealth, nor to the extensive transactions carried on by the Inhabitants of this place’, and ‘is not sufficient to represent the real wealth and outstanding Credit of the inhabitants’. There was literally no discerning policy being put in place at all concerning money. Far from introducing a ‘money economy’, Minto and Raffles appeared to have returned Java to a barter economy. But economic rationality and social affluence were never their true object. Politically, Minto’s policy was a triumph. Hume had said there were two ways by which public debt would perish: by the ‘natural death’ of voluntary bankruptcy, or the ‘violent death’ from conquest.¹¹⁷ Minto’s devaluation was a combination of both, the natural death of public debt and the violent death of the moneyed interest.

¹¹⁷ Hume, ‘Of Public Credit’, *Essays*, 372 & 374.

Chapter Five

Raffles and the Agrarian Law

This chapter resumes from chapter four our scrutiny of the ideas behind the particular policy adopted by Minto and Raffles in Java. Here I attempt to relate Raffles's sale of government land between 4 November 1812 and 16 February 1813, not only to his two land rents, the New Revenue System of 15 October 1813 and the Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814, but also to Minto's devaluation of Java's Paper Currency and his own withdrawal of that money. In doing so I will touch on the accumulated morass of past discussions by historians about the two land rents – far more as compared to the land sales and devaluation – that has led us farther away from a coherent understanding of these five enactments and what the British were really doing in Java.

In this chapter, I shall revisit the historical argument that has held over the matter of the two land rents: that they had played out a Dutch debate from the period of the Batavian Republic (1795-1806) between neo-mercantilists and progressives. I reassess the document at the centre of this argument, Muntinghe's Letter of 27 May 1812, but in the light of two other documents that have been thus neglected, Minto's Instructions of 18 October 1811, and Minto's Letter of 22 November 1813. We shall see that, far from being the agent of contested Dutch ideas, Raffles had put into practice a coherent policy built on British ideas, and insofar as there existed a contest over these ideas, it had involved an eighteenth century British debate between he and Minto to which the Dutch were merely auxiliaries or spectators.

Minto's Letter

It may be supposed that Minto's destruction of the financial-capitalist moneyed interest in Java, by eliminating the public debt implicit in Java's paper money, would level the playing field not merely for an industrial-capitalist moneyed interest to fill the vacuum, but also for a post-feudal landed interest to emerge. As we saw in chapter three, Minto's interest in restoring the conception of property in real estate had defined his term as Governor-General of Bengal. Certainly, where Java was concerned, he admitted that his personal preferences lay with a landed interest. However, he did not expect that this was possible in the short term. He recognised that his devaluation of Java's paper money had crippled the capital market and the conditions for the privatisation of land were not there. In his final letter to Raffles, dated 22 November 1813, Minto described these conditions in retrospect of Raffles's sales of government land and in anticipation of Gillespie's charges of corruption involving those sales. 'Although my views,' Minto began,

as you know lead to the transfer of Public Territory to the management of individual industry and the creation of a genuine landed interest, with all its immediate benefits, & ameliorating tendencies in the room of the deplorable system of vassalage, & dependence, under which Land is now held in Java, yet I have felt that this change could not be brought about suddenly, partly from the very nature of all, extensive Changes, partly from the Circumstances of the Colony which contains at present neither Capital nor Capitalists enough to afford a comparison between the Value in the Market, of Land & Money in either fair or at all approaching to fair.¹

The importance of Minto's letter to the history of the British occupation of Java is inestimable. It ties into one coherent context the two policies that had been implemented upon the invasion, which were Minto's devaluation of paper money on 11

¹ Minto to Raffles, 22 November 1813, MSS Eur F148/34.

September 1811 and Raffles's sale of government land between 4 November 1812 and 16 February 1813, as well as the two Land Rents subsequently implemented by Raffles (at a time when Minto had already been recalled, but was no less aware of developments), that were the New Revenue System on 15 October 1813 and the Amended Revenue System on 11 February 1814.² Clearly, at a theoretical or ideological level, Raffles's sale of government land did not sit well with Minto. Indeed, it also alarmed Minto for political reasons. In the same letter, Minto cautioned Raffles for having instituted, through the sales, a permanent holding of land among a new class of landowners. 'I touch upon these points the more willingly for the purpose of conveying to you a caution on the Subject,' he wrote, 'founded on our Knowledge of the Sentiments which appear to be the most prevalent at home, but which you may not be apprized of.'

There is a great division of Opinion on the question of permanent Settlements, and the extension of that System to the newly acquired provinces under the Presidency of Bengal, which has in a great degree been carried into effect during my Administration, has met with serious opposition, and which what is more essential, obstruction from the Authoritative interposition of the Court of Directors. The introduction of that System has been gradual in those Provinces, but yet more sudden than is approved at home. But Java is in a state infinitely less favourable to perpetual alienations, & you may depend upon such measures, unsupported by particular exigency, being disapproved, and indeed disavowed & Annulled by the Authorities in England.³

² Minto's letter was included by Sophia Raffles in her *Memoir* (1830: 196) but with more than half its contents removed. John Bastin referred to Minto's letter in his *Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System* (1954: 86), but only in a footnote. The reason is his source, Sophia Raffles's *Memoir*. Of Minto's letter, Bastin merely said that, 'Minto at first approved the sales... probably because he thought it was an attempt to follow his instructions. But he was surprised to learn of the extensive sales later, and politely told Raffles so.' It appears that Minto's letter made its only historical appearances in these two works.

³ Minto's Letter must be read in light of the 1812 Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, and of the 1814 Committee on the Petitions relating to the Corn Laws. The first committee ended the Company's monopoly in India, while the second protected Britain's agricultural economy. The question at the heart of both committees was the association between political power and the value of property in land, which, analogous to the later question on the devolution of trade, saw the oligarchical system of

Minto believed that Raffles had alienated land in Java into permanent holdings to an 'extensive' degree. Minto's concern was not unwarranted, but we must distinguish that what he meant by 'extensive' related to both the permanence of the titles and the size of the landholdings. Raffles's land lots averaged 170 acres in Batavia. In East Java, they averaged 660 acres but included uncultivated or waste land.⁴ Generally, Raffles's lot sizes could not rival the thousands of hectares of permanent (or *Zamindari*) freeholds in Bengal, but certainly they dwarfed the individual (or *Ryotwari*) leaseholds which were being implemented in Madras and had ranged from 2 to 20 acres. Compared to properties in Britain at the time, Raffles's lots generally fell into the moderate category between 200 and 1,500 acres. He himself stated that they were not 'Small Estates'.⁵ The main issue, however, which Minto took exception with Raffles was the permanent title, or perpetuity, granted to the lots sold.

Now, Minto was an earnest advocate of Cornwallis's Permanent (or *Zamindari*) Settlement and did not in principle reject perpetual alienations of landholdings. However, as he warned Raffles, he was wary as to the sudden decision by the Court of Directors, occurring in 1811 under the new Chair of Jacob Bosanquet, to reverse the policy of the Permanent Settlement.⁶ Minto's advice to Raffles was to adopt a progressive policy that proceeded gradually from small-sized and short-term *Ryotwari*-

large and permanent (i.e. perpetual) landholdings in India and Britain being challenged by the redistribution of small and short land leases.

⁴ In the public auctions at the Batavian and Preanger Regencies, for example, there were six lots offered in Krawang which appear to have ranged from 20 to 439 acres and averaged 173 acres. (John Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission* (S-Gravenhage: VKI, Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 82. N.b. I have assumed the square roods were stated as thousandths, otherwise the six lots alienated at Krawang, which today is a regency of 400,000 acres, would total 1,034,742 acres, or 3% of Java). In the public auction at Sourabaya, thirteen lots were offered which ranged in size from 111 to 1,794 acres, and averaged 662 acres. (MSS Eur F148/35/170.) In Britain at the time, small farms ranged from 150 to 200 acres, and the largest from 1,500 to 2,000 acres.

⁵ 'Minute by the Lieutenant Governor', 18 February 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents concerning his administration as Lieutenant Governor of Java, addressed to the Chief Government of India to refute the charges brought against him by Major-General Gillespie* (privately published in Batavia, 1814), Part IX, Appendix G, 207.

⁶ Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1908), 181-183.

type leases to longer-term leases and then to permanent titles. ‘I should have inclined, therefore,’ he wrote, ‘to small and partial sales of land, if alienation in perpetuity should have been thought advisable at all, proportioned in some degree to the disposable quantity of Money in the hands of Individuals. But the general course to be recommended I conceive to be short leases, followed by longer, and ultimately by perpetuities.’

In advising Raffles to precede his land sales with *Ryotwari*-type leases, Minto was describing a schedule and model of land distribution. In this model, landownership had to wait. Only a provisional leasing of land was feasible at the time. The reason was not so much the small quantity of money, both paper and specie, left in circulation for the public to afford to buy land. The Quantity Theory of Money, which held that the price of goods was proportionally equal to the quantity of money in circulation, meant that a smaller quantity of money could still summon the power to purchase the same goods at lower prices. As Minto said, the sale of land should be ‘proportioned’ to the ‘disposable quantity of Money’. The reason as to why Minto objected to landownership was rather because the inadequate circulation and transaction of money could not ensure its proportionality to goods. ‘The Circumstances of the Colony,’ we heard him say, ‘contains at present neither Capital nor Capitalists enough to afford a comparison between the Value in the Market, of Land & Money in either fair or at all approaching to fair.’ The real intrinsic value of land, therefore, could never at the time be realised in a sale.

Now, it may be argued that Minto’s concern with fair value betrayed an apprehension of what Gillespie was at the time accusing of Raffles over the land sales, which was that ‘these Lands, [were] alienated in perpetuity for an inadequate sum of

Spanish Dollars’,⁷ even ‘below what in some instances was tendered.’⁸ Selling land for less than their value was hardly an offence, until it was revealed that Raffles was also involved in the purchase, in which case public property was potentially manipulated to serve the private interest. In the civic humanist tradition, this incurred the scorn and odium of corruption. The instrument, Gillespie claimed, was through the paper money. Raffles’s public notification on 4 November 1812 of the intended sale of land also accepted paper money as payment for land purchases. But because it had then depreciated further to double what Minto had devalued it in September 1811 (i.e. to 13 Rix Dollars Paper for 1 Spanish Dollar Silver), payments of paper money at Minto’s official peg of 6½ Rix Dollars Paper for 1 Spanish Dollar effectively cut the real cost of a purchase by half. ‘The Paper in the market continued to depreciate,’ Gillespie claimed, ‘and such alone as were aware of the intended sale of Lands, and the consequent demand that would be occasioned for Paper, had an interest in accumulating it.’⁹

Of insider trading, Raffles seemed to be culpable. He had co-purchased an estate at Tjanjore for 30,500 Spanish Dollars, but paid in paper money. In real terms, this amounted to 400,000 Rix Dollars Paper. Nominally, however, only 200,000 Rix Dollars was required, and this had a real value of 15,250 Spanish Dollars. Raffles’s purchase still far outbid the competition who offered 7,000 Spanish Dollars, but Gillespie charged that this was only possible because Raffles was able to supply the required quantity of paper in advance. Raffles denied ‘buying up Paper at its depreciated rate’.¹⁰

⁷ Gillespie to George Nugent, Commander in Chief at Bengal, 13 February 1813, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part III, 46.

⁸ Gillespie’s ‘Memorandum on the Sale of Government Lands’, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part III, 47-49.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰ Raffles’s ‘Answer to the 3rd Head of Enquiry’ on ‘Whether the Lieutenant Governor and Mr. McQuoid and another Commissioner became joint Owners of any of the Coffee Plantations, and if so, to what extent’, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VI, 97-103.

He insisted that ‘the Paper Currency required for my personal purchase was procured from Messrs. Timmerman Thyssen and Co. fourteen days after the sale had taken place.’ This, and Timmerman’s peculiar statement which denied that Raffles had instructed any money transfers beforehand, hardly dispelled suggestions of insider trading.¹¹

It is significant, however, that Minto did not question the propriety of Raffles’s financial speculation. ‘As the purchase of effects offered to public Sale by Government, is not in itself a Crime in the Members of that Govt.,’ Minto said, ‘the allegation of that fact by your adversaries must probably have been accompanied by the additional imputations of the expected advantage from your proposed purchases having entered into your motives for adopting the public measure of a Sale of land, or some private benefit in your purchases having been derived from the mode & conditions of the Sale.’¹² He continued encouragingly, ‘I need not assure you of my entire and unqualified conviction of the perfect purity both of your motives & conduct in this as in every other action of your Public Life.’

Instead, Minto’s concern over the land sales was based on a theoretical predicament. It was, ostensibly, the consequence of a continued plunge of Java’s paper money to double its depreciated value in September 1811, which led Raffles to withdraw the currency entirely. ‘The depreciated state of the Batavia Paper Currency about the month of October 1812,’ Muntinghe affirmed, ‘was the first and only cause of the measure adopted to withdraw the same from circulation by a competent sale of Lands.’¹³ However, the proportionality relation between the quantity of money and

¹¹ J. S. Timmerman Thyssen & Co, 10 March 1814, appended in William Robinson to Charles Assey, 10 March 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VII, Supplement K, 219.

¹² Minto to Raffles, 22 November 1813, MSS Eur F148/34.

¹³ ‘Letter from Mr. Muntinghe in defence of his conduct’, 20 March 1815, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VIII, 33.

prices of goods, which had been upset by paper, had not been restored and could not be restored until all paper was withdrawn. But to do so, paper needed to be exchanged for land, and yet the exchange could not be properly conducted owing to the depreciation (or disproportionality). Furthermore, as we saw in the previous chapter, new paper money could not be resupplied in any extent before all old paper was withdrawn and specie had readjusted itself as the circulating medium. Minto cannot have missed the irony. The cause of depreciation could not be removed due to the effect. Edmund Burke's prophecy of the 'transmutation of paper into land, and land into paper' must have rung in his ears. These catch-22 dilemmas presented loopholes for manipulation and speculation, and Raffles acknowledged them to be unavoidable. 'The Sale of Lands, connected as it is with the redemption of the Paper Currency,' he remarked, inevitably involved 'collateral financial arrangements arising from that redemption.'¹⁴

In reality, there was no other option for the withdrawal of paper money than to sell land. What specie Minto had introduced into circulation had, as Gillespie stated, 'since disappeared from the market'. It had been, to use Hume's expressions, banished by paper, or 'locked up in chests'. All other public property in the form of commodities which had not been sabotaged in the invasion, or appropriated by the military and private individuals, but were secured by Minto, were not sufficient to be exchanged for the quantity of paper to be redeemed or were simply unwanted. Hence, we find Minto, though deeply troubled by the land sales, compelled to approve it. If paper was not withdrawn entirely, the measure of devaluation would end in failure. In the following passage, we see Minto trying as hard to convince himself of the necessity of the land sales as to justify it on the part of Raffles. 'I begin, therefore, by assenting without

¹⁴ Raffles to Hastings, 25 March 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal Documents*, 1.

reservation, to the absolute & exigent necessity, which was the motive, & is the justification of the proceeding,' Minto told Raffles.

The Revenues, and all the demands of Govt. were paid in paper, which could not be reissued. There was, therefore, a virtual suspension of Receipt at the Public Treasury. To avoid this total loss, the paper must have been issued again at the discount of the day, which would have discredited the Currency still more & would have involved an enormous and constantly recurring loss. This State of things left you no option but to withdraw the paper, to make room for some better medium of Circulation; and the Operation of the evil was too rapid to admit of delay.

'The only fund for the redemption of the paper,' Minto continued, 'which could be found, appears very clearly to have been precisely that to which you had recourse; the Sale of Public property, & it must be deemed fortunate that this resource existed and proved to be immediately avoidable.' The word 'avoidable' is original in Minto's letter. It may be a scribe's mistake,¹⁵ but if not it betrays Minto's personal doubt and unhappiness toward the situation which had presented itself. Nevertheless, he proceeded to match the 'expedient' to the 'necessity':

I consider, therefore, your measure to have been an able expedient, in a case of great emergency. At the same time I conceive the Necessity of a prompt remedy to form the essential & indeed, the indispensable ground of the resolution that was taken; for I should not, I confess, have thought an extensive alienation of the Public domains, advisable in itself under the particular Circumstances of the Colony at the time.¹⁶

¹⁵ Sophia Raffles construed it as 'available', thus redacting the text to imply Minto's complete approval of Raffles's measure. Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 196.

¹⁶ Minto to Raffles, 22 November 1813, MSS Eur F148/34.

The Problem of Two Land Rents

Minto's concern over the land sales, however, did not trouble Raffles. Raffles did not see any structural problem to exist with his auction of government land. On the other hand, in heeding Minto's warning about Bosanquet's crackdown on the Permanent Settlement, Raffles immediately drew attention to his land rent settlement which he declared had constituted a *ryotwari* scheme. Two days after his Amended Revenue System was proclaimed, he replied to Minto that 'the Fifth Report of the House of Commons fell into my hands: and... I found that I had exactly hit on a settlement which, while it was peculiarly applicable to Java, was considered the most advantageous one for India generally. The principles of the *ryotwar* settlement had suggested themselves,' he averred, 'without my knowing that they had been adopted elsewhere'.¹⁷

Raffles's claim of originality, to a celebrated development in Indian history that is popularly credited to the Scottish official of Madras, Sir Thomas Munro, actually has much going for it. Raffles's defining document which laid out the arguments for both the New Revenue System and the Amended Revenue System, his *Substance of a Minute*, was entirely focused on how to give the 'actual cultivator' in Java a 'proprietary right in the soil' in order to protect 'his right to the full produce and profit of his industry', which, secured, was expected to 'advance the wealth and happiness of its numerous population.' In principle, the *Substance* echoed Munro's focus on the individual cultivator, or *Ryot*, where 'every ryot, who is likewise a cultivating proprietor of the land which he holds, is permitted to hold that land, at a fixed assessment, as long

¹⁷ Raffles to Minto, 13 February 1814, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 224. Raffles was referring to the *Fifth Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company* (London: 1812).

as he pleases'.¹⁸ It also paraphrased a statement in the Fifth Report that 'every ryot is a farmer, who tills the land for which he pays rent', who as a class 'are considered as a sort of proprietors... attached in the strongest manner to the soil... and... they ought to be recognized as enjoying a right (they and their posterity) to their tenures.'¹⁹ In fact, Raffles's two land rents seemed uncannily to fulfil the Fifth Report's conclusion for 'a system of laws, the prominent object of which is, to protect the weak from oppression, and to secure to every individual the fruits of his industry.'²⁰

It is evident, that how Raffles could have arrived at a decisive measure that converged in time and substance with public enquiries and proposals concurrently conducted in Madras and London, must carry a profoundly important question in the historical narrative. Historians, however, have generally withheld from crediting Raffles with originality. The reason is due to another question concerning the purported inconsistency between the Amended Revenue System, and the New Revenue System, which preceded it by four months, i.e. the problem of Raffles's two land rents. John Bastin framed it thus: why was it, 'that between October 15 [1813] when the proclamation ordering village [*Mahalwari*] settlements was promulgated, and February 11, 1814, when the land rent Minute was penned, Raffles' ideas on the question of the revenue settlements changed considerably'?²¹ There had been many answers offered. Among the Dutch historians, it was long argued that 'Raffles introduced the detailed system because he had heard that the *Ryotwari* system was in favour with the home authorities.' H.R.C. Wright contended that Raffles changed to the *ryotwari* system in

¹⁸ Munro's testimony, 14 April 1813, 'Minutes of Evidence before the Commons on the East India Company's Affairs', *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time, Volume XXV, 11 March 1813 to 10 May 1813* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), 829.

¹⁹ *The Fifth Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, Volume I* (Madras: J. Higginbotham, 1866), 688.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

²¹ John Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission* (S-Gravenhage: VKI, Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 146.

mid-1812 before the land rents,²² but ‘remained purposely evasive on the question of detailed [*ryotwari*] settlement, until Minto, the supporter of the *Zamindari* system, left India.’²³ Bastin defended the Dutch position in response to Wright, treating Raffles’s *ryotwari* claim as demonstrating ‘that Raffles heard of the introduction of the *Ryotwari* system in British India sometime after he had made his plans for village settlements’.²⁴

The real problem of Raffles’s two land rents, I find, lies with the historical attention given to their differences as two modes of land tenure, so much so as to demarcate two strongly-contrasting approaches to policy in Raffles. Thus, a supposedly conservative approach which preserved traditional and communal functions was regarded to have been revised with a progressive approach which introduced legalist and individualistic institutions. The contrast, however, has been exaggerated. It originates with a comment from Gijsbert Karel Van Hogendorp, younger brother of Dirk Van Hogendorp and Vice-President of the Council of State of the Netherlands during the Anglo-Dutch conference in 1814 which decided Java’s restitution, to the Stadtholder and soon-to-be King William I. ‘At that time little was known [by the Dutch] of the changes which Raffles had made, but in October G. K. van Hogendorp, seeing an account of them in an English paper, announced triumphantly to William that “the system [of Dirk] Van Hogendorp” had been introduced.’²⁵ Dutch historians consequently claimed that Raffles’s Amended Revenue System had emulated the ‘ryotwari’ proposal made by Dirk van Hogendorp in response to the land reform question raised by a Batavian Republic committee in 1802.

²² H.R.C. Wright, ‘Muntinghe’s Advice to Raffles on the Land Question in Java,’ *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 108 (1952), 220-47.

²³ Bastin, *Raffles’ Ideas*, 147. Bastin claimed at the outset that his work on Raffles’s ideas was ‘suggested by Dr H.R.C. Wright’s article “Muntinghe’s Advice to Raffles on the Land Question in Java”.’

²⁴ Bastin, *Raffles’ Ideas*, 148.

²⁵ Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, 84.

This Dutch connection left long-lasting effects in the historiography. Firstly, it made Raffles's New Revenue System troublingly unaccountable in relation to his Amended Revenue System. Secondly, it created an industry for historians to try to account for the change. Bastin, for example, located an explanation in Raffles's method of determining the condition and reality of native land customs by surveying every option and evidence that presented itself. Raffles's researches represent an interesting event in itself, which I shall discuss later. However, what Bastin saw Raffles to have concluded was an ideological conflict between the *ryotwari* scheme and *mahalwari* scheme, which, in making his choice, Raffles dithered, backtracked, and 'amended' his initial scheme. Curiously, this ideological conflict also recalled the ideological conflict concluded previously by Dirk Van Hogendorp, who unlike Raffles was resolute in his choice. For this reason, Bastin has intimated the indirect influence of Van Hogendorp's ideas, conveyed through Herman Muntinghe and Colin Mackenzie, on Raffles's backtracking.

The difficulty with this construction is that it localised Raffles's two land rents and made them autonomous of the intellectual context of Minto's invasion and occupation of Java. One historical event in particular was neglected. This was Minto's instructions to Raffles on 18 October 1811,²⁶ prior to his leaving Java, in which he recommended a 'radical reform' of the existing structures of feudal landholding and forced labour, by giving to the individual cultivator a security of property through which he can secure an independent livelihood. As we saw from Edmund Burke, this involved introducing the concept of private landownership. The owner's interest in his land's improvement would encourage private industry, quicken – as we saw with David

²⁶ Minto to Board of Control, 3 August 1813, 'Recording the Instructions left by me with the Lieutt Govr at Batavia – dated 18th Octr 1811', 'No.3 Collection of the Revenue', MSS Eur F148/15. There were 6 sets of instructions, but were not recorded by Minto at the time. He recorded them in his Minute of 3 August 1813 for the benefit of the Board of Control, after being notified in June 1813 of his being recalled and superseded by the Marquis of Hastings.

Hume – the refinement in the arts and commerce, and lead to general prosperity in the public interest. Thus, Minto taught Raffles that ‘The principle of encouraging industry in the Cultivation and improvement of land by creating an interest in the effects and fruits of that industry can be effected in Java only by a fundamental change in the whole System of Landed property and tenure.’ As mentioned above, this maxim was reiterated and elaborated by Raffles in his *Substance*, and indeed in all of his letters and writings including the *History of Java* no less.²⁷ If we are to attribute its source to somebody, then Minto was the most direct connection. However, the concept’s prevalence within circles in Madras and London indicated a school of thought rather than the beliefs of one person, and Minto’s intellectual debt to Hume and Burke traces the concept back to a discourse. I shall return to this.

Minto’s ‘radical reform’ required a revolutionary undertaking in three stages. The first was to return the command over labour to the cultivator himself, through ‘an abolition of the Contingent’ on produce, of the ‘actual culture of the land on account of Government’, and of the ‘Monopoly of the Sale’. The result was ‘a perfect freedom in the Cultivation and Sale of Rice,’ which Minto expected ‘will soon render it unnecessary for Government to provide immense Stores of Grain for the food of the people, whom a free Market will supply without the intervention or providence of Authority.’ Minto argued that the existing ‘System of Contingents did not originate in a mere solicitude for the Supply of the people, but was a measure at once of finance and control, to enable Government to derive a revenue from a high price imposed on the consumer, and to Keep the whole body of the people dependent on its pleasure for subsistence.’ Once the system of contingents had been abolished, land should be freed from the feudal tenure and, Minto said, ‘Government should throw the Coffee lands into

²⁷ See section on ‘Tenure of Lands’, Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java, Volume I* (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), Chapter III, 135-162.

the hands of private industry.’ This implied the private holding of real property by the individual cultivator. However, as he would repeat two years later, Minto advised that the privatisation of land

cannot yet be Accomplished by Sales in perpetuity, subject to quit rents, for the indemnification of Govt. There is not private capital enough at present for such an operation; but it may be invited from without, & I hope will accumulate within, at not distant period. Leases for moderate periods appear to me the best way of commencing this process, but even this should in the present state of society & of industry be attempted only gradually. Let one or two lots of those lands be let for any number of Years thought advisable, say ten, on the terms and conditions to be hereafter approved of.

The third stage was to terminate the ‘late System... of Farming the Revenues of every description’ which was dominated by the Chinese, and to institute in its place a mode of ‘Collection by the Officers of Government’. Now, ‘a sudden and general transition from this plan’, Minto admitted, ‘is not practicable’. Generally, to effect all the above changes ‘must probably be a slow process,’ he noted, and ‘will require much enquiry and reflexion, as well as a cautious & gradual execution.’ Nevertheless, Minto remarked that ‘the utmost efforts should be made to establish the [revenue collection] system with the least practicable delay’, and instructed Raffles that ‘I should hope that the new mode of Collection may become in a great degree general by the beginning of the ensuing half year.’ It is not clear what Minto meant exactly by ‘the ensuing half year’, but if we consider that these instructions were given to Raffles on 18 October 1811, then the ‘beginning of the ensuing half year’ would refer at the very latest to the second half of 1812. The import of this timetable is tremendous. The whole point in a new mode of collecting the revenues – which was to be limited to the duties on imports and exports – being established, was that it presupposed the new mode of private

industry and the new mode of private landholding being established. Minto clearly allowed no latitude to his conception of ‘gradual’.

Minto’s Radical Reform

Interestingly, Minto’s instructions to Raffles of 18 October 1811 were quoted almost fully by Bastin in his 1954 study on Raffles’s land rents. Bastin, however, did not consider them relevant. Instead, he singled out a remark which Minto added on 3 August 1813, that his written instructions to Raffles were ‘intended only as a sketch which [Raffles’s] knowledge of my general views and his own research, discernment & prudence afforded the assurance of his filling up as perfectly and as quickly as zeal, guided by sound discretion, could enable him to perform so great and delicate a task.’ Bastin interpreted this remark to justify that ‘Minto’s instructions on the revenue system were not precise, nor indeed were they meant to be.’

This interpretation has been made out of context. What Bastin did not quote was Minto’s preceding sentence: ‘Under these heads of Enquiry I procured a considerable body of information, written and oral, which it was my first intention to digest & present to the Board, in illustration and support of the concise and summary Suggestions with which, under the title of instructions, it was sufficient on my departure to furnish the Lieut Governor.’ Minto’s written instructions, therefore, only appeared sketchy because they were quickly written down, firstly, as a summary for the Board of Control (or Secret Committee)²⁸ and, secondly, as a reference for Raffles: ‘for the

²⁸ It is interesting that Minto tended to address his reports to the Board of Control rather than the Secret Committee after learning in June 1813 that the Court of Directors had ordered his recall as well as of George Barlow and George Nugent the Commander-in-Chief. The decision was controversial and the result of two separate political struggles. One involved the chief of the Royal Household, the Marquis of Hastings, who, before being selected to replace Minto, had been manoeuvring to head a new British government following the assassination of Spencer Percival. The other involved the factions in the Court of Directors, which was referred to in chapter three. In 1811, Jacob Bosanquet and the Shipping/Banking interest regained their influence in the Court and disapproved of Minto’s policies in India and Java. On 17

guidance of the Java Government after my departure on the several points to which they relate.’ The impression is given that Minto had in fact already discussed his instructions with Raffles verbally and in depth, but put off a detailed minute because there was information lacking. Indeed, in explaining to the Board of Control why ‘these instructions were not annexed’ previously, Minto said it was ‘principally because, having communicated, in personal conferences, to the Lieutt Governour, my thoughts and views on the whole of these extensive & in part intricate Affairs as fully as the imperfect state of my information permitted, I was unable to convey my Sentiments & wishes in a very concise and summary form, and yet,’ – here Minto was succinct – ‘as addressed to him, with sufficient precision & clearness for every practical purpose.’

A picture thus begins to emerge of Minto having given prior instructions in person to Raffles to undertake concurrently two things: firstly, to generally implement Minto’s ‘radical reform’ of Java’s political society by the second half of 1812, and secondly to complete the enquiries which Minto had initiated that would provide the documentary justification for the ‘radical reform’. Bastin had focused on Raffles’s pursuance of these enquiries as detached from Minto’s precise and clear instructions, and found his policy to have changed. But if we start at Minto’s instructions from 18 October 1811 and end with Raffles’s Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814 (the second ‘land rent’), there was (if we excepted the land sales) no particular change at all but rather a general continuity. Minto actually described this continuity, when he reported his instructions to the Board of Control:

December 1812, when their rival Charles Grant was away, they convened an extraordinary meeting wherein they sacked Minto. See *The Dissents, or Protests, of Edward Parry, William Astell, George Smith, John Bebb, and Charles Grant against the Resolutions of the Court, by which the Right Honorable Earl Minto was recalled from the Government-General of India; Lieut.-General Sir George Nugent, Bart. From the Command-in-Chief of the Land Forces; and Sir George Barlow, Bart. & K. B. from the Government of Madras* (London: John Murray, 1813).

It will appear to the Board from my Minute of the [date left blank] that in the instructions now referred to, I rather Aimed at pointing the views and deliberations of the Java Government to the future and gradual attainment of certain improvements in the Administration of the Country which I thought desirable, & for that purpose recommended diligent research & enquiry, than proposed to enjoin the immediate adoption of particular measures by positive Orders. I was myself, therefore, desirous of profiting by those enquiries, before I should enlarge further on the questions to which they related. The Java Government has prosecuted the investigations which were recommended, with the greatest diligence, & has been ably & zealously Assisted by many Gentlemen both Dutch and English, to whom the Charge of these laborious researches was more particularly committed. The information thus furnished has in great part been already communicated to this Government & has enabled the Government of Java to make considerable progress towards the accomplishment of several essential objects suggested in my instructions.

The problem of Raffles's two land rents had in fact been unnecessary. If Raffles's Amended Revenue System of 11 February 1814 is read carefully, it will be found that its first clause notified 'the object of Government to separate, in a great measure, the Revenue from the Judicial branches of the internal administration', and much of its remaining ninety-one clauses dealt with the details of centralised revenue collection. There was nothing unusual about the separation of government functions and responsibilities: as we saw in chapter three, it was implemented by Cornwallis in India in 1786. Minto had intended to extend this civil structure to Java. The instructions on revenue collection (involving the instructions discussed above) which he left for Raffles comprised one of six sets of instructions. Minto also left instructions on 'The Administration of Justice, & the Police'.²⁹ The Amended Revenue System was thus a new law code for a new government department. The principal change which it stipulated in relation to the New Revenue System was to transfer the judicial duties of the Heads of Villages to the Officer of Division. That was a new post, the precursor of

²⁹ Minto to Board of Control, 3 August 1813, MSS Eur F148/15.

the colonial District Officer, who was to oversee the ‘Judicial Regulation, lately enacted’ and under the charge of the Residents. The Heads of Villages were left the task of collecting the revenues and answering to the Resident’s counterpart in the new revenue department, the Collector, as well as being ‘in every way subordinate’ to the Officers of Division.

This drastic removal of the Heads of Villages’ political powers was understood to have developed from Raffles’s enquiries into native land customs. Much of the reports from these enquiries had conflated the question of proprietary rights traditionally possessed by the chiefs with the question of the individual’s right to elect the chiefs, such that, Bastin said, ‘the right of election seemed to [Raffles] to imply certain individual rights to the soil’.³⁰ The notion of proprietary rights for the individual challenged assumptions of proprietary rights for the chiefs, and this was believed to have persuaded Raffles to change from recognising the latter to recognising the former. Historians have conceived this change in terms of a reassignment of proprietary rights through the two land rents. The New Revenue System, which invested those rights in the Heads of Villages, became identified historically as a *Mahalwari* land rent, whereas the Amended Revenue System reassigned those rights to the individual cultivator and became identified as a *Ryotwari* land rent. These categories, however, are unsound. While it is true that Raffles used the basis of individual rights to eschew the rights of the chief, he did not necessarily transfer the rights of the chief to the individual. The Amended Revenue System removed the Heads of Villages’ proprietary rights, but it did not specify any proprietary rights or lease arrangements with regard to the individual cultivator. And the reason is because the proprietary rights and lease arrangements of

³⁰ Bastin, *Raffles’ Ideas*, 156. Bastin noted that the ‘various reports cited by Raffles in the Substance... all deal with the question of the right of election.’ (p157). Particularly significant was a report by David Hopkins which stated that ‘the people east of Surabaya... had the right of electing every year their *Petinggis*, from which it was evident that “a certain right of soil actually belongs to the present occupier, either as he is the immediate clearer of lands, or the heir or successor of that person”.’ (p155).

the individual cultivator were already set out in the first ‘land rent’, that is, the New Revenue System of 15 October 1813. The second head of that civil code proclaimed that:

Government lands will be let generally to the Heads of Villages, who... will re-let these lands to the Cultivators, under certain restrictions, at such a rate as shall not be found oppressive; and all Tenants under Government will be protected in their just rights, so long as they shall continue to perform their correspondent engagements faithfully: for it is intended to promote extensive industry and consequent improvement, by giving the people an interest in the soil, and by instituting amongst them an acknowledged claim to the possession of the lands, that they may be thus induced to labour for their own profit and advantage.³¹

It thus appears that the New Revenue System had already stipulated the proprietary rights of the individual and the individual lease within a framework that also included the proprietary rights of the chiefs and the village-level lease. What the Amended Revenue System simply did was to rescind the proprietary rights of the chiefs and turned them into tax collectors.³² Where the individual cultivator was concerned, there was in fact no fundamental change, but rather a continuity. Raffles thus did not, as some historians have believed, institute first a *Mahalwari* land rent, then changed his mind and replaced that with a *Ryotwari* land rent.³³ Instead, a general land rent, the New Revenue System, was instituted which effected Minto’s second stage of throwing the ‘coffee lands into the hands of private industry’. It was then refined by a new revenue code, the Amended Revenue System, which effected Minto’s third stage of instituting

³¹ ‘Proclamation; declaring the Principles of the Intended Change of System’, Raffles, *Substance of a Minute*, 174.

³² This was also observed by H.R.C. Wright. ‘In order to change over to a ryotwari system... it was only necessary to give the village headman a commission as tax-gatherer instead of a lease as landholder. The change was important only in so far as it encouraged greater interference by the district officer. Such village settlements, therefore, were naturally to be regarded as preparatory to a detailed settlement.’ Wright, ‘Muntinghe’s Advice’, 238.

³³ For example, as Bastin asks: ‘Why, only four months after he had given orders for the village settlement of the land rent did [Raffles] revoke them, and order instead the introduction of the individual, or *Ryotwari*, system of revenue collection?’ Bastin, *Raffles’s Ideas*, 154.

‘Collection by the Officers of Government’. Step by step, piece by piece, Minto’s ‘radical reform’ was being constructed. As Raffles later explained,

In the first settlement, leases were only granted for a year, or at the utmost three years, and were given to intermediate renters; but in the more detailed settlement of 1814, after sufficient information had been collected on the state of the country, government determined to act directly with the individual cultivator, and to lay the foundation of a permanent system.³⁴

This development also depicted the two-pronged application of theory and practice demanded by Minto in carrying out his instructions: to ‘require much enquiry and reflexion, as well as a cautious & gradual execution.’ Indeed, Raffles’s *Substance* completed the enquiries began by Minto and supplied the documentary justification Minto had deemed so necessary for his ‘radical reform’ but was not able to provide to his superiors back in October 1811. Raffles’s two land rents were indeed executed consequent to the information received at two consecutive phases. These were not information that contradicted each other, or which put the land rents in opposition, but rather, they indicated the progress of research toward a highly-desirable and anticipated conclusion. The theory of some historians, which made out the second phase of information to have contradicted the first, and Raffles to have become alarmed on having acted upon false information in the first land rent, and thus rushing to correct the mistake with the second land rent, is unsound. When Minto wrote to the Board of Control on 3 August 1813, he was plainly more than satisfied that his instructions to Raffles from 18 October 1811 had been (or were being) fulfilled:

The Mass of matter which has been since furnished on all those and many other points by the labours of Lieutenant Colonel McKenzie and the Commissions in which he presided, as well as by the individual learning and diligence of Mr. Muntinghue & other ingenious & meritorious Officers of the late Government

³⁴ Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java, Volume 1* (London: Black, Parbury, and Allen, 1817), 158.

And above all measures already matured and at this moment in full operation, in execution of the suggested plans, entirely supersede the defective enquiries and hasty deliberations of my short Administration in Java... It is highly Satisfactory to conclude with reminding the Board, that there is scarcely an Article of the annexed instructions in compliance with which the most judicious measures, approaching in several instances to their full accomplishment, have not been adopted, with a promptitude & Ability, which do honour, at once to the wisdom and the energy of the Lieutenant Governour of Java and his Council.

Muntinghe's Letter

Seen from the intellectual context of Minto's invasion and occupation of Java, in which he sought to break the influence of the island's financial moneyed interest and radically reform its political society, Raffles's two land rents represented two progressive outcomes on the trajectory of a single coherent policy that began with Minto. They were, however, over a year late in coming. Minto had expected the land rent and revenue collection to be operational by the second half of 1812. 'Why, in fact,' as Bastin had asked of Raffles, 'did he delay so long?'

The answer is revealed by the one objection which Minto harboured toward Raffles's implementation of his 'radical reform'. This, which we encountered above, referred to Raffles's sale of government land as the means to withdraw the Batavian Paper Currency. It took place between November 1812 and February 1813 (the 'ensuing half year' from October 1811). As we saw, Minto had on 18 October 1811 already instructed Raffles at the outset that the alienation of land 'cannot yet be Accomplished by Sales in perpetuity'. Rather, 'leases for moderate periods appear to me the best way of commencing this process, but even this should... be attempted only gradually.' Minto has sadly been misunderstood in the history. Because he had championed the Permanent Settlement in India, so it was assumed, for example by Wright, that he had

rejected the *ryotwari* settlement in Java. The opposite cannot be more true. Minto's instructions to Raffles clearly ordered him to 'let one or two lots of those lands be let for any number of Years thought advisable, say ten': this limited tenure did not describe a freehold, but a leasehold. When in 22 November 1813 Minto repeated again that 'I should have inclined, therefore, to small and partial sales of land,' it was very clear that what he had in mind was something akin the *ryotwari* settlement. As I showed, this inclination was not owing to his personal preference, but to his devaluation of the paper currency from which a proportionality between money and prices had not yet established.

Minto's ten-year leases and 'small and partial sales' were provided by Raffles's two land rents. Yet the land rents only came roughly a year *after* Raffles had sold perpetuities. This sequence of enactments reversed the order of Minto's instruction to start with 'short leases, followed by longer, and ultimately by perpetuities.' Raffles had gone and dished out permanent titles from the start. His proceedings also led to an outcome that diverged from Minto's picture of the direct government-subject relationship that government as the allodial landowner would initially establish with the native cultivator. Raffles instead established a potential relation between landlords and tenant farmers in which government was uninvolved. He effectively created the 'landed interest' that Minto had been so certain could not be done at that stage. This nuanced deviation by Raffles from Minto's instructions represented the real change in the historical narrative, and the actual change that demands the historian's interest.³⁵ It hinged not upon the two land rents but the land sales. As mentioned, Raffles officially

³⁵ This was the position taken by H.R.C. Wright, but for different convoluted reasons. Wright suggested that Raffles had been a proponent of the *zamindari* system until he was converted to the *ryotwari* system by Muntinghe's letter of 27 May 1812, which Wright claimed had 'displayed ideas derived not only from Minto, but also from Dirk Van Hogendorp.' Nonetheless, and perhaps to account for the anachronism between the first land rent in October 1813 and Muntinghe's letter of May 1812, Wright then claimed that Raffles did not change his policies to reflect a *ryotwari* system until mid-1813. Wright, 'Muntinghe's Advice'.

claimed that his land sales had supplied the means for resolving the deteriorating value of the paper currency – this I shall return to later. But if we look at all three land enactments in terms of land tenure, a heterogeneous scheme emerges where we have a kind of permanent settlement effected by the land sales, as well as the village and individual settlements incorporated in the land rents. The question is asked whether this outcome was not accidental but deliberate, and if so why?

One important factor affecting our historical understanding of what was going on lay with a crucial letter which Muntinghe wrote to Raffles on 27 May 1812.³⁶ It centred upon the problem, then troubling the administration, as to how the old feudal system of contingents and forced deliveries may be abolished, and a new system of cultivation introduced, without undermining the existing output of the island's productions. This was particularly relevant 'with regard to the districts set apart for the cultivation of coffee'. Minto's order that 'Government should throw the Coffee lands into the hands of private industry' by assigning ten-year leases directly to the native cultivator, Muntinghe argued, 'seems to meet with a great obstacle, on account of the mode of cultivation.' The reason he gave was that

The Javanese have a decided aversion of the planting of coffee, and the abandoning those plantations to Javanese wou'd [sic] be their [plantations'] certain ruin. They have however a considerable intrinsic value, prov'd by their having been for several years almost the only resource of this Island. There is consequently no other alternative left, than either to continue the monopoly or to sell the coffee-plantations in full property to Europeans.

Muntinghe's proposition should be seen in the context of the dispute which dominated the Commission appointed by the Batavian Republic in 1802 to, in the words of Colin Mackenzie, the first British official to learn of these previous developments,

³⁶ Muntinghe to Raffles, 27 May 1812, MSS Eur F148/31.

‘discuss, settle & arrange a Plan for the better Administration of India & the Company’s Commerce.’³⁷ It was under this Batavian Commission that the ideas of Dirk Van Hogendorp had figured so prominently, as to have been consequently adopted by historians for the framework for Java’s nineteenth century colonial narrative, including the events of Raffles’s administration. Van Hogendorp had, as Bastin described, ‘wanted the Javanese “feudal system” abolished, the lands surveyed and classified according to fertility, and then parcelled out to the Javanese in full property.’³⁸ It was the ‘striking similarity between Van Hogendorp’s ideas and those of Raffles,’ which led Bastin to claim an ideological connection through Muntinghe and Mackenzie.

Where Muntinghe’s letter was concerned, nonetheless, it did not align with the views of Van Hogendorp. It is true that Muntinghe described the ‘introduction of private property or at least the possession of land on certain leases’ and the ‘increasing industry of the cultivator animated by a more permanent right of possession and by a free disposition of the remaining part of [his] produce’, but the possession of real property was strictly discriminated between the European and Javanese. What Muntinghe in fact proposed had instead evoked the views of Van Hogendorp’s conservative opponent in the Commission, Sebastiaan C. Nederburgh. Bastin also observed this, and Robert Van Niel has stated that Muntinghe ‘stood, I feel quite certain, closer to Nederburgh than to Van Hogendorp in an ideological sense.’³⁹ Nederburgh’s approach had been to resume, but also to police, the ‘reliance upon Javanese institutions for the collection of products by means of contingents (taxation in produce) and forced deliveries (forced sales at fixed prices) for specified products such as coffee, pepper, and spices, and continuation of Javanese social institutions of

³⁷ Mackenzie to Minto, MSS Eur F148/47.

³⁸ Bastin, *Raffles’s Ideas*, 13.

³⁹ Robert Van Niel, ‘Dutch Views and Uses of British Policy in India around 1800’, in *India and Indonesia during the Ancien Regime*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 28.

hierarchical authority and privilege.⁴⁰ Nederburgh's recommendations had in fact informed the Batavian Committee's report and, apart from some exceptions where Van Hogendorp's ideas were later implemented by Daendels, they had generally described the state of Java when the invasion took place. Muntinghe's letter was more or less a restatement of Nederburgh's position. What Muntinghe did was simply to repackage Nederburgh's 'Javanese institutions for the collection of products' in terms of indentured labour as the essential complement to private property. As we heard, land was to be sold to Europeans, but

the question arises again about the mode of cultivation. Europeans of whatever class they may be seem unfit for the labor of tilling the ground in an Indian climate... But allowing the unfitness of Europeans of any description to cultivate the ground in an Indian climate, the consequence just mention'd may easily be avoided by continuing under a system of private property the same mode of cultivation now adopted by govt. [viz] to assign a certain number of families or villages to the cultivation of a certain number of coffee-shrubs or rather to a certain extent of those plantations, proper to become a European property or estate and to assign their wages either on the quantity of coffee they might gather or on the daily labour they might perform.

Muntinghe's letter was referred to by both Wright and Bastin to have been a major influence on Raffles's land rents, in particular as the conduit of Van Hogendorp's ideas – thereby reflecting in turn the British experiences in Bengal that Van Hogendorp claimed had informed his proposals for Java – which they argued had persuaded Raffles to adopt the *Ryotwari* system.⁴¹ Now, unless Van Hogendorp's settlement for Java had granted full proprietorship of real estate to the European inhabitants and had indentured labour from the native inhabitants without the security of a lease in return, I find that the

⁴⁰ Van Niel, 'Dutch Views', 18.

⁴¹ Bastin, *Raffles's Ideas*, 51-55. Van Niel points out the obvious that Van Hogendorp's 'notion of landownership for the Javanese peasant had nothing in common with the *zamindari* settlement proposals being applied by Cornwallis.' Van Niel, 'Dutch Views', 25.

similarity between Muntinghe's and Van Hogendorp's ideas has been misconceived. Bastin did not cite Muntinghe's segregation of the resources of land and labour, and his categorisation of landholdings as a strictly European privilege and labour as an inescapable Javanese burden. Here was a discriminatory structure that anticipated the future mode of colonial control in Java's Cultivation System,⁴² and perhaps it was indicative of an intent among the Dutch to preserve their former mercantile authority over Java in the face of British reform. 'Thus,' Muntinghe boldly proclaimed, 'the whole of the native establishment and administration, might be preserved under the introduction of a system of free trade and free cultivation'. What he meant, of course, was free trade and free cultivation for the European. For the Javanese, however, there was no real change.

Muntinghe's proto-apartheid scheme made a mockery of the concepts of the division of labour, private property, individual industry, free trade, and the like. Audaciously, he presented his conception of proprietorship as an enlightened innovation which disproved the 'capital argument against the introduction of private property of land, that it's [sic] necessary consequence wou'd be the introduction of a West-Indian Slavery repugnant to every feeling of humanity'. He then contended that only when the commodities produced from the European farms had reached a critical volume and could be circulated by money, then government may terminate the contingent deliveries by Javanese labour, whereupon 'a new prospect may be open'd for private industry and commerce' among the Javanese.⁴³ That, of course, lay indefinitely in the unforeseeable

⁴² 'In many respects, Nederburgh reads like a preview of things to come under Johannes van den Bosch', the founder of the Cultivation System. Van Niel, 'Dutch Views', 25.

⁴³ 'After the introduction of private property or at least the possession of land on certain leases shall have made any considerable progress, and when by the prerogatives of a free trade the circulation of money and produce will be encreas'd, it is naturally to be expected, that a large proportion of the rent due to govt. on the leases granted, will be paid in cash instead of in produce. And then probably the period will be near, that all the remainder of the contingencies and contributions levied in kind, as far as they are not wanted for the immediate use of govt. may be disposed of by public auction at stated periods; and that

future, but Muntinghe's casuistry seems to have kept his historical reputation intact. It is true, that Muntinghe's views fall within the context of a time when the feudal system was being abolished. Nonetheless, even within that context, it should be noted that the theory of giving the cultivator a security in the soil so as to create a personal interest in cultivating his industry, combined both resources of land and labour within the person of the cultivator, and not divided them between the powerful and the weak, European and native, rich and poor. There is a very big difference between Muntinghe's proposal and the schemes envisioned by Minto and the proponents of the *ryotwari* system in India, let alone by Van Hogendorp.⁴⁴

A Forced Opinion

In the event, Raffles adopted Muntinghe's scheme of private proprietorship when he sold perpetuities to largely European buyers. But Muntinghe's input ended there. His scheme of indentured labour never saw the light of day (at least not until 1830). Raffles's subsequent land rents instead provided for the native cultivator's security and welfare by bestowing on him proprietary rights to the soil. Historians have generally taken Muntinghe's influence to have extended to the land rents, which they saw to be the fruit of his transmission of Van Hogendorp's ideas, but that is mistaken. Muntinghe's letter had clearly awarded private proprietorship to the European and not the native, and this award referred to the land sales and not the land rents. His influence

thus a new prospect may be open'd for private industry and commerce'. Muntinghe to Raffles, 27 May 1812, MSS Eur F148/31.

⁴⁴ It explains why Muntinghe did not mention Van Hogendorp's defining document, the *Bericht van den Tegenwoordigen Toestand der Bataafsche Bezittingen in Oost-Indië* (Report on the Present State of the Batavian Possessions in the East Indies, 1799) to Raffles until August 1815. See Wright, 'Muntinghe's Advice', 237. From the political point of view, Muntinghe was closer to Nederburgh than Van Hogendorp, and the contradiction which this circumstance gave to the theory that Muntinghe's letter had transmitted Van Hogendorp's ideas to Raffles has led some historians to devise an unconvincing subnarrative of personal enmity, wherein Muntinghe had transmitted Van Hogendorp's ideas indirectly. For example, see Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas*, 150-153. The straightforward answer as to why Muntinghe did not mention Van Hogendorp to Raffles before August 1815 is because Van Hogendorp was simply not relevant to their discussions at the time.

– which, we shall see, was not so much an influence than a pretext – stopped at the land sales. Where the land rents were concerned, Muntinghe had no part. As mentioned, his letter recommended that the Javanese communities continue to be regulated by native custom under the native chiefs. Through the authority of the chiefs, Muntinghe had expected to contract the labour of common Javanese. This treatment of the Javanese was nothing like Raffles’s land rents at all, but rather very much like the old feudal system. For Muntinghe, serf labour remained in all but name. His account of welfare merely consisted of stating that ‘for the inhabitants of those villages & to prevent their oppression some previous regulations shou’d be required, which might easily be drawn out, and which shou’d be consider’d as conditional of the sale [of the coffee plantations].’

Muntinghe, therefore, had nothing to do with Raffles’s empowerment of the cultivator at all. In fact, he did not anticipate the radical extent of the land rents. Bastin described how he instead became ‘troubled during 1813 by Raffles’ plans for suddenly removing the Regents from effective control over their districts, and in his Minute of July 28, had attempted to restrain Raffles’ enthusiasm.’⁴⁵ Just before Raffles announced the New Revenue System, Muntinghe resigned, apparently ‘desirous’, as Raffles told Minto, ‘of residing on his Estate in order to administer it in person’.⁴⁶ Muntinghe did not approve of the imminent land rents. Definitely, as he later grumbled, he had not counted on being ‘prohibited from resorting to feudal service and forced deliveries’ under the New Revenue System, which had obliged him instead as the landlord ‘to provide for the native Chiefs in the same manner as they were provided for heretofore; and bound to deliver to Government every article of produce, in which at any time a

⁴⁵ Bastin, *Raffles’ Ideas*, 154.

⁴⁶ Raffles to Minto, 18 October 1813, MSS Eur F148/35.

monopoly was established'.⁴⁷ Muntinghe's grievances did not end there. By the Amended Revenue System, he had to lease his new properties to the cultivator in order to secure the latter's labour. The total lack of profitability that resulted from this development was rather too much for him to bear:

With regard now to the private proprietor, it may be observed, that according to the conditions of sale, he has a right to raise his Revenue on the produce of the Lands, and from the rent of Houses – but that from the state of society, and from the utter want of money among the lower classes of Inhabitants, three Spanish Dollars being in general accounted a plentiful allowance for a man and his family for a whole year, he is utterly prevented from raising a single farthing on the rent of their habitations.

Raffles nonetheless found it convenient to credit Muntinghe for both the land sales and the land rents, thus sowing the seed of the misunderstanding that would plague the historian. Both Wright and Bastin have highlighted Raffles's minute of 11 February 1814, the same date as his Amended Revenue System, which 'paid tribute to Muntinghe as his link with all that was liberal in the views of the former administration: "it was from a confidence in his opinion, and a reliance on his unerring judgment, that I first conceived it practicable to work the change which has been wrought".'⁴⁸ Yet Muntinghe's response, as we saw, was hardly appreciative. Definitely, it was not one which a person purported to be the source of Raffles's ideas would give. Raffles's compliment, therefore, was not an earnest recognition of Muntinghe's contribution but a cynical imputation of some sort. Muntinghe's letter, rather than having influenced Raffles, had in fact been of great utility to Raffles and an indispensable asset in his communications to Minto. Dated 27 May 1812 at Batavia, it reached Raffles at Semarang, where he had gone to meet with Colin Mackenzie for 'what was to be the

⁴⁷ 'Letter from Mr. Muntinghe in defence of his conduct', 20 March 1815, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VIII, 37.

⁴⁸ Wright, 'Muntinghe's Advice', 236.

final meeting of the [Mackenzie Land Tenure] Commission' on the state of real property in Java by which the question of land reform was to be decided.⁴⁹ On receiving it, Raffles instantly wrote to Minto on 2 June 1812 that:

I have at last forced from Mr Muntinghe an opinion on the subject in writing and that your Lordship may at once judge both of the ability and disposition of this Gentlemen [sic] in effecting your Views. I have the honor to enclose his Letter to me on the subject. Mr Muntinghe has from the beginning been decidedly bent on the adoption of the measures suggested by your Lordship, and I conceive his present Paper may be considered as embracing in a few Words almost all the Arguments for and against the System.⁵⁰

Again on 3 July 1812, after having consulted the members of the Mackenzie Commission, Raffles subtly stated to Minto that he would be proceeding with the land sales on the basis of Muntinghe's letter: 'Your Lordship will already have received the ideas of Mr Muntinghe on this interesting subject, and as our late Success at Djocjo Carta, has enabled us to do in fact what we please with the Country, I think it would be unpardonable in me to neglect so fine an opportunity of commencing our plans of improvement.'⁵¹ Muntinghe certainly saw his plan commenced: at the auction at Batavia he purchased for himself several lots of coffee estates. But once the lands were sold, he saw Raffles drastically depart from his plans and implement the land rents. Muntinghe's letter, which had called for perpetuities without further ado, thus appears

⁴⁹ Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas*, 56. Raffles arrived at Semarang sometime between 29 May and 1 June 1812. The members were Mackenzie and three Dutchmen: F. J. Rothenbühler, J. Knops, P. H. van Lawick van Pabst.

⁵⁰ Raffles to Minto, 2 June 1812, MSS Eur F148/31. Minto had placed the highest credit on Muntinghe's opinions. As he told Raffles upon returning to Calcutta: 'I have hitherto refrained from stating either to my Colleagues here, or to the Court of Directors, the general notions I had conceived concerning improvements in the Administration of justice, & in the tenure & regulation of landed property, which are touched upon in the notes I left with you, & which have been a little more developed in our personal conferences in Java. I have expected a great deal of interesting information in these Subjects from Mr. Muntingue, particularly a description of the present judicial Establishments, Civil and Criminal, and of Police, at Batavia, as well as in the Country; with a history of a suit, Civil, & Criminal, from the first institution of it to Judgment. I still hope Mr. Muntingue will perform this promise.' Minto to Raffles, 26 February 1812, MSS Eur F148/34. Raffles arrived at Semarang on 1 June 1812.

⁵¹ Raffles to Minto, 3 July 1812, MSS Eur F148/31.

to have been opportunely exploited by Raffles and for one purpose: to circumvent Minto's orders not to sell perpetuities at the first off before the land rents. The turn of events plainly upset Muntinghe. Raffles had played him like a fiddle.

At this point, it is important that we recognise what Raffles's land sales and land rents had actually achieved. The land rents, which were never part of Muntinghe's plan, fulfilled Minto's instructions for short leases. On the other hand, the land sales, which were part of Muntinghe's plan, were discouraged by Minto. Raffles had therefore implemented Minto's instructions but calculatedly with one modification: when he used the basis of Muntinghe's letter to sell perpetuities. To return to the question I asked above, whether the heterogeneous scheme that emerged from Raffles's land sales and land rents – in which a permanent settlement, village settlement, and individual settlement all coexisted in principle – was deliberate, the answer therefore is yes. Muntinghe's disapproval of Raffles's land rents and Minto's disapproval of his land sales reveal a context wherein Raffles had manoeuvred in pursuit of a goal which deviated from Minto's goal and departed entirely from Muntinghe's goal. What Raffles had conceived, I will come to. But the particular context of his land rents and land sales should put away the hoary suggestion that they had formed a continuity with the ideas and debates of the Batavian Commission of 1802.

To be sure, the Franco-Dutch debates and ideas had no genuine connection to events in India to speak of. This was the view of Robert Van Niel. 'British policies in Bengal and India did have an influence on events in Java', he wrote, but as 'a direct consequence of the British conquest of Java in 1811 and had almost no connection with' the 'ideas of the Commission of 1802-1803' or the 'differing opinions of Van

Hogendorp and Nederburgh'.⁵² In fact, Van Hogendorp's well-known confusion between the *zamindari* estates in Bengal with *ryotwari* leases have led historians to query if he held any vision of society at all that could be accurately compared to the British reformist experience in India. Certainly, Nederburgh's indirect rule of the Javanese through neo-feudal forms which he qualified as native custom had nothing to do with the ideas of the Company's 'legislators and governors' in India. Muntinghe's contracting of labour from the 128 villages of 22,195 inhabitants that came with his combined estates in Krawang, for example, evoked the mercantilist monopoly over labour which the British 'legislators and governors' wanted so zealously to break. Indeed, as Van Niel observed:

If we stand still for a moment and look at the arguments and statements being made by both Van Hogendorp and Nederburgh about policies and conditions in Bengal and Java, we are struck first by how poorly informed both of them seem to have been, and second by how little either of these men based their arguments on theoretical and philosophical concepts which form such a strong foundation of English views on these matters.

Van Niel's observation is especially pertinent in cracking the second historical puzzle of the Muntinghe connection: that is, the anecdotal story of how, in August 1815, Muntinghe finally gave Raffles a copy of Van Hogendorp's famous *Report of 1799*.⁵³ This was Van Hogendorp's defining document. It detailed his vision of a Javanese state liberalised under the social transformation wrought by the French Revolution: the colonial equivalent in the East Indies of what a revolutionary Haiti had represented in the West Indies. Van Hogendorp's proposals had showed a general similarity of ideas with Raffles's second land rent, and because Raffles went on to

⁵² Van Niel, 'Dutch Views', 26.

⁵³ See n.

acknowledge this similarity in his *History of Java*,⁵⁴ some historians have since assumed that Muntinghe produced the *Report* in commendation of Raffles's fulfilment of Van Hogendorp's ideas. The problem, of course, was why Muntinghe, if he had as they claimed transmitted those ideas, had oddly never shared the *Report* with Raffles before the land rents, but only a year and a half later. The answer was because there was in fact no transmission of ideas from the *Report*. Muntinghe probably produced the *Report* in criticism rather than commendation, by reflecting on Raffles's land rents as the kind of Jacobin excess that was characteristic of Van Hogendorp.

What we are dealing with, therefore, were two separate discourses. In dealing with the question as to how to abolish the feudal system and what to replace it with, the Dutch came from a different origin as for the British. Muntinghe had approached what Raffles and Minto were saying about the question in terms of the Dutch debate that developed between Van Hogendorp and Nederburgh. But Raffles and Minto approached the question in terms of a British and British Indian discourse. If they referred to the Dutch debate at all, it was, as with Raffles, to exploit its advantages, or to placate Dutch opinion, and even to arrest Dutch resentment. For in this manner, Raffles's acknowledging Muntinghe's comparison of him with Van Hogendorp may have been intended to reflect Muntinghe's own culpability in the matter. Raffles's constant attribution of policy to Muntinghe,⁵⁵ and Muntinghe's personal enrichment from this policy, was sufficient to frustrate any public complaint he might make against Raffles.⁵⁶ When Gillespie charged Raffles in December 1813, Muntinghe was obliged

⁵⁴ Stamford Raffles, *History of Java*, 269-274.

⁵⁵ Sophia Raffles went so far as to state that 'in the introduction of the land-rental, Mr. Muntinghe took a distinguished part, and his intimate acquaintance with the native character and institutions rendered his assistance and co-operation of great value.' Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 229.

⁵⁶ In June 1818, Raffles clashed with Muntinghe over their rival claims to Palembang – Raffles as Resident of Bencoolen, and Muntinghe as the envoy of the Commissioners-General of the Netherlands. Muntinghe had deposed the ruler for feudal savagery, which angered Raffles because the ruler was his client. When Raffles wrote to Muntinghe of his 'utmost astonishment and surprise' at the latter's

by Raffles to prepare a letter ‘explaining my conduct’ in reply to ‘all the charges and insinuations which the Major General R. R. Gillespie has thought proper to cast over the general measures of your administration, with regard to the late Sales of Land, and the Paper Currency of this Island.’⁵⁷

The Genuine Landed Interest

Minto’s instructions for Raffles to begin with short leases were, as we know, a means to an end: perpetuities. However, they visualised a more dynamic scenario than a simple transition from *ryotwari*-type leases to *zamindari* holdings. At any time in the future, Minto’s leases would instantiate in a variety of sizes and tenures, all of which aspired in the long term to become permanent holdings, or perpetuities. The original goal of settling a general perpetuity in real property was in fact shared by all reformist ‘legislators and governors’ in the Company in India at the turn of the nineteenth century, i.e. figures such as Cornwallis, Shore, Munro, Bentinck, Minto. They had not initially contested the three property models that colonial history has categorised as the *ryotwari* system in Madras, the *zamindari* system in Bengal, and the *mahalwari* system in the Ceded Provinces. Rather, perpetuity had defined the cause of land reform. Cornwallis, for example, believed that only ‘a *permanent* settlement, which alone, in my judgment, can make the country flourish, and secure happiness to the body of

appearance, Muntinghe returned a somewhat cynical reply that revealed his resentment of their former relations: ‘But how could it be the fate of these humane principles, to be stopped in their course by a friend to humanity, by excellence? how could the patron of these principles rise up in opposition to the accomplishment of his own system, and the lieut.-governor of Fort Marlborough oppose, what it was, and ever will be, the glory of the late lieut.-governor of Java to have first proclaimed? - I am sensible, hon. Sir, you would want here to put a stop to my argument; you would remind me that it is on a right by contract that you found your claims, and, pointing to the final clause of the treaty you allude to, propose your system, that the Sultan of Palembang was an independant prince, under the protection of the British government, where former rights were to be left untouched, even should humanity suffer by it.’ ‘Protest of Sir S. Raffles against the Proceedings of the Dutch in the Malayan Archipelago’, in *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1819* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, Joy, 1820), 216-233.

⁵⁷ ‘Letter from Mr. Muntinghe in defence of his conduct’, 20 March 1815, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VIII, 25-40.

inhabitants'.⁵⁸ The historian of India, Romesh Dutt, explained at the height of empire that:

If language has any meaning, then it is clear that the Ryotwari settlements which Munro had already made, and which he desired to introduce in other parts of Madras, were on the condition that every Ryot would hold his land *for ever without any additional assessment*, except for new lands reclaimed. If words have any definite significance, then it is clear that *there was no difference with respect to permanency* between Cornwallis's *Zemindari* settlement and Munro's Ryotwari settlement⁵⁹

How that permanency or perpetuity was to be arrived at, now that was the point from which the great debate over land sizes and tenures proceeded. At issue was not whether Munro, Bentinck, Cornwallis, or Minto had favoured the large landholding or the small lease, but which arrangement was appropriate to the local condition of the land and the current state of the society, laws, governance, and other institutions. To these considerations, there was not one mode of reasoning. The appearances of the *ryotwari* settlement in Madras, *zamindari* settlement in Bengal, and *mahalwari* settlement in the Ceded Provinces, each represented, for better or worse, the different practices of different theories. The 'permanency' of Cornwallis's *zamindari* settlement, for example, was criticised by James Mill as having 'no existence; that the plan which he had established for giving permanency to the property of the Zemindars, had rendered it less permanent, than under any former system; had in fact destroyed it.'⁶⁰

The same goal of permanency of property in Java was evident in Minto's instructions to Raffles: 'Government should throw the Coffee lands into the hands of

⁵⁸ *Fifth Report*, 591.

⁵⁹ Romesh Dutt, *Economic History*, 139-140.

⁶⁰ James Mill, *The History of British India, Volume 3* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), 295.

private industry’, but ‘this cannot yet be Accomplished by Sales in perpetuity’.⁶¹ The considerations to this end were accounted under Minto’s ‘heads of Enquiry’ when he was in Java, in which he ‘procured a considerable body of information, written and oral,’ and, after he had left Java, the ‘mass of matter which has been since furnished on all those and many other points by the labours of Lieutenant Colonel McKenzie and the Commissions in which he presided’. From this information, Minto believed that ‘leases for moderate periods appear to me the best way of commencing this process, but even this should in the present state of society & of industry be attempted only gradually.’

In principle, the outcome that would have developed from Minto’s instructions would not be structurally different to what actually resulted from Raffles’s carrying out of those instructions. Minto had anticipated in the long term an agricultural society of freemen: tenant farmers, husbandmen, yeomen, and landlords – by no means what the Dutch had visualised. Raffles conceived a similar structure: only, in spite of the ‘present state of society & of industry’, he jump-started the whole scheme into being. For this reason, though both he and Minto recognised a similar construction of agricultural society, what they had each conceived for a landed interest, or the character of ownership on which was founded agricultural society, were not the same. The difference between their ideas is slight and imperceptible, but the consequence is disproportionately substantial and conspicuous. It revolved around the question of capital in Minto’s instructions from October 1811, when he remarked that permanent titles could not yet be awarded because ‘there is not private capital enough at present for such an operation; but it may be invited from without, & I hope will accumulate within, at not distant period.’⁶²

⁶¹ Minto to Board of Control, 3 August 1813, ‘Recording the Instructions left by me with the Lieutt Govr at Batavia – dated 18th Octr 1811’, ‘No.3 Collection of the Revenue’, MSS Eur F148/15.

⁶² Ibid.

Minto's reference to capital may not at first seem striking beyond the proportionality relation of money mentioned earlier. Even the second occasion that he referred to capital, in his letter of 22 November 1813, draws no special significance. 'This change could not be brought about suddenly,' we saw him write to Raffles, 'partly from the Circumstances of the Colony which contains at present neither Capital nor Capitalists enough to afford a comparison between the Value in the Market, of Land & Money in either fair or at all approaching to fair.' Minto's conception of 'capital' was obviously not the financial capital of paper debt and securities (which he had sought to eradicate), but the industrial capital of commerce and the refined arts (which he sought to cultivate). Minto described this capital, for instance, when the expedition fleet came ashore at Penang in 1811:

One of the favourite sights is a flour-mill and baking establishment invented and executed by a Chinese. There is nothing very curious or difficult in the machinery; but the establishment is on a great scale, and owes its success not only to the ingenuity, but to the capital and to the very liberal spirit of enterprise of the owner;— to crown all, the bread is preferred by the navy to anything they had even in England.⁶³

Because there was no capital, there was no proportionality of money, and therefore there could be no proper exchange between money and land. Evidently, Minto's 'landed interest' was intimately linked to the growth of commerce in agriculture. The maturing of his short leases into perpetuities presupposed increasing productivity, surpluses, and exchange, which translated into wages and rents, and led to capital intensity and investment. The commercialisation of agriculture went hand in hand with its development, as labour and property markets facilitated the accumulation and amalgamating of landholdings (also known as 'engrossing') and the improvement

⁶³ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India: Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1807 to 1814*, ed. Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880), 258.

of the land. From this commercial agricultural development, there optimally emerged a proprietor class which approached the *zamindari* level of landowners, and a tenant class which worked the *zamindari* lands. Cornwallis, to whose land settlements in Ireland and India Minto had deferred, had argued that ‘in a country where the landlord has a permanent property in the soil, it will be worth his while to encourage his tenants, who hold his farm in lease, to improve that property.’⁶⁴

Here was a patrician society built on the partnership of self-interests and the division of labour. Without the landlord’s freehold of real estate, there could be no enclosure of land to end the inefficient ‘open-field system with its communal regulations of crop rotation and cattle grazing’.⁶⁵ In extending a security of property to the tenant farmer, the landlord effectively outsourced the efficient tillage of the land and assured its improvement. To this specialisation of functions, the market and capital were crucial. As Hume said, the ‘great wheels of trade’, oiled by money, brought money and commodities to ‘meet’ and ‘affect each other’, thereby quickening diligence and refining the arts. Importantly, the *zamindari* theory was not local to India, but was a proven and rising practice in Britain from mid-to-late eighteenth century. Robert Forster, for example, explained how

The tenant farmers who ran the estates of the great families were the real agricultural entrepreneurs. Given an encouraging margin of profit on their farms, they developed both a personal loyalty to their landlord and a professional expertise that led to farm improvements. No doubt enclosure was an important element in the English agricultural revolution, but the imagination, talent, and capital of the larger tenant farmers, ably seconded by the estate agent, probably counted for even more. These were the men who planted the clover and the

⁶⁴ *Fifth Report*, 591.

⁶⁵ Robert Forster and Elborg Forster, eds., *European Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1969), 102.

turnips, altered the traditional crop courses, eliminated the fallow field, and improved the livestock.⁶⁶

The Deserted Village

To Minto's remarks on capital, Raffles appeared not to have formally replied. In fact, he gave not the slightest hint of an opinion or interest, and because of this the relative significance of capital in his and Minto's views went unnoticed. However, in an overlooked letter which Raffles later wrote to a future patron, the Duchess of Somerset – in 1817, when he was back in England and touring Europe with his cousin, Reverend Thomas Raffles – Raffles revealed his position with regard to capital and what would have been his response to the necessity Minto placed on capital. This response was made defensively, as if he was still justifying that Minto was wrong in his letter of 22 November 1813, and he was right. Remarking on the state of agriculture and rural property which he observed in France in comparison with that in Switzerland, the Rhine valley, and Belgium, Raffles wrote: 'I was certainly surprised and delighted with the appearance of agriculture in France, not that the fields were as highly cultivated as in England, nor that any thing like an advanced state of agriculture was to be seen.' Continuing, he said,

I was pleased to observe two things, which I know are highly condemned by agriculturalists, the smallness of the properties, and the cultivation of the fruit trees in the grain and hay-fields. Agriculturalists maintain that capital is essential to improvement; that when the properties are so small there can be no capital; this I grant to be good diction where the soil is poor and requires much improvement, but when it is rich, and wants little or no improvement, capital is unnecessary. For the greatness of a country it may be an object that the greatest possible quantity of produce should be brought to market; and those who are for raising a nation maintain that this can only be effected by large farms and the outlay of capital.

⁶⁶ Robert Forster and Elborg Forster, *European Society*, 100.

The philanthropist, however, and even the philosopher, will hesitate before he sacrifices everything to the greatness of the nation, unless its happiness goes hand in hand with its greatness, he will think the latter but of little value. Now when I see every man cultivating his own field, I cannot but think him happier far than when he is cultivating the field of another; even if he labours more, that labour is still lighter which is his pride and pleasure, than that which is his burden and sorrow.⁶⁷

Raffles's comment, that 'capital is unnecessary' in agriculture, inflicts a glaring repudiation of Minto's claim that it was necessary. But Raffles also expounded much else besides capital. He clearly saw small properties to form the basis of the people's well-being, or 'happiness', and he denied the utility of the market to that purpose. He was sceptical of the import of the concept of national wealth and the human activity of labour that was elemental in its production. Instead, Raffles placed more weight on the concept of the national population and the bounty of the land which supported it. This stance makes Raffles out to have advocated an agrarian constitution that diverged from Minto's patrician landholdings. Raffles's landed interest was not intimately interdependent on the labour, capital, and commodity markets: it centred on the personality and patrimony of the free yeoman or husbandman.

The tension between the two schemas of agricultural society held by Raffles and Minto in fact reprised the pivotal debate, now long forgotten, on the moral justice of agricultural development which had raged in Britain between the mid-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. At its heart lay the dilemma and critique of commercial agricultural development, which had been proven to invigorate industry and commerce and to support modern society, but which was also observed to have led, from the necessity of enclosing common pasture and of engrossing small properties, to the large-scale clearance, migration, and impoverishment of common people formerly inhabiting

⁶⁷ Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 14 July 1817, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 287-289.

and working on the land. The dilemma and critique informed a rich discourse about change, as modern ideas about the world emerged to challenge older ideas. The pastoral context of the debate between Minto and Raffles as to the question of land reform in Java is therefore traced directly to the social and moral sentiments which manifested in the vast body of Augustan literature of the eighteenth century, and which were treated in the considerable philosophical and scientific works of the period.

At an intellectual level, this literature embraced the Enlightenment concerns about the human condition, happiness, the aesthetic, human understanding and self-governance which foreshadowed the existential angst of Britain's Romantic Movement in the early-nineteenth century. Such theories translated at a practical level to questions of governance and society, and the debate over these questions claimed many traditions. Where property was concerned, these traditions included the discourse of jurisprudence from the sixteenth century, the political discourse of the seventeenth century, which included civic humanism or classical republicanism, and the political economies of the Mercantilists, *Physiocrats*, Adam Smith, and the Agriculturalists in the eighteenth century. Together, these traditions comprised the framework by which the British officials of the East India Company had apprehended the question of land reform in India and in Java. Raffles's partiality to the interests of the national population was actually reactionary to Minto's embrace of national wealth. It distinguished an older theory of government or politics with its ideas of the state, and was sceptical of the newer science of political economy and its ideas about society.

The debate was also subject to the particular conditions existing in, for example, the Catholic-Protestant divide in Ireland and the Highland-Lowland divide in Scotland. Apart from Raffles, a disproportionately large number of these officials were Scottish, and it was often the case that their ideas were coloured by issues pertaining at the time

to Scotland's century-old relationship with England within the Union. A precise picture of the influences on Minto's thinking was captured in a letter which he wrote to his wife on the voyage to Java in 1811:

I have been reading "Ossian," and Crabbe's "Borough," &c. I have also with me "The Lady of the Lake," and the six volumes of Scott's works, besides Mr. Dugald Stewart's new volume. His matter is always attractive to me, and his style most captivating. Mr. Fox's History, the whole corpus of Latin poets, and Cicero's works, not to mention Dryden's edited by Scott. These with many manuscript volumes to read, and some, alas! to write, will serve me for pastime for this trip.⁶⁸

Minto's authors and works comprised a pantheon of pastoral literature. George Crabbe's poem *The Borough*, for example, was a development of the poem that first made his reputation: *The Village* (1763). Both poems attacked the idealised view of the rural idyll and defended the realities of commerce in country life. Crabbe's *Village* had in fact mimicked, with the intent of a retort, the celebrated poem of the era which had encapsulated the 'emotional indictment of the agricultural revolution',⁶⁹ that was Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770). Both *The Deserted Village* and *The Village*, remarked Annabel Patterson, 'were dialectically locked together'. Interestingly, where Minto had read Crabbe's *Borough* enroute to Java, Raffles later quoted Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* as part of his commentary on the 'Tenure of Lands' in his *History of Java*.⁷⁰ In a passage where Raffles was describing the state by which land was

⁶⁸ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India*, 252. The literary works refer to *Ossian* (James Macpherson, 1760), *The Borough* (George Crabb, 1810), *The Lady of the Lake* (Walter Scott, 1810), *A History of the Early Part of the Reign of James II* (Charles Fox, 1808), *The Life of John Dryden* (Walter Scott, 1808).

⁶⁹ Annabel M. Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (California: University of California Press, 1987), 228. Francis Jeffrey remarked in the *Edinburgh Review* of April 1808, that if Crabbe 'can be said to have imitated the manner of any author, it is Goldsmith, indeed, who has been the object of his imitation; and yet, his general train of thinking, and his views of society are so extremely opposite, that when *The Village* was first published, it was commonly considered as an antidote or answer to the more captivating representations of *The Deserted Village*.' Arthur Pollard, ed., *George Crabbe: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1995), 55.

⁷⁰ Stamford Raffles, *History of Java*, 147. See also Mary Quilty, *Textual Empires: a reading of early British histories of Southeast Asia* (Monash Asia Institute, 1998), 67.

customarily held in Java, he claimed that – in spite of the disruptions of the feudal system – ‘the land allotted to each separate cultivator is managed by himself exclusively; and the practice of labouring in common, which is usual among the inhabitants of the same village on continental India, is here unknown.’ Raffles ended the passage by observing how ‘the lands on Java are so minutely divided among the inhabitants of the villages, that each receives just as much as can maintain his family and employ his individual industry,’ and then proceeded to back up the statement with the following stanza from Goldsmith:

‘A time there was, ere England’s griefs began,
When ev’ry rood of ground maintain’d its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life require’d, and gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.’

Raffles was using Goldsmith’s description of the former state of property in England as a premise for the proposition he was making of Java’s present state of property: that every rood of ground maintained its man,⁷¹ without the need for capital. This agrarian constitution provided a dialectical contrast against the commercial agricultural development depicted by Crabbe and advocated by Minto. They distinguished two particular British conceptions of the landed interest. Minto’s approach of maximising the utility of land has been described: its deployment of commerce and manufacturing for the advancement of agriculture places it under the category of *physiocracy*, the political economy of the French *économistes*. However, because it involved affirmative laws favouring agriculture, it also fell under the

⁷¹ There are four roods in one acre.

category of those whom Raffles termed the 'Agriculturalists'. These were the patrician landlords of the influential Agricultural Society who later lobbied for the Corn Laws.

Because Raffles's policies involved, as with his land rents, affirmative laws favouring agriculture and laws regulating commerce (the withdrawal of money; monopolies on opium, timber, and tin), Raffles was technically also an 'agriculturalist'. However, the effect of his laws was egalitarian and in the public interest, rather than patrician and for the private interest. Raffles's permanent and equal division and distribution of land to every farm household in fact apprehended the civic humanist concepts of self-dependence and authority which proprietorship brings, or what John Pocock described as 'the authority by which people claim and exercise their liberty'.⁷² Ideologically, it denoted the kind of neo-Roman agrarianism associated with the writings of Richard Price, and before Price, of James Harrington. Unlike Minto's physiocratic division of labour in favour of undivided landholdings, in Raffles's agrarianism it was the land that was divided to leave whole the individual's 'active life', as it were, so that he worked freely for himself in 'ignorance of wealth' and for 'innocence and health', rather than laboured for and in dependency of others.⁷³ These ideas were captured by Raffles as he continued to describe post-Waterloo France as one vast undeserted village in his letter to the Duchess of Somerset:

In France there seems to be so much good land that it can hardly be managed amiss, and in the provinces through which I passed it struck me that the crops were full as good as those which I have seen in England. Throw the people out of those little properties, and they lose their independence of character, their pride; and when only accustomed to daily wages are soon fitted for the army, the

⁷² See Pocock's essays 'Authority and property: The question of liberal origins' and 'The mobility of property and the rise of eighteenth-century sociology', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 51-72, 103-124.

⁷³ The distinction between 'work' and 'labour' as two modes of human activity and their impacts on the personality of the individual and of society is the subject of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958). The distinction also underlies the theme of alienation in Marx but with far less subtlety.

manufactory, or the poor-house. But you will say how is it that in France, where the government is so despotic, that the people are happier than in England? Many causes may have contributed to the present state of agriculture in France; the revolution abolished the feudal rights and service, with ten thousand vexations under which it had previously laboured; and the land in general fell into the hands of the actual cultivators, and the people who were seen to cultivate it with so much pleasure. I like to see fruit-trees growing among the corn, because it not only affords a refreshing and beautiful scenery, but because it reminds me of those patriarchal times, those days of simplicity, when the son and the grandson, and even the great grandson, honoured the trees that their forefathers planted. Upon the whole, I cannot but think that, notwithstanding agriculture as a science may be almost unknown in France, and that France as a nation has been greatly impoverished both in men and money, there is a foundation in the present state of her land and peasantry to support a much greater nation than France ever yet was...⁷⁴

Ancient Constitution

Raffles's invocation of Goldsmith in support of his land rents thus represented the reappearance of his republican tendencies from before the invasion of Java which I discussed in chapter two. As we saw, Raffles had in his 'Malacca' paper described an undivided and unspecialised community of *Orang Merdika*. In his 'Malay policy' paper, Raffles identified this personality among the Bugis – 'the most bold adventurers, and enterprising of all the eastern nations, and extremely addicted to a military life'.⁷⁵ Though the Bugis had long lost their land, they still retained the independence and authority which proprietorship once brought them. As Raffles later explained of the ancient Bugis, 'the mode of husbandry is, of course, very rude, and feudal institutions

⁷⁴ Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 14 July 1817, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 287-289.

⁷⁵ Raffles to Minto, 10 June 1811 (Revised 20 September 1811), MSS Eur F148/7.

stand in the way of their improvement; but private property in the soil is established, and lands are held in free tenure or by rent-hold.’⁷⁶

Raffles’s land rents had therefore been shrewdly designed, and carefully introduced, in proposition of a neo-Roman agrarian constitution for Java: a Commonwealth of Java, as it were. Raffles was thus anxious that the findings of the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission into the state of property in Java should show that Java’s ancient constitution before the coming of religion, feudalism, and mercantilism – i.e. before Java’s griefs began – was defined by the equal division and distribution of land among the people. In his *History*, Raffles later described ancient Java as a ‘great agricultural country’ which also ‘rose to great commercial prosperity’ though in an unspecialized way, signifying an ancient constitution of the undivided personality. The early reports from the Dutch members of the Commission and Company officials such as Hugh Hope and John Crawford pointed to rights of possession that were vested in the sovereign ruler or delegated to the regents and chiefs. By mid-1812, however, as Wright pointed out, evidence of individual proprietorship in the soil began to surface in terms of the individual’s right to elect the chiefs. Raffles was jubilant when Colin Mackenzie delivered to him the following verdict:

It must be confessed, that notwithstanding the supreme and exclusive property of the soil recognized in the state or sovereign, undoubtedly strengthened by the tenets of Mohamedan law, yet a certain right, and pretensions arising from occupancy and prescription, appears to have been respected among the natives, and even protected by some of their institutions in certain cases, as in the productions and fruit-trees planted by the lower cultivators about their dwellings. The protection of these people on that soil which their ancestors had cultivated and inhabited, and the consequent increase of cultivation and of produce, was looked on as the peculiar distinction of a good Sovereign; and hence a law of custom, or *addat*, was recognized, which seemed to protect them in the occupancy

⁷⁶ Stamford Raffles, *History of Java*, Appendix, lxxxix.

of the ground, and from being unnecessarily removed from the land occupied by their families.⁷⁷

Now, historians have long observed that Raffles had taken the individual's right to elect the chief as implying the individual's right to the soil. However, the premise in this curious implication that equates real property with the ballot,⁷⁸ has never been explained. As is now shown, it was in fact unique to the civic humanist principle whereby real property accorded to its owner a liberty of person and, by this liberty, an authority within the body politic or state. In the discussions on the state of property, we thus find an encounter between two conceptions of property which converged upon the figure of the Village Head. Hope, Crawford, and the Dutch members of the Mackenzie Commission had from their standpoint of jurisprudence understood that the trickling down of the sovereign's legal powers to the chiefs handed them an authority over their communities and the land on which they inhabited. By this reasoning, Crawford proposed to tailor the land rents at the village level. On the other hand, Raffles and Mackenzie (and two other figures, William Yule and David Hopkins) had from their civic humanist standpoint understood that the 'authority' of the chiefs, and indeed all the way upward to the sovereign, was actually an obligation raised by the fact of the people's occupancy of the ground.

The British notion of the 'rights of common', for example, which was the right to drive 'stock on the common pasture' and gather 'wood and furze on the common and waste', had no attachment to a communal figurehead. Rather it was understood to be the customary privilege of small proprietors (or yeomanry), small farmers, and landholding

⁷⁷ 'Report of Colonel Mackenzie', 12 August 1812, Stamford Raffles, *Substance of a Minute*, 259. John Bastin has interpreted this passage to the contrary: as Mackenzie's 'dogmatic assertion... that the proprietary rights to the ground in Java were vested in the Sovereign.'

⁷⁸ It underlay the grounds which led to the Reform Act of 1832, and also, to a degree, to the Chartist movement which followed.

day-labourers, i.e. the propertied individual cultivator.⁷⁹ In this situation, the people's occupancy on the ground necessitated their governance of their public interests. In securing this necessity thus derived the prescriptions of customary law, such as the 'rights of common' in Britain, or, in Java, the 'certain right' or *adat* which protected the people's occupancy on the ground. To the civic humanist, therefore, the law proceeded from the *de facto* person and property of the individual, which a sovereign was obliged to observe:⁸⁰ 'the basis in right of the *de facto*', as Pocock put it.⁸¹ The civic humanist view contrasts with the jurisprudential view, which saw governance as proceeding *de jure* from the law of the sovereign, to which the individual was subject. In enacting his land rents, therefore, Raffles was anxious for evidence of an ancient agrarian constitution because he was aware that the law was only prescribed in observance of (rather than in order to observe) the fact. Like Lycurgus the lawgiver of Sparta, Raffles could only legislate upon the authority of the individual proprietors, or the people, and in obligation to them.

In view of this, Raffles and Mackenzie's idiom of the 'fruit-trees' was critical. Cultivated not as a tithe crop but in the rural idyll of past generations, the fruit tree stood not merely as a remarkable monument of the people's ancient proprietorship of the soil, but also as an enduring testament to their entailment and primogeniture in the soil. The significance was founded on the fact that, even without legal proof of deed or grant, the fruit tree's implantation into the land and its continued existence upon that spot of ground represented a *de facto* claim upon the land by its planter and his heirs.⁸²

⁷⁹ See Hermann Levy, *Large and Small Holdings: A Study of English Agricultural Economics* (1911), tr. Ruth Kenyon (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), 4.

⁸⁰ See John Pocock's 'Introduction' in Harrington, *Oceana*, xii.

⁸¹ Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 58.

⁸² The idiom of the fruit tree was also employed by Minto in Malacca in a letter to his wife. 'The timber has been long since removed, and all that are now seen are fruit-trees, some of which are rather of the forest than of garden dimensions, and under their close, thick shade the Malay and Chinese peasants cultivate their grounds with industry and not without skill.' Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India*, 263.

This curious custom actually had origins in English common law that go back to some statutes of Edward III and Edward IV.⁸³ Clearly, it provided the context for what Mackenzie observed to be ‘a law of custom, or *addat*... which seemed to protect them in the occupancy of the ground’. This ‘certain right, and pretensions arising from occupancy and prescriptions,’ disclosed the authority of the people in the possession of their property, and consequently their right of electing the government of the body politic. This apprehension of a person’s *de facto* authority within his property,⁸⁴ situates Raffles’s legislations within the political language of the figure to whom was indebted the tradition of British republicanism: James Harrington. Harrington’s language, Pocock said, reverted ‘almost unequivocally to an earlier vocabulary, one in which the concepts of property and nature functioned as means of pronouncing that man the political animal was by nature a citizen and not a subject, a creature who used intelligence to define himself rather than to acknowledge binding law.’⁸⁵

Harrington’s *Oceana*, for example, contains a vivid description of a law, that once was prescribed in observance of and to secure the people’s *de facto* distribution of land between themselves in the ‘Commonwealth of Israel’, and was being prescribed again for, to quote Mackenzie, ‘the protection of these people on that soil which their ancestors had cultivated and inhabited, and... to protect them in the occupancy of the ground, and from being unnecessarily removed from the land occupied by their

⁸³ It states: ‘Now is to shew, What things may be granted or given without deed, and what not. And as to that, know, that all chattels, reals or personals, may be granted or given without deed, if not that it be in special cases. And therefore, if a man give unto me his horse or cow, or a bow, or a lance, or other such like thing, such gift is good by word. And if a man give unto me by word his corn growing upon the land, it is good. And if a man give unto me a tree growing upon his land, it is good without deed. [15E.3. 14]... But if tenant in tail give unto me a tree growing upon the land, and dies before that I have cut down the tree, and his issue in the land where the tree is growing, if I cut down the tree, he shall have an action of trespass; because that the tree is annexed unto the freehold, and by the gift comes of the nature of the land: But otherwise it shall be, if the donor of the tree had been sole tenant of the land in fee-simple in his own right [18E.4. 21 & 18 E.4. 6].’ John Perkins, *A Treatise of the Laws of England, on the various Branches of Conveyancing* (Savoy: Henry Lin’tot, 1757),

⁸⁴ See Pocock’s chapter ‘Authority and property: The question of liberal origins’ in Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 51-72.

⁸⁵ Harrington, *Oceana*, xiii.

families.’ The following passage is taken from Harrington’s description of this law, and it will be apparent that the text resonates with the passages just quoted above by Mackenzie on fruit trees in Java, by Raffles on fruit trees in France, and by Goldsmith on a time before England’s griefs began:

By the statute of population, all houses of husbandry that were used with twenty acres of ground and upwards were to be maintained and kept up for ever, with a competent proportion of land laid to them and in no wise... to be severed. By which means the houses being kept up, did of necessity enforce dwellers; and the proportion of land to be tilled being kept up, did of necessity enforce the dweller not to be a beggar or cottager, but a man of some substance, that might keep friends and servants and set the plough on going. This did mightily concern... the might and manhood of the kingdom, and in effect amortize a great part of the lands unto the hold and possession of the yeomanry, or middle people, who, living not in a servile or indigent fashion, were much unlinked from dependence upon their lords and, living in a free and plentiful manner...⁸⁶

Harrington’s passage was a classic portrayal of the English civic humanist conception of the person and property of the free citizenry. He had in fact reproduced it verbatim from a history of King Henry VII by Britain’s eminent Renaissance philosopher and civic humanist figure, Francis Bacon.⁸⁷ Bacon’s Henry VII was the

⁸⁶ James Harrington, *Harrington: ‘The Commonwealth of Oceana’ and ‘A System of Politics’*, ed., J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 55.

⁸⁷ ‘Another statute was made of singular policy; for the population apparently... Inclosures [sic] at that time began to be more frequent, whereby arable land (which could not be manured without people and families) was turned into pasture, which was easily rid by a few herdsmen; and tenances [sic] for years, lives, and at will (whereupon much the yeomanry lived,) were turned into demesnes. This bred a decay of people, and by consequence a decay of towns, churches, tithes, and the like. In remedying of this inconvenience the King’s wisdom was admirable; and the Parliament’s at that time. Inclosures they would not forbid, for that had been to forbid the improvement of the patrimony of the kingdom; nor tillage they would not compel; for that was to strive with nature and utility: but they took a course to take away depopulating inclosures and depopulating pasturage, and yet not that by name, or by any imperious express prohibition, but by consequence. The ordinance was, That all houses of husbandry, that were used with twenty acres of ground and upwards, should be maintained and kept up for ever; together with a competent proportion of land to be used and occupied with them, and in no wise to be severed from them... By this means the houses being kept up did of necessity enforce a dweller; and the proportion of land for occupation being kept up, did of necessity enforce that dweller not to be a beggar or cottager, but a man of some substance, that might keep hinds and servants, and set the plough on going. This did wonderfully concern the might and mannerhood of the kingdom, to have farms as it were of a standard, sufficient to maintain an able body out of penury, and did in effect amortise a great part of the lands of

equivalent of Harrington's character of Panurgus: both represented the law-giving Carlylean great men of history. Their relevance, as shown, lay in the intellectual legacy which they identify in the language of Raffles's legislations. But they also claim a further significance: Bacon's passage of the 'statute on population' was also cited by Dugald Stewart in his lectures on political economy.

Political Society

Dugald Stewart, as mentioned, was Minto's professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University. Raffles was not a student of Stewart, nor was he Scottish or had he attended a Scottish university. However, John Leyden (and, it has been insinuated, Colin Mackenzie)⁸⁸ was also taught by Stewart and, as I will show, he had a considerable influence on Raffles's thought. Three figures who later became central to Raffles's career after Java were also students of Stewart: the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Duke of Somerset, and Sir Robert Inglis. If Raffles did not know Stewart personally, he certainly knew of Stewart and Stewart's teachings.⁸⁹ These connections are important, as they disclose Dugald Stewart to be the source of the conceptual framework and cognitive approach adopted by Minto and Raffles in their perceptions and ideas and in their policies and writings.

Stewart's lectures were sectioned into two parts: the first treated 'Of Political Economy Proper', and the second treated 'Of Politics Proper, or Theory of Government'. Under 'Political Economy Proper', there were four categories: these were

the kingdom unto the hold and occupation of the yeomanry or middle people, of a condition between gentlemen and cottagers or peasants.' Francis Bacon, 'History of the Reign of King Henry VII', *The Works of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England, Vol. VI*, eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (London: Longman and Co., 1858), 93-95.

⁸⁸ Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Visions of a Greater Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 67.

⁸⁹ He also knew Stewart's son and editor, Matthew Stewart, to whom he gave a job in Java. Raffles to Minto, 20 February 1812, MSS Eur F148/30.

‘Of Population’, ‘Of National Wealth’, and to a smaller extent, ‘Of the Poor – their Maintenance’, and ‘Of the Education of the Lower Orders’. The first two categories on population and national wealth essentially followed the structure of Sir James Stewart’s work on political economy, on which I shall touch toward at the end. Generally, each of these four categories was discussed in terms of the dichotomy between political economy and politics. The subject of population, for example, was traditionally an ‘Article of the Natural History of Man’ which, in posing the question, ‘How far it is true that a rapidly increasing population is an unequivocal test of a wisely constituted government’, fell under the realm of politics. Stewart, however, explored the question in terms of policy in respect of subsistence, agriculture, commerce, manufactures, employment, and machinery, thus affecting population as an ‘Article of Political Economy’.

The subject of national wealth, on the other hand, was treated especially with regard to the problems arising from theoretical misconceptions and speculations about labour, value, and money that had had lasting effects on society and state. As we saw in chapter four, Adam Smith’s theories of value and price were not exempt from Stewart’s criticism. Nor was, as we saw in chapter two, Smith’s reworking of self-interest.⁹⁰ The ‘perfect liberty, equality, and justice’ which Smith’s theories demanded was seen to further vicious commerce and suppress virtuous commerce. ‘Among the various callings,’ Stewart noted in his introduction, ‘to which the circumstances of modern Europe have given rise, there is none which has discovered a greater jealousy of

⁹⁰ ‘For speculations which embrace so complicated a variety of objects, the details of a particular branch of trade are surely not the best preparation; nor is that quick-sighted regard to personal interest which commercial pursuits communicate, necessarily accompanied with views equally just, concerning questions of public utility. The truth is, that no wise statesman will reckon much on the disinterested benevolence of any one order of individuals; and the only occasions on which their professional knowledge is likely to be turned to national advantage, is when the interest of their order, and the interest of the community, are one and the same. That this is *less* the case with manufacturers and merchants than farmers and country gentlemen, is frequently remarked by Mr. Smith in the course of his *Inquiry*’. Dugald Stewart, *Lectures on Political Economy, Vol. I*, ed. William Hamilton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), 15.

uninitiated theorists, or a more arrogant contempt for the speculative conclusions of the closet, than the whole tribe of what are commonly called the *monied interest*; that is, *capitalists, great merchants, and financiers of every description.*'⁹¹

Dugald Stewart's construction of political economy was thus total. He saw the disadvantages to government without the market, the imperfectability of the market without government, and resolved to make the antinomian leap of combining the advantages of both government and market. Where political economy had, as he stated at the beginning of his introduction, 'been hitherto restricted to inquiries concerning *Wealth and Population*', Stewart proposed 'that the same title may be extended with much advantage to all those speculations which have for their object the happiness and improvement of Political Society, or, in other words, which have for their object the great and ultimate ends from which Political regulations derive all their value; and to which *Wealth and Population* themselves are to be regarded as only subordinate and instrumental.'⁹²

What Stewart had conceived as 'Political Society' was the result of what he termed the 'Political Union' between the 'Principles of Human Nature' and the 'Circumstances in the Condition of Mankind'. 'That it is in the political union,' Stewart explained, 'and in the gradual improvement of which it is susceptible, that the chief provision has been made for a gradual development of our faculties, and for a proportionate enlargement in our capacities of enjoyment, insomuch that it may be confidently affirmed, that by the particular modification of the political order existing in

⁹¹ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 14.

⁹² Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 10. Compare this to Adam Smith's definition of 'political economy': 'Political œconomy, considered as a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator, proposes two distinct objects: first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services.' Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994); 455 (Book IV, Introduction).

any country, both the intellectual and moral condition of the great body of the people is infallibly determined.’⁹³ The origin of these ideas lay in the discourse of human understanding which was unique to the Scottish Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Before he became renowned as the editor of Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart was the preeminent disciple of the philosopher who answered the scepticism of David Hume, the idealism of George Berkeley, and the materialism of Joseph Priestley: Thomas Reid. Stewart’s magnum opus, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792), had in fact articulated and elaborated Reid’s three major treatises on the human understanding: *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), and *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (1788).

In the next chapter, I shall discuss the bearing of this discourse upon what has been termed the Scottish School of the Philosophy of Common Sense, and its significance to the approach to India and the East Indies by Scottish officials in the East India Company. Here, it is sufficient to state that the realism promoted by the Scottish School of Common Sense, and their repudiation of unfounded idealism, tended to translate into a practical appreciation of the *de facto*. Thus, George Davie, the historian of the Scottish School, labelled Reid a ‘Harringtonian democrat’.⁹⁴ Reid had in fact stated that ‘If the Oceana of Mr. Harrington is considered in itself only, or if it were once established in a nation sufficiently enlightened,... I conceive it to be the best model of republican government that has ever been proposed.’⁹⁵ Dugald Stewart’s admiration, even Hume’s, was no less enthusiastic. Harrington’s *Oceana*, Stewart said, ‘is justly regarded as one of the boasts of English literature, and is pronounced by Hume

⁹³ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 18.

⁹⁴ George Davie, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), 23.

⁹⁵ Peter J. Diamond, ‘Reid and Active Virtue’, in *The Philosophy of Thomas Reid*, eds. Melvin Dalgarno and Eric Matthews (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 349.

to be “the only valuable model of a commonwealth that has yet been offered to the public.”⁹⁶

The subtle overlap or parallel – I am unwilling to claim a direct relation or connection – of English civic humanism with the Scottish philosophy of common sense pervades Stewart’s lectures on political economy. It was evident in his pronouncement that ‘among the means, for example, of advancing national wealth, what [is] so efficacious as the laws which give security to the right of property, and check an inordinate inequality in its distribution?’⁹⁷ Indeed, although he professed to keep in check the falsehoods conceived under both categories of national wealth and population in advancing the political union, Stewart’s appreciation for the *de facto* tended to lead him to shrewdly relegate the systems of national wealth (economics and sociology) in subservience to the systems of population (politics and government). Hence, we find the market delicately subjected to government intervention; microeconomic behaviour aligned with what Stewart termed the ‘*Science of Agriculture*’; macroeconomic structures adjusted by the ‘science of Legislation’; the ‘monied interest’, ‘commercial interest’, and ‘trading and manufacturing interest’ generally acquiescing to the ‘landed interest’. Stewart even argued that ‘Civil Liberty’ (or negative liberty, the conceptual ‘civil right’ in jurisprudence)⁹⁸ could not be realised without the ‘political power’ or ‘political privilege’ that was secured by (and which in turn secured) the people’s

⁹⁶ Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy, since the Revival of Letters in Europe, The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart, Vol. I*, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1854), 94.

⁹⁷ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 16.

⁹⁸ See Isaiah Berlin’s essay ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’ (1958), in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-217.

‘Political Liberty’ (or positive liberty, the conceptual ‘self-dependence’ in civic humanism).⁹⁹

‘The share of political power vested in the people is of trifling moment,’ Stewart said, but ‘its importance to their happiness depends on the protection and support it provides for their civil rights.’¹⁰⁰ The people’s civil rights were easily trampled on by the tyranny of a sovereign or conqueror, and only the people’s political liberty, by then not trifling, could defend and recover those rights. Historically, Stewart identified this postulate in the motive for the Glorious Revolution of 1688. His claim was contrary to the account given by Hume,¹⁰¹ but Stewart was able to support it by referring to Charles Fox’s *History of the Early Part of the Reign of James II*, which described the period as ‘the æra of good laws and of bad government’, of ‘the inefficacy of human laws, and the imperfection of human constitutions!’ Stewart quoted Fox’s declamation: ‘How vain, then, how idle, how presumptuous is the opinion that laws can do everything! And how weak and pernicious the maxim founded upon it, that measures, not men, are to be attended to.’¹⁰² Fox’s account of the events of 1688 in fact echoed his mentor Edmund Burke’s account that it, as we saw in chapter three, ‘was made to preserve our *antient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *antient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty.’¹⁰³ Thus, Stewart wrote: ‘The only effectual and permanent bulwark against the encroachments of tyranny,’

⁹⁹ Stewart initially introduced the term ‘political liberty’ in dispute of John Locke’s use of it – ‘what is called *Political Liberty*’ – as meaning civil liberty.

¹⁰⁰ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 23.

¹⁰¹ Hume’s *History of England* (1754-61) disputes the Whig narrative that James II had abused his power when he trespassed upon the liberties of the people and had thus ‘forfeited all title to the crown’. Hume instead claimed that the revolution of 1688 represented a constitutionally new development. The view of Fox, the whigs, and other commonwealthmen, were that James II had lost the trust of the people and they had consequently asserted their political liberty in deposing him.

¹⁰² Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 25-26.

¹⁰³ Burke, *Reflections*, 30.

is to be found in the political privileges which the Constitution secures to the governed... The want of them, however, does not, like that of civil liberty, necessarily affect the happiness, nor impair the natural rights of individuals; for their value is founded entirely on considerations of political expediency; and, therefore, the measure of them, which a wise man would desire for himself and his fellow citizens, is determined, not by the degree in which every individual consents, directly or indirectly, to the laws by which he is governed; but by the share of the power which it is necessary for the people to possess, in order to place their civil rights beyond the danger of violation.— In so far as this object is attained under any establishment, the civil liberty of the people rests on a solid foundation; and their political power accomplishes completely the only purpose from which its value is derived.¹⁰⁴

The scope and coverage of the themes, theories, and topics argued and discussed in Stewart's lectures on political economy, deserve a huge (but much-neglected) commentary and debate in itself. Here I have limited my discussion of the lectures to the frame of reference which it provided for Raffles's and Minto's ideas about property and authority. From the above passage, it follows that Stewart's concept of political society was really that 'of man considered as the member of a political body',¹⁰⁵ and was equal to what Quentin Skinner has described as the 'neo-Roman theory of free states'.¹⁰⁶ Stewart's passage above in fact reiterated the classic civic humanist creed that civil liberty can only be constructed on the base of political liberty. This mode of speech was explained by Skinner with regard to the seventeenth century republicans as follows:

It is said to follow that, if you wish to maintain your liberty, you must ensure that you live under a political system in which there is no element of discretionary power, and hence no possibility that your civil rights will be dependent on the goodwill of a ruler, a ruling group, or any other agent of the state. You must live, in other words, under a system in which the sole power of making laws remains with the people or their accredited representatives, and in which all individual

¹⁰⁴ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 23-24.

¹⁰⁵ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

members of the body politic – rulers and citizens alike – remain equally subject to whatever laws they choose to impose upon themselves.¹⁰⁷

Stewart's conception of 'political economy', therefore, concerned not the economic functioning of the nation, but the legal, political and moral order of the body politic.¹⁰⁸ As we just heard, Stewart believed that 'by the particular modification of the political order existing in any country, both the intellectual and moral condition of the great body of the people is infallibly determined.' This approach in fact described the origin of political economy in the field of moral philosophy: as an inquiry into the cognitive behaviour of man and the proper application of that inquiry to man's well-being or happiness. Describing his science and object of political economy, Stewart said that 'I was anxious to point out its intimate connexion with the *Philosophy of the Human Mind*. The only infallible rules of political wisdom are founded ultimately on a knowledge of the prevailing springs of human action, and [in thinly-disguised criticism of Smith's political economy and moral philosophy] he who loses himself in the details of the social mechanism, while he overlooks those moral powers which give motion to the whole, though he may accumulate a mass of information highly useful in the pursuits of private life, must remain in total ignorance of those primary causes on which depend the prosperity and the safety of nations.'¹⁰⁹

Collectively, Stewart's 'springs of human action' adopted the same idiom that transposed the individual human body with the political body of the nation or state, and was known in classical republican literature as the 'ancient metaphor of the body

¹⁰⁷ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 74.

¹⁰⁸ The distinction is similar to Max Weber's categories of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society).

¹⁰⁹ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 17. Thomas Reid, commenting on Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, also made a similar criticism. 'A very ingenious author has resolved our moral sentiments respecting the virtues of self-government, into a regard to the opinion of men. This, I think, is giving a great deal too much to the love of esteem, and putting the shadow of virtue in place of the substance...' Thomas Reid, *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D.*, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart, and Co., 1846), 557.

politic'. How the order of the body politic was 'modified' – in accordance with Stewart's political union, political society, and political economy – was through the regulations of law. From the civic humanist standpoint, it was explained by Skinner that 'if a state or commonwealth is to count as free, the laws that govern it – the rules that regulate its bodily movements – must be enacted with the consent of all its citizens, the members of the body politic as a whole.'¹¹⁰

But where the body politic was reasserting its political liberty and political power after a period of imposed tyranny, as in England in 1688, or Java in 1811, the regulations of law represented more of a restoration than a modification of the order of the body politic. Such moments also possessed their own metaphor in the literature: this was the figure of Lycurgus, the legislator who established the Agrarian Law by 'lots of land descending undiminished from father to son',¹¹¹ and restored 'order and equality' among the inhabitants of Sparta. But the feat of Lycurgus, like Panurgus and Henry VII, was the stuff of legend. How the regulations were to be introduced was, as we have seen with Raffles, a most challenging endeavour. The question as to what degree of rigour should the order of society be subjected to the designs of the legislator and governor? Stewart quoted Burke's dictum, that '*to ascertain what the State ought to take upon itself to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible, to individual discretion.*' Stewart was clearly aware of the difficulty. 'It is the very problem stated by Mr. Burke,' he admitted,

which renders it so difficult to define with precision the object of *Political Economy*. Its general aim is to enlighten those who are destined for the functions of government, and to enlighten public opinion with respect to their conduct; but unless it be previously ascertained how far the legitimate province of the

¹¹⁰ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 27.

¹¹¹ *Plutarch's Lives, Vol. III.*, tr. John Langhorne and William Langhorne (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1834), 460.

Statesman extends, it is impossible to draw the line distinctly between those subjects which belong properly to the science of Legislation, and those of which the regulation ought to be entrusted to the selfish passions and motives inseparable from human nature.¹¹²

Britain's future statesmen and legislators in the East Indies were certainly wary of the enormity of the task. It is significant that at the end of Minto's instructions of 18 October 1811 on land reform, he reminded Raffles that:

On this branch nothing must be done that is not mature, because the Change is too extensive to be suddenly or ignorantly attempted. But fixed and immutable principles of the human Character & of human association assure me of ultimate, and I hope, not remote success, in views that are consonant with very motive of action that operate on men, and are justified by the practice and experience of every flourishing Country in the World.¹¹³

Balance of Power

In identifying the mode of speech in the policies and writings of Raffles, Minto, and Mackenzie, to the language of civic humanism, we are thus able to pinpoint its source exclusively within the discourse and intellectual legacy of eighteenth century Britain. The primacy they accorded to land and the interest of agriculture distinguished them from the commercial interest. But in their agrarian outlook, they differed nuancedly. The civic humanist conceptions of freedom and authority which property accorded to

¹¹² Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 17. Adam Smith, too, in his occasional relapses into the language of the Scottish School, hesitated to offer any instruction for the Legislator. Referring the 'unfortunate effects of all the regulations of the mercantile system', he said that: 'They not only introduce very dangerous disorders into the state of the body politic, but disorders which it is often difficult to remedy, without occasioning, for a time at least, still greater disorders. In what manner, therefore, the colony trade ought gradually to be opened; what are the restraints which ought first, and what are those which ought last to be taken away; or in what manner the natural system of perfect liberty and justice ought gradually to be restored, we must leave to the wisdom of future statesmen and legislators to determine.' Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 655 (Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III).

¹¹³ Minto to Board of Control, 3 August 1813, 'Recording the Instructions left by me with the Lieutt Govr at Batavia – dated 18th Octr 1811', 'No.3 Collection of the Revenue', MSS Eur F148/15.

the citizen, and the classical republican ideal of equality, manifested in an enthusiastic partiality by Raffles for the Agrarian Law.

Minto, on the other hand, was no Harringtonian democrat. Edmund Burke's influence led him to recognise that, indispensable though the function of real property was to the peace and order of society, this function had to be precisely governed rather than boldly legislated. The 'Spirit of Liberty' was not something that can be instantly set in stone like Lycurgus's Agrarian Law. In this regard, Hume's maxim – that 'order in society... is much better maintained by means of government; and our duty to the magistrate is more strictly guarded by the principles of human nature, than our duty to our fellow-citizens' – comes to mind.¹¹⁴ In his essay 'Of the First Principles of Government', Hume had repudiated Harrington's principle which 'has made property the foundation of all government', on the basis that the 'right to property' was not fact but opinion, and thus did not equate to the 'right to power'.¹¹⁵ For Minto, the natural 'springs of human action' thus did not lead to the equal division and distribution of land, but rather to the engrossing and enclosing of it.

The tensions and nuances between Minto's and Raffles's positions on property and authority defined (and were defined by) the conceptual framework of Dugald Stewart's lectures on political economy. Stewart coincided with Minto in his esteem for the modern *physiocratic* theories of the French *économistes*, Francois Quesnay, Victor Mirabeau, and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot. At the same time, Stewart coincided with Raffles in his esteem for the ancient Harringtonian Commonwealth. 'One thing,' Stewart lectured, 'is certain and indisputable:– that the actual cultivators of the soil are

¹¹⁴ See Hume's essay 'Of the Origin of Government', in David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. I, eds. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 113-117.

¹¹⁵ Hume, *Essays*, 109-113.

eminently entitled to the protection and encouragement of the Legislator'.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, he concurred with Hume that 'ancient policy was *violent*, and contrary to the more natural and usual course of things'.¹¹⁷ Stewart explained that what Hume meant by 'violent', was that 'ancient policy aimed too much at modifying, by the force of positive institutions, the order of society, according to some preconceived notion of expediency, without trusting sufficiently to those principles of the human constitution, which, wherever they are allowed free scope, not only conduct mankind to happiness, but lay the foundation of a progressive improvement in their condition and in their character.' The 'inequality in the distribution of landed property,' Stewart conceded, 'is plainly a part of the order of nature, and... is intimately connected with the progressive improvement of the human species.'

These two diverging roads delineated the dilemma of governance in society which Stewart set out, as mentioned above, as the task of political economy. They were reducible to the debate as to whether small farming properties or large farming properties were better.¹¹⁸ Where the minute division and distribution of property was concerned, there was a glaring physical problem: with each generation it led to incrementally smaller properties, which led to the contradiction of diminishing productivity and a deficit in subsistence known as 'involution'.¹¹⁹ And yet no argument in favour of large properties seemed to be defensible against the charge of inequality.

¹¹⁶ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 121.

¹¹⁷ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 143.

¹¹⁸ In an important section dealing with 'Population in connexion with Agriculture', Stewart discussed this debate with respect to 'Farm Tenure', 'Farm Burdens', 'Size of Farms', 'Enclosures', 'Size of Properties', and he drew from several key sources including David Hume, Richard Price, Adam Smith, Arthur Young the Agriculturalist, Sir James Stewart, Victor Mirabeau, Robert Wallace, and John Howlett. Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 113-138.

¹¹⁹ See Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Mark Elvin, 'The High-Level Equilibrium Trap: The Causes of the Decline of invention in the Traditional Chinese Textile Industries', in W. E. Willmott, ed., *Economic Organization in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); and Philip C. C. Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi delta, 1350-1988* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

Stewart cited another articulate criticism by Hume of Francis Bacon's 'statute on population', which depicted Henry VII's agrarian division and distribution of land.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, Stewart excused 'the evils resulting from too minute a division of land [that] must necessarily be confined to very unusual combinations of circumstances.' Remarkably, he proceeded to say that 'those [evils] which arise from the opposite extreme of an accumulation of this species of property in the hands of a small number of individuals, is a political disorder much more deeply rooted in our prevailing ideas and institutions, and affecting far more extensively and powerfully the general interests of society.'¹²¹ In spite of all the arguments by Hume against the prevailing idea of the commonwealth, Dugald Stewart seemed to have personally been partial to it. The reason, I believe, is revealed in a footnote in his *Dissertation* on the progress of modern philosophy:

A remark which Hume has elsewhere made on the *Oceana*, appears to me so striking and so instructive, that I shall give it a place in this note. "Harrington," he observes, "thought himself so sure of his general principle, - that the balance of power depends on that of property, that he ventured to pronounce it impossible ever to re-establish monarchy in England: But this book was scarcely published when the King was restored; and we see that monarchy has ever since subsisted on the same footing as before."¹²²

As much as he claimed to have been 'at some pains to illustrate' to his students 'that the happiness of mankind depends *immediately*, not on the *form of government*,

¹²⁰ 'Mr Hume, who, in his History of England, has interspersed his narrative with many of the most important principles of Political Economy, dissents widely from Lord Bacon, in the judgment he pronounces on this part of Henry Seventh's policy. "The law enacted against Enclosures," he observes, "and for the keeping up of farm-houses, scarcely deserves the high praises bestowed on it by Lord Bacon. If husbandmen understand agriculture, and have a ready vent for their commodities, we need no dread a diminution of the people employed in the country. All methods of supporting populousness, except by the interest of the proprietor, are violent and ineffectual. During a century and a half after this period, there was a frequent renewal of laws and edicts against depopulation, whence we may infer that none of them were ever executed. The natural course of improvement at last provided a remedy.'" Dugald Stewart, *Lectures*, Vol. I, 134-135.

¹²¹ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures*, Vol. I, 152.

¹²² Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation*, 94.

but on the particular system of *law* and *policy* which that form introduces’,¹²³ Stewart had tacitly given ‘Politics Proper, or the Theory of Government’ precedence over ‘Political Economy Proper’. Indeed, Stewart’s editor, Sir William Hamilton, also editor of Reid and the flagbearer of the Scottish School in the nineteenth century, explained that in Stewart’s ‘ultimate arrangement’ of his lectures, ‘the *Theory of Government* and its several *Forms* are, relatively to *Political Economy* proper, considered in the first instance’.¹²⁴ Moreover, Stewart ‘usually delivered a series of lectures on the Theory and Forms of Government, in addition to, but as a part of his ordinary course of Moral Philosophy’, and ‘these *Political* lectures were thus altogether distinct from his separate course of *Political Economy*.’ Stewart in fact noted that though ‘the one [political economy], indeed, leads *naturally* to the other [politics]; but it does not lead to it *necessarily*; for it is extremely possible [recalling Fox’s history of James II] that inexpedient laws may, in consequence of ignorance and prejudice, be sanctioned for ages by a Government excellent in its constitution, and just in its administration; while the evils threatened by a Government fundamentally bad, may to a great degree, be corrected by an enlightened system of internal policy.’¹²⁵

The theory and form of government which merited Stewart’s highest attentions was the theory of mixed government. This referred to the ‘mixture, in a greater or less proportion, of *all* the three simple forms’¹²⁶ of ‘government, – Democracy, Aristocracy, and Monarchy’ – in the first of which ‘the sovereign power is supposed to be lodged in the *whole body of the people*; in the second, in *one particular order*, (such as a *body of nobility*...;) in the third, in a *single person*.’¹²⁷ In a nutshell, the mixed government

¹²³ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures on Political Economy, Vol. II*, ed. William Hamilton (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1856), 376.

¹²⁴ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 21.

¹²⁵ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 22.

¹²⁶ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 355

¹²⁷ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 352

referred to the constitutional concept of 'balance of power'. Stewart's commentary in favour of combining the 'three simple governing powers' adopted the argument communicated by Harrington, Aristotle, and Polybius,¹²⁸ and which originated from the problem of the governance of society. Taking the example of 'Lycurgus... and some other ancient legislators, [who] are said to have made an equal division of lands', Stewart consequently asked: 'how is this equality to be maintained?' The spectre that threatened to rip equality to shreds was the Polybian cycle of decline into corruption. Citing Aristotle's *Politics*, Stewart explained how the Agrarian Law (or indeed any constitutional law) was doomed from the start:

A constitution may be excellent, whether the executive power rest in the hands of one person; whether it be divided among many; or whether it continue in the hands of the people; but that power will become fatal if monarchy degenerates into tyranny, if Aristocracy is turned into Oligarchy, or if the Democratic authority, falling again into the lower classes of the people, produces nothing but tumult and anarchy.¹²⁹

The solution lay, therefore, in tackling the degenerating tendency in the active life. In which case, we are thus back in the realm of civic humanism, enjoined to protect the interests of public liberty by arresting the self-interests of vicious commerce, patronage, collusion, corruption, faction, discord, the 'Spirit of Conquest', illegitimate subversion, etc. Where the Agrarian Law was concerned, equality was maintained constitutionally through the balance of power inherent in the mixed government. Thus, democracy kept a check on tyranny, monarchy kept a check on oligarchy, and aristocracy kept a check on anarchy. Thus, citing Polybius, Stewart wrote:

¹²⁸ Stewart's frame of reference 'On the principles of the three governments' was Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. He also referred to Hume, Aristotle, Polybius, Harrington, Algernon Sidney, Adam Ferguson, Machiavelli, Thucydides, and Grotius. Twice had Stewart quoted Harrington's dictum that 'the people without the senate would want wisdom; the senate without the people would want honesty.'

¹²⁹ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 384.

Lycurgus, therefore, foreseeing this necessity, instead of adopting any one of the single forms of government, collected what was excellent in them all, and so joined together the principles that were peculiar to each several form, that no one of them might be extended beyond proper bounds, and slide into the evil to which it was inclined by nature. But that each separate power, being still counteracted by the rest, might be retained in due position, and the whole government be preserved in equal balance, as a vessel when impelled to either side by the wind, is kept steady by a contrary force.¹³⁰

Interestingly, the balance of power was also conceived in the sphere of the philosophy of the human mind. The Scottish School comprehended that the character of man also had a degenerating tendency that can be arrested by recovering his natural human constitution. In Stewart's lectures, human behavioural 'principles' were identified which were analogous to Montesquieu's 'principles' of governing power. 'As the form of a government has an influence on the character of the people, so there is a certain national character necessary to support the government,' Stewart remarked.¹³¹ Thus, the virtue or equality in a democracy, degenerated into passion and violence in anarchy; moderation in the aristocracy, degenerated into avarice and ambition in oligarchy; and honour in a monarchy, degenerated into fear in despotism. Mixed together, however, one rational principle became an antidote for another irrational principle. Thus, moderation kept a check on passion; honour kept a check on ambition; virtue kept a check on fear. The general idea of the mixed government, therefore, Stewart said, 'is suggested to us by the principles of human nature, and the common course of human affairs.'¹³² The mixed constitution was a reflection of the natural human constitution, the mixed government a reflection of man's natural governance over his conduct. The balance of power was thus a representation of the balance of virtue in the human character.

¹³⁰ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 414.

¹³¹ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 419.

¹³² Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 417.

Following Polybius's mythical account of the 'Lacedemonian Commonwealth' and 'Roman Commonwealth', and Harrington's historical idealisation of the 'Commonwealth of Oceana', Stewart believed that 'the *English Constitution* affords the first instance in the history of mankind in which the theory delineated by the ancient philosophers has been realized with success.'¹³³ How the constitution and governance of man and society were conceived in terms of the philosophy of the human mind will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. I have introduced the subject here in order to distinguish the Scottish School's conception of balance of power from the civic humanist conception of balance of power. My purpose is to show that, by the civic humanist conception, we can finally address the last lingering puzzle of Raffles's land policy: what was Raffles's motive for proceeding, against the orders of Minto, with the land sales suggested by Muntinghe? And why did Raffles sell only the amount of land he sold and not more? I shall briefly answer this question by way of a conclusion to this chapter.

Balance of Property

Contrary to the approach of the Scottish School, the civic humanist approach to the mixed constitution made no allusions to the human constitution. Instead, in the pen of James Harrington, the constitutional concept of balance of power in the commonwealth was articulated in terms of his doctrine of 'balance of property'. As we saw earlier, what Harrington 'desired to say... was that land, or real property, tended to make men independent citizens, who actualized their natural political capacity'.¹³⁴ With regard to the Agrarian Law, this natural political capacity was actualised by combining the three governing powers, where this combination was formulated according to the divisions of

¹³³ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. II*, 417.

¹³⁴ See Pocock's essay 'Authority and property', in Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 68.

real property that were assigned under each of the three governing powers.¹³⁵ Thus the proportion of lands held by the people, by the aristocracy, and by the monarchy, each possessed a sufficient authority to hold the other to equal account.

Harrington's 'balance of property', I argue, defined the construction of Raffles's agricultural society. Unlike Minto, who in line with the Scottish School believed that each of the three simple forms of governing powers had to evolve according to the nature of 'human character' and 'human association', Raffles saw that by assigning land, he was able to establish immediately a mixed constitution in society. There was a valid historicist argument in favour of such a measure. As we saw earlier, the premise for Minto's and Raffles's land reforms was the abolishing of the feudal and mercantilist systems, and the problem of how to constitute a post-feudal society. Muntinghe, we saw, had approached the question with the view of reserving for the European the private ownership of land and relegating the provision of labour to native neo-feudal institutions. To the civic humanist, this proposal stank not only of inequality, but slavery. It actually portrayed the slave-based system to which Lycurgus's Sparta would later degenerate. In this respect, there is in fact a fascinating correspondence between the two rival systems proposed by Muntinghe and Raffles, and the two rival systems defined by the political economist, Sir James Steuart, as the options available for a post-feudal constitution.

The figure of Steuart has historically provided an enigmatic comparison to Adam Smith. Steuart's 1767 publication, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political*

¹³⁵ 'Property in land, according to the distribution that happeneth to be of the same, causeth the political balance producing empire of the like nature; that is, if the property in lands be so diffused through the whole people that neither one landlord nor a few landlords over-balance them, the empire is popular. If the property in lands be so engrossed by the few that they over-balance the whole people, the empire is aristocratical or mixed monarchy; but if property in lands be in one landlord, to such a proportion as over-balanceth the whole people, the empire is absolute monarchy. So the political balance is threefold, democratical, aristocratical, and monarchical.' James Harrington, 'The Prerogative of Popular Government', in *The Political Works of James Harrington: Part One*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 458.

Economy, preceded by nine years Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which wickedly made no reference to Steuart at all. However, Steuart's ideas were central in Stewart's lectures, especially where concerning money, agriculture, and taxes. To Steuart's authority, Stewart accorded a deference which contrasted with his criticism of Smith. It has not been possible in this thesis to discuss the connection. However, it deserves a reference with regard to Raffles's land policy. 'Steuart's work' has been said to have 'bore some resemblance to that of James Harrington.'¹³⁶ Steuart's distinction between 'labour' and 'industry' – as between the action of the whole individual who worked freely for himself in 'ignorance of wealth' and for 'innocence and health', and that of the alienated slave who laboured for and in dependency of others (as mentioned earlier) – was one of the first principles Stewart introduced in his lectures.¹³⁷ It also provided the framework by which Steuart argued that, on the demise of the feudal system, there were (as an 'Article of Political Economy') only 'two alternative roads to population growth' available to the legislator. One road was that of Sparta's 'ancient political economy' – also Muntinghe's proposal – whereby:

the statesman shall force certain classes to labour the soil, and, with discretion, distribute the produce of it to all that have occasion for subsistence, taking in return their services for the public benefit; this will prove an infallible way of multiplying inhabitants, of making them laborious, and of preserving a simplicity of manners; but it is also the picture of ancient slavery, and is therefore excluded from the supposition.¹³⁸

The other road was that of 'modern political economy'. It involved what Maria Luisa Pesante described as 'destroying the simplicity of manners, and stimulating

¹³⁶ Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* (Duke University Press, 2000), 146.

¹³⁷ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures, Vol. I*, 36-37.

¹³⁸ James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy: being an Essay on the Science of Domestic Policy in Free Nations, The works, political, metaphysical, and chronological, of the late Sir James Steuart of Coltness, Bart., Vol. I*, ed. General Sir James Steuart, Bart. his son (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1805), 35.

unnecessary wants':¹³⁹ that is, to leave behind native custom, and create an 'effectual demand' whereby the cultivator is induced, through a Humean 'quickenings' of his own industry, to produce surpluses¹⁴⁰ that could be exchanged for a determined 'equivalent' value in the form of money. 'A people,' Steuart stated, 'who have an industrious turn, will multiply in proportion to the superfluity produced by their farmers; because the labour of the necessitous will prove an equivalent for it.'¹⁴¹ This direct mode of exchange differed fundamentally from the market exchanges determined by Smith's division of labour. Smith had seen the cultivator's surpluses to pay for his labour and support his subsistence, as well as replenish capital employed and return revenues of profit to the capitalist and of rent to the landlord. The result was Hont and Ignatieff's 'paradox of commercial society' highlighted in chapter two, which described the compatibility between 'economic inequality' and 'adequate subsistence', and between the 'rights of the rich' and 'needs of the poor'.

Steuart's surpluses, on the other hand, supported the cultivator's subsistence and the wants of society. Because superfluous stock was necessarily equivalent to the cultivator's industry, rather than an asset accruing to the capitalist,¹⁴² it was consumed immediately or it was not produced at all. Production, therefore, was caused to meet a calculated consumption; supply was caused to meet a calculated, or 'effectual', demand. Today, Steuart's mode of exchange is recognised to have been the forerunner to Maynard Keynes's theory of aggregate demand, in which effectual demand or the propensity to consume is created by strategic state spending, which in turn sustains

¹³⁹ Maria Luisa Pesante, 'Steuart's Theory of Money & Sovereignty', in Ramón Tortajada, ed., *The Economics of James Steuart* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 186-200.

¹⁴⁰ For the similarity of Steuart's ideas on 'industry' with Hume, see Ikuo Omori, 'The 'Scottish Triangle' in the shaping of political economy: David Hume, Sir James Steuart, and Adam Smith,' in *The Rise of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, eds. Tatsuya Sakamoto and Hideo Tanaka (London: Routledge, 2003), 103-118.

¹⁴¹ Steuart, *Inquiry*, 35-36. For Stewart's concept of the 'equivalent', see Jean-Jacques Gislain, 'James Steuart: Economy and population', in Tortajada, *Economics of James Steuart*, 169-185.

¹⁴² Sylvie Diatkine and Michel Rosier, 'Steuart and Smith on Banking Systems and Growth', in Tortajada, *Economics of James Steuart*, 218-234.

employment and industry. In Steuart's time, the equivalence which demand makes with supply was also seen to have a political purpose. It forged a socio-economic relationship in which economic equality and a balance of power were established between the two classes of free men emerging from a post-feudal order: i.e. the 'rich' and the 'poor'. Steuart's mode of exchange, Pesante explained, thus comprehended a 'reworking of Harrington's theory of freedom and subjection in terms of the balance of property.'¹⁴³ But what enabled Steuart's mode of exchange was his highly-inventive credit theory of money and the determinacy which it gave to value.

As we saw in chapter four, Smith's equation between the value of money and the price of a good was fraught by the ambivalence and contradiction arising from the 'altercation' between labour value and use value. Prices could not be properly fixed, because value was indeterminate. The reason for this, in Steuart's view, was because money, in the conventional form of specie and paper issued on account of specie, was expected to do too many things it was not designed for. The functions needed of money in an exchange were as the means of exchange and a standard of account, i.e. symbolic money, or, simply, cash. Conventional money, however, which 'custom' had 'made precious metals the common material', was, contrary to Hume's bullionist insistence otherwise, unsuited for these functions. So was paper money issued against bullion, and also paper money issued as Smith's 'real bills' of mercantile credit, which was essentially a metallic position. Intrinsically, metallic money was commodity money, introduced into the economy 'by way of credit'.¹⁴⁴ It facilitated efficiently money's functions as the means of payment, or standard of debt, and as a store of value, functions which fulfilled its role in financial capital.

¹⁴³ Pesante, 'Steuart's Theory of Money & Sovereignty', 197.

¹⁴⁴ Pesante, 'Steuart's Theory of Money & Sovereignty', 193.

However, using commodity money in the form of precious metals to carry out the functions of symbolic money, exacerbated ‘the problem of the indeterminacy of value with which commodity money enters the circulation of commodities which, on the contrary, have a determinate cost-value.’¹⁴⁵ Moreover, it opened the gates for financial capital and its monopolising spirit to procure the power of command over labour, and subjugate the cultivator to debt and slavery. On account of public debt, Minto, as we know, destroyed Java’s paper currency. But, faithful to Hume’s position on money, Minto had no backup plan: he merely hoped that industrious capital will regenerate out of the vacuum. Raffles was far more aware of the reality that industrial capital could do no such thing. Adopting the position of Steuart, he understood that the reason was because Hume’s specie was fundamentally flawed for the role of symbolic money in industrial capital. ‘Symbolic money which is created by credit [i.e. specie] is not money,’ noted Pesante, ‘because gold is the wrong commodity for cash base’. What was required was a radical reconception of conventional money, which could serve as industrial capital as well as answer Dugald Stewart’s question as to how the equality, levelled by Minto’s destruction of financial capital, would be maintained.

The means by which to effect a radical reconception of money was also the means by which to effect the balance of property: this was the opportunity opened by Muntinghe’s proposal to alienate land to private proprietors. Raffles’s land sales established a class of rich European proprietors, but instead of proceeding with Muntinghe’s plan to indenture native labour to the estates, Raffles then established through his land rents a class of poor native husbandmen who lacked the means to procure estates, but were accorded rights to the ground which the Europeans had to respect. What remained was to equalise and energise the two propertied ‘parts of

¹⁴⁵ Pesante, ‘Steuart’s Theory of Money & Sovereignty’, 191.

society' in balance, by creating 'a social link through economic exchange' between them.¹⁴⁶ This economic exchange involved Steuart's effectual demand, wherein the 'wealth' of the rich (i.e. their land) could be expended to consume the productions of the poor (i.e. their industry). An instrument was thus needed that can exchange an equivalent value of land for an equivalent value of industry, and it was believed that this instrument was symbolic money, or Steuart's 'circulating equivalent'. 'The desire to consume creates,' Steuart said, 'the circulating equivalent, without which the alienation of the produce of industry would not have taken place.'¹⁴⁷

Raffles, I argue, attempted to establish symbolic money as the instrument for creating effectual demand in the form of his new paper currency, known as the Lombard Note. The event is understated in the history, no doubt owing to the utter confusion which it must have caused the historian: why on earth would Raffles issue more paper money from mortgaged land when he was withdrawing paper money that was initially issued from mortgaged land? Two factors distinguished Raffles's Lombard Note from the Franco-Dutch government's Probolingo Paper and Orphan Chamber Paper. The first concerned the commodity which backed the currency. Probolingo Paper and Orphan Paper – though they were issued in connection with land mortgages – were actually representative of silver. Probolingo paper was issued as debt notes on cash loans acquired by government against the security of government land. Orphan paper was issued as credit notes on cash appropriated by government from the Orphan Chamber's reserves. Both Batavian paper currencies thus circulated as credit (or debt) and constituted commodity money. As a result, they were unable to efficiently circulate commodities at their determinate cost-value.

¹⁴⁶ Gislain, 'James Steuart: Economy and population', 174.

¹⁴⁷ Steuart, *Inquiry*, 60.

The Lombard Note, on the other hand, was issued in credit for land mortgages through a defunct Dutch colonial bank which Raffles revived, the Lombard Bank. Significantly, these mortgages were private loans, issued by a public bank to the private proprietors of land which they had purchased from the land sales. ‘The re-establishment of the Lombard Bank was necessary,’ Raffles explained, ‘in order to enable persons possessed of real property to obtain a command of the value thereof for the settlement of their outstanding accounts, [and] that the Lombard Notes have the security of actual property on which they are issued’.¹⁴⁸ The Lombard Note was technically a non-metallic commodity money. But because land was considered a suitable commodity for cash base, thus, by Stuart’s reasoning, the Lombard Note was expected to circulate as money, or symbolic money, rather than as credit. Because it was expected to function as a medium of exchange and standard of account, it was thus capable of circulating commodities at their determinate cost-value. These characteristics of the Lombard Note – i.e. anti-metallism, non-cartalism, land as cash base – specifically identify with Stuart’s credit theory of money.¹⁴⁹

The second factor was the very limited issue of the Lombard Note. At 214,360 Spanish Dollars,¹⁵⁰ this represented a sixth of the Batavian paper currency at the value recognised by Minto in September 1811, or a twentieth at the value claimed by Van Braam. The limited issue pointed to effectual demand: only a determinate amount of symbolic money adequate to circulate a determinate equivalent of produce was required to facilitate a calculated consumption. Raffles’s estimate of the value of the people’s industry under his Agrarian Law can be fixed at 300,000 Spanish Dollars, the maximum amount the Lombard Bank was authorised to issue. This was no market economy.

¹⁴⁸ Raffles to Hastings, 25 March 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part V, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Pesante, ‘Steuart’s Theory of Money & Sovereignty’, 194.

¹⁵⁰ J. Dupuy to Raffles, 4 March 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VII, Supplement AAA, 285.

Interestingly, the actual issue of the Lombard Note came at just over half of the value of ‘the total amount of Land sold... [which] is Spanish Dollars 375,413’.¹⁵¹ This was in accordance with the instructions for the Lombard Bank, which stipulated that ‘the Notes are to be issued on the Mortgage of Houses and Lands exclusively, such Mortgage being admitted to an extent not exceeding half the value of the same’.¹⁵² The correspondence of the value of Lombard Note issue to half of the value of land alienated for the sales rather corroborates the fact that these measures had involved the macroeconomic state planning consistent with effectual demand, rather than the market forces of Smith’s division of labour.

Certainly, the Lombard Note was a deliberate experiment on Raffles’s part. Concocted in August 1812 at the latest, it was coincident to the land sales which he had in July 1812 made up his mind to undertake. It was consequently put into practice by 1 March 1813, when the land sales had been wrapped up, and another round was issued in 1 November 1813, again coincident to the New Revenue System of 15 October 1813. The Lombard Note, the land sales, the land rents: all three were clearly the deliberate components of a single land policy. But only the land rents were sanctioned by Minto. As with the land sales, Raffles also manoeuvred for some kind of justification to proceed with the Lombard Note. In August 1812, he wrote to Minto to propose the Lombard Bank, and argued if it was better ‘to substitute in lieu of the present [Batavian] notes, a Paper Currency immediately guaranteed by the *British* authority, or to issue similar notes through the medium of a Bank supported and sanctioned by Government,

¹⁵¹ ‘Minute by the Lieutenant Governor’, 18 February 1814, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix G, 202-211. This receipt, and the remainder of Batavian paper withdrawn, added to 8.47 million Rix Dollars, the total amount of paper money in circulation at the invasion. ‘Government have now in their Treasury... by the redemption of this Paper Currency obtained a Credit for the surplus above that sum which was obtained by the Sale of Lands, which balance amounts to Rix dollars 6,059,619, or Spanish Dollars 932,249.’

¹⁵² ‘Additional Instructions for the Lombard Bank’, 1 November 1813, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part IX, Appendix ZZ, 283-284.

but maintained rather by Colonial credit than by the General Credit of the British Government.’¹⁵³ Minto seemed to have recognised the Lombard Note for its radical anti-metallist nature, because he not only disapproved of it, but he proposed a safer cartalist alternative. In October 1812, on the question of ‘the establishment of a Public Bank on the Island,’ orders were sent to Raffles that ‘we would not wish you to take any step with a view to such an establishment’.¹⁵⁴ In February 1813, another instruction was sent to Raffles ‘to issue Treasury Notes to a moderate amount.’¹⁵⁵ Raffles issued the Treasury Notes, but at less than half the amount of his issue of the Lombard Notes.

It is not known whether the Lombard Note worked well as symbolic money and as the instrument for effective demand. He later said that ‘the subject of Paper Currency offers so wide a field for discussion, that it is with difficulty I can confine myself to the above concise statement of our proceedings’. Nor is it known if Raffles’s land sales and land rents had any success in creating a constitutional balance of property and whether this equality was maintained. Muntinghe’s complaint that ‘three Spanish Dollars being in general accounted a plentiful allowance for a man and his family for a whole year, he is utterly prevented from raising a single farthing on the rent of their habitations’, suggests that there was some success. These questions, however, are secondary. The real significance of Raffles’s land reform policy lay in its sheer political-macroeconomic enormity. It was sweeping in scale and revolutionary in design. What it represented was a comprehensive post-feudal settlement, and one which, compared to Minto’s piecemeal solution and Muntinghe’s regressive scheme, offered the highest promise of a self-determined or independent national state for Java. The magnitude of

¹⁵³ Raffles’s ‘Answer to the 12th Head of Enquiry’ on ‘The Policy of the Measures adopted with respect to the Treasury Notes and Lombard Bank’, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VI, 149.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ J. Dupuy to Raffles, 27 February 1813, Stamford Raffles, *Letters and Internal documents*, Part VII, Supplement XXX, 366. ‘and that the credit and value of these Notes, may be successfully maintained, it will be advisable that they should bear an Interest – not, however, exceeding 6 per Cent per annum.’

what Raffles attempted to do in Java in 1811-1816 would not be seen again until Sukarno's post-colonial settlement for the independent national state of Indonesia.

Chapter Six

John Leyden's Nativist Conception of the Colony

The Java policies of the Earl of Minto and Sir Stamford Raffles from 1811 to 1816, it has been evident, were committed to the freedom of the individual and to the freedom of peoples. Minto's decision to invade Java was inspired by his determination to break the moneyed interest's power of command over the cultivator's labour. His devaluation of Java's Paper Currency was intended to end the people's bondage to debt slavery. Raffles's land rents were designed to thwart the cultivator's subjection to new forms of feudal servitude as well as to bequeath him the self-dependence which the right of property empowered its proprietor. These policies prescribed a system of governance and a social order which intervened in human lives. But, for better or worse, they were intended to end what Minto and Raffles saw to be oppressive systems of modern, commercial, colonial society, and to recover and protect the native individual's freedom.

Admittedly, Minto's and Raffles's perceptions of freedom were subjective. But these perceptions are important if we are to understand how the spirit of their policies, constituted as a scheme of criticism of colonial society, developed in the East Indies after the British government returned Java to the Dutch in 1814.¹ To understand Minto's and Raffles's perceptions of freedom, however, we have to understand how they had conceived of the human being in his human condition. As I explained in chapter two, the civic humanist context of freedom in Raffles's mode of language denoted a positive,

¹ By the terms of the 1814 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. The Company did not hand over the island until 1816.

rather than negative, conception of liberty. Positive liberty expressed the will asserted by the individual on his authority as a free citizen, rather than the protection which his claim to a legal right accorded to his freedom to do things.² For Raffles, freedom took a political form, in the sense of being free from enslavement, or of being self-conscious and independent of an external power or will.

This positive conception of liberty overlapped with Minto's understanding of liberty. However, a subtle but significant difference separated their approaches. Where Raffles had identified the external power personally in terms of a substantiated figure, such as the Chinese creditors and farmers of revenues, the native sovereign and regents, Dutch officials, even English and American 'adventurers' and 'interlopers' (his free traders), this was not true in the case of Minto. In Minto's understanding of liberty, the external power was impersonal. As we saw, it took the conceptual forms of public debt, paper money, and the moneyed interest. For Minto, the causes of the human condition transcended corporeal causes. They in fact took the shape of ideas and concepts, such that the human condition is itself a condition of the human understanding. Minto's abstract dimension is not unusual if we recall the battle of wills conceptualised by his teacher, David Hume, between the idea of the 'nation' and the idea of 'public credit'.³ Central to this battle was the concept of 'power', though it was not conceived as an idea in itself – 'we never,' Hume argued, 'have any idea of power'⁴ – but as the degree to which an idea such as the 'nation' or 'public credit' subjects or beholds a person.

² See Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958), in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-217.

³ David Hume, 'Of Public Credit', in David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. I, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898).

⁴ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (England: Penguin Classics, 1985), 211 (Book 1, Section XIV)

This intellectual understanding of the human condition discloses a Scottish discourse involving a unique ‘Scotch Metaphysics’, or philosophy of the human mind.⁵ The Scotch metaphysics was an epistemological tradition of the Church of Scotland which defended human reality. It was formally inculcated in Scotland’s schools and universities under the disciplines of ‘logic’ and ‘moral philosophy’, and in the fields of linguistics and divinity. In the eighteenth century, this Scotch tradition was challenged by ideal forms of knowledge from the French *philosophes*, and then undermined by a secular deconstruction of the human understanding from none other than David Hume. A Scottish response to Hume and the French idealists emerged with Thomas Reid, who proved that human reality was native reality. Reid sparked a national debate on the human condition which, for the Scots, had essentially distinguished the Scottish Enlightenment. In this debate, Minto, Hume’s student, stood on side of Reid.⁶ In John Leyden, however, we have a vigorous scholar of Reid. Leyden’s teachers, Dugald Stewart and James Finlayson, were themselves students and colleagues of Reid. Together, they represented the Edinburgh University component of what became known as the Scottish School of the Philosophy of Common Sense.

The Scottish School originally addressed ethical and political concerns at a national level, and subsequently apprehended questions of political economy on an international scale. We have seen Minto, for example, grapple in Java with what Dugald Stewart had criticised to be Hume’s simultaneous denial and acceptance of the intrinsic quality of bullion, and Adam Smith’s ambivalence of labour value and intrinsic value.

⁵ The term was coined by George III and made generic by George Elder Davie. The discourse it refers to is a vast and rather specialist subject of logic, which I cannot enter into here. My purpose will be to relate the general arguments of the Scotch metaphysics and their implications in ethics, politics, political economy, history, and language.

⁶ ‘The view taken by Sir Gilbert of Hume’s sceptical arguments appears to have been that adopted subsequently by Reid, Oswald, and Beattie.’ Gilbert Elliot, *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto from 1751 to 1806, Vol. I*, ed. Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), 28.

The problem was essentially one of indeterminate ideas, and we saw Minto reject the sovereignty of the ideas of public credit and paper money as a result. In this chapter and the next, I will show how the Scottish School's innate or nativist form of knowledge was brought by Leyden to bear, posthumously, on ethical and humanitarian concerns in Asia. Leyden's nativist conception of the human condition was adapted as an epistemological form of the venture of critique of colonial society by Raffles when he left Java in 1816. In this chapter, I introduce Leyden's intellectual nativism and explain how it led him to propose a nativist model for the colony as a positive community of goods. In the next chapter, I will discuss the basis of Leyden's nativism in the Reidian framework of Common Sense, and why it led Leyden to recover the native consciousness of the peoples of Asia from the anthropological and anthropogenic claims by the Orientalist scholars of Calcutta's *Asiatick Society*.

Minto's Conception of the Human Condition

Minto's conception of freedom, it is apparent, cannot be accurately labelled as positive liberty. Neither was it a negative liberty, or some composition of both. This ambiguity may, on a first impression, be mistaken for indifference. On the one hand, Minto was a member of the Ministry of the Talents, which enacted the ground-breaking Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807. His aversion to slavery was unquestionable. 'Slavery is established in all these countries to a shocking extent,' he wrote from Malacca, where the expedition to Java had disembarked; 'an insolvent debtor, however, small his debt, is condemned to be the slave of the creditor.'⁷ At Malacca, Minto famously emptied the prisons and freed its prisoners. This event was highly celebrated by Munshi Abdullah

⁷ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India: Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1807 to 1814*, ed. Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880), 265.

who recorded it in his *Hikayat Abdullah*.⁸ And yet, on the other hand, Minto's own account was impassive and strikingly practical:

I released all the Government slaves at Malacca, presenting to each with my own hand a certificate of their freedom, and four dollars to provide for their immediate subsistence till they can get into some way of life. They have also the option of resuming their former state if they find a difficulty in maintaining themselves...⁹

In fact, Minto's understanding of liberty described an impermanent state. An individual's liberty was measured against how successfully he could negotiate through 'some way of life', including, if he was unsuccessful, resuming his 'former state'. Liberty was therefore posited in the act, rather than in a state. This was not the 'active life', or *vita activa*, which the political freedom that comes of possession of property privileges its owner. We are dealing here with a sense of freedom that is instantiated as a result of an individual's actions. This phenomenon, seen with regard to the Malay, was actually elaborated by Raffles in a letter, dated 1 January 1815, to William Marsden, secretary of the admiralty and a distinguished historian of Sumatra,¹⁰ where he was formerly secretary to the Bencoolen government. The description was not Raffles's own, but quoted from an unnamed source. Marsden, however, will have recognised that it was the same source which Raffles had repeatedly quoted and referred to since his correspondence with Marsden began in 1806. Raffles's source was John Leyden:

The Malay, living in a country where nature grants (almost without labour) all his wants, is so indolent, that when he has rice, nothing will induce him to work. Accustomed to wear arms from his infancy, to rely on his own prowess for safety,

⁸ Munshi Abdullah, *Hikayat Abdullah*, tr. A.H. Hill (Reprint No. 29, Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2009), 93.

⁹ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India*, 265.

¹⁰ William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra, containing an account of the Government, Laws, Customs, and Manners of the Native Inhabitants, with a description of the Natural Productions, and a relation of the Ancient Political State of that Island* (1783) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 1811 edition).

and to dread that of his associates, he is the most correctly polite of all savages, and not subject to those starts of passion so common to more civilized nations. But with all his forbearance, he is feelingly alive to insult; submits with a bad grace to the forms to which, in a civilized life, he finds himself obliged to conform; and when these are either numerous or enforced with supercilious contumely, or the delays of office, he flies to the woods, where, with a little rice boiled in a bamboo, eaten with sprouts of the surrounding trees as a leaf, *he feels he is free.*¹¹

This passage opens with a principal theme of British eighteenth century thought which we have already come across. ‘Indolence’ was a concept defined by Hume’s juxtaposing of it against ‘industry’: while industry resulted from the ‘refinement in the arts’, indolence was the state where this refinement was absent or had not commenced (and not a human defect). Instead of a ‘quickening of diligence’, this state described the ‘habits and manners’ of a rustic mode of life or rural idyll. The distinction generally separated a former ancient order from a future of commercial modernity. Leyden acknowledged this distinction, comparing the arms-bearing custom of ‘savages’ against the ‘forms’ of ‘civilized life’. However, when he then compared the conduct of the ‘savage’ with that of ‘civilized life’, we find a remarkable reversal of the norm. The Malay individual, instead of being typically governed by his unreasoned passions in comparison to the reasoned politeness of refined society, was regarded by Leyden to be ‘the most correctly polite of all savages, and not subject to those starts of passion so common to more civilized nations.’

This inverted construction of human history is unusual and striking. Instead of progressing socially in civil manners with the advance of the arts and sciences, as the grand narrative of commercial society dictated, man was seen instead to regress

¹¹ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir of the Life and Public Services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, F.R.S. etc: particularly in the Government of Java, 1811-1816, and of Bencoolen and its Dependencies, 1817-1824; with details of the Commerce and Resources of the Eastern Archipelago, and Selections from his Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1830), 235.

personally. The reason was quite clearly put by Leyden: the ‘forms’ of ‘civilized life’ put a damper on the actions of the individual. Indeed, what the natural law paradigm of modern civil society does is, to quote Quentin Skinner, to organise the ‘moral space between rulers and ruled’. But instead of accepting the rights of freedom and property which this moral space sanctifies and protects, the Malay individual was seen by Leyden to have found them, and the civil manners of polite society which resulted from the observance of these rights, to be oppressive. The Malay is not free if only because he is subjected ‘to the forms to which, in a civilized life, he finds himself obliged to conform’. Yet the Malay individual did not seem to have regarded his cultural customs to be unoppressive either. There is an inherent tension in the observance of custom, as the Malay individual ‘dreads’ the ‘prowess’ ‘of his associates’.

The contrast struck between the system of ancient custom and the system of modern society is similar to that alluded to by Minto between the ‘way of life’ in modern society and the ‘former state’ of an ancient body politic. To the particular convention or mode of manners, language, and usages which derived from the observance of each system, the freed Malay individual had the choice of entering. Like Minto, therefore, Leyden’s conception of liberty described an impermanent state. It referred to the individual’s ability to negotiate his way amid the *power* imposed on him through the mode of manners, language, and usages of either system of ancient custom or modern society. Liberty is posited in the individual’s action. But here Leyden departed from Minto. Where Minto saw two alternatives of social order that man must choose between, Leyden saw a third option. Shunning both social orders, the Malay individual can choose, even for a fleeting moment, to fly ‘to the woods, where... *he feels he is free.*’ I shall return to Leyden’s third option later.

The framework apprehended by Minto and Leyden, in juxtaposing two social orders in opposition, identifies two general paradigms of the human world which I have repeatedly alluded to throughout this thesis. These paradigms originate respectively in the ideas of natural law and personal virtue, which themselves originate in how the property termed *human nature* was understood by man. In the first case, man derived his knowledge of his world based on the universal laws of *Nature*. In the second case, man understood the place of his person in the world to be central, and providential by the design of *God*. Man is either idealised as a social creature on the one hand, or realised as a political creature on the other. At an intellectual level, these conceptions of human nature articulated rival ideas about society and state. Where the idealisation of society was concerned, a *de jure* foundation of natural law and private property applied. Where the realisation of the state was concerned, a *de facto* foundation of public virtue and self-government applied. In practical terms, these two paradigms informed two modes of language, manners, and usages, which John Pocock attributed to the two conceptual frameworks of political economy and civic humanism. We encountered these two frameworks in chapter two. As mentioned, they also delineated Isaiah Berlin's two conceptions of negative liberty and positive liberty,¹² Hannah Arendt's dichotomy between the 'private' and 'public' realms, and Harrington's distinction between the 'Goods of Fortune' and the 'Goods of the Mind'.

I have crudely and simplistically set these two paradigms of social order apart in order to differentiate their nuanced qualities. In truth, a dialectic exists between the two paradigms which depicts the narrative of the history of ideas. The complexity of how one view adapted to or adopted the other through time demands that we cannot treat either one discretely in itself, or to the exclusion of the other, or as some immutable and

¹² Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', 166-217.

indivisible entity.¹³ Augustine of Hippo's fifth-century conception of the providential *City of God*, for example, though fatally opposed to the earthly *City of Man*, necessarily expressed a divine law which was often indistinguishable from latter's natural law.¹⁴ The two laws, though held to be distinct, were later conflated by Thomas Aquinas.¹⁵ This conciliation seemed to have broken down nearer Minto's era. We already heard Hume's prophecy of the apocalypse between public credit and the nation, with either one invoking nature, man, or God as it suited them.

In the civic humanist language of the eighteenth century, however, we see a concerted balancing or converging of the two poles. Adam Smith, in espousing the 'natural system of perfect liberty and justice' of the marketplace, was careful to warn that it should not upset the 'state of the body politic' which constituted the nation.¹⁶ The jurisprudential language of 'natural rights' was adopted or merged with the political language of 'historic birthrights'.¹⁷ For their invocation of both natural law and personal virtue, a motley of republicans and democrats from seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain, known variously as Levellers, Commonwealthmen, London Radicals, etc., were given the general epithet 'whig'. Indeed, as we saw in chapters one and three, the most famous whig intellectual of the age, Edmund Burke, had appealed for the restoration of legal, political, and moral order in the body politic of empire. Minto's dispassionate

¹³ See John Pocock's essay 'Modes of political and historical time in early eighteenth-century England', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 91-102.

¹⁴ See Gerard O'Daly's chapter 'The Theme of the Two Cities', in Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 53-66.

¹⁵ See Paul E. Sigmund's essay 'Law and Politics' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 217-231.

¹⁶ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994), 655 (Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III).

¹⁷ See John Pocock's essay 'The varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform: A history of ideology and discourse', in J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 215-310. Also Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* (1959) (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987).

upholding of both the ‘way of life’ in modern society and the ‘former state’ of the ancient body politic reiterated this inclusive view of social order.

The reason, as we saw with Minto in chapters three and four, was because what was deeply troubling about any system of the human world were its enthusiastic or fanatical extremes. Modern commercial society paved the road to the future, but at every step of the way a *spirit of conquest* threatened to subvert authority, usurp liberty, and impose domination. The same threat loomed over the ancient body politic. Balancing or converging the two social orders had the metaphysical cogency of mitigating the *spirit of conquest* and preserved a *spirit of liberty*. As we saw with Burke, this approach derived from the scholastic argument that the practical stability of *pax et concordia* outweighed the ideological import which the classical cause of *libertas et imperium* was believed to satisfy. *Pax et concordia* resulted in the *common good*. This outcome of the balancing or merging of ideas about human nature and the human world evokes the Aristotelian Doctrine of the Mean. In identifying the middle ground between modern commercial society and the ancient body politic, Minto was also tempering the demands which arose from the intellectual foundations behind each order. Thus, the mandates of Nature and God, of jurisprudence and governance, of wisdom and virtue, were maintained in tension to each other, such that the modes of manners and language in either order was prevented from oppressing the Malay individual and affecting his sense of freedom.

This middle ground, Minto had expected to emerge in Java out of the vacuum created by his annihilation of paper money, public debt, and the moneyed interest. Financial capital, which in the civic humanist scheme of things had characterised *vicious* commerce and its bane of war and debt, was wiped out in order that *virtuous* commerce, and the industrious capital it promoted, could resume its proper place in the

lives of men. As we saw in chapters four and five, Minto had envisioned a basic exchange economy based on commodity money in the form of specie. Raffles digressed from this system by instituting a Steuartian scheme which deployed a limited credit economy based on symbolic money in order to effect a final barter economy. In both cases, money was strictly employed as a medium of exchange and measure of account. Its accumulation as a store of value and standard of debt was mitigated by the absence of debt assets and securities so central to Adam Smith's conception of capital. In this manner, the 'forms' of 'civilised society' were moderated. Money was sufficiently employed to oil the wheel of trade, encourage consumption to meet production (and vice versa), and circulate commodities. The Malay individual, freed and empowered by an interest in property in land, could quicken his diligence in industry, follow 'his plough with greater alacrity and attention', and remain free – or so it was argued.

Leyden's Conception of the Human Condition

In the figure of John Leyden, we find a departure from Minto's inclusive and architectonic structure of legal, political, and moral order. Leyden did not deny or reject the structure, but, as mentioned, he saw a third route for the Malay individual which shunned both regimes of jurisprudence and governance and their forms of society and state. What is interesting and significant is that this third route was not anarchic in the lawless context we understand today, nor was it utopian (or dystopian). Unlike his contemporaries,¹⁸ Leyden did not produce any treatise elaborating some social-economic or political ideal, nor any poetic creations expressing a millenarian paradise or the gothic aesthetic. Instead, in his first published work, the *Discoveries and*

¹⁸ For example, William Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793) and William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789).

Settlements of the Europeans in Northern and Western Africa (1799),¹⁹ Leyden constantly referred to recorded evidence of particular native communities realising their free existence outside of the forms of both commercial society and the body politic. ‘Those that inhabit the desert [sic],’ for example, ‘have an invincible attachment to liberty, like the Tartars, a propensity which can neither be conquered by the arts, nor by any modification of government.’²⁰

How these native African communities operated outside of and in comparison to the laws and governance of organised society, was illustrated by the distinction made in the *Discoveries* between two types of commerce, known as ‘commission-commerce’ and ‘speculation-commerce’. The categories originated from one of Leyden’s explorer-heroes in Africa, who featured prominently in the *Discoveries*: the Swedishborgian and Abolitionist, Carl Bernhard Wadström. In his *Essay on Colonization* (1794), Wadström had defined *speculation-commerce* as a system of economy which ‘does not tend to directly supply the wants of a community, as to gratify the avidity of individual merchants’.²¹ For these merchants, ‘governments suffer to take advantage of those wants’ and ‘have been prevailed on to make formal grants, of monopolies and exclusive privileges’. In contrast, *commission-commerce* described the mode of exchange into which,

in remote ages, mankind were naturally led by their real wants. An interchange of useful commodities was the only object of merchants in early times. A natural and necessary barter, by their means, diffused the produced of every part of the then known world over the whole; and their profits might be regarded more as the wages of necessary labour, than as the gains of injurious monopoly. Gold and

¹⁹ John Leyden, *A Historical & Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries & Settlements of the Europeans in Northern & Western Africa, at the close of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: J. Moir, 1799).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹ C. B. Wadström, *An Essay on Colonization, particularly applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some free thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce; also brief descriptions of the Colonies already formed, or attempted, in Africa, including those of Sierra Leona and Bulama*, Part I (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794), 67-68.

silver were not excluded from this commerce; but they were left to find their way into the general circulation, by their *weight and standard*. Their relative worth was not, like that of coin, fixed by artificial laws; but, like the worth of every other commodity, was regulated by the natural demand. And paper credit had, in that early period, no existence. This natural and unrestrained state of commerce accorded perfectly with the primitive simplicity of those ages: and it certainly tended to promote a diffusion of the comforts of life commensurate to the wants of mankind, whom it united by the bond of mutual interests.²²

Wadström's two categories of commerce appear at first to distinguish the notions of virtuous commerce and vicious commerce, and of industrious capital and financial capital. However, a careful reading of Wadström's definition of commission-commerce above will show that there is no such parallel. Wadström's commission-commerce does not in fact portray an economic system at all. Firstly, there was no conceptualisation of money at its most fundamental functions as a medium of exchange and measure of account. Paper money, which generally indicated a store of value and standard of debt, was absent. But, importantly, specie was also absent. This meant that the 'artificial laws' which signified the intrinsic value of the metallic coin or the face value of its seigniorage – i.e. the conceptualisation itself of money – was also absent. Instead, there was gold and silver, which were seen as natural commodities and functioned as a crude form of commodity money. Secondly, there was no conception of supply and demand of the scale generated by Smith's division of labour, or even by James Steuart's effectual demand. In both cases, consumption had been based on 'unnecessary wants'. Wadström's demand was instead seen as 'natural demand' and based on 'real wants'. This lack of a monetary system and a market exchange system implied the lack of a pricing system, and even a valuation system. Indeed, it is difficult

²² Wadström, *Essay on Colonization*, 65-66.

to conceive what ‘the worth of every other commodity... regulated by the natural demand’, might be.

It is clear, however, that in spite of the absence of established ideas about money, markets, price, and, it seems, even property in land, commission-commerce was not an untested or dysfunctional activity. Leyden found it to have operated among the ‘Brebers’ [sic] of Barbary, the ‘Mongearts’ of the Sahara, and the ‘Gago’²³ of ‘Negritia’, as he referred to Guinea, as the West African coast was then known. Commission-commerce was, in Wadström’s own words, effectively ‘a natural and necessary barter’ that was supplied by ‘necessary labour’, consumed by ‘natural demand’, and realised by natural money. Compared to speculation-commerce, this ‘natural and unrestrained state of commerce’ depended entirely on the actions of the human individual and was totally unaffected by the speculative influence of ideas, theories, systems, laws, and their conventions of manners, language, and usages. The term ‘commission’ was used to denote the acting out of a task. In Wadström’s construction, commission-commerce thus excluded every sort of political-economic, social, and political concept and innovation to have been propositioned in the eighteenth century. But this did not mean it was anti-intellectual or obscurantist. As a phenomenon, commission-commerce was simply a world apart from the Enlightenment. As an historical event, it did not submit to the assumptions handed down to us from that age.

Interestingly, what Wadström’s ‘natural and unrestrained state of commerce’ had resembled was the free intercourse between human beings which Adam Smith had at a fundamental level based his model of market exchanges. At this level, we are dealing with the free actions of human beings as they communed and communicated with each other. How human beings conducted themselves in these interactions was a

²³ Known today as Gao, in Mali.

matter of great interest. Indeed, it boiled down to a question of great antiquity, which asked: is man capable of self-government? Where Adam Smith was concerned, this question takes us back to the earlier speculation about human nature: is man a social animal or a political animal? In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this debate produced the immortal literature on modern political thought that has set the frame of reference for all ideas and inquiries on political philosophy ever since. I shall give a very brief overview.

James Harrington, we saw in chapter five, took an ancient view of man as an exclusively political animal. The conception of man as a social animal, on the other hand – so central to the historical materialism in Smith's theories of the division of labour and self-interest (and indeed in Karl Marx's means of production and class struggle) – was decisively established by John Locke. The views of Harrington, Locke, and other writers from the seventeenth century, however, were partly responses to a necessary question raised at first by Machiavelli and later explicated by Thomas Hobbes: were men fundamentally capable of moral goodness toward each other? Hobbes, notoriously, had said no. Man was a materially selfish brute, and not by free choice but by the design of nature, which Hobbes called the 'state of nature'. The only hope for mankind, therefore, was to compel man to choose, for his own sake, cooperative behaviour through what Hobbes conceived as the 'social contract'. The concept, variously rooted in Roman law and native tradition, was innovatively reworked by Hobbes to describe an idealised consent by all men to surrender their personal liberties to a sovereign authority who will govern their behaviour as a whole. Society, therefore, was constructed from an idea. So was the state, which was realised in the power of the sovereign. Man became social or political only by direction, not by creation or by nature.

The impact of Hobbes's scepticism of human nature and human morality lay in the challenge of its brutal realism. The rediscovery of man's moral goodness thus set the agenda for all future ideas and inquiries, but against a bar raised by the necessity of the state of nature. The ethical nature of man was rediscovered, but as the *essence* of his social or political natures which in turn were rediscovered in the state of nature. Harrington, though he criticised Hobbes's 'ratiocination', located man's political personality in terms of the moral 'goods of the mind': that is, the 'natural or acquired virtues, as wisdom, prudence and courage, etc.'²⁴ Locke located human sociability in natural law, and natural law in the state of nature. Both nature and its laws were, in reprising the scholastic conflating of the natural law with the divine law, ordained by God. Natural law thus determined both man's social nature and the ethics which governed his social behaviour. Hobbes's social contract between the sovereign and subject was recast by Locke as a concord among all individuals to observe each other's natural rights of individual liberty and private property. The observance of these natural rights in turn informed the conventions of society, including its ethical norms, and delegated a government by law to enforce those conventions.²⁵

Adam Smith, writing nearly a century after Locke, theorised society's ethical norms in terms of what he denoted as the 'moral sentiments'. Man was motivated to conduct himself in a moral manner by the mutual good feelings, passions, or sentiments, which his actions were as a consequence believed to satisfy between himself, his subject, as well as the impartial spectator. These actions basically represented the free actions of human beings, and Smith's construction of the common sentiments involved

²⁴ James Harrington, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'*, ed., J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.

²⁵ Thomas Carlyle later described these conventions of society as the 'true Law-Code and Constitution of a Society': 'Without such Earth-rind of Habit... call it System of Habits, in a word, *fixed ways* of acting and of believing,— Society would not exist at all.' Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (Modern Library Classics, 2002), 33.

in these actions portrayed a system of the free intercourse between human beings. It was to all intents and purposes a system of *common sense*. However, it was also a system of common sense which was adapted to the framework of natural jurisprudence.²⁶ Smith's moral sentiments, namely, 'propriety', 'approbation', 'sympathy', and 'self-love', or 'self-interest', were concepts about human nature that assumed the necessity of man's natural liberty and his right of property. They underpinned the ethical basis for the free and guiltless commercial exchanges in the *Wealth of Nations*. This construction, however, contained within itself a contradiction. No matter how free and ethical the actions and actors in Smith's system of common sense were theorised to be, their claim of being free and ethical was inherently and inescapably undermined by the necessity of the natural law that determined the property which is human nature. Although Smith argued that his system 'is not originally the effect of any human wisdom,' he admitted that it 'is the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature'.²⁷

I have given this terse outline of the tradition of ideas about human morality and human nature from Hobbes to Smith, in order to discern a common scheme. In this tradition, not only was human morality the concept of an essence of human nature, human nature was itself a concept of the essence of the human being. Human morality was invariably a conceptualised idea, and never autonomous of the conceptualised ideas of human nature from which it sprang. The outcome was a moral relativism that differentiated Smith's free human actions – i.e. man's natural 'propensity to truck,

²⁶ For more on Smith and the natural law, see Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 129-153; and Knud Haakonssen's chapter 'Adam Smith on Justice, Rights, and Law', in *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 214-245.

²⁷ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 14 (Book I, Chapter II). Smith, however, then proceeded to state ambiguously: 'whether this propensity be one of those original principles in human nature, of which no further account can be given; or whether, as seems more probable, it be the necessary consequence of the faculties of reason and speech, it belongs not to our present subject to enquire.'

barter, and exchange’ – from the free human actions in Wadström’s ‘natural and unrestrained state of commerce’. From the metaphysical perspective, truly free, voluntary human acts should not be governed by Nature or even by God at all. If human actions were the effect of nature’s laws, or had proceeded from the influence of theories or beliefs about human nature which presented to the actor a set of motivating consequences or a set of purposive choices, including the demand of duty or the benefit of utility, then those actions were not metaphysically free nor ethically voluntary. In the case of Wadström’s commission-commerce, free human action was absolute. And if free human action led to successful human intercourse, then an absolute moral realism must apply to that free human action.

It is not easy from the vantage of our milieu to credulously accept this principle of *free will* as the determinant of the human condition. The human condition has generally been discerned from some premise about the moral nature of the human being, and therefore to be corrected or controlled by ideas and systems of social order that have been deduced from that premise. Such an essentialising approach to the human condition had ancient Greek origins and was reasserted at the dawn of the Enlightenment by, we will see in the next chapter, the French philosopher René Descartes. In the next chapter, I shall explain why this philosophical approach to man’s understanding of his place in the world was rejected by the Scottish School. To the Scottish School, the human condition was not predetermined or predestined by the idealised property that is human nature. The human condition was simply determined by the human being’s instinctive or intuitive actions. The Scottish School believed these actions to be willed by human actors as free causal agents, and the free human will to reflect the actor’s innate moral knowledge, i.e. the free human will has a moral reality.

In this sense, the human condition was effectively a moral condition realised by the human understanding.

These notions of human agency and moral realism constituted a *de facto* human reality for the Scottish School. They were philosophically grounded in logic and metaphysics, and continue to be treated under the broad category of ‘virtue ethics’. Yet to the Scottish School, the free human will was also not something assured or permanent. When human actions are foolish and destructive, it was because they are no longer freely willed. The reason was because the human will is, evocatively of the civic humanist idea of *virtue*, corruptible. As described above, the source of corruption was believed to be found within ideas themselves – indeed, as we will see, in contradictions planted in ideas by Descartes’ system of ideal philosophy. Uncorrupted, though, the free human will constituted the Scottish School counterpart to virtue, which was the human being’s innate morality termed as *character*.

Leyden’s Intellectual Nativism

Any reader who encounters for the first time Leyden’s *Discoveries* and his ‘Preliminary Dissertation’ to his 1801 edition of *The Complaynt of Scotland*, may be hard pressed to grasp what Leyden had intended to say in each work. Both publications, Leyden’s very first two from when he was in his mid-twenties, were poorly structured. He tended to hop from one observation or topic to another without elaborating on each one or on their connections. This undisciplined style was a contrast to Leyden’s contributions in the *Asiatic Researches* nearly a decade later, which were precise in argument and developed in structure.²⁸ Yet the same can be said for Leyden’s journal articles from

²⁸ John Leyden, ‘On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations’, in *Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia, Volume the Tenth* (London: Vernon, Hood, and Sharpe, 1811),

1798 to 1801, the same period of the *Discoveries* and *Complaynt*. It is clear that Leyden's first two works stuck out clumsily for a deliberate reason. Partly, they were not proofread. But mainly, it was because Leyden was writing for a particular readership who understood his subject matter and mode of language.

To the general public, Leyden admitted that in his 'plan, he is conscious there are some obvious defects, particularly the want of strict unity of subject, an objection which likewise applies to Raynal's celebrated history of the European settlements in the East and West Indies.'²⁹ Leyden's reference to the classic enlightenment text by the French Jesuit scholar, Abbé Guillaume Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (1771), drew on the similarity between his multiplicity of sources and records with Raynal's 'talents and experience both as an industrious, if not particularly gifted, historian and as a resourceful, magpie-like collector of information.'³⁰ Leyden's friend and biographer, Sir Walter Scott, had also described the *Discoveries* as being 'written on the plan of Raynal's celebrated work... as it contains a clear and lively abridgement of the information afforded by travellers'.³¹ Scott's comparison of Leyden's *Discoveries* to one of the eighteenth century's most prolific works of Oriental scholarship and of the European Enlightenment, however, has inadvertently led to mistaken assumptions about Leyden's ideas on the subject. Apart from their similarity of arrangement, both works did commonly repudiate the destructive colonisations of the past and support a future of virtuous commerce and the enlightened colony. However, how both works conceived of

158-289. John Leyden, 'On the Rosheniah Sect, and its founder Báyezíd Ansári', in *Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia, Volume the Eleventh* (London: J. Cuthell, 1812), 363-428.

²⁹ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, vi.

³⁰ Peter Jimack's 'Introduction' in Peter Jimack, ed., *A History of the Two Indies: A Translated Selection of Writings from Raynal's Historie philosophique et politique des établissements des Européens dans les Deux Indes* (Routledge, 2017).

³¹ Sir Walter Scott, 'Biographical Memoir of John Leyden, M.D.', in *The Edinburgh Annual Register, For 1811, Vol. Fourth, Part Second* (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Co., 1813), xli-lxviii.

virtuous commerce and the enlightened colony were poles apart. Indeed, they represented rival views.

What Raynal's *Two Indies* generally proposed was a new mode of colonial expansion whereby the colony no longer functioned to supply forced labour and precious metals for the benefit of a mercantilist metropole, but rather colonial products that can be traded internationally to its own enrichment. This, of course, described the nineteenth century system of liberalism exploited to huge success by Britain. Raynal's mode of commerce certainly resonated with the free and guiltless international division of labour that was then being promulgated by Adam Smith. In Raynal's time, his proposal was considered progressive, but it contained within it the seeds of eurocentrism, dependency, and the civilising mission which later distinguished imperial power and capitalist subjection. Raynal's model of the enlightened colony, Peter Jimack explained, betrayed an 'approval of the slave-dependent plantation system.'³² We saw in chapter five how it was also approved by Muntinghe as the replacement for the feudal system. To this end, Jimack continued,

the pursuit of riches is certainly empathetically defended, as encouraging the people to be fruitful and industrious, to sail the seas and to engage in manufacturing... By breaking down the barriers between peoples, 'by extending the sphere of needs and the desire for pleasures,' trade 'becomes, one might say, the driving force of the world'... contemplating with satisfaction the picture of a 'Europe full of industrious nations, circulating unceasingly around the globe, to bring it under cultivation and make it useful to man, [...] linking continents together by flying bridges of communication'... And it is the architect of this transformation of the world, the merchant, the trader, who finally emerges as the hero of the work...

³² Jimack, 'Introduction'.

In gratifying the avidity of the hero merchant and supplying unnecessary needs and pleasures, Raynal's system of political economy effectively portrayed Wadström's speculation-commerce.³³ European, idealistic, modern, utilitarian, civilising: evidence of this mode of commerce in Africa was contrasted by Leyden in his *Discoveries* with evidence of commission-commerce. Geographically, they separated the interior from the exterior, desert from forest, highland from plain. Demographically, they distinguished the peoples of these regions. In the three main zones of north-west Africa – i.e. Barbary, the Sahara, Guinea – Leyden particularly differentiated the Moors from the Berbers, Monselemine from Mongearts, and Accanese from the Gago, respectively. The Berbers, Mongearts, and Gago conducted within their own people and with other groups a free intercourse based on 'natural and unrestrained' human actions, or commission-commerce. The Moors, Monselemine, and Accanese, on the other hand, had long received the arts, religion, and authority which informed the conventions of society and government, and which determined the mode of intercourse in speculative-commerce.

By studying the manners, language, and usages of the peoples of Africa, such as were evident in the distinct modes of intercourse in speculative-commerce and commission-commerce, Leyden, who never stepped foot outside of Scotland until 1803, claimed to know them confidently. This identification of people in terms of their beliefs and behaviour is unusual by our standards. It was based on the Scottish School understanding of the *human constitution*, which held that the human intellect was original and innate, or native, within the individual person. 'The radical principles of the human constitution are every where the same,' Leyden noted, 'however they may

³³ Wadström actually cites Raynal's comparison of the enlightened 'spirit of humanity which now begins to inspire all sensible men', with 'conquerors, both ancient and modern, [who] are sinking to the level of the most detestable of mankind.' Wadström then asks: 'But were navigators alone blameable in this respect?... I fear not.'

happen to be modified by adventitious circumstances'.³⁴ Nativism in turn gave the individual powers to will and act freely. Human actors were thus causal agents, and human actions had a moral reality. This *de facto* knowledge of man's intellectual and active powers, termed *Common Sense*, allowed the Scottish School to induce the natural forms human behaviour may take, such as the intercourse in commission-commerce. Inversely, by this connection, the manners, language, and usages of human behaviour could be used to identify the native human constitution, where it existed. This identification was consistently employed by Leyden with great skill. 'By contemplating their manners and customs,' he said, 'we may discover the simple and unmixed operation of those principles which, in civilized society, are always combined with extraneous circumstances.'³⁵

By contrast, in their anthropological works and travel literature, the European votaries of the Philosophical Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution began from the state of Nature (and/or the fate of Providence), and proceeded to theorise and idealise the nature and consequently the behaviour of human beings extraneously, according to what Nature was observed and reasoned to dictate by its laws. Predictably, this conjectural approach in uncovering an unknown human nature, determined the African nature and behaviour relative to Eurocentric theories and ideas about human nature and moral essence. It inevitably led to the European representation of the African and Asiatic natures and their state of civilised society, which, in the hands of the Oriental scholars of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, was turned into the science of 'immutable cultural essences' later exposed as a means for imperial domination and control by Edward Said, in his seminal postcolonial critique, eponymously titled *Orientalism* (1978).

³⁴ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 74.

³⁵ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, xi.

These two conceptions of human existence were distinguished by Leyden in his *Discoveries*. Leyden in fact rejected the deductive method of the learned lights of the European Enlightenment. Though it adopted the mantle of philosophy, it was seen to be, by beginning with unknown premises in order to propose unknown facts, fundamentally speculative. The Scottish School saw it to betray the inductive methods of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. Thus, Leyden criticised the natural scientists who approached the African interior as,

a *charta rasa*, an extended blank of immense size, where everything was unsettled and uncertain, affording ample room for the modern geographers to contradict the ancient, and quarrel with one another, like the geologists their brethren, who dispute continually concerning the interior part of the globe, while they have only penetrated to a contemptible depth beneath its surface.³⁶

The problem with the concept of the blank space – Joseph Conrad’s ‘heart of darkness’ – adopted by the modern geographers and geologists, was its subjectivity in being formed, characterised and dominated by a creative power, in spite of what was in reality already existing in that space. Leyden’s anticipating of the ‘Scramble for Africa’ a century before the event is astounding. He saw exploration to be a handmaiden to empire – conquest, in a new name. Conquest had set out to take territory; exploration aimed higher in claiming the natural history of the world and the natural history of man. Indeed, Leyden was already aware, two centuries before Said, how European representations of Africa and Asia had been internalised as colonial knowledge which held the African and Asiatic under the European gaze. At Houssa, for example, Leyden observed that, ‘in describing their methods of making pottery, the Arab unconsciously gave a representation of the Grecian wheel.’³⁷

³⁶ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 1.

³⁷ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, vii.

Yet, Leyden did not see these developments to have been deliberately caused by megalomaniac explorer-scientists and guileful Orientalists from Europe. The cause was seen to lie within the conceptual framework of their deductive methodology and ideas. Admittedly, this was the conceptual framework of the European Enlightenment. Representations of colonial knowledge were the logical outcome of Enlightenment theories of human nature, political economy, social progress, and Enlightenment concepts of self-interest, property, labour, money, credit, and debt. At the epistemological level, the Enlightenment framework was not unique to Europe. But its philosophical flowering in eighteenth century Europe prescribed a European discourse, idealised a European material world, and effected a European order of liberalism and empire. Leyden understood this Foucaultian historicism of knowledge. The Scottish School beheld the philosophical foundation of knowledge in Enlightenment theories and ideas to be a phenomenon of the moment, and distinct from the foundation of knowledge which it believed to be original, native, instinctive, and common in all human beings. This perspective of the Scottish School in fact proposed a paradigm shift that turned the Enlightenment view of humanity on its head.

Leyden's Human History

The philosophers of the Enlightenment took a monistic view of a natural world conceptualised by the philosophy of ideas.³⁸ In the figures of Abbé de Condillac, David Hume, and Joseph Priestley, they rejected the Scottish precept of native common sense. Or rather, their philosophical framework did not apprehend the Scottish premise of original and native knowledge, but perceived instead a blank intellectual space mired with the unreasoned passions of primitive or savage peoples. As a result, the

³⁸ See Isaiah Berlin's essay 'The Hedgehog and the Fox' in Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (England: Penguin Books, 2008).

Enlightenment's *philosophes* regarded it to be their duty to educate, civilise, and illuminate the savage – including those from the Scottish Highlands – and to free him from his ignorance and from his bondage to his passions and prejudices.

Predictably, in response, the Scottish Schoolmen found Enlightenment monism to threaten the Scottish premise of original and native knowledge. Their epistemological approach was broad and pluralistic: they accepted both the philosophical foundation of knowledge and the common sense foundation of knowledge: indeed, as two parts of a whole. This 'moderate and wide' epistemological foundation, I will return to later. Nevertheless, the Schoolmen were aware that the learned lights of the Enlightenment scorned the instinctive beliefs of ordinary people, known as the *vulgar*, for amounting to the same impulsive passions and prejudices of unenlightened savages. This attitude had grave repercussions. The Schoolmen believed that common sense knowledge was in fact vulnerable to being discredited, corrupted, and suppressed by the idealism and materialism of philosophical knowledge. But because philosophy was not an external force or influence, but internal to the human understanding, it was seen to debase or degrade native common sense as a cancer from within the individual's mind. By this process, native knowledge was lost and with it went the reality of human morality and free human action. The vulgar or savage individual, no longer willing his actions freely by his original and native knowledge, was now subjected to the enlightened systems of philosophy – such as Harrington's agrarianism, Locke's liberalism, or Smith's free market – and instructed by its normative conventions of manners, language, and usages.

Accordingly, the Schoolmen's conception of human understanding as comprising of two epistemological frameworks disassembled the mode of language apprehended by the *philosophes*. To the Schoolmen, the 'intellect' and the 'passions' which the *philosophes* assigned respectively to the learned and vulgar, conveyed rather

different meanings. Man's 'intellectual powers' meant his native and original knowledge, his 'active powers' meant his native free will to act, and both these powers account for the human constitution, also referred to as the native 'character'. Man's 'passions' instead referred to the conventions of idealised systems, as in 'those starts of passion so common to more civilized nations.' When read in this context, the following passage from Leyden's *Discoveries* produces a most extraordinary narrative which places the cause for the native individual's passions on philosophical ideas concerning his human nature and the human world, rather than on the lack thereof as according to the Enlightenment narrative. The native individual's passions were seen to grow as those ideas eroded his native understanding about his human existence and determined the forms of his behaviour.

As the process of deterioration has been going on without intermission for about two centuries, it ought not to excite our surprise, if the negro character had even acquired a peculiar degree of malignancy. The emotions in the breast of the savage derive a degree of wildness and ferocity from the ruggedness of the objects which surround him; numerous objects affect his mind, which do not injure his person; and whatever acts upon the moral frame, tends to establish a physical habit. The expression of the features is gradually moulded to characterize the predominant passion, and every affection of the corporeal system re-acts upon the animating mind. Should therefore the negro character have actually degenerated, this would not constitute an anomalous [sic] fact in the history of man. Where the intellectual powers are left uncultivated, the passions acquire superior energy and violence.³⁹

The corruption and suppression of native vulgar knowledge by learned philosophical knowledge opens up a context of human history which is utterly different from the stadial history of man's material progress from a primitive land-based subsistence to a civilised commercial existence. Leyden's narrative of human history

³⁹ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 97-98.

was based on the rise and fall of civilisations; it was thus cyclical rather than linear. In this manner, it resembled the classical Polybian history whereby the ‘goods of the mind’, or virtue, was corrupted by the ‘goods of fortune’, or luxury, and this entropic process led to the rise and fall of states. An adaptation of this narrative was presented by the French philosopher and orientalist, Constantin Volney, in 1796 in his acclaimed history entitled, *The Ruins: or, a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires*. Volney’s works offered much reflection for Leyden,⁴⁰ and only because the corruption of philosophy implicit in the Polybian decline of virtue into vice in Volney’s history, was inversely analogous to the decay of native knowledge into philosophical knowledge in Leyden’s history. Volney’s animating principle of virtuous self-government was a law of nature called ‘enlightened self-love’. Where Leyden saw native knowledge and native will to be corrupted by such laws, Volney saw ‘enlightened self-love’ to be corrupted by the instinctive and native forms of ‘self-love’ he termed ‘ignorance’ and ‘cupidity’.⁴¹ In both cases, civilisations never survived their zenith.

The cycle of Leyden’s human history was seen to define the past. The Enlightenment was in fact understood by Leyden to have followed earlier moments of enlightened thought. They generally included Deism in the seventeenth century, Protestantism in the sixteenth, Nominalism in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, Mohamedanism in the seventh, and Neoplatonism in the third and fourth (this generalisation does not take into account their nuanced divisions and dissensions). The doctrinal influence of these idealistic movements throughout history was seen by Leyden to have debased the native intellect of the individual and degraded his native morality. To Volney, on the other hand, apart from Mohamedanism, they marked the

⁴⁰ Leyden wrote, ‘Volney’s plan for a literary historico-philosophical history for collecting ancient documents relative to the history revolutions is one of the most valuable ideas thrown out in his hasty reflections on History to which he has given the name of lectures.’ *British Library*, MSS ADD 26,564.

⁴¹ Constantin Volney, *Volney’s Ruins: or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires* (Boston: Josiah P. Mendum, 1869), 35-41.

advent of socio-political institutions and the ascent of empires. Since Plato and his 'Allegory of the Cave',⁴² philosophers have regarded the native intellect as a misguided reality, and their reasoned ideas as coming closest to illuminating the reality of human existence. However, to Leyden, this light instead wielded a despotic power, dictating the individual to think and act not according to his own free intellect and will but according to institutional systems, necessitated by philosophical ideas, of religion, law, and government.

In Africa, these systems were generally classed in terms of the 'absolute authority' of a monarchical, or the 'aristocratical republicanism' of an oligarchical, state or community. But they also significantly referred to the 'society', 'sect', or 'association' of priests and merchants, who variously propagated the 'law' or 'doctrine of Mahomet', the 'peculiar' and 'characteristic tenets of certain denominations of Christians', the 'tenets' of 'the ancient Pagan religion', or the 'law of ancient custom'. There is a remarkable description by Leyden of 'the mysteries of MUMBO JUMBO, [which] like those of BELLI, are conducted by a society of *illuminés*, who are bound by solemn oaths,' and who, 'like the free-masons of Europe, they use a cant language which is unintelligible to the uninitiated.'⁴³ Leyden's striking identification of the mystics of the African cult with the Enlightenment figures of the *illuminés* (illuminati) and freemasons not only pointed at the universality which he saw to apply to the philosophical framework: it also resonated to Edmund Burke's cynical view of the Enlightenment. The philosophical bewitchment of eighteenth century Europe had afflicted Africa before. The evidence lay in the insipid African character, the result of the despotism of idealised systems, and the individual's enslavement to those systems'

⁴² Plato, *The Republic* (England: Penguin Books, 1987).

⁴³ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 227-228.

conventions. Leyden observed this among the Monselemine, Accanese, and especially the Moors:

At every period of history the same character appears to have marked the Moorish nations, and seems to have been always composed of the same quick and volatile, though weak and combustible materials. A considerable part of this character may probably proceed from physical causes; but the spirit of their laws, institutions, customs, and manners, have always retained a certain uniformity of operation on the minds of the people...⁴⁴

As a result, 'the Moors have always been quick, fiery, and impatient, treacherous and cruel', but only because they were 'always groaning under the yoke of despotism, exerting insane and ferocious efforts for relief, which have never proceeded beyond the avenging of injuries, and which have never procured any amelioration of their condition.' Their meanness was thus a superficial reaction to the despotism of ideas, rather than an expression of native passions and prejudices. But beneath the mean exterior, there was no sign of the human morality and human agency that was innate in the human constitution. These intellectual and active powers denoted what Leyden termed the native character. 'Among the individuals,' Leyden explained, 'little diversity of character prevails, for despotism represses the magnanimous exertions of genius, and destroys the peculiarities of the mind, by rendering only one system of manners safe.' The result was a debased human condition depicted in terms of the individual's alienation from his native character. 'Among rude nations, there is generally a frankness and sincerity of character,' Leyden continued, 'but when despondence seizes the general mass, the character of man embitters with the pain he endures; every virtue, even humanity itself, is destroyed, and society is as really dissolved as among those tribes who acknowledge no ruler.'

⁴⁴ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 22.

Thus, among the Moors of Barbary, depressed from their former glory by inveterate oppression, distrust and malevolence have eradicated the natural sense of right and wrong; the opinion of perfidy prevails; all wish to oppress and plunder, as they have been oppressed and plundered, and consider detection as the only misfortune. A dismal uncertainty brood[s] over life, which impairs the greater energy of the mind, and stifles every voluntary exertion. Men dread to give scope to their natural feelings, because they feel nothing but pain; influenced by some obscure hopes of happiness, like their flocks, they are driven along through life, without any fixed intention or object, and, like these, attempt to snatch a little enjoyment as they pass.⁴⁵

To have the individual's 'greater energy of the mind' impaired and his 'every voluntary exertion' stifled – to be 'like their flocks' and 'driven along through life' – spelled the death of the native character as the individual became the necessary creature of idealised systems and their conventions, such as the 'opinion of perfidy'. And to be bound to necessity and be bereft of character were, to Leyden and the Scottish School, to be as good as dead. This was the atrophic state of the people of Africa, as Leyden saw it.

Thus we may perceive how naturally despotism by the same process produces a ferocity and a voluptuousness of character; how it equally chills the heart and palsies the understanding, causing an apathy as well as an absence of thought, which soon subside in the dejection of meanness, and the debility of vice. But despotism is as weak as it is violent; it never possesses more than half the power which it pretends to exercise; its motions are irregular and convulsive, which exhaust their power by their own violence, and are only useful for destruction; now all is spasmodic energy, now all is inaction and death.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 23-24.

⁴⁶ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 24.

Leyden's Wadströmian Colony

Leyden's *Discoveries* is profuse with observations as to how the intercourse of ideas between different groups of people affected their native knowledge and agency, and thus their native character, and modified the conduct of their manners and the mode of their speech. A thorough study of this intercourse has not the time or place in this thesis, but it suffices to note that the intercourse was generally facilitated by priests and merchants for the purposes of religion and commerce. We have already seen the effect of the encounter between innate morality and speculative morality where religion was concerned. The innate moral actions of the vulgar folk were seen to crumble before the prescriptions of the learned philosophical constructions of organised religion. Islam had long featured in north-western Africa, but in the modern era, organised religion consistently designated the Christian denomination. Christianity was discernibly a virile European influence, and like the Arab influence before it, its ideas of religion went hand in hand with ideas of commerce.

As we saw with Wadström, the same division separating innate morality with speculative morality also existed between a commerce that was conducted according to native instinct and a commerce that was conducted according to the prescriptions of philosophical conceptions of man's propensity to trade. In the modern era, the prescriptions of speculative-commerce included the property and trade in slaves – indeed, as a natural law⁴⁷ – and invariably were denominated 'European commerce'.⁴⁸ In Africa, what ensued in an encounter between European speculation-commerce and native commission-commerce was portrayed by Leyden in the *Discoveries*:

⁴⁷ See David Boucher's chapter 'Slavery and Racism in Natural Law and Natural Rights', in David Boucher, *The Limits of Ethics in International Relations: Natural Law, Natural Rights, and Human Rights in Transition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 103.

It is true, that in their intercourse with Europeans, both fraud and violence are often displayed; but these are the consequence of the frauds of Europeans, and their own inaccurate notions of property. As the Europeans practise every species of injustice, not only with respect to the quantity of trading goods, but also by their adulteration; as they use every degree of fraud and violence in trepanning their persons,— the natives, in order to trade on equal terms are forced to resort to a similar conduct. Their ideas with respect to property are very different from those of Europeans. Occupied chiefly by their natural wants, they easily part with their superfluities to those who may want them. In their rude arts there is no division of labour; in the cultivation of their fields, there is not even an individuality. The inhabitants of every district carry on their agricultural operations in concert, and share, in common, the products of their harvest. From this arrangement, the idea of a common interest is continually suggested to the canton or district; but the idea of exclusive property is at the same time rendered more indefinite and vague. The unlimited exercise of the law of hospitality renders the possession of property more useless, as well as more uncertain, as the industrious are forced to share their superfluities with the indolent...⁴⁹

As it turned out, innate morality and commission-commerce were casualties in their encounters with organised religion and speculative-commerce. As mentioned, Leyden located them in the manners and language of the Berbers, Mongearts, and the Gago. These peoples effectively represented the last bearers of the native African character, if only because of their sparse contact with Europeans. Interestingly, Leyden also recorded instances of certain groups or individuals, not from the interior or deserts or highlands, who were aware of the despotic and enslaving natures of speculative-commerce and organised religion that had taken hold in Europe. To them, Leyden gave the epithet, ‘savage philosophers’,⁵⁰ for their native foundation of knowledge. One such figure was John Henry Naimbanna, the son of the king of the Temne people in Sierra Leone. In Leyden’s time, Naimbanna was celebrated for having been sent by his father

⁴⁹ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 99-100.

⁵⁰ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 100.

to England in 1791 into the care of the Abolitionists, Granville Sharp and Henry Thornton, also director and treasurer of the African Association.

Today the story of Naimbanna is disparaged as an example of the Christian civilising and Saidian patronage of the ignorant savage. It is seen to represent a narrative whereby ‘the heathen prince Naimbanna, now transported an ocean away from Africa, is able to find his redemption in Christian England.’⁵¹ That may actually be the case. However, something is amiss in this narrative where Leyden was concerned. To Leyden, Naimbanna’s journey seemed to have been a kind of civilising mission itself, one reminiscent of the British missions of Pope Gregory I and St Augustine of Canterbury. Rather than find his redemption in Christian England, Naimbanna seemed to have gone to a heathen England to redeem the native morality of the Englishman. A biographical account of the event, published in 1807 by an unknown author, described how ‘the king had thought before this time that there was none but bad people in England... but he now found, though there were many wicked people in England, there were many good people also’.⁵² On ‘being informed [that] what made the people in England good, was the Christian religion, he resolved to send thither his son’ – not to receive the light of religion, I argue, but to embody the native character as the true Christian character, and for the benefit of Englishmen whose native character had been debased. Thus, the author concluded by imploring his English reader:

If [, though] living in a christian land, and called by a christian name, thou art nevertheless no Christian, repent without delay, I beseech thee. Receive, from this time the Gospel as a little child. Put off that pride which stands in the way of thy

⁵¹ Tcho Mbaimba Caulker, *The African-British Long Eighteenth Century: An Analysis of African-British Treaties, Colonial Economics, and Anthropological Discourse* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), 22.

⁵² *The Black Prince, a True Story: being an Account of the Life and Death of Naimbanna, an African King’s son, who arrived in England in the Year 1791, and set sail on his Return in June 1793* (Howard & Evans, 1807). The author was most probably Naimbanna himself, and the work edited and published posthumously.

repentance, and of thy salvation. Be humble and willing to learn like this Prince Naimbanna.⁵³

This curious inversion of the moral category between the European and African was evident in Leyden's condemnation of the 'iniquitous commercial principles' of European commerce, which 'continued to regulate the intercourse of white men with their sable brethren, [and] to degrade the negro, and disgrace the European.'⁵⁴ It was also strongly indicated, as I pointed out in chapter one, by Charles Grant's poor opinion of the free traders from Britain in comparison to those from India. Grant, we know, was another prominent Abolitionist from the Clapham Sect that included Thornton and Sharp, as well as a director of the African Association. This inversion of moral category discloses an hitherto-unknown context of colonisation and Orientalism which contradicts the accepted narrative that has come down to us – one based on Raynal's natural law model of the colony – and which rather agreed with Said's indictment of the European's patronising role. Leyden actually expressed this context in his *Discoveries*. Defending Wadstrom's essay on colonisation, he explained how 'Wadstrom, in contributing to the emancipation of the Negroes, was likewise the benefactor of the Europeans; "for," as Helen Maria Williams remarks in her *eloge*, "the dignity of human nature, violated in the person of the slave, is avenged by the consequent depravity of his master."⁵⁵

What emerges is the intriguing view that the African individual, on encountering the polite manners of refined society in England, was still superior to the English individual for his possession of his native character. He may be enslaved physically in chains, but he was free metaphysically; whereas the English slaver was depraved and

⁵³ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁴ Leyden, *Discoveries & Settlements*, 106.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 127.

metaphysically enslaved. Leyden had a story of the son of another African king who had been sold to the West Indies, but was ‘redeemed’ by Wadstrom and placed at a congregational academy in Surrey. The outcome again contradicts our historical assumptions: ‘Though acquainted with European customs, he retained an invincible propensity for those simple manners to which he had been accustomed in his native country.’⁵⁶ The *philosophe* would have dismissed the prince’s native knowledge and will as gobbledegook, but Leyden clearly respected it as something substantial. The prince’s native manners were not animated by an obstinate and ignorant passion, but by an *invincible propensity*. Leyden celebrated this invincible propensity, or will, present in the figure of Naimbanna during the debates on slavery at the House of Commons. ‘A person, who had made a public assertion very degrading to the African character,’ had elicited a forceful speech from Naimbanna, which Leyden recorded in full:

If a man rob me of my money, I can forgive him; if a man should shoot at me, or try to stab me, I can forgive him; if a man should sell me and all my family to a slave-ship, so that we should pass all the rest of our days in slavery, in the West Indies, I can forgive him; but, (added he, rising from his seat with much emotion), if a man takes away the character of the people of my country, I never can forgive him. If a man should try to kill me, or should sell me and my family for slaves, he would do an injury to as many as he might kill or sell; but if any one takes away the character of black people, that man injures black people all over the world; and, when he has once taken away their character, there is nothing which he may not do to black people ever after. That man will beat black men, and say, O, it is only a black man, why should not I beat him? That man will make slaves of black people; for, when he has taken away their character, he will say, O, they are only black people, why should not I make them slaves? That man will take away all the people of Africa, if he can catch them; and if you ask him, But why do you take away all these people? he will say, O, they are only black people, they are not like

⁵⁶ This was Peter Panah. See ‘Account of the Swedish Design of an Agricultural Colony in Africa – Character of Wadstrom’, in *The Edinburgh Magazine or Literary Miscellany for January 1800, Vol. XIV New Series* (James Symington, 1799), 21-25. The ‘Account’ was one of three important selections from Leyden’s *Discoveries* that were published in this edition of *The Edinburgh Magazine*, of which Leyden was the editor.

white people, why should not I take them? That is the reason why I cannot forgive the man who takes away the character of the people of my country.⁵⁷

The testimony, substantiation, and preservation of man's original native character, gifted to him through God's creation and uncorrupted by his own philosophical ideas about human nature, was the sole cause to which Leyden dedicated his short life and career. It derived from the Scottish School conception of human reality. To the Schoolmen, the native common sense and native free will amounted to a human force for the common good. For this reason, they tended to approach the question of Scotland's Union with England in terms of a fusion between the common sense of the vulgar Scot and the philosophy of the learned Englishman, in the hope that their interaction would not only preserve Scottish common sense but also temper English ideas and perhaps restore English common sense. A similar fusion between African common sense and European ideas had in fact summed up the entire reasoning and purpose for Wadström's vision of the colony:

A mixture of sensible and virtuous Europeans with simple, untutored Africans, may be expected, by the reciprocal action and re-action of their habits and manners, to produce a social character nearly approaching the ancient simplicity. It were therefore to be wished, that the beneficial species of commerce [i.e. commission-commerce], just mentioned, could be so fixed in every new African colony, as for ever to exclude that perverted system which I shall call speculation-commerce...

Wadström's vision was promoted by Leyden in the *Discoveries* as a plan that the African Association could successfully implement in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was established as a British crown colony twelve years earlier and had rather failed. It was founded on the commercial footing of the Sierra Leone Company and its settlers were

⁵⁷ Leyden seems to have been the first person to publish Naimbanna's speech. It was quoted in the 1807 biographic of Naimbanna, *The Black Prince* (see 51n), and in Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq.* (London: Henry Colburn and Co., 1820).

recruited from Black Loyalists from America. In this combination, a Scot such as Leyden would have recognised a parallel with Scotland's national colonial project at Darien in Central America, and foreseen disaster. In the event, the African Association did not accede to Leyden's proposal. That was in 1799. But in the period between Leyden's visit to Penang in December 1805, where he stayed with Raffles, and Raffles's visit to Calcutta in July 1810, where Raffles stayed with Leyden, Leyden began to consider applying his proposal of a nativist colony to the Malay Archipelago.

Scottish School 'Orientalism'

Leyden's interest in African nativism was not physical and anthropological, but metaphysical and epistemological. He did not identify the African character as a particular species of man. Instead, he saw it as originating from a metaphysical human constitution that was native, original, and universal to all mankind, but which, from its encounter with philosophical ideas, had led to its own corruption and modification. Race, in Leyden's view, denoted a native character that was not of any physical, material, or physiological category, but of a moral one. This view of a *de facto* moral human constitution remained accepted in Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Europe, however, it was overshadowed by the philosophical attempt to rationalise human nature and idealise its essential qualities into an idea. That rival idea of 'race', conceptualised as a physical, material, and physiological category, dominated the colonial project by European powers in the nineteenth century.

This clash between the native and ideal forms of knowledge is widely known to have been played out between church divines and scientists in their nineteenth-century debate on the origin of man. What is less known that it was also played out earlier between the Scottish School and the Orientalists at Calcutta. I discuss this in the next

chapter. But in short, the Scottish School, from its perception of the individual as a sentient being in his own right, and as a subject with an original and innate human constitution, or character, was able to observe and criticise how modern philosophy had, through the learned theories of Hobbes, Harrington, Locke, Voltaire, Hume, Smith, Rousseau, etc., beheld the individual against subjective ideals and standards of human nature. From the *philosophe*'s normative conception of the human condition, the savage individual in particular was gauged: as objects of an unknown human nature, a *tabula rasa*, that needed to be defined by deduction and denominated with a name. Such subjective definitions had followed the Enlightenment template, as human nature was idealised in turns as a selfish brute, a political animal, a social creature, a cultural personality, an ethnic species, a genetically-coded organism, and so on. Thus were the African, American, and Asiatic natures were thus subjectively represented, each in their comparably primitive stages of socialisation, education, civilisation, statehood, proselytisation, etc. Indoctrinated by this knowledge, the African, American, and Asiatic were no longer knowing and sovereign subjects, but objects subjected to the European Mind.

Two centuries before Edward Said, therefore, the orthodox Scottish Schoolmen in the person of Leyden had already identified the chronic subjectivity that was involved in the Enlightenment science of man, and how this subjectivity gave power to the European states over their colonies. In fact, Leyden's identification of this subjectivity actually exposes a central flaw in Said's critique of Orientalism, which was that it was framed in the same Enlightenment philosophical tradition that led to Orientalism in the first place. Hamid Dabashi, citing James Clifford,

pointed out a central paradox in Said's criticism of "Orientalism" – namely its "relapse into the essentializing modes it attacks," and for its being "ambivalently

enmeshed in the totalizing habits of Western humanism.”... Said, in other words, was being representational precisely at a time that he was criticizing representation... he, the critic, had assumed the position of a sovereign, knowing subject, which was at the epistemic root of the Enlightenment predicates of the colonial manufacturing of an Orient.⁵⁸

Said’s critique of Orientalism had thus been prone to the same subjectivity which he accused in the European representation of the East. It was effectively a late learned thesis of modern philosophy to reassert, contest, and claim the Enlightenment idea of human nature: in this case by shifting and reassigning its racial object from the nineteenth-century native to the twentieth-century westerner. This fundamental difference between Said’s and Leyden’s critiques of Orientalism is very useful in understanding next what Leyden’s Scottish School approach the East – his ‘Orientalism’ – had itself set out to achieve.

⁵⁸ Hamid Dabashi, ‘The Creative Crisis of the Subject’, in *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (New York: Routledge, 2107), 155-184. See also James Clifford’s review of ‘Orientalism’ in *History and Theory* 19 (2): 204 (1980).

Chapter Seven

Scottish Orientalism: Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, and John Leyden

In this chapter, I will deal with the source of Leyden's intellectual nativism that is the Scottish School's cognitive framework termed Common Sense. It is fundamentally a specialist field of rigorous logic which is not necessary to this thesis. I shall instead focus on the central precept of Common Sense that is Thomas Reid's Theory of Perception, but in the context of two historical developments which I have introduced in the previous chapter. These refer to (1) the crisis of philosophy between rationalism and empiricism which was arrived at by early modern Enlightenment thought, and the paradigm shift which Reid's Theory of Perception presented as an answer to that crisis; (2) the two foundations of epistemology, known as *Common Sense* and *Philosophy*, that resulted from this paradigm shift, and how they contextualised a Scottish debate on the future of the Scottish nation between two antagonistic divisions or classes of Scots: the *vulgar* commoner and the *learned* elite.

To all intents and purposes, these events took place well away from Asia in eighteenth-century Scotland and had uniquely involved Scottish society. However, the intellectual framework of Common Sense, being anchored in a theory of cognition, was also concerned with the origin of common sense knowledge and how it had determined men's actions, communications, and creations. As a result, the Scottish School was interested in the historical forming of manners, the development of language, and the cultural records of literature and artefacts (or 'antiquities'). Naturally, these activities

were not limited to Scotland, but had occurred in all historic societies. The academic interest in the origins of foreign manners, languages, and literature, was therefore fundamental to the Scottish School. And yet, this interest was also ancillary to a more important purpose. For, if Common Sense had led to equivalent sets of manners, languages, and literature in foreign societies, then so had Philosophy. The Scottish School in fact believed that not only did division and conflict between the vulgar commoner and learned elite also occur in other societies, but also that Enlightenment thought had been the cause of those divisions and conflicts. The principal society other than Scotland which the Scottish School saw division and conflict to have set in was India, and the East or Orient in general.

This moral and political interest which attached to the Scottish School's epistemological interest in India, depicts a unique Scottish understanding of Asia. Some scholars have described a 'Scottish Orientalism', but Scottish Orientalism, strictly defined by the Scottish School, was not an approach to the East that derived from the Scottish Enlightenment. That Enlightenment view of the East, we will see, was adopted by the Orientalists of the *Asiatick Society* of Bengal.¹ In fact, as I argue in the figure of John Leyden, the Scottish School recognised two modes of orientalism that were pitted against each other in opposition. The Calcutta Orientalists held contempt for the vulgar savage Indian, but the highest reverence for the learned Indian. The Scottish Orientalists, on the other hand, with the Scottish vulgar-learned divide on their minds, loathed the Calcutta Orientalists for what they saw as a British fulfilment of the Indian caste system. Leyden, in particular, made it his life's purpose to correct this betrayal not only of the peoples of the East, but of British humanity and honour. He set out to investigate the manners, language, and literature of the common people of the world,

¹ There was also a Scottish view of the East held by the Church of England, which overlapped with both Scottish Orientalism and Calcutta Orientalism.

hoping to recover their native consciousness. In the Malay Archipelago, as a result of his efforts, there emerged a nativist Malay consciousness.

The Cartesian System of Philosophy

Leyden represented the third generation of the Scottish School of the Philosophy of Common Sense. Among his teachers at Edinburgh University were Dugald Stewart and James Finlayson, professors of moral philosophy and logic respectively, and both second generation stalwarts of the Scottish School. The first generation Schoolmen comprised of the trio of Thomas Reid, James Oswald, and James Beattie. All three figures first rose to prominence for their responses to David Hume's classic seminal work, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739).² These responses in effect engaged with a century-old debate that had begun with the French philosopher, René Descartes. In his 1637 *Discourse on the Method (of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences)*, Descartes first stipulated the philosophical statement that has become immortal: *je pense, donc je suis*, or more widely recognised as *cogito ergo sum*. What Descartes' statement proposed was that because he was aware, or conscious, that he thought about how he knew things about himself and in the world, and questioned whether this knowledge was valid, then that consciousness alone of the act of thinking and doubting provided a sufficient premise on which to predicate the reality of his existence. 'I think, therefore I am'.

² See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (England: Penguin Books, 1985). Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) (Glasgow: W. Falconer, 1819). James Oswald, *An Appeal to Common Sense in behalf of Religion* (London: J. Hughs, 1768). James Beattie, *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1778). Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1785). Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1788).

Descartes' *cogito* was proposed at the dawning of an age of modern scientific discovery distinguished by the names of Galileo and Kepler. It was also an age of heresy, as those discoveries undermined the established view of the universe that had been erected by the scholastic doctrines of the Church for over a thousand years, during which the upheavals it faced were only of the theological kind. Theological upheaval indeed defined the era of Descartes, as Catholic revival followed the Protestant Reformation epitomised in the figure of Martin Luther. Given these historical contexts, it is surprising that the *cogito* of Descartes, who was trained in the Jesuit tradition, tended to be overlooked for having offered a means or method of reforming the Church's worldview, including the existence of God, amid the challenges of the modern age. Thus, F. E. Sutcliffe explained that Descartes' method 'was to serve as an infrastructure to modern Christian thought, in the same way as the philosophy of Aristotle had served medieval Christian thought through the synthesis of St Thomas Aquinas.'³

Descartes' infrastructure was what is known as the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter. The *cogito's* premise that 'I think' had made all human knowledge conditional on human consciousness and retrievable only through human reason. Consequently, its proposition that 'I exist as a thinking being' separated the thinking mind from the existential body. Mind and matter, or soul and body, became two distinct entities of the human self: the mind as the immaterial essence of the self, the body as the material substance of the self. Sutcliffe explained this process thus:

The Cogito is a first principle from which Descartes will now deduce all that follows. He has a clear and distinct conception of the fact that he exists; he can therefore believe that whatever else he perceives with the same clarity and

³ See F. E. Sutcliffe's 'Introduction' to René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, tr. F. E. Sutcliffe (England: Penguin Books, 1968), 9.

distinction is equally true. Moreover, he knows himself only as a thinking being, he is therefore assured that the soul and the body are entirely distinct. Since he has been able to understand his own being and essence without yet knowing anything about the world outside him, it follows that his self – or soul – is completely independent of the outside world, mind is distinct from and superior to matter.⁴

Seen against the Church's worldview, Descartes' dualism of mind and matter denoted a radical recalibration of the Scholastic project to balance, equate, or 'fuse faith with reason', i.e. the synthesis of St Thomas Aquinas. This design originated in a sixth century work entitled *The Consolation of Philosophy* (523) by Boethius, the 'first scholastic', in which the author, facing execution, struggles to reconcile his belief in God with his knowledge of the natural world that was informed by his enormous learning in Greek philosophy.⁵ Boethius's consolation of finding freedom in his soul through the philosophy which the Greeks applied to nature, described a 'principle of rational examination of dogma' that led to the 'conjunction of faith with knowledge'.⁶ From this structure that conjoined the spiritual realm to the temporal, were consequently related, very loosely, the dualities inhering to the necessity of providence and nature, the dominion of church and king, the system of society and state, the private and public interests, the language of law and politics. In this tradition continued the method of Descartes. However, where the scholastics had apprehended a Neoplatonist paradigm where reality in the world was determined by God's ideal forms (or 'universals') and Nature's material substance, Descartes reprogrammed it to harmonise with modern science, such that God, though incontrovertible, was not present in the real world. The

⁴ Sutcliffe, 'Introduction', 19. Sutcliffe continues thus: 'Next, by reflecting on the notion of doubt itself, Descartes perceives that, as to know is a greater perfection than to doubt, he must be an imperfect being. But an imperfect being cannot produce the idea of perfection which he nevertheless possesses. No other being, imperfect like himself, could have given it to him; only a perfect being could have done so, therefore a perfect being, God, exists.'

⁵ See P.G. Walsh's 'Introduction' to Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶ Josef Pieper, *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (Indiana: St Augustine's Press, 1960), 37-38.

real world was now determined by ideas reasoned in the mind of man, which itself was ‘infinitely separated from a world which is matter’.⁷

For his recalibration of the Christian worldview, Descartes has been understood to have departed from scholasticism. Sutcliffe said the Cartesian method ‘marks, at its date, the most complete break with the Aristotelian and medieval conception of the cosmos.’ While that is true, it did not mean that Descartes was un-associated with scholasticism. His contemporaries comprehended his method from the scholastic viewpoint. Scholars of scholasticism in fact identified Descartes’ *Discourses* with the ‘ontological argument’ of St Anselm of Canterbury.⁸ And this was where the Scottish Schoolmen identified the origin of the ‘monstrous simplification’⁹ that had distorted philosophy and afflicted modern European thought. Anselm had argued that, though the existence of man is called into question, the nature of existence in itself ‘actually belongs to the essence of God’, or is ‘necessarily contained within the concept of God’,¹⁰ and therefore transcends any inquiry as to whether God exists. Descartes’ ‘ontological argument’ was structurally the same: ‘God, being absolute perfection, must necessarily exist since existence is one of the perfections.’¹¹ This proposition was only a short step away from saying that because consciousness was the essence of mind, thus man must necessarily exist. To the Scottish Schoolmen, this was all metaphysical syllogistic nonsense.

From the scholastics’ point of view, they claimed that Descartes, like Anselm before, had ‘overvalued’ the part of deductive reason in the equation between faith and

⁷ Sutcliffe, ‘Introduction’, 21.

⁸ Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 65.

⁹ Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 73.

¹⁰ Pieper, *Scholasticism*, 69, 74.

¹¹ Sutcliffe, ‘Introduction’, 20.

reason.¹² Anselm had effectively substituted faith for reason, and Descartes did exactly the same. However, for Anselm the object of faith was God. Though he reduced that faith into reasoned belief, it did not affect man's autonomous perceptions of the natural and human worlds. Descartes, on the other hand, reduced man's faith in God to his consciousness of his own mind. The problem with swapping God for Mind as the object of man's new rationalism, was that man alienated his reasoning ability of knowing the natural and human worlds directly, objectively, and physically: i.e. his self as a knowing and sovereign subject. Sense perception, the cognitive instrument of Aristotelian physics, was no longer dependable. Man was only a pseudo-knowing and pseudo-sovereign subject as Mind, isolated in its own internal world. 'What Descartes had done,' Sutcliffe explained, 'was to adopt Aristotle's conception of physics as a demonstrative science based on necessary principles, whilst at the same time replacing the principles of Aristotle by those of his own finding.'¹³ The *cogito's* replacing of God with Mind, faith with reason, and indeed perception with faith, resulted in two main outcomes. One was the complete discrediting of man's matter-of-fact perceptions of the natural and human worlds. The other was the idealisations of his rational mind as to what the human and natural worlds would be. Knowledge thus became an entirely deduced affair.

Reid ridiculed this deductive mode of understanding which he variously termed the 'ideal system', 'ideal theory', or 'ideal philosophy'. It assumed that the world is never known to man directly, but in the form of ideas which represent the world. Because it also assumed that those ideas are constructed and exist in mind that is infinitely separated from the world, the question arose as to how the world of matter caused those ideas in mind to be? It was inevitable that this form of knowledge would

¹² Pieper, Scholasticism, 71-72.

¹³ Sutcliffe, 'Introduction', 22-23.

become damagingly subjective, contradictory, and nihilistic. Certainly, these problems determined the responses to Descartes. Thence, Reid observed, ‘this opinion of the existence of ideas or images of things in the mind, seems to have taken its rise, and to have been so universally received among philosophers.’¹⁴ In the case of the French theologian, Nicolas Malebranche, the origin of ideas was assigned to God, and Descartes’ system led to full-blown Platonism.¹⁵ According to Reid:

This author seems, more than any other to have been aware of the difficulties attending the common hypothesis concerning ideas – to wit, That ideas of all objects of thought are in the human mind; and, therefore, in order to avoid those difficulties, makes the ideas which are the immediate objects of human thought, to be the ideas of things in the Divine mind, who, being intimately present to every human mind, may discover his ideas to it, as far as pleaseth him.¹⁶

Consequently, John Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), asserted that mind had no original and initial knowledge about anything (though elsewhere he implied that man had innate knowledge of natural law). Mind was a blank slate, a *tabula rasa* – or, as we saw Leyden criticise in the previous chapter, a *charta rasa* – that subsequently acquired knowledge of the natural and human worlds in the form of ideas received *a posteriori* from the body’s experience of sensations. Locke was addressing the problem of subjectivity in Descartes, but he was unclear how body’s sensory experiences informed mind’s ideas, or how mind’s ideas related body’s sensory experiences. There was no bridging the Cartesian crisis except by this ambiguous ‘Way of Analogy’. What Locke effectively ended up doing was to anchor the epistemological

¹⁴ Thomas Reid, *The Philosophy of Reid as contained in the “Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense”*, ed. Elias Hershey Sneath (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1892), 359.

¹⁵ See Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* (1674-75), tr. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁶ Reid, *Philosophy*, 344.

polar opposite to rationalism which the Cartesian dualism necessarily created: *empiricism*. And empiricism simply led to contradictions with rationalism.

Answering Locke was another theologian, George Berkeley, the Bishop of Cloyne in Ulster. Berkeley milked Descartes' theory of ideas to arrive at the door of scepticism and, indeed, of deism. He found that mind cannot be sure that the world, including one's own body, if it was not being perceived at any one moment, physically existed at all.¹⁷ The mind only knew itself and its ideas. The notion of God's Creation, where it concerned the natural physical world, was thus a figment of the vulgar imagination. Of Berkeley's subjective idealism, Reid said that,

The result of his inquiry was a serious conviction that there is no such thing as a material world – nothing in nature but spirits [minds] and ideas; and that the belief of material substances, and of abstract ideas, are the chief causes of all our errors in philosophy, and of all infidelity and heresy in religion. His arguments are founded upon the principles which were formerly laid down by Des Cartes, Malebranche, and Locke, and which have been very generally received.¹⁸

To Reid, Berkeley was merely the last actor, in a predictable script inevitably set in motion by Descartes, before the entry of David Hume to bring the entire debate to a nihilistic finale. From Berkeley's position that mind was sceptical of body's sensory experiences, Hume found that mind too could not trust that it did not make up its own consciousness. Knowledge reasoned in the conscious mind about the world remained separated from knowledge perceived from body's experience of the world, and neither mind nor body could hold the other to account. There was thus no real knowledge about anything. Neither mind nor body probably existed. 'Reason is, and ought only to be the

¹⁷ See George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and *Three Dialogues* (1713) (England: Penguin Books, 1988).

¹⁸ Reid, *Philosophy*, 82.

slave of the passions,' Hume notoriously remarked.¹⁹ Reid explained that Hume 'proceeds upon the same principles' as Berkeley, 'but carries them to their full length; and, as the Bishop undid the whole material world, this author, upon the same grounds, undoes the world of spirits [i.e. minds], and leaves nothing in nature but ideas and impressions, without any subject on which they may be impressed.'²⁰ The only things that qualified to the name of 'mind' or 'knowledge' were ideas that, rather than being proved, could be empirically associated in a causal relation. From this benchmark, which Reid called the 'Way of Ideas', Hume thus analysed the validity of ideas that were valued to mankind, such as government, politics, commerce, money, public credit, and the commonwealth.²¹

Scottish Common Sense

Reid severely criticised Hume's 'Way of Ideas' and his new 'science of man'. 'It seems to be a peculiar strain of humour in this author,' he remarked, 'to set out in his introduction by promising, with a grave face, no less than a complete system of the sciences, upon a foundation entirely new – to wit, that of human nature – when the intention of the whole work is to shew, that there is neither human nature nor science in the world.'²² For all its empirical claims, Hume's association of ideas, based on the principles of resemblance, contiguity, and causation, was fundamentally a method of deduction. Hume's brand of empiricism nevertheless became a major cornerstone of the Enlightenment movement. To Reid, Oswald, and Beattie, this development, and the Cartesian system that led to it, was an absurdity. From their reactions to Hume thus sprang the Scottish School of Common Sense. However, Reid did not reject the

¹⁹ Hume, *Treatise*, (Book II, Part III, Section III) 462.

²⁰ Reid, *Philosophy*, 82.

²¹ See David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. I, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898).

²² Reid, *Philosophy*, 82.

Cartesian mind-body infrastructure that framed the philosophy of Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. For all ‘the defects and blemishes of their system we ought rather to honour their memories,’ he wrote, ‘as the first discoverers of a region in philosophy formerly unknown; and however lame and imperfect the system may be, they have opened the way to future discoveries’.²³

Reid’s loathing was reserved for the old scholastic infrastructure that synthesised faith with reason. The philosophers from Descartes to Hume, he continued, ‘have removed an infinite deal of dust and rubbish, collected in the ages of scholastic sophistry, which had obstructed the way.’ What Reid disapproved of the Cartesian system was its presupposition that knowledge took the form of ideas that were constructed in the mind, and that ideas unquestionably existed in the mind. This principle, common to both rationalism and empiricism, traced its origin to Plato’s notion of forms or ‘universals’, which are general descriptive categories of the common properties or qualities of things, such as hardness, colour, or elephants. The scholastics had argued, for a thousand years, whether universals could or could not exist independently of the mind, that is, whether they really existed in the material world.²⁴ From this problem of universals thus emerged three general positions: realists who believed that universals – e.g. a class of animals such as elephants – exist in the world independently of the mind, idealists (or conceptualists) who believed that they exist as ideas in the mind, and nominalists who believed that they exist neither in mind or matter but were simply names or words assigned to individual instances of elephant-like creatures.

²³ Reid, *Philosophy*, 81.

²⁴ See Alexander Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 14.

These positions directing man's knowledge of the world have overarching consequences for his approach to the world. If our seventeenth and eighteenth century protagonists were to be assigned to these categories, then the realist was Reid, the idealist was Descartes, and the nominalists were Berkeley and Hume. Reid in fact took a personal interest in the history of the discourse of universals. He attributed nominalism to an intellectual lineage that traced from the scholastics, William Ockham, Peter Abelard, Roscellinus, back to the Egyptian Neoplatonists, Porphyry and Plotinus, and to the Greek sceptic, Pyrrho.²⁵ Their legacy was revived by Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and 'a sect in France called *Egoists*', before descending on Hume. As a realist, Reid took exception with the idealists and nominalists for several reasons. First, as mentioned, was their normative principle that only the ideas in the mind were 'self-evidently real and true, but that everything else that is contingent is to be proved by argument.'²⁶ 'The consequences of this theory,' commented Elias Hershey Sneath, 'are such as to prejudice every man against it who has a due regard for the common sense of mankind.'²⁷ In Scotland, the prejudice applied both ways, as the theory of ideas set apart the modern philosophers as a learned elite divorced from the vulgar bearing of the common people.

At an intellectual level, Reid set out to restore the 'epistemic merit' of the 'contingent truths' which the modern philosophers held could not be deduced and constructed as reasoned ideas in the mind, but had to be proved by argument. These contingent truths referred to man's matter-of-fact perceptions of the natural and human worlds. Irrational, impulsive, and prejudiced, Hume impugned them – as the Nominalists and Neoplatonists had impugned them before him – as the 'superstitions'

²⁵ Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, (Chapter VI, Part VII) 638, 567.

²⁶ Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, (Chapter V, Part VI) 475-496.

²⁷ Sneath, 'Introduction', in Reid, *Philosophy*, 29

and ‘enthusiasms’ of the ‘passions’. He used the clichéd expression, *common sense*, which Reid defiantly dignified. Terence Cueno and René Van Woudenberg have identified how the modern philosopher distinguished ‘self-evidently real and true’ ideas from the common people’s ‘contingent truths’ as two classes of ‘beliefs’ that have ‘epistemic merit’ (i.e. ‘being warranted, entitled, reliably formed, certain, a case of knowledge’).²⁸ The modern philosopher held that his ideas of the mind are beliefs that are ‘evidentially based on some other belief that has the merit in question’, and thus ‘may be “immediately” warranted, entitled, reliably formed, and so forth’. On the other hand, common sense beliefs are not ‘evidentially based on some other belief that has the merit in question’, and are thus ““mediately” justified, warranted, entitled, and so forth’.

Reid made this benchmark of modern philosophy redundant by showing that common sense beliefs, or what modern philosophy regarded as ‘contingent truths’, were in fact ‘immediately warranted, entitled, reliable formed, and so on.’²⁹ Reid accomplished this through his rival theory to the theory of ideas, which was his *theory of perception*. Reid built his theory of perception through a direct appeal to the longevity and prevalence of common beliefs held by common people about the world, i.e. *common sense*. This appeal is similar to the prescription Edmund Burke made to the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the ages. But where Burke’s traditions had followed idealisations of natural law and the ancient constitution – essentially learned ideas which he termed ‘wise prejudice’ – Reid’s prescriptions followed a scientific methodology. Unlike the ideal philosophers, who qualified knowledge by deduction, Reid arrived at knowledge inductively. The rules of the method of induction were laid down by the Elizabethan philosopher, Francis Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*

²⁸ Terence Cueno and René Woudenberg, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.

²⁹ Cueno and Woudenberg, ‘Introduction’, in *Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, 8.

Scientiarum (1620). Also known as the Baconian method, it was adopted by Sir Isaac Newton and established in Scotland by Newton's Scottish mathematician associates, David Gregory and Colin Maclaurin.³⁰

The deductive method postulated a general proposition (such as 'human beings think') and predicated on it a specific proposition (such as 'I think'); if both propositions are premised to be true, then they logically conclude a particular truth (such as 'therefore, I am'). Hume's empirical associations adopt the deductive method. They test hypotheses (such as 'paper credit is artificial money') by uncovering associations between two empirically-demonstrated ideas (such as 'money is the oil of commerce' and 'paper credit banishes money from commerce'). For Reid, such deduction was prone to syllogism and sophistry. Induction safeguarded against these errors. The inductive method began with a specific truth, a first principle (such as 'I think'), and extrapolated logically into a general truth (such as 'humans act'). Indeed, Reid did not fault Descartes' consciousness, but only how Descartes dealt with consciousness. Looking introspectively at consciousness, Reid did not see the idea of a being that is the mind, but rather he became aware of the operations of the mind. He pointed out that the modern philosopher had mistaken the operations themselves for the objects of the operations, and erred in the ideas he formed of those objects.³¹ By analysing the operations of the mind inductively, Reid identified them as the actions of the mind in distinguishing the qualities or signs of things encountered in the natural and human worlds – in other words, universals – and transposing those universals as notions believed by the mind. Thus, sensations, memory, thought, etc. harvest human

³⁰ There is a direct intellectual lineage from Maclaurin to Reid through Reid's teacher George Turnbull. Reid was also related through his mother to the Gregory family of accomplished mathematicians.

³¹ Reid appreciated that human beings are led 'rather to attend to the things signified by the sensation than to the sensation itself, and to give a name to the former rather than to the latter.' Ironically, the modern philosopher, whose consciousness led him to see an object or idea that is the mind, had committed what was a flawed common sense belief; whereas Reid had the eye of the philosopher in spotting the flaw and seeing instead the operations of the mind. See Cuneo and Woudenberg, 'Introduction', 9.

experiences which are related consciously as notions of space, figure, time, motion, and as beliefs of existence, self, morality, etc.:

But I think it appears, from what hath been said, that there are natural suggestions: particularly, that sensation suggests the notion of present existence, and the belief that what we perceive or feel does now exist; that memory suggests the notion of past existence, and the belief that what we remember did exist in time past; and that our sensations and thoughts do also suggest the notion of a mind, and the belief of its existence, and of its relation to our thoughts. By a like natural principle it is, that a beginning of existence, or any change in nature, suggests to us the notion of a cause, and compels our belief of its existence. And, in like manner, as shall be shewn when we come to the sense of touch, certain sensations of touch, by the constitution of our nature, suggest to us extension, solidity, and motion, which are nowise like to sensations, although they have been hitherto confounded with them.³²

The mechanics of what Reid termed the *human constitution* – whereby notions of universals in the mind are suggested by innate principles of the human constitution (such as instinct, habit, affection, passion, duty, etc.) from the experience of universals in the world – effectively expound a concept of human nature which rivalled David Hume’s ‘science of man’ and Adam Smith’s ‘moral sentiments’. But Hume’s epicurean creature was the product of a deductive ideal philosophy which placed him in the realm (and made him sceptical) of human experience. Smith’s stoically self-interested man, too, originated with an idealisation of nature that placed him in the other realm of human consciousness, though one which progressed historically with human experience. Referring to Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as a prime example, Reid remarked how ‘a very ingenious author has resolved our moral sentiments respecting the virtues of self-government, into a regard to the opinion of men,’ but ‘this I think is giving a great deal too much to the love of esteem, and putting the shadow of virtue in

³² Reid, *Philosophy*, 108-109.

place of the substance'.³³ Dugald Stewart, Smith's editor and biographer, also weighed in on his subject's epistemological fallacy. Istvan Hont relates how Stewart told his students that 'Smith's theory "may account for a man's assuming the appearance of virtue",' and that 'Smith had written a theory of politeness, not of morality; perhaps a moral sociology, but not a true moral philosophy.'³⁴ By contrast, Reid's theory of perception instead bridged the Cartesian chasm between consciousness and experience, mind and body, rationalism and empiricism³⁵ – indeed, between faith and reason – by restoring man as a sentient being and as a sovereign subject who directly, objectively, and physically perceives universals in the natural and human worlds.

The result of Reid's theory of perception was to render 'moderate and wide' what is known as the 'epistemological foundation'.³⁶ This refers to what, by the definition of the modern philosopher, constituted knowledge that is 'evidentially based on some other belief that has the merit in question' and thus 'may be "immediately" warranted, entitled, reliably formed, and so forth'. Where the modern philosopher had accepted a narrow epistemological foundation which was based on ideal philosophy and discounted common sense, Reid's theory of perception now gave merit to common sense as knowledge – this, as we shall see, did not actually placate the modern philosopher, but rather antagonised him. The huge range of beliefs warranted by common sense made it epistemologically rich. As Reid explained,

³³ Reid, *Active Powers*, (Essay III, Part II, Chapter II) 139. Istvan Hont relates how Reid's criticism of Smith went further. 'According to Smith, [Reid] continued, "Social Virtue seems to be resolved either into Vanity or into self-interest." Although in the Smithian view "all Our moral Sentiments are resolve dinto Sympathy," Reid stated, "so even this Sympathy seems to be resolved into self love, which receives some change in its direction by an operation of the imagination." Thus, "Dr Smith's System of Sympathy," he concluded, summing up his criticism, was "wrong. IT is indeed only a Refinement of the selfish System.'" Istvan Hont, 'The Adam Smith Problem', in *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, ed. Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 29-30.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ For this response to scepticism, Reid has been compared to Immanuel Kant. It is not the purpose of the thesis to treat Kant here.

³⁶ John Greco, 'Reid's Reply to the Skeptic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, ed. Terence Cuneo & René Van Woudenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.

Thus we see, that the modern philosophy, of which DES CARTES may justly be accounted the founder, being built upon the ruins of the Peripatetic, has a spirit quite opposite, and runs into a contrary extreme. The Peripatetic not only adopted as first principles those which mankind have always rested upon in their most important transactions, but, along with them, many vulgar prejudices, so that this system was founded upon a wide bottom, but in many parts unsound. The modern system has narrowed the foundation so much, that every superstructure raised upon it appears top heavy.³⁷

The Politics of Epistemology

Reid's theory of perception, in replying David Hume's way of ideas, had delineated an epistemological distinction between philosophical knowledge and common sense knowledge. Philosophical knowledge took the form of reasoned ideas and ideals. Common sense knowledge took the form of intuitive or instinctive beliefs. Unsurprisingly, the contrast between these two forms of knowledge shaped opposite opinions of the natural and human worlds. Moreover, the contrast between the method and modes of acquiring each form of knowledge – introspectively and inductively in the case of Reid's theory of perception, deductively and empirically in the case of Hume's way of ideas – further shaped opposing attitudes towards the conduct of life.

'Epistemology,' said the political theorist, Richard Gunn, 'is bound up with social practice.'³⁸ Reid, from his broad epistemological viewpoint, was very much aware that these opposing opinions and attitudes divided populations into two antagonistic groups: the *learned* and the *vulgar*. 'Thus,' he explained, 'the wisdom of philosophy is set in opposition to the common sense of mankind',

The first pretends to demonstrate, a priori, that there can be no such thing as a material world; that sun, moon, stars, and earth, vegetable and animal bodies, are,

³⁷ Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, (Chapter VI, Part VII) 640.

³⁸ See Richard Gunn's 'Introduction' to George Davie, *A Passion for Ideas: Essays on the Scottish Enlightenment, Vol. II* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), xvii.

and can be nothing else, but sensations in the mind, or images of those sensations in the memory and imagination; that, like pain and joy, they can have no existence when they are not thought of. The last can conceive no otherwise of this opinion, than as a kind of metaphysical lunacy, and concludes that too much learning is apt to make men mad; and that the man who seriously entertains this belief, though in other respects he may be a very good man, as a man may be who believes that he is made of glass; yet, surely he hath a soft place in his understanding, and hath been hurt by much thinking.³⁹

The problem which the vulgar, or common people, saw with the learned philosophers was that their ideas and ideals about human nature, law, religion, state, society, market, etc., and regarded by them as necessary truths, consequently determined the people's mode of conduct. As I showed in the previous chapter, this determination of people's behaviour amounted to a metaphysical despotism by the ideas of ideal philosophy, which oppressed and subjected people to its tenets and conventions, i.e. Leyden's forms of civilised life. 'Philosophy itself,' M. A. Stewart wrote, 'becomes an accessory to social control.'⁴⁰ In the metaphysical discourse of the eighteenth century, this sense of power exerted by an idea over the conduct of people was termed *necessity*, owing to the necessary truth of the idea. Minto's impassive and practical attitude, for example, respecting the choice which faced the slaves whom he freed from debt bondage between 'some way of life' in modern society and their 'former state' in the ancient body politic, was a stoic acknowledgment of two necessitarian systems of nature. To the Schoolmen of Scottish common sense, however, necessitarianism was not only enslaving. In pervading the manners, language, and usages of people, it debased man's native constitution, or character, and degraded his instinctive and intuitive actions. The natural world of physical matter, Sir Isaac Newton had

³⁹ Thomas Reid, *The Philosophy of Reid as contained in the "Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense"*, ed. Elias Hershey Sneath (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1892), 148-150.

⁴⁰ M.A. Stewart, 'Religion and rational theology,' in Alexander Broadie, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31-59.

discovered, was a system of inertia and entropy, and subjecting man to its necessary laws literally denoted the dismal state of not living:

This opposition betwixt philosophy and common sense, is apt to have a very unhappy influence upon the philosopher himself. He sees human nature in an odd, unamiable, and mortifying light. He considers himself, and the rest of his species, as born under a necessity of believing ten thousand absurdities and contradictions, and endowed with such a pittance of reason as is just sufficient to make this unhappy discovery: and this is all the fruit of his profound speculations. Such notions of human nature tend to slacken every nerve of the soul, to put every noble purpose and sentiment out of countenance, and spread a melancholy gloom over the whole face of things.

A similar contempt for common sense existed on the part of the ideal philosopher, which revealed a seemingly irreconcilable antagonism between the learned and vulgar. Hume, in his opening words in his essay 'Of Commerce', averred that,

The greater part of mankind may be divided into two classes, that of *shallow* thinkers, who fall short of the truth; and that of *abstruse* thinkers, who go beyond it. The latter class are by far the most rare; and, I may add, by far the most useful and valuable. They suggest hints at least, and start difficulties, which they want perhaps still to pursue, but which may produce fine discoveries when handled by men who have a more just way of thinking. At worst, what they say is uncommon; and if it should cost some pains to comprehend it, one has, however, the pleasure of hearing something that is new...⁴¹

On the other hand, Hume continued, 'all people of *shallow* thought are apt to decry even those of *solid* understanding, as *abstruse* thinkers, and metaphysicians, and refiners; and never will allow any thin to be just which is beyond their own weak conceptions.' 'The difference between a common man and a man of genius,' he went on to say,

⁴¹ David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Vol. I, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 287-288.

is chiefly seen in the shallowness or depth of the principles upon which they proceed. General reasonings seem intricate, merely because they are general; nor is it easy for the bulk of mankind to distinguish, in a great number of particulars, that common circumstance in which they all agree, or to extract it, pure and unmixed, from the other superfluous circumstances. Every judgment or conclusion with them is particular. They cannot enlarge their view to those universal propositions which comprehend under them an infinite number of individuals, and include a whole science in a single theorem. Their eye is confounded with such an extensive prospect; and the conclusions derived from it, even though clearly expressed, seem intricate and obscure.

While Hume dismissed the shallow thinking of the vulgar, Reid nonetheless did not reject the learned. He in fact considered himself among the learned, but had famously noted how it was ‘humiliating [for the philosopher] to find, that his reason can lay no claim to the greater part of’ his knowledge, and that thus, ‘in this division, to my great humiliation, *I find myself classed with the vulgar.*’⁴² At the intellectual level, Reid actually recommended ‘to reconcile Reason to Common Sense.’⁴³ His reason was the reality of common sense: ‘even those philosophers who have disowned the authority of our notions of an external material world... cannot get rid of the vulgar notion and belief of an external world’. Though ‘Reason should stomach and fret ever so much at this yoke, she cannot throw it off’, and thus, ‘if she will not be the servant of Common Sense, she must be her slave.’ This joining of philosophy to common sense evokes the scholastic project of joining faith to reason. The first scholastic, Boethius, had found their conjoining necessary to unite the Greco-Romans with the Christian Goths.⁴⁴ A similar social-political necessity also applied in eighteenth century Scotland. We saw it present in Leyden and Wadström’s scheme of the African colony, which depicted a

⁴² Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1785), 207, 277.

⁴³ Reid, *Philosophy*, 150.

⁴⁴ See Josef Pieper, *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston (Indiana: St Augustine’s Press, 1960). The narrative of *fides et ratio* was articulated in Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume the Fourth* (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1788).

‘mixture of sensible and virtuous Europeans with simple, untutored Africans’. This mixing of the learned with the vulgar actually described a Scottish solution, which the advent of Scottish common sense had made possible, to a Scottish problem termed by George Davie as ‘the Central Problem of Scottish philosophy’.⁴⁵

The Central Problem of Scottish Philosophy

Hume’s intellectual contempt for the vulgar originated, as his scepticism had originated, from the intellectualism of George Berkeley. But there their similarity ended. Berkeley’s doctrine of immaterialism was published in the wake of Scotland’s legislative union with England in 1707. It developed in Berkeley, an Ulsterman, a sceptical view of Enlightenment materialism and of England as the social model for Scotland and Ireland to emulate. Hume’s way of ideas, on the other hand, made him sceptical of the traditional Scottish and Irish spiritual institutions, but pointed to the Enlightenment and the English model. In a Scotland that had lost its political independence, was reeling from its disastrous colonial project in Darien, Central America, and being deemed a stateless nation, Berkeley’s tilt away and Hume’s tilt in favour of European modernity and English commerce rather brought a Scottish national crisis to breaking point.

Modernity and commerce were sticky issues in eighteenth century Scotland because of the challenge they posed to the historical polity which survived the Union: i.e. the Church of Scotland. As we saw, the ideal philosopher took a monistic view of the world: it was to be completely changed according to their ideas or not at all. The Church of Scotland, on the other hand, was deeply entrenched in Scottish society, not as an episcopal authority but as the presbyterial regulator of democratic self-governance

⁴⁵ See George Davie, ‘Berkeley, Hume and the Central Problem of Scottish Philosophy’, in Davie, *Passion for Ideas*, 40-69.

through the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. As a result, the influence of the Church of Scotland was prevalent in Scottish communities and households through its ubiquitous schools and a prolific pedagogic system.⁴⁶ The result of this influence was a firmly-established national ethos that was tightly-bound up in the Calvinist tenets of self-consciousness, moral virtue, and free will, which the common people recognised or knew instinctively in each other, i.e. common sense (also denoted as *sensus communis*). Davie termed this national ethos of Scotland's vulgar population the *democratic intellect*.⁴⁷ Because, as a prolific mode of language and manners, it pervaded into all aspects of Scottish life – religion, law, politics, culture, even mathematics, as well as affecting the events of Scotland's past⁴⁸ – this national ethos or democratic intellect rather defined a *nation*. Stateless, Scottish writers subsequently conferred on the sense which they recognised of a Scottish nation, the epithet 'North Britain'.

For the modern philosopher, however, most notably Hume, the epithet quickly acquired the negative connotations of the backwardness, ignorance, and prejudices of the vulgar Scot, as well as of the savage Highlander. A passage from the first *Edinburgh Review* of 1755-6, cited by Nicholas Phillipson, described that, 'if countries have had their ages with respect to improvement, North Britain may be considered as in a state of early youth guided and supported by the more mature strength of her kindred country.'⁴⁹ To Hume, therefore, the Union was a blessing, as it allowed Scotland to harness the ideals of commercial modernity that had been systematised in England. Phillipson continued: 'Here was an image of Scotland – or rather North Britain – as part of a new

⁴⁶ See R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

⁴⁷ See George Davie, *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century* (1961) (Croydon: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ John Knox's Presbyterian model of church government is a significant event. See also Alexander Broadie's argument that the Declaration of Arbroath (1320), which was a declaration of Scottish independence, was formulated according to the political doctrine of the Scottish scholastic, Duns Scotus, which based the idea of consent on the free will of both the community and the individual. Alexander Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 25-31.

⁴⁹ Nicholas Phillipson, *Hume* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 32.

British polity, freed from faction and poverty, exposed to the civilizing powers of commerce, having acquired a culture capable of exploiting it.' Hume's sceptical stance, which deemed the common and accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the ages to be worthless, and prescribed the ideas of the learned philosopher in their place, was described by Davie as 'the Berkeleian system, according to which, in the interests of reconciling progress with traditional standards, we are to set aside the instincts of the farmer in favour of the sophistication of the philosopher and to think with the learned while we talk with the vulgar.'⁵⁰

Hume had regarded his principles as a kind of esoteric knowledge which 'escapes the vulgar and ignorant'.⁵¹ But because those principles proceeded from 'certain and stable causes,' he was confident they could be 'fitted to operate on a multitude' who 'will certainly be seized by the common affection, and be governed by it in all their actions.' 'Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye,' he remarked, 'than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers.' To Reid, this loss of self-government to the necessity of philosophical ideas as the result of nothing more than the misplaced 'pride of philosophy',⁵² was clearly abhorrent. But Reid was not the first to be alarmed by the philosopher's vanity. A generation earlier, the Presbyterian theologian, Francis Hutcheson, had observed it in Berkeley's intellectualism and understood it to be a potent argument against vulgar pig-headedness. Hutcheson was more troubled by the learned-vulgar divide than the despotism of philosophy. He consequently appealed 'for

⁵⁰ Davie, 'Berkeley, Hume', 44.

⁵¹ Hume, 'Of the First Principles of Government,' in Hume, *Essays*, 24.

⁵² Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, 278.

unity in the name of nationalism of the spirit'.⁵³ Davie called this unity the 'Hutchesonian system',

according to which, with the same aim of reconciling material advance with the intellectual principle, we are to respect the instincts of the farmer as against the sophistication of the philosopher and initiate a sort of dialogue between the vulgar and the learned, instead of talking down to the farmer from the standpoint of the philosopher".⁵⁴

According to the Hutchesonian system, the philosopher must thus commune with the farmer if his propositions are to be substantiated, i.e. to conjoin common sense with philosophy. 'The philosopher has no option but to join with the rest of humanity in conducting his thinking within the confines of common sense,' explained Nicholas Wolterstorff: 'he cannot lift himself above the herd.'⁵⁵ Hutcheson's unity has been regarded to have been achieved by Adam Smith, his most devoted disciple, through the historical materialism and moral consequentialism attached to Smith's system of human intercourse. However, as mentioned, the idealisation of Smith's system had sprung from the spring of Cartesian rationalism. We heard Reid tease Smith's moral sentiments for 'putting the shadow of virtue in place of the substance'. From the Scottish School's point of view, any attempt to unite the philosopher with the farmer must spring from the broad epistemological foundation which included both philosophy and common sense, i.e. it must address the substance and shadow of virtue together as one. Reid said,

To judge of first principles, requires no more than a sound mind free from prejudice, and a distinct conception of the question. The learned and the unlearned, the Philosopher and the day-labourer, are upon a level, and will pass

⁵³ George Davie, 'Hume, Reid, and the Passion for Ideas', in Davie, *Passion for Ideas*, 7.

⁵⁴ Davie, 'Berkeley, Hume'; 44

⁵⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Reid on Common Sense,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, ed. Terence Cuneo & René Van Woudenberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77.

the same judgment, when they are not misled by some bias, or taught to renounce their understanding from some mistaken religious principle.⁵⁶

This epistemological union had originated with Reid's teacher, George Turnbull, also Hutcheson's rival, in his philosophical doctrine termed 'providential naturalism'.⁵⁷ Structurally, Turnbull's providential naturalism was similar to the scholastic conjoining of providence and nature. Alexander Broadie explained that it held that (1) 'natural philosophy' included the inductive science of the human mind, (2) 'that the laws of nature are the product of a providential act of divine will,' (3) 'that the divine purpose for which the laws of nature were created is discoverable by a study of things that operate according to the laws', and (4) 'that our cognitive faculties, which are of course part of the divine dispensation, have a scientifically determinable function, knowledge of which gives us some insight into the mind of God,' as well as 'true beliefs about the material world'.⁵⁸ The outcome was a narrative of the creation by the divine will within the human constitution of an innate moral virtue that made the individual a sentient, self-conscious, and free-willed being. These qualities rendered in him a 'theistic non-necessitarianism' toward the laws of nature.⁵⁹ It described the metaphysical state of human life having a first cause, and of human beings as an efficient cause who acted independently of and upon a world of necessity, inertia, and entropy. It was on this basis of revolt against the necessity imposed by nature, rather than the claim that common sense was epistemologically equal or superior to philosophy, that Reid associated himself with the side of the common people. 'If this is wisdom,' he said of the ideal philosophy, 'let me be deluded with the vulgar':

⁵⁶ Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, 566.

⁵⁷ See Alexander Broadie, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy: Philosophical Works and Correspondence of George Turnbull* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005).

⁵⁸ Alexander Broadie, 'Reid in Context', in Cuneo & Woudenberg, *Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, 41-43.

⁵⁹ Cuneo and Woudenberg, 'Introduction', 16.

I find something within me that recoils against it, and inspires more reverent sentiments of the human kind, and of the universal administration. Common Sense and Reason have both one author; that Almighty Author in all whose other works we observe a consistency, uniformity, and beauty which charm and delight the understanding: there must, therefore, be some order and consistency in the human faculties, as well as in other parts of his workmanship. A man that thinks reverently of his own kind, and esteems true wisdom and philosophy, will not be fond, nay, will be very suspicious, of such strange and paradoxical opinions. If they are false, they disgrace philosophy; and, if they are true, they degrade the human species, and make us justly ashamed of our frame.⁶⁰

From common sense's first cause as the innate knowledge willed by God to His human creation, Reid consequently claimed that common sense was older than rationalism, and that it represented 'true wisdom and philosophy'. This chronology is peculiar at first, as it suggests a charge of Platonism. But there is a fundamental difference. Platonism dealt with objects of thought, with ideas of things such as deity, and in this respect Plato's theory of forms was the ancient precursor to Descartes' theory of ideas. Reid and Turnbull's divine will related God's divine cause to the actions of human beings as causal agents. It dealt with the nativism and originalism of man's free will, and its manifestation in his utterances or speech. What Reid's chronology thus sought to do, was contend that God's divine will, or as Wolterstorff put it, His 'divine discourse',⁶¹ predated Platonism and outdid Platonism in originality and naturalness. The result was a discourse about the history of philosophical thought which featured the claim of common sense – rather than the claim of an Aryan idea, a Semitic law, or an Adamic gene – as mankind's *ancient constitution*. Thus, Reid declaimed,

To what purpose is it for philosophy to decide against common sense in this or any other matter [concerning right]? The belief of a material world is older, and of

⁶⁰ Reid, *Philosophy*, 149-150.

⁶¹ See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

more authority, than any principles of philosophy. It declines the tribunal of reason, and laughs at all the artillery of the logician. It retains its sovereign authority in spite of all the edicts of philosophy, and reason itself must stoop to its orders.⁶²

Testimonies of Free Will

Reid's conception of common sense as mankind's ancient constitution was adopted and championed by Leyden. 'With all his respect for ancient authors,' Leyden declared in his two major publications, the *Discoveries of Africa* and the *Complaynt of Scotland*, he 'has never ceased to recollect, that no ancient of them all, is so old as common sense.'⁶³ Proving and preserving the ancient common sense became the foundational thesis of Leyden's oriental researches. Even his conduct of his life was a demonstration of common sense. Before we can understand what these entailed, we need to revisit the logic and metaphysics of Reid's theory of perception.

As I tried to explain, Reid's theory of perception worked by distinguishing qualities or universals of physical matter existing in the natural and human worlds, and transposing them into known notions of that matter and beliefs of their existence. How the human mind did this was undiscoverable by Reid's Baconian inductive methodology. However, this operation of the mind implied a cause and effect relation between the physical matter and the known notion. In other words, a thing existing in the world caused the human mind to perceive a sign of that thing and, by a natural principle of the human constitution, to conceive and believe the existence of its significate, i.e. the thing that was signified by the sign. These signs and their significates

⁶² Reid, *Philosophy*, 150.

⁶³ John Leyden, 'Preliminary Dissertation', in John Leyden, *The Complaynt of Scotland, written in 1548, with a Preliminary Dissertation and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1801), 290. John Leyden, *A Historical & Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries & Settlements of the Europeans in Northern & Western Africa, at the close of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: J. Moir, 1799), 227.

were regarded by Reid as the ‘testimony of nature’⁶⁴. The natural world thus communicates to us through its signs, or universals. These signs were ‘established by nature, but discovered only by experience.’⁶⁵ Knowledge of their significates referred to the natural sciences, which, said Reid, ‘the whole of genuine philosophy [Aristotle’s natural philosophy] consists in discovering’.

Reid categorised the signs of nature as the first and simplest of three classes of ‘natural signs’. The second class referred to ‘human testimony’, that is, ‘the signs in natural language [that] are features of the face, gestures of the body, and modulations of the voice.’⁶⁶ ‘Nature hath established a real connection between these signs,’ Reid affirmed, ‘and the thoughts and dispositions of the mind which are signified by them; and Nature hath taught us the interpretation of these signs; so that, previous to experience, the signs suggest the thing signified, and create the belief of it.’ As with the signs and their significates in the natural world, there was also a cause and effect relation attending to the signs and their significates in the human world. The signs in natural language, or human testimony, signified acts that were caused by a power present in the human constitution. This power was the will of the active knowing mind, which acted out the knowledge contained in ‘human thoughts, purposes, and desires’ and ‘dispositions’.⁶⁷ Reid defined this knowledge in terms of the aesthetic, or ‘taste’, which was ‘discovered to us by a natural principle, without reasoning or experience’. The philosophy of the aesthetic he termed the ‘fine arts’.

Today, the conception that natural language was the effect of a cause constitutes what is called a ‘speech act’. C.A.J. Coady has argued that Reid had developed ‘an

⁶⁴ Reid, *Philosophy*, 320.

⁶⁵ Reid, *Philosophy*, 136.

⁶⁶ Reid, *Philosophy*, 321.

⁶⁷ Reid, *Philosophy*, 136-137.

account of speech acts'.⁶⁸ Speech act theory holds that human utterances are actually performative acts which solicit responses from the subject and which cause an effective change to a given situation.⁶⁹ Unlike the natural causes in nature, which – because nature is inert and entropic – ‘have no proper efficiency or causality’,⁷⁰ the will of the active knowing mind was an efficacious causal agency that changed the inertial and entropic state of the world. As I explained, the human will, seen as an efficient cause, denoted a metaphysical freedom from necessity, or theistic non-necessitarianism. This combination of theistic non-necessitarianism, the human will, and a proto-speech act theory, with regard to epistemology, relates to an intellectual school of thought known today as ‘Reformed epistemology’.⁷¹

Reformed epistemology deals with the justification and qualification of *belief* as a form of knowledge with epistemic merit, i.e. the mediated justification, warranting, or entitling of beliefs that are not evidentially based on some other belief that has epistemic merit. As we saw in the previous chapter, the warranting of non-evidential beliefs had formed the entire purpose of Reid’s theses concerning common sense, and in that respect Reid can be regarded to have anticipated Reformed epistemology. For Reid, as for today’s exponents of Reformed epistemology, the warranting of belief included beliefs that have been recorded in Scripture, such as the witnessing of miraculous acts and speech. Hume had memorably discredited miracles in his *Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding* (1748) and attacked religious belief in his *Natural History of Religion* (1757) and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) – the last of which,

⁶⁸ C.A.J. Coady, ‘Reid and the Social Operations of Mind’, in Cuneo and Woudenberg, *Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, 180-203.

⁶⁹ Speech act theory was developed by J.L. Austin. See J.L. Austin, *How to do things with Words*, eds. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). Speech act theory has also been fundamental to other fields especially the history of political thought. See J.G.A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁷⁰ Reid, *Philosophy*, 137.

⁷¹ It is articulated mainly in the works of two philosophers, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

interestingly, Hume had confided in Minto's father in 1751. Reid, nevertheless, demonstrated by his theory of perception that the claims of Scripture do warrant belief in them.⁷² The miraculous acts and speech in Scripture come under the third class of Reid's natural signs. He defined this class as comprehending those signs 'which, though we never before had any notion or conception of the thing signified, do suggest it, or conjure it up, as it were, by a natural kind of magic, and at once give us a conception and create a belief of it.'⁷³

Reid's third class of miraculous signs reflected the testimony of God. We thus have the testimony of the creative will in three forms: first, the divine will of providence (the first cause) in miraculous signs; second, the human will (the efficient cause) in natural language; and third, the universals of creation in nature. All three were knowable to the human constitution, and only the last was subject to the necessity of its own laws. From this framework of natural signs was thus discerned a chronology of the creative will. To the Scottish Schoolmen, almost all of whom were trained for the ministry, this creative will was enacted in the Scriptural 'Word of God'. Here, the Schoolmen differed from the Scholastics as Reformed epistemology differed from Reformed theology: they treated the Word of God, termed the *logos*, not as the revealed knowledge of necessary providence, but as the performative speech of divine volition: as if 'God was then and there issuing a counsel' to the reader who had opened the bible at a random page.⁷⁴ In other words, the *logos* performed the divine speech act and actuated the divine will. The Schoolmen believed this divine will to have manifested in its creation of man, as the native human will of the human knowing mind. This native will was thus believed to represent the original character of mankind, humanity's moral

⁷² See Dale Tuggy, 'Reid's Philosophy of Religion', in Cuneo and Woudenberg, *Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, 289-312. Also M.A. Stewart, 'Religion and rational theology,' in Broadie, *Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, 31-59.

⁷³ Reid, *Philosophy*, 137.

⁷⁴ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 7.

ancient constitution, gifted through God's creation of Adam literally according to the biblical metaphor: 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'.⁷⁵

The historical concerns of the Scottish Schoolmen thus focused on rediscovering this original native will, and to preserve it where they believed it to exist. There was, as mentioned, a social-political agenda to prove that this original native will represented the ancient constitution of the Scottish people. The defence of Scottish common sense, I argue, had supplied the inspiration for and reaction to the *Ossian* controversy. But in effect, as we shall see of Leyden, the entire population of the world and its recorded language and manners were potentially subjects of the Scottish School's interest and research. As Reid said, 'the signs in the natural language of the human countenance and behaviour, as well as the signs in our original perceptions, have the same signification in all climates and in all nations; and the skill of interpreting them is not acquired, but innate.'⁷⁶

The means of locating the creative will therefore lay in analysing its effect: i.e. the natural signs in human speech. Here, Reid made a distinction in human speech which he designated as 'natural language' and 'artificial language'.⁷⁷ The difference was that 'natural language' – the 'features of the face, gestures of the body, and modulations of the voice' – was caused by the divine will during creation, while 'artificial language' was caused by the native human will. 'In artificial language,' said Reid, 'the signs are articulate sounds, whose connection with the things signified by them, is established by the will of men; and, in learning our mother tongue, we discover this connection by experience; but not without the aid of natural language, or of what

⁷⁵ John 1:14, King James Version.

⁷⁶ Reid, *Philosophy*, 321.

⁷⁷ Reid, *Philosophy*, 321. Reid also made a parallel distinction in natural signs in nature. There were signs which were sensed, which he termed 'original signs', and signs which were perceived by means of sensation, termed 'acquired signs'.

we had before attained of artificial language.’⁷⁸ Artificial language referred to the original ‘use and structure of ordinary language’.⁷⁹ From both artificial language and natural language, and from the recorded texts of artificial language, the native human will was thus discoverable. But first, artificial language had to be identified and distilled from the morass of the world’s human languages.

The Complaynt of Scotland

Leyden’s *Discoveries in Africa*, published in 1799, proved to be a success which inducted him into Scotland’s ‘republic of letters’. He attracted the notice of one of Scotland’s leading antiquary-historians, John Pinkerton, who, on enquiring with his colleague, Malcolm Laing, was told that ‘Mr. Leyden is the author of that account of Africa which he gave to a bookseller gratis. He is a student of divinity and teacher, very young, and a good linguist.’⁸⁰ Leyden was subsequently entrusted by the custodians of the unique sixteenth century Middle Scots (lowland Scotch of the early modern period) manuscript, *The Complaynt of Scotland (1549)*, to edit it. The *Complaynt* was a literary treasure from the critical period of Scotland’s history known as the ‘rough wooing’ of Scotland (in the figure of Mary Queen of Scots) by England (in the figure of Edward VI).⁸¹ It was ostensibly an anti-English tract in the medieval literary tradition of the ‘Three Estates’⁸² – i.e. the nobility, clergy, commons: Montesquieu’s three governing powers – in which the author exhorted, as he stipulated in his subtitle, ‘the Thre Estraits

⁷⁸ Reid, *Philosophy*, 321.

⁷⁹ Cuneo and Woudenberg, ‘Introduction’, 9.

⁸⁰ Malcolm Laing to Pinkerton, 9 July 1800, John Pinkerton, *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton, Esq., Vol. II*, ed. Dawson Turner (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), 177.

⁸¹ For more, see James A.H. Murray’s ‘Introduction’, in *The Complaynt of Scotlande with ane Exortatione to the Thre Estaits to be vigilante in the Deffens of their Public veil, A.D. 1549*, ed. James A.H. Murray (London: Early English Text Society, 1872). Also A.M Stewart’s ‘Historical Background’ in Robert Wedderburn, *The Complaynt of Scotland (c.1550)*, ed. A.M. Stewart (Edinburgh: The Scottish Text Society, 1979). Leyden was the first of the *Complaynt*’s three editors. All three interpreted the *Complaynt* and its author differently.

⁸² See Joseph A. Dane, ‘The Three Estates and Other Mediaeval Trinities’, *Florilegium Vol. 3* (1981), 283-309.

to be vigilante in the deffens of their Public Veil'. Considering that the eighteenth century was a period of contentious self-reflection on the part of all Scottish people with regard to their union with England, Leyden's edition of the *Complaynt* was eagerly anticipated in literati circles.

'I shall... leave directions for the *Complaint of Scotland* to be transmitted to you when published,' Laing told Pinkerton in 1800; 'it will be out in six weeks, with a glossary by Leyden, a promising young man.'⁸³ The *Complaynt* was published in 1801. But instead of an edited text, Leyden reproduced the *Complaynt* with 'the orthography of the original, however barbarous or irregular'.⁸⁴ More controversially, he prefaced the *Complaynt* with a 'Preliminary Dissertation' on the text that was equally as long as the text (292 pages). Leyden's *Complaynt* caused an immediate uproar, and Pinkerton soon published a scathing review that condemned 'Mr. Leyden's prolix, digressive, and retrogressive dissertation' and its being 'printed not as a classic, but in *fac simile*, with all the confusion of the original edition.'⁸⁵

A reader of Leyden's dissertation would be apt to agree with Pinkerton that 'the most patient antiquary will find considerable difficulty in the perusal', as 'the want of divisions and arrangement... presents a chaos without any bridge over it, and which we shall never again attempt to pervade.' It is true that Leyden's dissertation on the text greatly exceeded his exegetic account of it. It discussed every other antiquated work dating back to – to list only the more familiar writers – the Scottish 'makars' (poets) of the sixteenth century; the fifteenth-century Scottish theologian, John Ireland; Geoffrey Chaucer and other English poets of the fourteenth century; Boethius and other proto-Christian classicists; the first-century Jewish historian, Josephus; Cicero and the Latin

⁸³ Malcolm Laing to Pinkerton, 21 June 1800, Pinkerton, *Literary Correspondence*, 166.

⁸⁴ Leyden, 'Preliminary Dissertation', 90.

⁸⁵ Art. XIII, *The Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature*, Vol. XXXV (London: S. Hamilton, May 1802), 95-99.

poets; and the Greek philosophers: Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. On top of their works, Leyden also rattled on about poetry and prose, the vulgar and learned, heraldry and chivalry, astronomy and astrology, superstition and prophecy, ‘moral treatises’ and the ‘system of war’, romance literature and the ‘system of theology’, historical-cyclic poems and history, and bards and historians. In addition, scattered throughout these discussions were diverse references to bizarre terms, allegories, and metaphors involving ships and the sea, dances and musical instruments, ballads and tunes, minstrelsy and manners, even Merlin, the Original Sin, and the Antipodes.

Yet, there was method and purpose in Leyden’s dissertation. But, as mentioned, it was only recognisable to those who apprehended its historical context and mode of language, which referred to the common sense realism and semantic language of the Scottish School. Leyden’s dissertation on the *Complaynt* was a colossal undertaking to investigate its use of the natural and artificial languages, as well as what it says of the natural and artificial languages. As with the *Discoveries*, it is not the purpose of this thesis to examine this undertaking here, but rather what Leyden had concluded from it. A.M. Stewart, the *Complaynt*’s third and last editor, identified six ‘facets’ of its composition: ‘it is simultaneously, a defence and illustration of the vernacular, an adaptation of Chartier, a propaganda pamphlet, a historical interpretation, a sermon, and it has elements of the encyclopedia and the pastoral.’⁸⁶ This list actually reflects Reid’s ‘positive philosophical methodology’ involving the ‘interplay between the deliverances of introspection, science, observations concerning the structure and use of ordinary language, and the principles of common sense.’⁸⁷ As a theory of cognition, Reid’s Theory of Perception necessarily informed a theory of language, a theory of manners, a theory of literature, and a theory of human history. In his dissertation, Leyden actually

⁸⁶ A.M. Stewart, ‘Historical Background’, xxix-xli.

⁸⁷ Cuneo and Woudenberg, ‘Introduction’, 12.

analysed the *Complaynt* by each of these themes. Here, I shall focus on its central historical theme, which is what Stewart noted to be the ‘adaptation of Chartier’. It was referred to by Leyden as the ‘Mutation of Monarchies’. This mutation described the decline of the medieval Scottish nation due to the discord and dissensions caused by the two learned classes, the nobility and the clergy, and their disdain and neglect of the vulgar common multitude.⁸⁸

Pinkerton did not appreciate the distinctions Leyden had attempted to differentiate in the historicism, linguistics, poetics, and performativity of the *Complaynt*. He was furious with Leyden for not treating the text as one would treat the ‘Greek and Roman classics’, which was ‘with the elegance and clearness of modern typography’.⁸⁹ Not only had Leyden preserved ‘the orthography of the original, however barbarous or irregular,’ he also preserved the use of certain archaic letters, ‘a practice [, he actually states, which is] severely reprobated by Pinkerton’ and challenged ‘the assertion of Pinkerton’.⁹⁰ Pinkerton accused Leyden of proceeding instead ‘like a mere antiquary, in throwing obscurity over a clear subject’, before ranting that he himself ‘would have followed a different method’. Pinkerton, interestingly, had signalled his interest to edit the *Complaynt* back in 1786, but was never entrusted with the task. His resentment at his young rival, however, went beyond personal jealousy. It conveyed a fierce disagreement over the scholarship of historical literature.

⁸⁸ ‘The Dream commences with the allegorical representation of Dame Scotia and her three sons, Nobility, Clergy, and Commons... Scotia vehemently expostulates with her three sons, whose mutual divisions and discords had produced their mutual disasters... Such is the outline of that part of the work, which may be properly denominated the Complaynt of Scotland.’ Leyden, ‘Preliminary Dissertation’, 179-180.

⁸⁹ *Critical Review*, 95-99.

⁹⁰ Leyden, ‘Preliminary Dissertation’, 290-291.

Pinkerton's method was a particular deployment of comparative philology, a method which brought him into contact with Edward Gibbon.⁹¹ For him, Leyden's linguistic minutiae were irrelevant. Where Leyden had compared the modes of speech between the *Complaynt* and other 'Complaints' of its genre to induce by its linguistic *context* what it had set out to do, Pinkerton compared an eclectic range of 'learned' texts of different genres and forms for associations and categories involving certain events, terms, and concepts. Illumined by the *authority* of the text, Pinkerton was thus able to deduce what ideas, doctrines, laws, and institutions were being represented in a particular manuscript.⁹² In his most important work, *The History of Scotland from the Accession of the House of Stuart to that of Mary* (1797), Pinkerton exploited this methodology to produce for different Scottish eras what he termed 'a Retrospect of the State of Scotland'.⁹³ They were essentially Enlightenment-type conjectural histories on the 'state of the people, and of civilization', 'government, laws, tactics', 'agriculture, useful arts', 'commerce, money, navigation', 'ecclesiastic history, literature, language', and 'ornamental arts, manners, dress'. Though prevented from laying his hands on the *Complaynt*, Pinkerton's 'Retrospect' for its period of the Rough Wooing enabled him to deduce its general premise.

Interestingly, one of Pinkerton's primary sources, the French courtier, Alain Chartier – whose *Chronicles of King Charles VII* he correctly attributed to Charles

⁹¹ See Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Gibbon's Last Project', in Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment* (London: Yale University Press, 2010), 161-191.

⁹² The different approaches between Leyden and Pinkerton has an analogy with the different approaches of historiography and historiosophy as documented between the historians John Pocock and Quentin Skinner. See J.G.A. Pocock, 'Introduction: The state of the art', *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-34. Quentin Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', *New Literary History* Vol. 3, No. 2, On Interpretation: I (Winter, 1972), 393-408; and Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', *History and Theory* 8 (1) (1969), 3-53. Also J.G.A. Pocock, 'Quentin Skinner: the history of politics and the politics of history', *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 123-144.

⁹³ John Pinkerton, *The History of Scotland from the Accession of the House of Stuart to that of Mary, Volume I* (London: C. Dilly, 1797), (Book V) 143-185, (Book IX) 338-440.

VII's herald, Gilles de Bouvier, or the Herald Berry – was later identified by twentieth century scholars to be the source of the Three Estates model employed in the *Complaynt*.⁹⁴ Chartier's work entitled *Le Quadrilogue Invectif* (1422) was a critique of medieval France's institutions of church and nobility – the two feudal estates – and their ineptitude in the face of a belligerent England. Transposed to the Scottish setting, the *Quadrilogue*'s Three Estates model presented a parallel critique of the Scottish church and nobility, and their ineptitude in the face of a belligerent England. This critique of the feudal estates had formed the central theme of Pinkerton's *Retrospects*. As mentioned, it also formed the central theme of Leyden's *Preliminary Dissertation*, as the 'Mutation of Monarchies'. However, in each case it took very different forms.

Pinkerton's retrospective view of Scotland was influenced by the Enlightenment paradigm of the freedom of speech and religion. The church and nobility were simply corrupted institutions that prejudiced the Scottish people from claiming their true destiny at the forefront of the modern British nation and empire. But this narrative quickly becomes controversial. Pinkerton referred to the Three Estates as the 'three communities', where the 'community' was essentially constituted of a 'race'. The feudal estates were constituted by a non-Scottish race, the Celts, whose passions and prejudices in the form of false religion and false chivalry had usurped for them the status and power of the clergy and nobility.⁹⁵ Pinkerton's true Scottish community, on the other hand, was constituted by the descendants of the Gothic race, whom he claimed to have been known in ancient Scotland as the Pictish race, and whom he also took for

⁹⁴ See A.M. Stewart, 'Historical Background', xxi, 54n liv.

⁹⁵ See John Pinkerton, *An Enquiry into the History of Scotland Preceding the Reign of Malcom III. or the Year 1056, including the Authentic History of that Period* (London: John Nichols, 1794). Also John Pinkerton, *A Dissertation on the Origins and Progress of the Scythians or Goths, being an Introduction to the Ancient and Modern History of Europe* (London: John Nichols, 1787).

the Scythian race.⁹⁶ The Scythian or Goth's nature to be free and to conquer their environment, Pinkerton ascribed to a true religion and a true chivalry which resurfaced in the modern figure of the Scottish 'burgher' or 'burgess'.⁹⁷ The ancient Scots, as with the modern Scots, were thus a learned race. Quoting Herodotus, Pinkerton claimed that 'the Scythians were both learned and wise', and proceeded to list the learned figures among the Scythians, including 'Zmolxis, the early lawgiver of the Goths', 'Anacharsis [who] was the next Scythic philosopher', and 'Menander, the celebrated founder of the new comedy, and whose drama was called the school of wisdom, [and who] was a Goth of Getia.'⁹⁸ This account is classic Enlightenment history for its treatment of the idea of 'race' as a subjective object of comparative natures.

By contrast, Leyden, who also referred to Chartier,⁹⁹ simply saw the *Complaynt's* critique of clergy and nobility as a critique of their learned systems of theology and stoicism. But inversely to Pinkerton's narrative of the corruption of a true learning into a false learning, Leyden's critique described a narrative of 'mutation' or decline of civilisation. Leyden's Scottish School framework recognised this mutation to be the debasement of vulgar common sense by learned ideal philosophy, and the degradation of the native vulgar character and will by philosophy's necessary prescriptions of law and behaviour, i.e. theology and stoicism. There was no ethnic differentiation of the people according to intellectual ability, but rather the fracturing of a united humanity by divisive ideas.

⁹⁶ For a biography of Pinkerton, see Patrick O'Flaherty, *Scotland's Pariah: The Life and Work of John Pinkerton, 1758-1826* (USA: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

⁹⁷ In discussing the 'old laws of Scotland' and referring to the *Leges Quatuor Burgorum* (Laws of the Four Burghs) of David I, Pinkerton deduced that 'it is natural to think that our burghs had the first regular laws.' Pinkerton to Lord Hailes, 1 February 1791, Pinkerton, *Literary Correspondence*, 260-263.

⁹⁸ Pinkerton, *Dissertation*, xi-xii.

⁹⁹ Leyden, *Complaynt*, 307.

In Leyden and Pinkerton, we thus have two opposing views of the historical text that is the *Complaynt of Scotland*. Pinkerton, imbibing the ideals, causes, and teleology of the Enlightenment, saw it to be a political work that suggested an idealised origin of man and envisioned the return to a utopia of the learned society of a master race. Leyden, imbibing Turnbull and Reid's theistic non-necessitarianism, apprehended a didactic work that demonstrated man's vulgar origin of common sense, and envisioned the recovery or reawakening of that ancient and free human constitution in what Davie termed as Reid's 'communal effort of will'. Such a reawakening would instantly realise a 'common weal' and usher in a 'grand era in the progress of human reason'.¹⁰⁰ The divergence between Pinkerton and Leyden was significant because it was demonstrative of the central problem of Scottish philosophy between the learned and vulgar. Indeed, at the outset of his dissertation, Leyden had quoted Pinkerton's opinion that the *Complaynt* was 'a most curious piece, well written, and fraught with great learning – the only classic work in old Scottish prose', and then proceeded to explain why 'he who should expect elegance or taste in so ancient a Scottish classic [i.e. Pinkerton], would highly be disappointed.'¹⁰¹

Origin of Man

As explained, to the Scottish School, the value of the ancient text lay in the context of its ancient speech, i.e. its testimonies or natural signs of ancient native will. For this reason Leyden did not scorn the lowly oral ballad or the 'barbarous and irregular orthography' of original texts. In fact, while writing his dissertation, he journeyed to the Scottish Highlands to investigate the vulgar basis of James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*. After the *Complaynt*, Leyden 'embraced with zeal' a project 'in collecting the

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Reid, 'A Brief Account of Aristotle's Logic', in Henry Home of Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man, Vol. III* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1813), 1-85.

¹⁰¹ Leyden, 'Preliminary Dissertation', 72.

traditionary ballads of the Border from oral recitation, and in illustrating the local antiquities and popular superstitions of his native country.’¹⁰² The fruits of his labour went into Sir Walter Scott’s ground-breaking *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802).¹⁰³ To Leyden, the *Minstrelsy* was unquestionably a vulgar project. Its primary consequence, as with his writings on *Ossian* and his dissertation on the *Complaynt*, was a vindication of the native instinct and the native will that proceeded from Reid’s epistemology of common sense. Needless to say, Scottish School nativism was usefully employed in the national discussion over Scottish anxieties and identities. It bestowed a dignity to the epithet North Briton and rather effected a Turnbullian engagement between the common Scot and the modern Anglo-Scot that became evident in the nascent empire.¹⁰⁴ But it was also inevitable that Scottish School nativism got sucked into the politically-charged question on the origin of man that would be bitterly debated in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵

Leyden’s native common Scot initially identified with the Celts because, it was believed, their ancestors had possessed ancient common sense. Literary evidence such as the *Poems of Ossian* and the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* supported this epistemological claim, but it also bolstered the political Celticist claim that the ancestors of the Scots were Celts who had constituted the original Britons. The Lowland

¹⁰² James Morton’s ‘The Life of the Author’ in John Leyden, *The Poetical Remains of the Late Dr. John Leyden, with Memoirs of His Life*, ed. Rev. James Morton (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), xxiv.

¹⁰³ Sir Walter Scott, ed., *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, collected in the southern counties of Scotland; with a few of modern date, founded upon local tradition, Vol. II* (Kelso: James Ballantyne, 1802).

¹⁰⁴ See T.M. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire: 1600-1815* (England: Penguin Books, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ A notable Scottish figure in this history who did not subscribe to the Scottish School nativism was John Crawford, Raffles’s Resident at Jogjakarta and later Resident at Singapore. Crawford tended toward Pinkerton’s Enlightenment science of man and the Orientalism of the Asiatick Society. His copious books on empire’s native races spanned half a century from 1820 to 1867, and placed him at the heart of the contentious debate on the subject. See Gareth Knapman, *Race and British Colonialism in South-East Asia, 1770-1870: John Crawford and the Politics of Equality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). For the scriptural context to the debate, which was relevant to the Scottish School’s Presbyterian psyche, see Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Scots may have migrated from Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany ('Cambric'), the Highland Scots from Ireland (Gaelic), but they were all common and native to their corner of Europe. Leyden, for example, writing to the James Macpherson of Wales, William Owen, referred to him as 'you Cambrians' and to both Owen and he as 'us true Celts'.¹⁰⁶ This nativism invariably applied to the originality and self-consciousness of vulgar, rude, rustic, or savage communities everywhere in the world. Beyond the Highland Gaels and the Lowland Borderers, they included the Berbers, Mongearts, and Gago in Africa, the Tamils in India, the Malays in the Eastern Islands, the Maoris in the South Pacific, and not least, the North American native peoples.

Learned idealists such as Pinkerton, however, saw, from their Enlightenment lens, such claims as polygenist (i.e. the theory that man has many origins) and preposterous. Pinkerton's Gothic thesis held that because the Goths had genealogically possessed philosophical ideas of ancient authority, such as Nature, Liberty, Law, Astrology, the Antipodes, etc., therefore they must have descended from a common ancestor of uncommon authority and enlightenment. This legacy simply put the Goths at the top of the pyramid in a monogenist (i.e. the theory that man has only one origin) view of human origin. It not only crowned the Goths as the first original race of mankind, but made them a race apart from the rest who were merely defective imitations of the Gothic original. This superiority thus made Pinkerton scornful of the dumbing down of learned ideas by the simpleminded Celts and other non-Gothic heathens in their *exoteric* medium of romance literature. The Celts, to use Hume's words quoted above, 'cannot enlarge their view to those universal propositions' of true *esoteric* learning which only a 'man of genius' could understand.

¹⁰⁶ Leyden to Owen, 26 February 1803, cited in Arthur Johnston, 'William Owen-Pughe and the Mabinogion', *National Library of Wales Journal* Cyf. 10, rh. 3 (Haf 1958), 323-328. Owen transcribed and translated the Middle Welsh cycles of the *Mabinogion*.

Leyden actually elucidated these distinctions of the ideal philosopher's Gothic system in his Preliminary Dissertation. The system had held true esoteric learning to have involved the Greek, Chaldean, and Brahmin philosophies, and their dualistic creeds of Stoicism and Theology. But disseminated to the heathen as popular romance and liturgy, the high forms of Stoicism and Theology (later manifesting in medieval Europe and the Middle-East as Scholasticism and *Ilm al-Kalām*) took the low forms and manners of Chivalry and Religion, which in turn became the controlling institutions of Nobility and Church.¹⁰⁷ Only, to Leyden, they controlled not the liberty of the learned race but the mind of the vulgar native commoner. 'The obvious intention of promulgating these Prophecies,' Leyden argued in the case of the chivalric legends of Merlin in the *Complaynt*, 'was rather to dispirit the Commons of Scotland, and subjugate their courage, by familiarizing their minds to the idea of being conquered'.¹⁰⁸ The result was the 'Mutation of Monarchies' and the decline of the Scottish nation. Indeed, the *Complaynt* had described this subjugation in terms of Berkeley's dictum, whereby 'he that will write well in any tongue, must follow this counsel of Aristotle; to speake as the common people do, to thinke as wise men do; and so shoulde euerye man understand him, and the iudgement of wise men allowe him.'¹⁰⁹

As mentioned, these linguistic contexts of metaphysical freedom and subjugation vexed the Scottish Schoolmen's ethos of theistic non-necessitarianism.

¹⁰⁷ 'Adapted to the habits of a martial age, and fostered by the directors of religion, the romances of Chivalry took so strong a hold of the minds of the Scottish nation, that they resisted the morose prescription of the reformers, and survived the keenest attacks of ridicule and satire, till they were gradually expelled by the introduction of a new set of manners.' This was the Reformation, which, 'in order, to attain the deeper influence over the minds of men, commenced its career by overturning all their ancient habits; and as Mahomet began his mission by proscribing the Persic romances, which, at that period, were the delight of the Arabian tribes, so, in Scotland and England the artillery of ecclesiastical censure was directed against the "unprofitable" reading of romances, and the "profane" recitation of popular songs.' Leyden, 'Preliminary Dissertation', 219. Thomas Carlyle, a later admirer of Leyden, paraphrased this structure when he referred to Church and Kingship as the 'Realised Ideals' and 'Arrangements' of 'Spiritual Guidance' and 'Practical Guidance' of *society*. Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (Modern Library Classics, 2002), 9.

¹⁰⁸ Leyden, 'Preliminary Dissertation', 193.

¹⁰⁹ Leyden, *Complaynt*, 24.

Both Dugald Stewart and Thomas Reid attended the early phase of the French Revolution, believing that it signified not only the will of the commoner, but the Turnbullian acquiescing to that will by the *ancien régime*'s orders of *noblesse* and *clergé*, or *l'état* and *l'église*.¹¹⁰ The Scottish Schoolmen, including Leyden, would soon recant their support,¹¹¹ as the French *citoyen* adopted the violent Gothic sensibilities of Rousseau's *noble savage*. Indeed, it would seem that Pinkerton's thesis of the Gothic overthrow of corrupt Celtic institutions was in France (where Goths were supposedly Franks) fulfilled by the Terror and National Convention. In the 1790s, it appeared that the Scottish School nativism found itself fighting a losing battle against the Gothic theory in both Britain and France – and, we will see, in India. Its reasonings on linguistics and epistemology limited its reach to within the Scottish academy, and paled beside the innovative, political, and attractive ideas and ideals emanating from the votaries of the Gothic theory.

This was not always the case. In the 1760s, the Gothic theory had figured as but one of several competing theories on the origin of language and the origin of man that were speculated in the field of British and French poetic literature.¹¹² Soon, however, three critical developments ensued. The first was Edward Gibbon's sweeping narrative of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), which credited the Gothic invasions that overthrew the corrupt empire for having rescued the liberty of the former republic. Next were Pinkerton's publications, most notably his *Dissertation on the Origins and Progress of the Scythians or Goths* (1787). The third was a series of

¹¹⁰ Again, Carlyle paraphrases the Scottish School when he wrote that 'Industry', the term he used to denote the vulgar/commoner during the French Revolution, 'cries passionately to these its well-paid guides and watchers, not, *Guide me*; but, *Laissez faire*, Leave me alone of *your* guidance!' Carlyle, *French Revolution*.

¹¹¹ Leyden acknowledged that though they, and him, were mistaken about the National Convention (1792-95) and the Terror, they were spot on about the National Assembly (1789-91).

¹¹² For an overview, see Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing Medieval Romances in Late-Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Germany: Peter Lang, 2010).

lectures given from 1784 to 1794 by Sir William Jones, the founder of the *Asiatic Society* of Bengal, which deduced a linguistic relation to exist between Sanscrit, Persian, Greek, Latin, Germanic, and indeed, even Celtic.¹¹³ Jones's linguistic thesis demonstrated a Gothic or Indo-European universal language. Effectively, it vindicated Pinkerton and Gibbon's histories by proving the Gothic theory's assertion of a master race with a superior learning who disseminated a universal language to the world.

The western world received Jones's Indo-European thesis with great adoration and acclaim. It seemed that by the turn of the nineteenth century the Gothic theory reigned supreme. But Jones had entered a field in which the Scottish Schoolmen were engaged in raging debates (with Horne Tooke, Joseph Priestley, Erasmus Darwin, and David Hartley) and remained unbowed: i.e. their specialist field combining logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and linguistics. The Schoolmen's adroitness in this field had enabled Reid to expose the flaws in Hume's theory of ideas two generations before, and, we will see, Dugald Stewart to expose the flaws in Adam Smith's theory of language one generation before. Indeed, it may seem that it fell exclusively on the Scottish Schoolmen to have provided the most stinging criticism of the big three of the British Enlightenment: Hume, Smith, and Edward Gibbon.¹¹⁴ In Leyden's generation, this criticism did not abate – we have seen Leyden expose the flaws of Pinkerton. In the

¹¹³ There were eleven 'discourses', which were interrupted by Jones's death in 1794. See William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones, Volume III*, ed. John Shore (London: John Stockdale, 1807; reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁴ On their travels in the Scottish Highlands, the Duke of Somerset and Rev Michell noted that 'the writings of Dr. Adam Smith are here much admired, but his principles not entirely assented to. One of the professors assured me that, notwithstanding his intimacy with Mr. Hume, (which, perhaps, arose from his obligations to him,) he believed that, in religious sentiments, he was far from being of the same opinion.' Michell and Seymour, *Tour*, 161. 'When the name and posthumous publications of Gibbon were mentioned, his candour paid a handsome tribute of respect to his memory, as a man of great talents, and the author of a most distinguished book. Mr. [John] Home, on the contrary, allowed him little merit as a writer of English, and less as a companion and friend.' Michell and Seymour, *Tour*, 171. See also M.A. Stewart, 'Religion and rational theology', 54. 'In the 1750s, Scots who opposed Hume saw his work as an affront, though they would have considered it a threat too, if he had held a university post.'

next sections, I will show how Leyden went to India to expose the flaws in Jones' philology on a foundation of critique established by Dugald Stewart.¹¹⁵

Origin of Language

Pinkerton's works were known to Sir William Jones, it seemed, through the influence of Edward Gibbon. Jones, said Hugh Trevor-Roper, became 'an admirer of Pinkerton.' He is celebrated and deprecated for having initiated scholarly studies on the languages, literature, and history of Asia by the merchants and administrators of the East India Company. These studies became known as Orientalism, a term that has come to be highly contentious and loaded with political connotations. I am careful to distinguish three uses of the term. The study of Orientalism refers to the general interests and attentions of the Oriental scholars at Calcutta, whose body of work was recorded in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society* (or *Asiatic Researches*). Orientalism had indeed epitomised a certain conjectural and deductive mode of interpretation, and Edward Said's identification of this mode to have equally been a mode of imperial control by the West of the East is referred by the eponymous title of his book, *Orientalism*. Leyden's approach to the colony and the East did not correspond to either the Saidian mode of *Orientalism* or Jones's mode of Orientalism. His Scottish School conception of 'Orientalism' was in fact opposed to both.

Jones's mode of interpreting the Asian texts was passionately adopted by the Asiatic Society's legion of scholars. Orientalism was, as Said rightly said, a discourse which wielded an institutional influence over the manner by which Company officials and also scholars in Britain, through the *Transactions'* republications in London, viewed and governed the East. Of the *Transactions*, Leyden read the first two volumes

¹¹⁵ Dugald Stewart, surprisingly, has never been studied and remains an important desideratum in the area of empire's connection to the Scottish Enlightenment.

when he was only eighteen years old and embarking on his divinity degree at Edinburgh University (1793).¹¹⁶ The mode which the *Transactions* employed in interpreting the Asian texts is classed under the same linguistic category as the mode employed by Pinkerton, which was comparative philology. But where Pinkerton was focused on comparing etymologies, especially the tortuous interpretation of place-names, Jones compared the ‘roots of verbs’ and ‘forms of grammar’ in what Michael Franklin noted as ‘the beginning of Indo-European comparative grammar and modern comparative linguistics’.¹¹⁷ Franklin described how Jones,

made detailed comparisons of grammatical roots to establish conclusively their identity as cognates. This emphasis upon roots and linguistic structure, rather than speculative etymology, rejects the philosophical a priori method of the eighteenth century for a new historical and comparative a posteriori method. Jones suggests the revolutionary idea of language evolution and, if languages can change over time, they may also become extinct – Jones’s putative lost source is what we now term Proto-Indo-European.¹¹⁸

By this method, Jones found a strong affinity between Sanscrit, Greek, and Latin, ‘so strong indeed that no philologer could examine them all three,’ he said, ‘without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists’. Jones’s theory of the Indo-European family of languages quickly became well-established among philologists in his time (and well-demonstrated among linguists today). However, it did not go unchallenged. It was not Jones’s theory that was criticised but the method by which he arrived at this theory, which was that of comparative linguistics. Jones’s critic was no less than Leyden’s teacher, the redoubtable Dugald Stewart. What Stewart picked in Jones’s method were the same

¹¹⁶ I. M. Brown, *John Leyden (1775-1811): his life and works* (PhD thesis, Edinburgh, 1955), 62.

¹¹⁷ William Jones’s ‘Third Anniversary Discourse’, 2 February, 1786. Jones, *Works*, 34.

¹¹⁸ Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37.

kinds of ‘problems of interpretation, ideological bias, and the hermeneutic circle’ that have been pointed out by John Pocock of the deductive method in historiography.¹¹⁹ Jones seemed to have committed the mistake of measuring the grammatical forms of Sanscrit against the grammatical structure by which he translated the Sanscrit texts.

‘Is it not possible,’ asked Stewart, ‘that the excellencies of Sanscrit may be somewhat overrated by Sir William Jones, from the same bias which has led him to overrate so immensely the merits of those ancient compositions, of which he has enabled the public to judge by the translations with which he has favoured us from that language?’¹²⁰ Jones had extolled the ‘wonderful structure’ of Sanscrit: ‘it is of a wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity... than could possibly have been produced by accident’.¹²¹ Stewart did not dispute that Jones had discovered a major ancient language. But he was at pains to point out to his students at Edinburgh that the deductive method employed by Jones had unearthed what was actually a learned language, or a learned family of languages. Just as Pinkerton’s deductive method had uncovered a Gothic language of ‘great learning’, Jones by a similar means had unearthed the learned language of the Gothic parent: Sanscrit, ‘or the sacred language of the Indian Bramins’¹²² or of the ‘Gymnosophists of India’.¹²³ Jones, declared Stewart, ‘while he expresses no doubt of Sanscrit’s having been once a living language, (without being able, however, to say when or where,) appears to me to have

¹¹⁹ Pocock, ‘State of the art’, 9-11.

¹²⁰ Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Vol. III, in *The Works of Dugald Stewart*, (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 90. Volume III was published in 1827, but its contents were already disseminated through his lectures since the 1790s.

¹²¹ William Jones’s ‘Third Anniversary Discourse’, 2 February, 1786. Jones, *Works*, 34.

¹²² Stewart, *Elements*, 71.

¹²³ Stewart, *Elements*, 85.

thought that IT WAS NEVER, AT ANY PERIOD, THE VULGAR OR VERNACULAR SPEECH OF INDIA.’¹²⁴

In his third volume of his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, Stewart asserted that ‘Sanskrit was a language formed by the Bramins, and always confined to their order’. However, he also argued, very strikingly, that ‘the Greek tongue not only served as a model for its syntax and system of inflections, but supplied the materials of its vocabulary on abstract and scientific subjects.’¹²⁵ Basically, Stewart claimed that Sanskrit and Greek were invented learned languages which had developed out of a collaboration between their philosopher-inventors, and, as a result of which, both had come to share the same authority of grammatical structure and ideological framework. How Stewart arrived at these premises was explained, again, by the central problem of Scottish philosophy. The learned language (and the learned literature and learned history) was always immediately intelligible to the ideal philosopher’s deductive and empirical mode of acquiring knowledge, and because it was adopted and repeated upon the first ideal philosopher’s authority, the Scottish Schoolmen simply traced this mode to the first ideal philosopher. Reid, for example, had identified this learned language in Hume’s Way of Ideas and traced it back to the Greek sceptic, Pyrrho.

At this point, however, the unshakeable field of logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and linguistics, found itself exposed in the shaky field of history. For this reason, we find Reid confining his speculations to the footnotes, Stewart assigning his to a category called ‘Conjectural History’, and Leyden expressing his through literature and theses on languages. We have already seen Leyden’s conception of human history

¹²⁴ Stewart, *Elements*, 88-89.

¹²⁵ Stewart, *Elements*, 90.

in the previous chapter. Unlike the Gothic history, the Scottish School history was an indirect history, always implied or signified. Nonetheless, its implications or significations were always founded on some secure point of linguistics or epistemology.

Origin of Learning

In his *Elements*, Stewart addressed the historical legacy of the ideal philosophy by tackling Adam Smith's dissertation entitled, *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages* (1761).¹²⁶ Smith's *Considerations* was the seminal text from which had originated the basis for the four stages theory of social development which became so central to political economy and the social sciences of the Scottish Enlightenment. It was stated by Jane Rendall to have inaugurated the 'mould of philosophical history, the kind of historical writing typical of the Scottish Enlightenment.'¹²⁷ Rendall's claim was founded on the authority of Stewart's biography of Smith, in which he gave the 'species of philosophical investigation' which was demonstrated by Smith's *Considerations* the 'title of *Theoretical or Conjectural History*'.¹²⁸ By this, Stewart meant to ask,

by what gradual steps the transition has been made from the first simple efforts of uncultivated nature, to a state of things so wonderfully artificial and complicated. Whence has arisen that systematical beauty which we admire in the structure of a cultivated language; that analogy which runs through the mixture of languages

¹²⁶ Adam Smith, 'Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages, and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages', in Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley (USA: Penguin Books, 2009), 404-432. Stewart refers to the *Considerations* as the 'Dissertation on the Origin of Languages'.

¹²⁷ Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to John Mill', *The Historical Journal* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Mar., 1992), 43-69.

¹²⁸ Dugald Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.', in *The Works of Dugald Stewart*, Vol. VII (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 31.

spoken by the most remote and unconnected nations; and those peculiarities by which they are all distinguished from each other?’¹²⁹

Because Stewart was the celebrated teacher of an entire generation of Edinburgh scholars who went on to acquire illustrious reputations in the British Empire, Rendall assumed that – except for James Mill – they unanimously ‘were prepared to apply a ‘philosophical’ framework to the history, including the ancient history, of Indian civilisations, and to the study of contemporary Indian societies’.¹³⁰ But the philosophical framework, we know, was only half of the story. The Scottish School, we have seen, did not have a monistic conception of the world, but a ‘moderate and wide’ epistemological foundation. At the time of Stewart’s pedagogy, his students were taught to acknowledge a constructive tension to exist between a Turnbullian system which balanced the learned philosophy and vulgar common sense on the framework of common sense, and a Hutchesonian system which balanced the learned philosophy and vulgar common sense on the framework of philosophy. These systems took the forms of Reid’s communal effort of will and Smith’s historical materialism respectively,¹³¹ and Stewart’s students, such as Mill, generally adopted positions in between in their outlook – Stewart’s *Lectures on Political Economy*, we saw in chapter two, had tried to merge both systems.

In the era of Hume, Reid, and Smith, however, the central problem of Scottish philosophy was still an unresolved conflict. Ideal philosophy was pitted against common sense, learned history against vulgar history, learned literature against vulgar literature, learned languages against vulgar languages. Smith’s *Considerations* did not appear to tie the learned destiny of man to a vulgar origin of man as his *Moral*

¹²⁹ Stewart, ‘Account of the Life’, 30.

¹³⁰ Rendall, ‘Scottish Orientalism’, 44.

¹³¹ George Davie, ‘The Scottish Enlightenment’, in George Davie, *The Scottish Enlightenment and other essays* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), 21-23.

Sentiments and *Wealth of Nations* tried to do. Instead, its theory of the invention of language described, in a learned language, a learned origin. As with Jones, Smith's flawed epistemological basis earned him the attentions of the Scottish Schoolmen, especially those who took the orthodox Turnbullian-Reidian position, such as Leyden and Stewart himself, no less, in his youth. Stewart, for one, was quick to spot the problem in Smith's

premise, that, according to Mr. Smith, the first step that men would take towards the formation of a language, would be the assignation of particular names to denote particular objects – or, in other words, the institution of nouns substantive; which nouns, it is plain, (according to this theory,) would be all proper names.¹³²

Smith's institution of the noun as the first class of words to be uttered by human beings was based on the authority of his epistemology of philosophy, which held that the immediate objects of human thought were ideas of things in the natural world and that these ideas of objects of thought stayed in the human mind. The object of thought, associated with an idea in the mind, thus formed the noun. Smith's philosophical framework apprehended simple words of this class to comprise the original language. Original language became artificial language when invention became necessary, as when adjectives, prepositions, and personal verbs had to be abstracted out of objects or nouns. But abstraction was not easy; it required ingenuity, especially when 'an idea of individual objects would be conveyed with much greater difficulty than that of action or suffering in any particular mode.'¹³³ The process involved expressing the nature or essence of the object – i.e. its gender, case, and number – which grammatically became the quality that inhered to the object. This quality in adjectives and prepositions was invented as declensions of the noun. In verbs, it was invented as conjugations and

¹³² Stewart, *Elements*, 20-21.

¹³³ Stewart, *Elements*, 27.

inflections of the pronoun.¹³⁴ Declensions, conjugations, and inflections identified learning, and thus gave away the philosophical framework behind a learned language. They described the philosophical function of essentialism, which Smith himself revealed to be a ‘contrivance’ around the problem of expressing quality and attribute, and which itself stemmed from the Cartesian problem of quality and attribute not being directly knowable. Thus, Stewart explained:

The circumstance which induced Mr. Smith to lay so great stress on the difficulties attending the invention of adjectives and prepositions, was a desire of accounting for certain peculiarities in the genius of the ancient languages; particularly the variations in the terminations of the [noun] substantives, according to differences of gender and other circumstances; and the employment of cases, to express those varieties of relation, which in the modern tongues are denoted by prepositions.¹³⁵

‘The fact to which [Smith’s theory] refers is a most important one,’ Stewart continued, as it ‘strongly discriminates the Greek and Latin languages from those spoken in modern Europe.’ The declensions and conjugations of a grammatical structure based on root nouns not only determined Sanscrit, Greek, and their derivatives, Persian and Latin, to be related in a family of learned languages, but also to be distinct from other languages. ‘The affinities and filiations of different tongues,’ remarked Stewart, ‘as evinced in their corresponding roots and other coincidences, are incomparably more easy in the explanation, than the systematical analogy which is said to exist between the Sanscrit and the Greek in the conjugations and flexions of their

¹³⁴ E.g.: ‘By the nature of the *Chaldean* tongue most words ended in the first long vowel like *shemia*, heaven; and that very word, unaltered in a single letter, we find in the *Pazend*, together with *laila*, night; *meyd*, water; *nira*, fire; *matra*, rain; and a multitude of others, all *Arabick* or *Hebrew*, with a *Chaldean* termination: so *zamar*, by a beautiful metaphor, from *pruning trees*, means in Hebrew to *compose verses*, and thence, by an easy transition to *sing* them; and in *Pahlavi* we see the verb *zamruniten*, to *sing*, with its forms *zamrunemi*, I *sing*, and *zamrunid*, he *sang*; the verbal terminations of the *Persian* being added to the *Chaldaic* root.’ Jones, *Works*, 116.

¹³⁵ Stewart, *Elements*, 24-25.

verbs, and in many other particulars of their mechanism.¹³⁶ This ‘systematical analogy’ similarly distinguished the learned grammatical form which Stewart identified in Jones’s method.

From these premises, hence followed the question of how that learned relation came to be. Stewart’s historical theory was based on records of the encounters between Alexander the Great and the philosophers on his expedition to Asia, Anaxarchus and Pyrrho, with the Gymnosophists (philosophers) or Brahmins (priests) of India.¹³⁷ ‘It is universally known,’ wrote Stewart, ‘that after the conquests of Alexander in Asia, it was one great object of his policy to secure the possession of his new empire by incorporating and assimilating, as far as possible, his Asiatic and his European subjects’.¹³⁸ Alexander ‘encouraged the Persian nobles to learn the Greek language, and to cultivate a taste for Greek literature’, and the same was repeated in India. ‘It was in consequence of this intercourse between Greece and India, arising from Alexander’s conquests,’ continued Stewart, ‘that the Bramins were led to invent their sacred language.’¹³⁹

Alexander of Macedon was famously known to have been the pupil of Aristotle. In medieval literature, he is the subject of the eponymous *Alexander Romance*, who like Arthur and his Knights, went East in search of philosophical truth and immortality.¹⁴⁰ The themes of the Alexander Romance were present in the *Complaynt*, and are common in what is called ‘marvellous’ (fantastic) medieval romance literature. Leyden understood the ‘marvellous’ quality of romance literature to have denoted an exoteric

¹³⁶ Stewart, *Elements*, 87.

¹³⁷ For the philosophical connections involving Pyrrho and Aristotle, see Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, his Antecedents and his Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³⁸ Stewart, *Elements*, 75-76.

¹³⁹ Stewart, *Elements*, 77.

¹⁴⁰ For background on the Alexander Romance, see Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (London: Yale University Press, 2010). For the authoritative texts: Richard Stoneman, *Legends of Alexander the Great* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2012). For the most popular text: Richard Stoneman, *The Book of Alexander the Great* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2012).

meaning, and this meaning had in turn originated from the esoteric philosophy that was ‘delivered by Aristotle to his pupil Alexander.’¹⁴¹ Pinkerton and Hume were not the first to find the vulgar too shallow to understand abstruse philosophical ideas. The Scottish School defenders of the vulgar, nevertheless, could. In Leyden’s Preliminary Dissertation, he cited a manuscript known more for its mysterious origin than for its recording the learning which Aristotle imparted to Alexander: the *Secreta Secretorum Aristotelis* (‘Aristotle’s Secret of Secrets’).¹⁴² The substance of this learning, however, and whether it was originally Greek or Indian, is unclear.¹⁴³ But it epitomised the series of letters purportedly sent by Alexander to Aristotle, detailing his arcane discoveries in the East, on which the exoteric *Alexander Romance* was built. On meeting the Gymnosophists, for example, Alexander wrote:

He instructed me instead to kiss the trees and to ask the Sun and Moon to make prophetic utterances. I asked the priest if the trees would speak to us in Greek or in Indian.

‘Both’, he replied; ‘but the tree of the Sun will first foretell the future in Indian, while the tree of the Moon will start to speak in Greek and conclude in Indian.’¹⁴⁴

Stewart did not appear to be as interested as Leyden in the *Alexander Romance* as the vehicle that propagated ‘marvellous’ exoteric knowledge. However, both shared the view that that the philosopher’s invention of a learned language was both a Greek

¹⁴¹ Stewart, *Elements*, 171.

¹⁴² Leyden, ‘Preliminary Dissertation’, 167.

¹⁴³ Urs App has notably described the Sanscrit learning in terms of an ‘Ur-Religion’ that had dominated ancient central Asia and which went on to preside in Zoroastrianism and other spiritual cults of the middle-east, in Buddhism, Shinto, and high forms of Hinduism, among others. App’s thesis resonates very closely with Leyden’s view of the Sanscrit learning. In fact, Leyden took a deep interest in the orientalist whom App studied: De Guignes, Ziegenbalg, La Croze, Anquetil-Duperron, Volney. See Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness: the Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy* (Rorschach: University Media, 2012); and Urs App, ‘William Jones’s Ancient Theology’, *Sino-Platonic Papers*, No. 191 (July, 2009).

¹⁴⁴ ‘Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle’, Stoneman, *Legends*, 15.

and an Indian project, involving both Greek and Indian learning, and producing by ‘a deliberate and systematical process’,¹⁴⁵ the Greek and Sanscrit languages. The event clearly astounded and fascinated Stewart:

It is difficult to conceive how far these improvements might be carried in the unexampled case of a language which was never contaminated by the lips of the vulgar, and which was spoken only by men of contemplative and refined habits, peculiarly addicted to those abstract speculations which are so nearly allied to the study of grammar and philology. It must be recollected, too, how much their labors would be facilitated by the systematical regularity of the model after which the original artists had wrought in its first composition... “Sanskrit,” says Mr. Colebrooke, “is a most polished tongue, which was gradually refined, until it became fixed in the classic writings of many elegant poets, *most of whom are supposed to have flourished in the century preceding the Christian æra.*”

During the interval between the invasion of Alexander and the period here mentioned, there was ample time for polishing and refining to the utmost this artificial dialect. Nor is it easy to explain why so many classic poets should have appeared so soon after Alexander’s invasion, but by the impetus which the minds of the Hindoos had received, and the new lights which they had acquired by their recent intercourse with the Greeks and Persians.¹⁴⁶

In his *Elements*, Stewart proceeded to challenge his students to build and expand on Jones’s Indo-European discovery by uncovering the influences and relations between Sanscrit as the pure learned language with its derivative learned languages, such as Latin. From these influences and relations, a conjectural history could be determined. ‘Although I have supposed,’ Stewart said, that

the first rude draught of the Sanscrit to have been formed soon after Alexander’s invasion had introduced the learned in India to an acquaintance with the Greek language and philosophy, this supposition was not meant to exclude other languages from having contributed their share to its subsequent enrichment. The long commercial intercourse of the Romans with India, both by sea and land,

¹⁴⁵ Stewart, *Elements*, 88.

¹⁴⁶ Stewart, *Elements*, 80-81.

accounts sufficiently for any affinity which may subsist between Sanscrit and Latin. When we consider that the former was... an artificial language, emanating solely from the priesthood, it is impossible to say what changes might not be introduced into it by the caravans of Roman merchants, who, from time to time, visited India, or even by the solitary adventurers who might occasionally find their way into that country; and from whom, it may reasonably be supposed, that the more inquisitive individuals of the order would be eager to acquire some knowledge of a tongue spoken by the conquerors of the world.¹⁴⁷

It soon became clear that there was a Scottish School strategy to Stewart's exhorting his students to analyse the construction of the Indo-European family of languages. For Sanscrit's derivative languages were not only impure imitations of the pure original, they were also diluted with other influences. And Stewart expected those influences to show evidence of vulgar languages. The Scottish School conception of a world both realised by common sense and idealised by philosophy made him confident that the learned language did not exist alone. Nor can it not have debased the vulgar languages as it expanded outward from north India. Stewart was contending with Jones' theory by its own terms, foreseeing that it will produce traces of vulgar languages that will undermine its own claims as the universal language of a master race. Indeed, it would also prove once and for all the ancient authority of common sense. Thus, Stewart had asked his students to consider whether

whatever other foreign idioms [that] were at different times introduced into India, may have supplied words which have been incorporated with Sanscrit as well as with the vulgar languages, or rather which have been naturally incorporated with the former through the medium of the latter. It deserves also to be considered, whether those vulgar tongues in India, of which Sanscrit is supposed to be the

¹⁴⁷ Stewart, *Elements*, 92.

basis, may not have furnished, at different times, to that sacred language, those words which are commonly referred to it as their original source.¹⁴⁸

This passage captures exactly what Leyden set out to do when he left Scotland for India.

Leyden's 'Orientalism': in search of the vulgar consciousness

Of all his students from his teaching career between 1785 and 1810, Stewart specifically named Leyden as one of 'two of the most competent judges [in linguistics] in this island'.¹⁴⁹ The other was Leyden's friend, Alexander Hamilton, the first professor of Sanscrit in England and Europe. Leyden was not merely an accomplished linguist. He was the epitome of the Reidian Schoolman, excelling in logic, metaphysics, and moral philosophy. The Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh University, John Finlayson, 'recognized the native energy of thought and the assiduity of Leyden, and not only bestowed on him particular notice, but found employment for him in the preparing of other students, and acting as his own amanuensis'.¹⁵⁰ James Mill, who attended the same classes at Edinburgh with Leyden, was surpassed by Leyden in Logic, so much so that Mill's biographer remarked, 'that Leyden should have risen to the leading position in the Logic class of that year shows that James Mill, in those days, was disposed to hide his light under a bushel'.¹⁵¹ Leyden was no less accomplished in

¹⁴⁸ Stewart, *Elements*, 91.

¹⁴⁹ Stewart, *Elements*, 71.

¹⁵⁰ See Thomas Brown's 'Memoir' of Leyden in John Leyden, *The Poetical Works of Dr John Leyden*, ed. Thomas Brown (London: William P. Nimmo, 1875), xviii.

¹⁵¹ Alexander Bain, *James Mill, A Biography* (London, 1882; reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17.

moral philosophy: Sir Walter Scott said Leyden was honoured with the ‘personal notice’ of Dugald Stewart.¹⁵²

In 1802, Leyden was engaged as a medical doctor by the East India Company. That was the only position available in India and Leyden undertook his medical degree within six months to qualify for it. This episode has obscured the real circumstances of his Indian enterprise. They revolved around the figure of Richard Heber, one of the biggest landowners in England, who had pulled strings with William Dundas and Castlereagh at the Board of Control to give Leyden his position. Richard Heber was also renowned for having amassed the country’s biggest collection of classical and antiquarian literature. He was the person who had arranged for Archibald Constable the Edinburgh publisher to assign the editorship of the *Complaynt* to Leyden. Indeed, Heber had also initiated Scott’s *Minstrelsy* project. Leyden’s patron represented a high church circle that was centred at Brasenose College, Oxford, and whose interests seemed to have been to counter the Gothic theories of the likes of Pinkerton, Gibbon, and before them, the poets Thomas Percy and Thomas Warton. This circle included all of England’s preeminent Arabists, Hebraists, and Biblicists: Joseph White, Thomas Winstanley, Henry Ford, William Cleaver, and (at Cambridge) Samuel Parr – all of whom Heber introduced to Leyden just prior to his embarking for India. Interestingly, the Brasenose circle was also the patron which had sent Sir William Jones to India.

‘If such a scholar as Dr. Bentley or Dr. Parr should ever make a serious object of studying Sanscrit,’ Stewart had remarked, ‘he would be able, I should think, without much difficulty, to ascertain, from internal evidence, which of the two languages was the primitive, and which the derivative dialect.’¹⁵³ This task again describes the object

¹⁵² Sir Walter Scott, ‘Biographical Memoir of John Leyden, M.D.’, in *The Edinburgh Annual Register, For 1811, Vol. Fourth, Part Second* (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Co., 1813), xli-lxviii.

¹⁵³ Stewart, *Elements*, 88.

that Leyden went to India to investigate, which were to identify the Sanscrit derivatives, and from those, to identify the vulgar or primitive languages. Sir Walter Scott recorded Leyden to have set his life's ambitions by this goal: 'I may die in the attempt,' he said, 'but if I die without surpassing Sir William Jones a hundred fold in oriental learning, let never a tear for me prophane the eye of a borderer.'¹⁵⁴ Among all the Scottish Schoolmen, none was more proficient to carry out the task than Leyden. Stewart had been able to discern the grammatical structure of learned languages, but not of the vulgar languages. The Scottish School understood that where the learned languages were (at the embryonic stage) founded on objects, or nouns, vulgar languages were founded on action, or verbs. Reid's theory of perception described the operations of the mind, rather than its objects of thought. As I explained, these operations, in transposing the signs or universals encountered in the world as notions believed by the mind, described a cause and effect dynamic within the human constitution. The native will was an efficacious cause of events, an actor, for whom the perception of reality took the form of actions which were uttered as verbs. 'We may remark,' Stewart said,

that what we call *action* in delivery is still chiefly connected with verbs; a proof that the notions they convey are more easily expressible by natural signs than the import of any of the other parts of speech. Language, then, I apprehend, in its rudest state, would consist partly of natural and partly of artificial signs; substantives being denoted by the latter, and verbs by the former.¹⁵⁵

Stewart, however, was not proficient in languages. He did not possess the experience and means to ascertain vulgar constructions of language. Leyden, on the other hand, was a prodigy in both the learned and vulgar languages. Leyden never revealed the process by which he identified vulgar idiom in languages and literature, but there is a passage from him that gives a general picture as to how he went about it:

¹⁵⁴ Scott, 'Memoir', lxcii.

¹⁵⁵ Stewart, *Elements*, 27-28.

I flatter myself I am pretty well versed in the science of Universal Grammar, at least if I am not it is from no fault of study. Distinguishing the necessary parts of language from the accidental, or ornamental, I first of all construct a series of grammatical forms of these, and then proceed to form a radical vocabulary of between 1000 & 1500 words of absolutely necessary use in the language. In this I distinguish the radical or original words in the language from those which are of foreign origin. This for the most part gives me a pretty correct idea whether the language will prove original or derivative. I then proceed instantly to speak, and read the most curious book which I can find, opening at the same time an alphabetical glossary in which all words that occur in the course of reading or conversation are regularly engrossed. At the same time I carry on a rough commentary on the work I am perusing in which new forms of flexion, illustrations of grammatical principles, traits of manners, dates, names of kings & countries are noticed as they occur, etc.¹⁵⁶

Leyden's distinction between 'the necessary parts of language' and the 'accidental, or ornamental', was clearly intended to get as close to a language's original basis as possible. From the necessary parts, he extracted what he called 'radical' words. The Oriental philologists used the term 'radical' to refer to the roots of words, and Leyden used it in the same manner. However, where the philologist had focused on objects for the root of words, Leyden looked for both objects and action. What Leyden took to be action radicals may be observed to approximate to the action radicals defined by his collaborator in linguistics, Alexander Murray, later Professor of Oriental Languages at Edinburgh. These were 'rude syllables', or 'monosyllables'; 'each of them is a verb and name for a species of action', and 'implied in them all' are 'power, motion, force, ideas united in every untutored mind'.¹⁵⁷ By this process, Leyden's

¹⁵⁶ Leyden to John Richardson, undated but can be fixed to the second half of 1806. *British Library*, MSS ADD 26565.

¹⁵⁷ Alexander Murray, *History of the European Languages; or, Researches into the Affinities of the Teutonic, Greek, Celtic, Sclavonic, and Indian Nations, Vol. I* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1823), 31. Murray's linguistic theory was the opposite extreme of the philologists: where the latter assumed that all languages are founded on objects, Murray assumed that 'all languages are formed on the idea of action.' (Murray, *History*, 30). For their polar opposition, Murray denounced Smith's *Considerations* as 'altogether unsupported by facts in the history of language.' (Murray, *History, Vol. II*,

selected radicals projected a very different dimension when separated into categories of ‘foreign’ and ‘original’.

If all selected radicals were objects, as was the case with the philologists, a mixture of ‘foreign’ and ‘original’ radicals would reveal a common learned structure and, by their proportion of mixture, whether the language was a derivative, such as Latin to Greek, or an original, such as Greek to Latin. However, if the selected radicals were both objects and action, as was the case with Leyden, a mixture of ‘foreign’ and ‘original’ radicals revealed a blend of a ‘foreign’ learned language with an ‘original’ or native vulgar language. Again, their proportion decided if the vulgar idiom had grafted onto the learned idiom, or vice versa. Finally, if all selected radicals were action words and had comprised a mixture of ‘foreign’ and ‘original’, then Leyden had discovered two native vulgar languages.

This process was painstaking, as it relied on building vocabularies and glossaries of all the languages in a particular region and piecing together their originality and degree of derivation from each other, including the connections of their literature and histories. This was exactly what Leyden did. Between 1803 and 1806, he amassed data from extensive travels (with Wellesley’s surveyors of Mysore: Colin Mackenzie and Francis Buchanan) across southern India and the Straits of Malacca, that allowed him to roughly map out the topology of the language, literature, antiquities, and history of three regions: (1) the ‘Indo-Persic nations’, (2) the ‘Dekkan’, and (3) the ‘Indo-Chinese nations’ (which was the most thorough of the three). Sometime in the second half of 1806, Leyden presented his findings to the Orientalist, John Richardson, at Calcutta. In January 1807, he submitted a proposal to the acting Governor-General, George Barlow,

489). Stewart took Murray’s criticism to be unfounded, though he acknowledged ‘the high estimation in which his attainments as a Polyglot were held’ by both Leyden and Alexander Hamilton. (Stewart, *Elements*, 27).

for a deeper study of the Indo-Persic nations and the Dekkan, but which he then withdrew. The philologist-dominated establishment at the Asiatic Society seemed to have not welcomed Leyden's findings,¹⁵⁸ until the Earl of Minto took over as Governor-General in July 1807. By the next instalment of the Society's *Transactions* in 1808, Leyden's 'On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations'¹⁵⁹ was published. He was admitted into the staff of Fort William College. In 1810, he became Deputy Secretary of the Asiatic Society. In the eleventh edition of the *Transactions* was published his essay 'On the Rosheniah Sect, and its founder Báyezíd Ansári'.¹⁶⁰

What Leyden had achieved by his researches was to have determined a major native vulgar language that subsisted in southern India in polar contrast to learned Sanscrit in the north. This was Tamil. 'I commenced with the Tamul and Persic languages,' Leyden explained to Richardson, 'the first of which I found contrary to my expectations to be an ancient and original language in its structure and philological principles radically distinct from Sanscrit [and] into which however a great number of Sanscrit terms, especially in religion and science had been introduced by the Bramins.'¹⁶¹ Tamil, Leyden determined, was 'an ancient Original language'. Topologically, 'the languages of the Dekkan can be easily classed by taking the two extremes which are: 1. The Tamul of the South and 2. The Sanscrit of the North, and examining the relative Affinities of the intermediate dialects.' For this achievement,

¹⁵⁸ Leyden was 'informed, on leaving Madras... that if he pursued his intention of visiting Bengal he would meet with a hostile reception as the supposed author of "some severe Strictures on the 6th Vol. of the Asiatic Transactions" which had irritated the older members of the Royal Asiatic Society by their presumption.' I. M. Brown, *John Leyden (1775-1811): his life and works* (PhD thesis, Edinburgh, 1955), 466.

¹⁵⁹ John Leyden, 'On the Languages and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations', in *Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia, Volume the Tenth* (London: Vernon, Hood, and Sharpe, 1811), 158-289.

¹⁶⁰ John Leyden, 'On the Rosheniah Sect, and its founder Báyezíd Ansári', in *Asiatic Researches; or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities; the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia, Volume the Eleventh* (London: J. Cuthell, 1812), 363-428.

¹⁶¹ Leyden to Richardson, MSS ADD 26565.

Leyden has never been credited. Thomas Trautmann has acknowledged Leyden's efforts, but instead credited what he termed the 'Dravidian idea' to Leyden's friend, Francis Ellis: 'it was from Ellis, we may suppose,' Trautmann asserted, 'that Leyden came to a rough approximation of the Dravidian idea.'¹⁶² Trautmann also acknowledged that 'right at the outset Leyden departs from Colebrooke... when he says that Sanskrit, being mainly a language of religion and science, "is not the native or indigenous language of the Dekkan but only superinduced by the propagation of religion and foreign conquest".'¹⁶³ The last remark should actually vindicate Leyden's claim that Tamil was epistemologically opposed to Sanskrit, and therefore credit the 'Dravidian idea' to him. But the central problem of the vulgar-learned divide is a context generally unknown, even unintelligible, to historians, who would hence see only gibberish in Leyden's texts. Thus, of Leyden's claims, Trautmann simply asserted that Leyden 'simply asserts them rather than demonstrating them with evidence and argument.' What Trautmann subsequently termed the 'Dravidian proof' he attributed to Ellis.¹⁶⁴

The attribution to Ellis is valid where the systematic empirical verification and conceptualisation of Tamil as a language unrelated to Sanskrit was concerned. Ellis chaired the Committee of Examinations at Madras and had directed the kind of detailed research programme which Leyden had earlier proposed but was denied. But more importantly, Ellis's 'Dravidian proof' was the deductive confirmation of what Leyden had already established by induction. It did not take into consideration the common knowledge innate to the Tamil people, but sought to mechanically verify by association that the ideas of their speech had indeed constituted a language in its own right.

¹⁶² Thomas R. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (California: University of California Press, 2006), 175.

¹⁶³ Trautmann, *Languages*, 176

¹⁶⁴ Francis Whyte Ellis, 'Note to the Introduction', in Alexander Duncan Campbell, *A Grammar of the Telooogo Language, commonly termed the Gentoo, peculiar to the Hindoos inhabiting the North Eastern Provinces of the Indian Peninsula* (Madras, College of Fort St. George, 1816).

Leyden's method, we have seen, was founded on Scottish common sense and Reid's epistemological foundation. As a linguist, Leyden knew what structural forms vulgar and learned languages would take. As a Scottish Schoolman, he also knew intuitively if a language he was perceiving was a vulgar or a learned one. Just as he had perceived Middle Scotch to represent the native active will of the vulgar or common people of Scotland, Leyden perceived Tamil speech to represent the native active will of the vulgar or common people of southern India.

It is here, in Leyden's proactive experiencing of the natural languages and natural signs in the world – indeed, in his living prodigiously in the context of the Scottish School realism by which he was taught to see the world – that we find the ardent quest for the vulgar consciousness that had defined his life's purpose. Leyden's future biographers, for failing (for the same reason above as Trautmann) to grasp this fundamental resolve of his to pursue all the vulgar languages and vulgar literature in the world – if only to make his vulgar existence real – have consequently and mistakenly labelled him a poor linguist, a poor poet, or a poor historian.

Leyden's vulgar legacy: the *Sajarah Malayu*

In searching for the native vulgar consciousness, Leyden not only uncovered a native vulgar language in Tamil, but also a group of native vulgar languages in the Malay Archipelago and another group of native vulgar languages in Indochina. This was the subject of his paper on the *Indo-Chinese Nations*. Leyden had categorised the Malay group under 'polysyllabic languages' and the Indochinese group under 'monosyllabic languages', but they generally correspond to, and anticipated far ahead, the Austronesian and Sino-Tibetan families of languages as they are called today. Linguists today acknowledge both language families to be unrelated to the Indo-European family.

However, finely poised across both language families, Leyden also identified a third category of ‘learned language’ which was ‘Pali’, a sacred dialect of Sanscrit.

Among the polysyllabic languages, Malay held a special significance for Leyden. It was the subject of a debate which he initiated in the *Indo-Chinese Nations* against the claim by Sir William Jones and William Marsden that it was derived from the Sanscrit. ‘By attempting to prove too much, however,’ Leyden wrote of Marsden,

I apprehend, that he has failed essentially. He has pointed out a few coincidences, but has left the mass of the language totally unaccounted for; and as the few coinciding words may all have been derived from a common source, it is perhaps a more natural inference to conclude that they have all been modified by some general language, than with Sir W. JONES, to determine that the parent of them all has been the Sanscrit.¹⁶⁵

Marsden, the British authority on Malay and the distinguished author of the *History of Sumatra* (1784), would respond to Leyden and defend his Sanscrit theory of Malay in his *Dictionary of the Malayan Language* (1812).¹⁶⁶ Leyden’s particular interest in Malay rested on his belief that here was a language which was ‘composed of nearly equal parts of Sanscrit, Arabic, and an Original language which has Affiliation with the Seamese (sic), Javanese and Bugguese (sic).’¹⁶⁷ Where the Sanscrit vocables were concerned, Leyden believed their source to be the Telinga language of India’s Coromandel Coast and Northern Circars. He wrote: ‘Here I am again under the necessity of dissenting from MARSDEN’S opinion. He says, “It is evident, that from

¹⁶⁵ Leyden, ‘Indo-Chinese Nations’, 167.

¹⁶⁶ William Marsden, *A Dictionary of the Malayan Language, in Two Parts, Malayan and English and English and Malayan* (London: Cox and Baylis, 1812). Diana Carroll has described how Marsden’s view of the native Malay changed as it accommodated Jones’ Sanscritic discoveries. See Diana Carroll, *William Marsden and his Malayo-Polynesian Legacy* (PhD thesis, Australia: Australian National University, 2005).

¹⁶⁷ MSS ADD 26565.

the Telinga, or the Tamool, the Malayan has not received any portion of its improvement.” I apprehend that the express reverse of this opinion is evident...¹⁶⁸

Telinga, also known as Telugu, was ‘originally a dialect of Tamul but which has borrowed copiously from the Sanscrit’.¹⁶⁹ It eponymously defined the *Kalinga* region of the ancient Telugu kingdoms of Chola and Vijayanagara, which coincides with the present state of Orissa (between the Northern Circars to the south and Bengal to the north). It was here that Leyden found the Telinga to be further intermixed with the local Sanscritic Odia language as well as the Sanscritic Bengali. These exchanges were held by Leyden to have been the means by which Sanscrit vocables were transferred from one tongue to another, and in the case of Kalinga, they were further transported across the Bay of Bengal to the Straits of Malacca. ‘The Bengáli language itself,’ he wrote, ‘corrupted in pronunciation, as it certainly is, might have been more safely adopted, as the medium for the introduction of Sanscrit vocables into Malayu’.¹⁷⁰ Malay was therefore not a Sanscrit derivative. Malay was a native vulgar language which had received Sanscritic influences from another native vulgar language which had already been infused with influences from Sanscrit derivatives. The route from Kalinga to Malacca, consequently, became the subject of some conjectural history by Leyden. The ‘Malay history and the language itself, exhibit traces sufficiently clear, to direct us to the region, with which the Malays had the most frequent intercourse, at an early period, and from which their language seems to have received the most considerable modifications, and that is the ancient kingdom of *Kalinga*’.¹⁷¹

From the Sanscrit-infused Telinga and Bengali of Kalinga, the Malay language had thus sourced its Sanscrit vocables. But its source of exoteric Sanscrit romances lay

¹⁶⁸ Leyden, ‘Indo-Chinese Nations’, 170-171.

¹⁶⁹ MSS ADD 26565.

¹⁷⁰ Leyden, ‘Indo-Chinese Nations’, 170.

¹⁷¹ Leyden, ‘Indo-Chinese Nations’, 171.

in the east in another Sanscritic language, that was Javanese. 'For the same reasons that I infer an ancient intercourse to have subsisted between the Malays and Kalingas,' Leyden continued, 'I am induced to think that a very intimate connection subsisted, at a very early period, between the Malays and Javanese.'¹⁷² For this reason, 'it is from the Javanese that the Malays profess to have received all their earlier mythological fables'. The scheme of Sanscritic influences in the Malay language was more or less complete, and Leyden only needed to account for the Arabic influence, another native vulgar language modified by Sanscritic influences. Here he agreed with Marsden,

that these words are generally legal or metaphysical terms, borrowed from the Koran or its commentaries, that they are never expressive of simple ideas, are rarely used in conversation, and, with few exceptions, seem never to have been thoroughly incorporated into the language. This account of the introduction of Arabic into Malayu is unexceptionably just...¹⁷³

Raffles, who lodged Leyden at Penang in December 1805, just prior to Leyden's submission of his research findings to Richardson, had felt confident as to delve into the debate himself. Writing to Marsden in July 1806, Raffles let on the basic position which Leyden took on the Malay language:

Many of the books and popular narratives of the Malays I find to have been rendered from the Kaling language, a term by which they call all the popular dialects on the Coromandel coast. That the astonishing number of Sanscrit words in the Malay language should have been introduced by the commercial intercourse of the Chuliahs, is not likely, any more than that they should have entered from the Guzeratty, whose intercourse must have in like manner been purely commercial; but a portion, no doubt, may have been received from each. I think, (with the Malays,) that they must have received their knowledge from the Island of Java. I have not been able to obtain, as yet, any knowledge of the Javanese language; but my friend Dr. Leyden, while he was here, paid some little attention

¹⁷² Leyden, 'Indo-Chinese Nations', 172.

¹⁷³ Leyden, 'Indo-Chinese Nations', 169.

to it; and his opinion I know was, that the Javanese language must be a dialect of the Sanscrit, very little corrupted.¹⁷⁴

Raffles continued to uphold Leyden's Indo-Chinese theory in his correspondence with Marsden and in other papers. Leyden, on the contrary, seemed unvexed by the need to debate. He never corresponded with Marsden. Instead, he focused on producing vocabularies and glossaries of as many languages as he could master, and to document the romances, histories, and indeed philosophical tracts in those languages. His second and last essay in the *Asiatic Researches*, on the *Rosheniah Sect*, depicted the esoteric learning of a Twelver Shi'ite cult in Afghanistan. Leyden's account of their tenets rather evoked Alexander of Macedon's observations of the Gymnosophists and their answers to his questions in the *Alexander Romance*. It demonstrated Reid and Stewart's historical theory that the learned knowledge and authority of Philosophy – or Nominalism, Idealism, Scepticism, and the like, as they were termed in the past – which had corrupted man's ancient constitution of common sense, had propagated and proliferated through the construction of a family of learned languages, through its learned esoteric systems of theology and stoicism, and through its popular exoteric romances about religion and chivalry. Where the native Malay language was concerned, Leyden set about to record these learned influences on its development, within Malay literature itself.

The result was the *Sajarah Malayu*. The *Sajarah Malayu* has been stated in the history to have been translated by Munshi Ibrahim, a scribe of Raffles whom Raffles brought with him to Calcutta in July-October 1810, where they lodged with Leyden. But this translation itself raises a question that surprisingly has never been asked: what was Ibrahim translating that is from Malay to Malay (or from Jawi/Arabic script to

¹⁷⁴ Raffles to Marsden, 6 July 1806, Sophia Raffles, *Memoirs*, 11-12.

Jawi/Arabic script which the Malay language uses)? The answer is that Ibrahim did not so much translate as transcribe, and to Leyden's instructions. The British administrator James Low later commented that Ibrahim 'made a copy of the Salelata Salatin (Malay Annals) at Malacca, and took it with him to Bengal, where he was in the service of Dr. Leyden. Ibrahim read the book to the Doctor and explained the meaning to him, and *he* wrote down what he seems to have considered as worthy of notice.'¹⁷⁵ It is apparent from Low's account that Leyden had, with Ibrahim's assistance, transcribed selections from the 'Salelata Salatin' into what became the *Sajarah Malayu*. Indeed, a study of the *Sajarah* will show that it was a composite of selections from several works, including the *Sulalatu 'l-Salatin*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, and *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*. In the *Indo-Chinese Nations*, Leyden listed five texts with which he was familiar, including the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and 'the *Hikaiat Rajah-bangsu*, which I have not seen, but which has been described to me as a genealogical history of the Malay RAJAHS.'¹⁷⁶ Clearly, there has been some editing and redacting involved in Leyden's transcribing of the *Sajarah*. In the linguistic form which it is known by, there is actually no earlier document existing of the *Sajarah* from before Leyden's Arabic manuscript of 1810.¹⁷⁷

An interesting part of the *Sajarah Malayu*, certainly its most intriguing part, was its opening genealogical history of the Malays. It began with Alexander of Macedon, named Raja Secunder of the Race of Makaduniah who married one Raja Kida Hindi of

¹⁷⁵ Virginia Matheson Hooker and M.B. Hooker, 'John Leyden: Biography', in *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, eds. Virginia Matheson Hooker and M.B. Hooker (Malaysia: MBRAS 2001; MBRAS Reprint 20, 2009), 33.

¹⁷⁶ Leyden, 'Indo-Chinese Nations', 180.

¹⁷⁷ In this thesis I have used the specific title Raffles gave to his English translation of Leyden's Arabic manuscript (spelled *Sajarah Malayu*) to distinguish that unique text from other texts of the 'Malay Annals' category. (See n175.) The latter, usually spelled *Sejarah Melayu*, are younger than and generally a recension of Leyden's text or the MSS which were redacted into Leyden's text. One of these MSS, the *Sulalatu Salatin*, is also commonly identified as the Malay Annals but it differs, I argue, in terms of linguistic context from Leyden's text. Leyden's text in its linguistic form is the oldest such MSS of the 'Malay Annals' category. There is only one other known MSS of the Malay Annals that is older: it was acquired c.1790 by the Estonian admiral in the Russian navy, Adam Johann von Krusenstern – however, the Krusenstern manuscript is a version of the *Sulalatu Salatin*, an MSS which Leyden already had access to as early as 1806.

Hindustan. Their descendants were listed, but in very peculiar names. William Linehan, a British scholar-administrator, had tried to determine the identities of these figures but ended up producing a partial list of characters who had no relation to each other whatsoever let alone a genealogical one.¹⁷⁸ Part of the problem was that Linehan had used Raffles's English translation of the Arabic sound of Leyden's transcribed manuscript, and was therefore misled by the English spelling. The main reason was because he did not understand Leyden's vulgar-learned context. A careful study of this 'genealogy' will reveal that its figures were kings, both real and mythical, of the Zoroastrian, Sassanid, Parthian, Armenian, Nestorian, Syriac Christian, Chola, and Vijayanagara civilisations. These kings had all been faithful champions of ideal philosophy and its controlling systems of theology and stoicism. At the Chola (i.e. Tamil) and Vijayanagara (i.e. Kalinga) stages of descent, a native people appeared in the narrative who chose the warring Kalinga king for their own ruler. These native people subsequently underwent cycles of events involving the Javanese and Arabs. It was quite clear, that what Leyden had tried to instil in this Malay 'genealogy' was not a gothic or racial ancestry, but an exoteric account of the development of the native Malay language as it became affected by influences from Sanscrit, Arabic, and Javanese.

This is only just to touch the surface of the *Sajarah*'s wealth of significations. But it is apparent that Leyden had chosen to make the *Sajarah* the instrument of the linguistic and historical contexts of the Malay language and literature for the benefit of his hearers and readers. Leyden did not invent the text of the *Sajarah*. Rather, he had carefully mimicked, collated, and redacted the Malay romances into a single narrative that captured the vulgar Malay consciousness, the native Malay instinct, and the native

¹⁷⁸ William Linehan, 'Notes on the Texts of the Malay Annals', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XX (1947), 107-116.

Malay will. Leyden's narrative depicted the rise and fall of the native Malay character as those powers of the human constitution became debased by foreign learning and then purified by the hubris resulting from this foreign learning. Interestingly, in Sanscritic Bengali, the term *Sajarah*, which does not seem to occur in the Malay lexicon before 1810, did not mean 'annals' or history, but 'to scold' or 'to complain'. The title *Sajarah Malayu* was Raffles's translation. If Leyden had meant it as the *Complaynt of Malaya*, then the *Sajarah Malayu* would identify Leyden's plans for the native Malay consciousness in terms of what the *Complaynt of Scotland* had achieved for the native Scottish consciousness. This was to reawaken the native Malay consciousness, in order that a 'communal effort of will' might ensue which will realise a 'commoun weil' among the people and usher in in the Malay Archipelago a 'grand era in the progress of human reason'. Certainly, the *Sajarah Malayu* became the 'spirit text' of Malay history,¹⁷⁹ to be consulted and studied again and again with each generation.

I would like to end this chapter by returning to Leyden's passage about the 'Malay character', which we saw Raffles quote in the previous chapter to Marsden in 1815. It was preceded by another passage which though written by Raffles had all the hallmarks of Leyden's language. Like the *Sajarah* it asserts the vulgar Malay consciousness, the native Malay instinct, and the native Malay will in the Malay character, and demonstrates what Raffles had in mind for the future character of the Malay Archipelago:

The Malays are a people by no means far advanced in civilization nor in their traditions, regarding their origin, do they trace back to a far distant date. In common with other nations in a similar state of civilization, their ideas may not be very numerous, nor their abstract notions very correct; but their meaning and their attention to passing events are remarkable. Their generally wandering and

¹⁷⁹ Hooker, 30.

predatory life induces them to follow the fortune of a favourite Chief, and to form themselves into a variety of separate clans. They may not be inaptly compared, as far as their habits and notions go, to some of the borderers in North Britain, not many centuries ago. The traditions regarding their early history are far less blended with the marvellous than the mighty feats of Fingal; and if in their attempts to account for their origin, we find a mixture of mythological fable, this surely is not of itself sufficient to invalidate what may otherwise be considered as a matter of fact.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Raffles to Marsden, 1 January 1815, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 235.

Chapter Eight

Malay Commonwealth and the Malay Capital

On our approaching, Napoleon turned quickly round to receive us, and taking off his hat, put it under his arm... He appeared to be acquainted with the value and importance of the Island [Java], but put some strange questions to Mr. Raffles, such as how the King of Java conducted himself. On Mr. Raffles explaining, he seemed most attentive, and then asked whether the spice plantations at Amboyna were doing well, and whether the Spice Islands were to be also restored to the Dutch. He then asked the name of the ship in which we were going home, with what cargo laden, and which was best, Bourbon or Java coffee... He then again addressed himself to Mr. Raffles, and seemed interested with his remarks on Java.¹

On 18 May 1816, while heading back to England from Batavia in a ship ‘laden... with coffee’, Raffles stopped by at St Helena. Napoleon had been exiled to the south Atlantic island just seven months earlier. It was a territory of the British East India Company, and despite Raffles entering in a country vessel, he was permitted to disembark for an interview with Napoleon. Their meeting has never been explained in the history, the circumstances being so bizarre. Certainly, where coffee was concerned, it represented (to use a favourite term of Leyden’s), an *ignis fatuus*,² that had led both men a rather tragic merry dance. For coffee was a key article which Napoleon had desperately sought for his citizen armies,³ but which his Continental System so successfully shut out from Europe that it ‘knocked the bottom out of the coffee-market.’ While at the source, in

¹ ‘Extract from Captain Travers’ Journal’, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 277.

² Will-o-the-wisp

³ See chapter ‘Napoleon’s Alliance with Chicory’, in H.E. Jacob, *Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity* (1935), transl. Eden & Cedar Paul (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2015), 163-177.

Java, coffee stocks were ‘literally rotting in the stores’, and everything Raffles desperately tried could not fetch a price for it.⁴

The mutual interest that both Raffles and Napoleon had in each other during their meeting emerges in the light of the British venture of critique. They were simply, and piteously, comparing notes. Here we have, on Raffles’s part, the successful experience in Java of decolonisation and political reform which placed Java’s coffee industry in the hands of the individual native cultivator. That it was not the French who pulled this off but the British must have intrigued Napoleon. In fact, Revolutionary France’s triumph of universal egalitarian revolution had lost it its premier coffee-producing island of St Domingo, where the self-liberating slaves, wrote Heinrich Jacob, ‘not content with massacring their some-time masters,... burned the crops’.⁵ Thus, ‘after 1791, coffee-growing came to an end in Haiti and Santo Domingo, their places as sources of supply being taken by Java’, which consequently ‘provided fully two-thirds of the coffee that was consumed throughout the world.’ The significance of this comparison, however, was not that Java took over the crown of coffee output from St Domingo. It was that a former commodity-producing colony was successfully transitioned into a self-conscious society that saw the self-realisation of all classes of its inhabitants – or at least of its formerly-dependent native labour class vis-à-vis its formerly-controlling capitalist and aristocratic classes – without having lost its agricultural resources and productivity as a result, but to have preserved it intact to its own benefit. By comparison, St Domingo’s enthusiastic embrace of the promise of an abundant and material future failed disastrously.

⁴ His only buyers were American free traders, who seemed to have acquired it for a song. The premier coffee market in the world was Europe.

⁵ Jacob, *Coffee*, 164.

The lesson of the Company's 1811 occupation of Java, as a political venture of critique, was how it re-engineered a liberal and egalitarian society without alienating the national population in favour of the national wealth, as was seen to be the case in British society, or destroying the national wealth in favour of the national population, that was the case of the French system. The outcome invoked, as I described in chapter three, Edmund Burke's 'great primaevial contract of eternal society', his settlement or 'partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.' Politically, British Java signified an instance of 'glorious revolution', which recast and reaffirmed Burke's critical *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. The immensity and subtlety of such a project has been entirely lost to the history, and indeed overshadowed by contemporary events far less ingenious. The Earl of Minto, the first architect of British Java, returned to an England that was rejoicing the end of the Napoleonic Wars and Napoleon's first exile to Elba. In an inevitable paradox of circumstances, the fall of the French revolutionary and imperial system instantly removed the counterpoint that had kept the British on their toes for a generation, and handed ideological victory to the real target of Burke's *Reflections*, that was British society. The significance of British Java as a mirror to British society suddenly withered into insignificance. Overnight, Minto's triumph of 1811 was robbed of all meaning. He fell ill as he set out on the journey home from London to Scotland and died in June 1814.

Certainly, it has never been appreciated in the history how dependably, if inadvertently, the fate of British Java was tied to the fate of Napoleon. Minto's Indian career was marked by Napoleon's threat 'to touch with a French sword' the banks of the Ganges and throw down 'throughout India the entire edifice of the English mercantile grandeur'. During the expedition to Java, Minto cryptically referred to Napoleon as 'the

gentleman who is coming up behind us all', and though he might 'allow that the gentleman behind may put out a little, and win the race before I intend it; but this is no part of my plan, and I really hope he will not be so uncivil nor such a marplot.'⁶ Here was a race to put right a wronged humanity, and a competition as to which plan was the better one. Minto was confident that 'my plan, by far the best and most interesting part of it, I mean what secures comfort to those who seem now to make me live beyond my life and survive myself [i.e. the native inhabitants of Java], will have been accomplished, before the trouble-fête could come up to spoil sport.' If Napoleon had wanted to destroy the edifice of 'mercantile grandeur' from British and Indian society, Minto would show how it could be done without destructive carnage but with good governance.

The similarities between the British venture of critique and the French Revolution touch upon a common republican scorn for the controlling systems of the old regime, whether of the landed oligarchy in France or the mercantile plutocracy in Britain. Leyden, Dugald Stewart, and Thomas Reid of the Scottish School had in fact supported the Revolution before the euphoria degenerated into terror, believing it to be the flowering of a 'communal effort of will' and 'a third grand era in the progress of human reason'.⁷ Minto's personal acquaintance with the *Physiocrats* embodied a partiality toward the Revolution emphasis on agricultural reform and away from the British reaction of trade liberalisation. Raffles, no less, showed an empathy with one of the defining legislations of the Revolution: the agrarian law of 10 June 1793. By its decree, the feudal institution of the seigneurial right was abolished, common land

⁶ Gilbert Elliot, *Lord Minto in India: Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1807 to 1814*, ed. Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880), 253.

⁷ Thomas Reid, *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D. F.R.S., Vol. I*, ed. Dugald Stewart (Charlestown: Samuel Etheridge, 1813), 164.

entrusted to the village commune, and small lots distributed to every man, woman, and child.⁸ These changes were effected by Raffles's agrarian law of 11 February 1814.

Yet it should be stressed that neither one was the cause of the other. The republican parallel between the British venture of critique and the French Revolution remained separated by a fundamental gulf. The ancient constitution which provided the British venture its language of virtue and common sense was anchored in realised and discoverable forms of historical governance (i.e. customs, manners, laws). Rights followed governance. French republicanism, on the other hand, identified an 'ancient liberty' which was idealised and consecrated from the first as a right. Raffles's agrarian law thus exhibited a distinctly British characteristic: it did not come into being at the expense of existing landowning rights. The native cultivator's smallholding in Java was leasehold rather than freehold, and situated on freeholds still held by government or by private European proprietors. The objective ultimately was not proprietorship itself, but the security and interest provided by property to a person's independence and his industry. As I explained in chapter five, this British mode of agrarian distribution was attributable to Burke's antagonist, Richard Price, rather than France's philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁹

Nevertheless, a fallen Napoleonic France had provided an empathetic model for appraising British Java. France's law of 10 June 1793 was possibly the only example of an agrarian reform legislation outside of Java. In June and July 1817, Raffles undertook a tour of Europe, during which in France he observed 'every man cultivating his own

⁸ See Noelle Plack, *Common Land, Wine and the French Revolution: Rural Society and Economy in Southern France, c. 1789-1820* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁹ John Bastin had suggested Raffles's influences to have included 'Adam Smith, Sir James Stuart, Sinclair', 'Montesquieu, Voltaire and Raynal', and Rousseau. John Bastin, *Raffles' Ideas on the Land Rent System in Java and the Mackenzie Land Tenure Commission* (S-Gravenhage: VKI, Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), ix. And John Bastin, *The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra: An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), xii.

field' and 'cannot but think him happier far than when he is cultivating the field of another'. 'Even if he labours more,' justified Raffles, 'that labour is still lighter which is his pride and pleasure, than that which is his burden and sorrow.' Raffles's travelling companion, his cousin, Rev Thomas Raffles, paraphrased his views. 'Happy is that land,' Rev Raffles wrote in his journal, 'where the property as well the person of the inhabitant is sacred, and the right of every man's inheritance, and the produce of his labour, is as much respected by the state, as by the private individual.'¹⁰ 'What the farmer now cultivates is either his own personal property, or his by a money rental,' he noted, 'so that he is unfettered in his plans of improvement, and is encouraged by the prospect of reaping the undivided produce of his labour.'¹¹ These comments repeat exactly the justifications given in British Java. Raffles's principal goal in land reform was always the individual cultivator's industry, 'the undivided produce of his labour.'

Interestingly, French agriculture at this time was experiencing the kind of glut which Raffles had first-hand experience of in Java. There, he had through a balance of property tried to put in place an aggregate demand to meet the native cultivator's supply. No such measures existed in post-war France; on the contrary, its grain exports to Britain were prohibited under the Corn Laws of 1815. It is not known what were Raffles's thoughts on the Corn Laws, but it is known that at this time Raffles became affiliated with the Agriculturalists. The Agriculturalists were a political association of landowners and farmers in Britain who supported regulation in favour of agriculture and, in some cases, against manufacturing. During his French tour, Raffles carried with him the renowned manual by Britain's premier Agriculturalist, Arthur Young, entitled *Travels during the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789, Undertaken more particularly with a*

¹⁰ Thomas Raffles, *Letters, during a Tour through some parts of France, Savoy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands, in the summer of 1817* (Liverpool: Thomas Taylor, 1818), 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

*View of ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity, of the Kingdom of France.*¹² Prominent Agriculturalists in Britain became Raffles's patron, including the Duke of Somerset and the Marquess of Lansdowne. Indeed, back in 1803, the Earl of Minto himself was persuaded by the prominent Agriculturalist in New South Wales, James Macarthur, 'to accept the Government of New South Wales' and implement a sweeping sheep farming policy.¹³ It was to a large degree on account of the Agriculturalists that the Corn Laws were legislated. But while Raffles would have supported affirmative or positive provisions for British agriculture, negative or punitive action against French agriculture would have gone against his partiality to the industry of individual cultivators everywhere.

The unilateral restriction of trade between the agricultural markets of France and Britain in 1817 recalled the unilateral restriction of trade between the agricultural markets of France and Java not a few years earlier. Both experiences in fact composed a lesson for the future. British Java was now lost to the Dutch Empire, and with it went all the achievements of the British reformer-critics. If the British venture of critique was to preserve its legacy in an East Indies recalibrated by the 1814 Anglo-Dutch Treaty, a fundamental rethink was required. No longer did Raffles, in 1817 the designated Lieutenant-Governor-to-be of the threadbare Company outpost of Bencoolen, possess the machinery of government which, we saw in chapters four and five, had been so essential in the reconstitution of Java's society. Through central government, Minto and Raffles had secured the interests of person and property by bringing about a settlement between the institution of real property and civil society. In Bencoolen, the entitlement of land was still practicable, but civil reforms were out of the question. And yet even so, government *de rigueur* was already redundant, if not existent. The restrictions of trade

¹² Ibid., 133.

¹³ Macarthur to Minto, 15 August 1803, *National Library of Scotland*, MS 11153/32.

involving France, Britain, and Java, showed that government's interventions in guaranteeing the security of person and property, and in creating a personal interest in individual industry, were futile if government could not bring the fruits of that industry to market. There was a case for free trade which Raffles must acknowledge, even if he was always critical of its moral levity. In the absence of government, Raffles thus turned to self-governance.

Native free will and British free trade

The means for self-governance lay in reawakening (or awakening) the native Malay consciousness, free will, and moral character. Leyden had already laid the groundwork back in 1810 when he collated and redacted classical Malay manuscripts into what became the definitive text of the *Sajarah Melayu*. Later supported by Raffles's *Maláyu Nation and its Maritime Institutions*, it detailed what Raffles described to be 'the numerous peculiarities of a nation generally believed to act on most occasions, solely from individual will, and ferocious passion.' Raffles's English translation of Leyden's Arabic text was published in 1821.¹⁴ Copies were already in circulation since 1810, and the first *Sejarah Melayu* in Jawi/Malay script was published in 1831 by Munshi Abdullah, Raffles's scribe and the nephew of Leyden's source in 1810, Munshi Ibrahim.

In spite of these dates, the component narratives of the *Sejarah Melayu* were an already long-established oral tradition. The difference was that, as I explained in chapter seven, Leyden had emphasised in the text, through a subtle mode of language, the

¹⁴ James Low, who possessed Leyden's redacted and collated text, says it was inscribed in the 'Arabic character'. There appears to have been several copies. Raffles translated his copy into English, which was published as the *Malay Annals* in 1821. See Virginia Matheson Hooker and M. B. Hooker's chapter 'Opening the Annals' in John Leyden, *John Leyden's Malay Annals*, eds. Virginia Matheson Hooker and M. B. Hooker (Malaysia: MBRAS Reprint 20, 2009), 30-38.

related concepts of tyranny or misconduct (*zalim*), deterioration (*runtuh*), consciousness (*insaf*), self-criticism (*taubat*), and self-awakening (*sedar*).¹⁵ These concepts depict a context of criticism, where man's perception of reality makes him intuitive of the signs of human failings and morally compelled to correct himself and others. Indeed, underlying these concepts was the Scottish School epistemology. Just as they had underpinned the medieval European theme or genre of the 'complaynt' or 'lament', they instilled within the Malay text a Malay sensibility whose exposure to foreign ideas depicted the cyclical rise and fall of the Malay character. Already in the mid-1820s, the conduct of the Malay ruler of Singapore and Johor, Sultan Hussein, who showed neither native knowledge nor moral virtue, but rather an enthrallment to the corrupting conventions of foreign ideas, was observed and criticised by Munshi Abdullah. 'Sometimes he wore Tamil costume, sometimes the dress of a Malay ruler'. This criticism translated into a broader complaint of the self-destructivity of the Malay Nation, as it forgot its native freedom of will and succumbed to the diktat of wealth and luxury:

As for the poor people who are the victims of this oppression, this injustice, this tyranny, they are in no position to make any complaints, save only to Allah who sees and hears all the agony and misery of mankind... Such men as these have never yet wakened to a realization of their true position. For is it not clear enough that the judgement of Allah is already upon them? Was there not a time when half the world was under Malay dominion and rule? There are many books and records which tell of the rulers of olden times, how great and powerful they were, how rich and full of wisdom. Why have their lands been despoiled by Allah ere now, and passed into foreign bondage. Is it not because of extreme injustice and tyranny that Allah has weakened them and enslaved them under alien rule? If such wickedness and corruption continue for long Allah alone knows in what state they

¹⁵ There is a prolific literature in Malay on these concepts of the *Sejarah Melayu*. For an authoritative work in English, see Muhammad Haji Salleh, *The Poetics of Malay Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2008). For the significance of 'sedar' to Malay identity, see Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

will be by the end. Ignorant and undiscerning though I may be, it seems clear to me that the very name of the Malays will be lost to the world, for there are many books I have read which say that Allah sets his face against all tyrants.¹⁶

In the Malay consciousness, the British venture of critique, shorn of its political form in British Java, adopted an epistemological form that aimed at the entire Malay Archipelago. The change is, in one sense, a logical development of the venture. The Bengal government that had directed Java's decolonisation from the Franco-Dutch empire, now handed over the reins of governance – albeit without a choice – to a native people in whom its policies had instilled a sense of self-realisation and self-dependence. But the cause of native individual free will, unleashed in an unlimited Malay-speaking region beyond the reach of British control, is a different kettle of fish to the native individual's political rights, administered in a civil society under absolute British control. No longer was freedom observed as a function of society but rather the opposite: from Minto's 'some way of life', Leyden's native 'feels he is free'. He, to borrow from Thomas Carlyle, 'cries passionately to these its well-paid guides and watchers, not, *Guide me*; but *Laissez faire*, Leave me alone of your guidance!'¹⁷ The nature of the transition, Dugald Stewart had taught, was 'one of the most important' 'objects' of the 'science of *Political Economy*'. It concerned 'that problem which Mr. Burke has pronounced to be one of the finest in legislation:– "to ascertain what the State ought to take upon itself to direct by the public wisdom, and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible, to individual discretion."¹⁸ Indeed, as discussed in chapter two, the combined efforts of all the British philosophers of the eighteenth century had revolved on this one question alone: can individual human actions be freed

¹⁶ Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, *Hikayat Abdullah*, Tr. A. H. Hill (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Reprint No. 29, 2009), 270-271.

¹⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (Modern Library Classics, 2002), 46.

¹⁸ Dugald Stewart, *Lectures*, Vol. I, 17.

from the safeguards of state regulation and still be counted on to be morally upright at the public, if not the private, level? Adam Smith had cautioned that,

In what manner, therefore, the colony trade ought gradually to be opened; what are the restraints which ought first, and what are those which ought last, to be taken away; or in what manner the natural system of perfect liberty and justice ought gradually to be restored, we must leave to the wisdom of future statesmen and legislators to determine.¹⁹

Smith's conception of freed human action, however, as I explained in chapter six, differed from the native free will perceived by Leyden and the Scottish School. Intellectually, we find juxtaposed here the two solutions by Smith and Thomas Reid to the eighteenth-century 'central problem' of Scottish philosophy, which disputed the ability of the shallow common individual to freely act for his own good interest in human exchanges as the result of his vulgar passions and prejudices. Smith's combination of moral sentiments and historical materialism had offered an idealised answer, which saw the common individual overcome this shortcoming as he improved his lot in polite society and became polished and educated. The Scottish School nativism instilled in Leyden's *Sajarah Malayu* and *Indo-Chinese Nations*, and in Raffles's *Maláyu Nation and its Maritime Institutions*, rejected this thesis. Native free will originated from a moral reality in the world and within man's human constitution. As Carlyle indicated, the term *laissez faire* signified a more humanist sense of volition than civil/political or legal/commercial freedoms. This, however, did not mean that Smith's human actions did not describe events in the East Indies. While native free will influenced the undivided and self-governing actions of the emerging common Malay

¹⁹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1994), 655 (Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III).

individual, Smith's human actions still described the self-governing activity of the emerging middle-class British country trader.

In fulfilling Leyden's aspirations for the Malay Nation as the continued legacy of the British venture of critique in the East Indies, Raffles thus no longer set the authority of the state against the liberty of the individual, as he had in Java. The legal freedom of the middle-class British country trader was no longer denied; the civil freedom of the common Malay individual was no longer protected. In allowing the activities of both the British country trader and Malay individual to proceed without interference, a structure of society was anticipated which placed the commercial interest of the British country trader alongside the political and moral interests of the Malay individual. The encounter between these interests was unpredictable. But Raffles gambled that Minto's former bugbear of the monopolising spirit of conquest, which he feared would animate the British interest, would be put to rest by Leyden's belief that the burgeoning native Malay consciousness, which the recovery of native free will entailed, will provide a moral bulwark against the vicious turn of European (and Chinese) commerce. In this respect, the society expected to form out of Raffles's post-Java scheme resembled Leyden's Wadströmian colony described in chapter six, whereby native 'commission-commerce' was believed to cast a mitigating if not reforming influence over foreign 'speculation-commerce'. Free trade, when determined by the Scottish School moral free will and not by Smithian moral politeness, was already innately self-limiting with respect to its moral levity. As we saw in chapter one, before he left England for Bencoolen, Raffles had outlined to Charles Grant his 'views of what our national policy ought to be with respect to the Eastern Archipelago – views, the leading principles of which I entertained... as favouring not only the fair

commercial interests of our country, and of a vast region of Asia, but the *moral* and *political* benefit of its immense population’.

Interestingly, this encounter between the foreign commercial interest and the native political and moral interests depicted what ensued in Raffles’s Bencoolen. Both the Malay individual and British individual being left uncoerced, Malay society expectedly resumed its traditional feudal form and British trade resumed its interest in China. But this was not the status quo it appeared to be, because Raffles introduced an innovation in Bencoolen. This was the institutionalisation of real property and agriculture which he and Minto had initiated in Java – only, in Bencoolen, it was effected by example not by decree. Where Malay society was concerned, the outcome at first appeared regressive. ‘I have assumed a new character among them,’ Raffles wrote in 1820, ‘that of lord paramount: the Chiefs are my barons bold, and the people their vassals.’²⁰ However, as he continued to explain, Raffles’s personal efforts at ‘agricultural industry and subordination’ seemed to achieve, by example, the same personal interest in individual industry among the native people in Bencoolen which in Java was formerly projected to achieve through government policy. ‘I have, at all events, carried the hearts of the people along with me, and, in directing their energies into proper channels, I find enough to occupy and amuse me.’ Native free will, including Raffles’s own will to act, when directed into ‘proper channels’, had shown the impressive power of human agency:

Under this constitution, and by the establishment of a right of property in the soil, I am enabled to do wonders, and if time is only given to persevere in the same course for a few years, I think I shall be able to lay the foundation of a new order of things on a basis that shall not easily be shaken. My attention is, at present,

²⁰ Raffles to Thomas Murdoch, 22 July 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 462. Out of its context, Raffles’s comment may suggest that he had in Bencoolen sowed the seeds of the later Resident system. John Bastin, for example, has described Raffles’s government in Bencoolen as a system of indirect rule.

principally directed to agriculture: an agricultural society has been established, of which I am President, in which we discuss, without reserve, all questions which relate to the produce of the soil and the people who cultivate it. Agriculture is every where the only solid basis of national prosperity; and in countries like Sumatra, it constitutes and comprises nearly all that is valuable and interesting.

Raffles's agricultural society in Sumatra was not limited to the Malays. What he also did was to encourage British traders to purchase land in Bencoolen and to send their sons over from England to develop and manage it as coffee plantations.²¹ The conversion of the British individual's pursuits from mercantile profit-making to agricultural livelihood was indicative of a conversion from speculation-commerce to commission-commerce. From his engagement with the native consciousness of Malay society, the British individual was rediscovering his own moral character and his undivided self. Or so Raffles and Leyden had credulously hoped. Whether a morally-constructive relationship truly developed between Malays and the British in Bencoolen is hard to judge – we only have Raffles's word for it. But his enthusiasm does reveal what he had planned for the Malay Archipelago in his final years there from 1818 to 1823.

Raffles's Bencoolen represented a microcosm of what was to become the Malay Nation: an agrarian commonwealth comprising individual Malay traders, cultivators, and settlers – each one self-conscious, self-dependent, and self-governing. At the centre of this agrarian commonwealth was 'the ancient maritime capital of the Malays', 'the very seat of the Malayan empire', which was 'the ancient city of Singapura.' To this

²¹ 'Capitalists in England must either send out their relatives, or lend their money on mortgage to some active and intelligent planter. Any young man of steady habits and common sense, whose father cannot obtain employment for him at home, but who can advance him from four to five thousand pounds, may thus establish himself, and create an estate of three or four thousand pounds a year for his descendants. These principals in the concern would require under-surveyors, coopers, distillers, writers, &c., and each estate would give employment to several Europeans.' Raffles to Duke of Somerset, 18 February 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 467-8. For an eye-witness account, see Thomas Day and William Day, *Letters from Bencoolen, 1823-28*, ed. James Trelawny Day (Scotland: Hardinge Simpole, 2008).

capital would flow all the produce of the Malay Nation, there to be vended by the East India Company. But ‘the Company must not enter into detail,’ Raffles explained in his document, *On the Administration of the Eastern Islands*; ‘she must not become a cultivator on her own account,’ and ‘she must not be a retail merchant.’²² Rather, ‘her purchases would be made by contract with inferior capitalists, who would collect the articles, and her sales being made to a similar description of speculators, they would distribute them in detail.’ ‘By conducting her commerce on the principle of wholesale and not of retail, the Company may in her commercial capacity be yet enabled to reap the full advantage of her command of capital, at the same time that she opposes no obstacles to the extension of commerce or to individual enterprize.’²³

Meanwhile, out from the Malay capital would flow the stabilising influence of the Company’s ‘political duties’ – the ‘protection of the Governor of Java’, as Leyden put it in 1811. In 1819, the Governor-General of Java was a Dutch imperialist and the British protector looked from afar at Bencoolen. But Leyden’s scheme of the ‘Malay League’ was principally unchanged. As with Leyden’s Madura, Singapore’s function as the Malay capital was the same, which was to assert what is today termed ‘soft power’.²⁴ As Raffles explained, British ‘soft power’ was to

comprize the maintenance of a due influence among the native states, and such an interference in each, as may tend to secure the British interests and remove obstructions in the way of a free commercial intercourse with them. It will be an object to avoid all interference which may involve our government in their internal disputes, at the same time that we cultivate and improve our connection with them by all the influence and support that they can reasonably look for from a powerful ally and protecting authority. Our own interests are so manifestly

²² Sophia Raffles, Appendix, 22.

²³ Ibid., 21.

²⁴ The concept is elucidated in Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990) and Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (United States: Public Affairs, 2004).

connected with the advancement and improvement of the native states, that it is obvious we can have no views which are not equally to their advantage, and our interference is in consequence more likely to be invited than looked upon with jealousy and distrust.

After the Dutch repossessed Java in 1816, Raffles no longer referred explicitly to the Malay Nation. His references above to the 'native states', however, plainly depicted a grouping of native states. This grouping, which he and Leyden had variously described as the 'Malay Nation', 'Malay Empire', 'Malay League', or 'Malay States', Raffles evidently believed to be a robust entity in 1819. It was clearly the focus of British soft power. The Malay Commonwealth, the precious hard-won fruit of the British venture of critique, had to be protected against the 'hard power' of the Netherlands East Indies government. British soft power would also supervise the relations between the British and Anglo-Indian traders with the Malay Commonwealth that hosted them at Singapore. The result was expected to be the outmuscling of speculation-commerce by commission-commerce. As Raffles continued,

On the same principle that we consult our general interests by fostering and promoting the individual enterprize of our own traders by giving them the utmost freedom in their speculations, we shall, on a wider and more extensive field, advance our higher political interests, by encouraging and improving the energies and resources of these states, by upholding their independence, and strengthening their power and importance. Our interference is not intended to depress but to raise these states, and by the establishment of a free and unrestricted commercial intercourse, to draw forth their resources while we improve our own.

Appended to the principal function of Singapore as the spiritual and political capital of the Malay Commonwealth, was thus its secondary function as the port to which the British country trader and Anglo-Indian merchant would congregate. For this multiplicity of purpose, Raffles thus described Singapore's role as a composite of parts.

As we saw in chapter one, these parts were drawn up as a ‘national policy’ in terms of three views (moral, political, commercial), three national interests (humanity, governance, commerce), and three principles (justice, order, liberality). The moral and political views, the interests of humanity and governance, and the principles of justice and order, referred to the Malay Commonwealth and the British reformer-critic’s obligation toward it. The commercial view, the interest of commerce, and the principle of liberality referred to the British country trader. Thus,

It was of primary importance to obtain a port which should have a commanding geographical position at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca, which should be in the track of our China and country trade, which should be capable of affording them protection and of supplying their wants, which should possess capabilities of defence by a moderate force, which might give us the means of supporting and defending our commercial intercourse with the Malay states, and which, by its contiguity to the seat of Dutch power, might enable us to watch the march of its policy, and when necessary to counteract its influence.²⁵

This scheme, which made Singapore the moral and political heart of the Malay Commonwealth and a paradigm of virtuous commerce for the British and Anglo-Indian trader, appears to have been realised even before Raffles departed from the East. In January 1823, Raffles reported the native trade volume for Singapore’s first two years in 1819 and 1820 to have comprised 63% of the total trade in terms of value.²⁶ The total size of trade was not modest, at 8 million Spanish dollars and 161,000 tons, easily three

²⁵ Stamford Raffles, *Statement of the Services of Sir Stamford Raffles* (London: Cox and Baylis, 3 November 1824), 54.

²⁶ ‘No less than two thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine vessels entered and cleared from the port, of which three hundred and eighty-three were owned and commanded by Europeans, and two thousand five hundred and six by natives, and that their united tonnage was one hundred and sixty-one thousand tons. It appeared also, that the value of merchandize in native vessels arrived and cleared, amounted to about five millions of dollars during the same period, and in ships not less than three millions, giving a total amount of about eight millions as the capital turned.’ Raffles to Marsden, 21 January 1823, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 533. Raffles had included the China and Indochina trades under the category of native trade. In terms of dollar value, the native Malay Archipelago trade, the China and Indochina trade, and the British and Indian trade, were probably equally proportioned in three parts. But the native Malay Archipelago trade, though of low value, was of high volume and dominated the shipping traffic.

times the size of the trade of Penang and Malacca. In 1822, it rose to 8.57 million Spanish dollars and 130,629 tons.²⁷ In 1823, it shot up to 13.27 million Spanish dollars and 151,991 tons, outdoing the high-value American trade with China which had in 1818 and 1819 amounted to 19.26 million Spanish dollars and 16,022 tons.²⁸ However, it was not the value that was important but the shipping: the native trade volume comprised 87% of the total number of vessels. The goods per native vessel were certainly a fraction of the goods per British vessel, but the overwhelming quantity of native vessels – six of every seven vessels in Singapore – indicates the involvement of a sizeable common class of people, rather than of specialist traders. The native individual, with ‘means’ and ‘wants’, had not only made his presence strongly felt, but his actions, by which he realised his existence, made manifest the Malay Commonwealth. Leyden would have claimed it was a ‘communal effort of will’, that instantly realised a ‘commoun weil’ and ushered in a ‘grand era in the progress of human reason’.

In June 1823, both the ‘European and Native Merchants of Singapore’ moved to thank Raffles publicly for his ‘zeal’, ‘vigilance’ and ‘comprehensive views’.²⁹ Both their address and Raffles’s reply placed propriety and ethics above any allusion to profit and advantage. ‘May you, Gentlemen,’ Raffles said, ‘English and Native, and as the language of your address expresses it, without class or distinction, long continue in the honourable and distinguished course which you have so happily commenced, and may the principles which you respect and act upon, long distinguish you among the merchants of the East.’

²⁷ Stamford Raffles, *Statement of the Services of Sir Stamford Raffles* (London: Cox and Baylis, Nov 1824), 56.

²⁸ *Third Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Consider of the Means of Improving and Maintaining the Foreign Trade of the Country: East Indies and China* (House of Commons, 10 July 1821), 227.

²⁹ ‘Address of the Merchants of Singapore, on the occasion of the departure of the Honourable Sir T. S. Raffles in 1823’, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 544-548.

Raffles's founding of Singapore as the capital of the Malay Commonwealth in 1819, represents the logical conclusion to the opening act of the British venture of critique that was the invasion, in 1811, of Java as the subject of a decolonisation settlement. Theoretically, both events were incompatible: the first, the brainchild of Minto, was deeply interventionist, while the second, the inspiration of Leyden, was libertarian. But the fall of France subjected the political landscape in Britain and India to a division whereby Minto's interventionism was relevant to the British venture of critique only at the height of Napoleon's power, and Leyden's libertarianism was relevant only after Napoleon's fall. To his credit, Raffles was astute in discerning the changing wind, and tacking the British venture of critique through it. In their different ways, both events restored the legal, political and moral order of society to a part of the world devastated by unbridled liberty and tainted by the failure of commercial empire. They defined an historical moment, whereby a 'liberating critique' of empire's failure – intended to highlight the source of the corrupting disease within British society and to atone for its afflicting of empire society – ended up redeeming empire itself.

The notion of a historical moment leads us to an important question: how had this venture of critique that was played out by the British in the East Indies figured in the *longue durée* of the region's history? How did the restoration of a legal, political and moral order in the East Indies between 1811 and 1819, in affecting its forms of governance and society, link past to future? To that end, Raffles, the agent who had faithfully put the theoretical views of Minto and Leyden into practice, finally emerges as the protagonist in this intellectual history. In his act of founding Singapore, not only do the events of the past decade culminate, but the personal views and arguments which we have seen expressed in his reports, letters, and publications since 1806, also place that act, and the venture of critique it underscores, intelligibly in the historical context.

Raffles's Historical Context

What Raffles's three objectives for Singapore – the naval station, China trade, Malay trade – effectively achieved for the region was a broad organisational system at many levels. As we saw, it encompassed the broad political economy of Dugald Stewart, Edmund Burke's broad political settlement of civil society, and the broad epistemological foundation of Thomas Reid. At the juridical level, it embodied what was historically known as *Ius Communicationis*, the 'right to free and unimpeded communication', or simply the right to commune. Conceptually, *ius communicationis* originated from the theological lectures of the sixteenth-century Spanish jurist and scholar of the Salamanca School, Francisco de Vitorio. Vitorio had criticised Spain's sixteenth-century colonisation of the Americas for the same reason Edmund Burke would later criticise Britain's colonisation of India, which was that it had proceeded abominably by a spirit of conquest. The actions of the Spanish conquistadors, Vitoria argued, had violated what he called 'a natural communion and partnership among men'.³⁰ These are the natural human exchanges and relations that should exist between the European and native individual of America – indeed, akin to Burke's later 'communion and fellowship of a great empire'.³¹ Spain's violent treatment and enslavement of the Amerindians had not only robbed them of their self-consciousness and self-dependence, it also denied the Spanish individual's natural human instinct to engage with the Amerindian in all activities involving trade, religion, culture,

³⁰ Brian Tierney, 'Vitoria and Suárez on *Ius gentium*, Natural Law, and Custom', in *The Nature of Customary Law: Legal, Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*, eds., Amanda Perreau-Saussine and James Bernard Murphy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³¹ Edmund Burke, 'Speech on Conciliation with America', *The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, Vol. II* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1871), 169. Burke's approach to international law is believed to have had a Thomist foundation from the influence of Vitoria's intellectual successor in the Salamanca School, Francisco Suarez. Peter Stanlis has placed Burke in the natural law tradition of both Suarez and Grotius. James F. Davidson placed Burke between that tradition and legal positivism. See Peter J. Stanlis, 'Edmund Burke and the Law of Nations,' *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (July 1953), 397-413. James F. Davidson, 'Natural Law and International Law in Edmund Burke,' *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (July 1959), 483-494.

diplomacy, custom, etc. In this respect, *ius communicationis* reflected the law of nations (*ius gentium*) but at the level of the individual.

It will be obvious to the reader that this ethical contrast between an equal and just state of human relations and an unequal and unjust state of power relations evokes the theme of the vicious cycle that has prevailed throughout the chapters in this thesis, and which emphasised the tension and anxiety between commission commerce and speculative commerce, the spirit of liberty and a sublime spirit of conquest, labour value and power value, *pax et concord* and *libertas et imperium*. The concept of *ius communicationis*, in its attention to both person and property, compares in the same way with a later concept of natural law which was derived from it, that is the rights of property (to the exclusion of the rights of man, or vice versa). This development reflected moral philosophy's specialisation into political economy and international law, wherein the rights of property were conferred both autonomy and authority with claims upon not just people but also nations. Where such claims affected the laws of nature and nations, they were entirely credited to the seventeenth-century Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius.

Peter Borschberg has related how Grotius had built his specific legal arguments for the natural laws of the 'free sea', 'war and peace', and 'prize and booty' from the broad base of Vitorio's *ius communicationis*. 'Grotius' contribution,' wrote Borschberg, 'was to amplify the underlying intentions and programmes of Vitoria by heightening the emphasis on free trade and market access.'³² This is not unlike the heightening of the emphasis on the market which the seventeenth-century writings of Thomas Mun and William Petty on England's *common weal* later underwent under John Locke, David

³² Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011), 89.

Hume, and Adam Smith. What is important here is the historical context which this development traced of the expansion of England's national economy into the colonial network across the Atlantic. For Grotius' specialisation of Vitorio's general thesis also traced a historical context, which was that of the VOC's reduction of Portugal's and Spain's imperial influence in the East Indies into a rules-based order. This reasoning, however, presents a problem: how can Vitorio's *ius communicationis* describe the Iberian empire which it criticised? The answer lies with the heterogeneity of the Iberian empire. While the Spanish claim to rights of ownership by first discovery in the Americas (*res nullius*) had provided the object of Vitorio's critique, in the Iberian East Indies this claim did not arise. Instead, there a *Pax Iberica* of sorts existed in the sixteenth century which was based on custom and consent.

As we have seen, the moral conceptions of the British reformer-critic toward the experience of empire in the East Indies tended to be contrary to what we expect them to be. Free trade was not necessarily good, mercantilism was not necessarily bad. This moral inversion also applied to the rules-based order which the Dutch Republic instituted in the East Indies: it was seen in a bad light when compared to the thalassocracy of the Portuguese Empire.³³ It is true that the Dutch had forced open the high seas and markets, but, as the British would do a century later in India, they used their new-found power and wealth to shackle the native with binding contracts. The Portuguese, on the other hand, denied other Europeans access to the East Indies, but if only to protect and preserve the native right to commune as the successor to the Malacca Sultanate and the *Pax Sinica* of the Ming Dynasty admiral, Zheng He, which

³³ 'The old Portuguese colonial empire was essentially a thalassocracy, a maritime and commercial empire'. C. R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 2.

supported the sultanate. This view is not new. It was conceived by none other than Raffles.

In his opening sentences in his *History of Java*, Raffles grounded the genesis of his narrative in the continuity which Portugal recognised in the entrepôt of Malacca as the beating heart of a regional maritime entity:

‘The first arrival of the Portuguese in the Eastern Islands was in the year 1510, when Alphonzo de Albuquerque first visited Sumatra. In the following year, Albuquerque conquered the city of Malacca, and sent to announce that event to those countries and islands which had traded thither, inviting them to continue their intercourse, and promising them protection and encouragement.’³⁴

This conception of Malacca as the eternal capital of the Malay world had first appeared back in 1808 in Raffles’s ‘Malacca’ paper:

‘Malacca, having been in the possession of a European Power for three centuries, and even previously to that period considered as the capital of the Malay States, has obtained so great an importance in the eyes of the native princes, that they are ever anxious to obtain the friendship of the nation in whose hands it may be. Its name carries more weight to a Malay ear than any new settlement, whatever its importance. This pre-eminence ensures constant respect from the traders to and from the neighbouring ports: at least it has done so till very lately...’³⁵

As a result, even in 1808, ‘there is a continual resort of native traders from the eastward and the countries in the vicinity, Malacca being the centre of the native commerce within the Straits.’ Raffles then proceeded to enumerate the current imports and exports, and their inward and outward ports of origin and call, that were carried by the ‘Bugguese or Eastern trade’, the ‘Javanese trade’, the trade of ‘Rhio, Lingin,

³⁴ Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java, Vol. I* (London: John Murray, 1817), xiii.

³⁵ Demetrius Charles Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* (1897) (Amsterdam: Pepin Press, 1999), 72.

Palembang,’ of Siak, ‘Siamese junks’, even the ‘Indiaman’ and ‘a large annual junk... from China’, as well as ‘Macao Portuguese ships’, which were exclusive to Penang. Even then, Malacca’s trade had constituted ‘nearly all the northern trade of the Archipelago’.³⁶ What is striking about Raffles’s descriptions of Malacca, as he observed it first-hand in 1808, and as he in 1816 conceived what it was like in 1511, was their constancy. Indeed, those descriptions anticipated Raffles’s later observation in 1824 of Singapore in 1819, as to ‘the rapidity with which the population of the surrounding countries recently flocked to Singapore at the sight of our flag.’ To Raffles, the reality of the Malay Commonwealth and its capital was grounded in history. In fact, from the third to thirteenth pages of his *History of Java*, Raffles inserted massive quotes from the sixteenth-century histories of the Portuguese empire, known as *Decadas de Asia*, by João de Barros and Barros’s successor, Diogo do Couto.

As with the concept of the Malay Commonwealth, Raffles’s historical grounding of the Malay Commonwealth was most likely the influence of Leyden.³⁷ Although Malacca had declined by Raffles’s time, the vast influence and esteem which it once wielded across the Malay world signified to him a dynamics that was latent in that world. As we saw, it only required to set alight the native will to unleash that dynamics. This historical bearing significantly impacts the British venture of critique, as it suggests that in restoring a legal, political and moral order in the East Indies, Raffles

³⁶ Ibid., 269.

³⁷ Leyden was a major source of Raffles’s reading. In February 1811, after arriving in Malacca from Calcutta, he wrote to Leyden: ‘I left the 10th Volume of the French Voyages behind. As this contains an Abstract of the Javanese History, pray send it, by a good opportunity.’ Raffles to Leyden, February 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5. This was probably an edition of Melchisédech Thévenot’s *Relations de Divers Voyages Curieux* (1663), a compendium of historical journeys reproduced in French which was among Leyden’s library (MSS ADD 26,564) and which represented a literary genre that Leyden emulated in his *Discoveries & Settlements of the Europeans in Northern & Western Africa* (1799). Raffles probably referred to a volume from Part IV which contained the chapters on ‘Instruction des vents qui se recontrent, & regnent plus frequemment entre les Pais bas & l’Isle de Java’ and ‘L’Asie de Barros, ou l’Histoire des conquestes des Portugais aux Indes Orientales’ (‘Instructions on the winds that meet & rule frequently between the low country and the island of Java’ and ‘Asia, from Barros, or the History of the conquest of the Portuguese in the East Indies’). Leyden’s Thévenot was probably Raffles’s first reading of Barros.

had adopted the model of the Portuguese thalassocracy centred on Malacca. The historical significance of Britain's intervention was that it had not only reversed two destructive centuries of the Dutch Republic's contractual colonial system – to which Raffles attributed what he evocatively gave the Gibbonesque term the 'decline and fall of the Dutch East-India Company' – but had restored the East Indies to the ancient native commonwealth which last flourished under the Portuguese. This historical moment of critique symbolised the redemption of the East Indies, through atonement for Dutch globalisation and restitution of the Portuguese peace.

The East Indian emporium in Raffles's historical context

The historical context of the British venture of critique touches upon a final question pertaining to Raffles's founding of Singapore. Did Raffles calculate beforehand that Singapore was potentially the engine of the Malay Commonwealth, or was his choice of Singapore merely a throw of the dice, or the last in a list of diminishing options? The answer is important, because on it rests the future history of Britain's nineteenth- and twentieth-century empire. It recalls the point made earlier in chapter one, as to how Raffles's occupation of Singapore in 1819, which was claimed *a posteriori* to have fulfilled a free trade agenda, could have been so incredibly foreknown and so impossibly providential. As we saw, free trade only became a cause in 1821 with Huskisson's advocacy of Singapore as the base for Britain's country trade to China. Raffles's action in 1819, I argued, was to found the capital of the Malay Commonwealth. Now, to this motive also applies the same reservations of foretelling and providence. How did Raffles know beforehand that Singapore would, in the words of Charles Grant, 'become a considerable Resort of Natives'? This is a moot point, for if Raffles had occupied Singapore by luck and not by design, then the Malay Commonwealth thesis collapses.

Raffles's intentions have long posed a historical problem. After his 1808 Malacca paper, and before his founding of Singapore, Raffles had shown interest in several other sites for his Malay capital, including Bangka, Keyser's Bay (Bay of Simangka), Biliton, Nias, Aceh, Riau, even Sambas and Banjermassin. They were not all of them small strategic islands, but also established coastal and inland ports, and in wide-ranging locations stretching from the northwest of Sumatra to its northern and southern tips and across the Java Sea to Borneo. These sites have incurred an impression of randomness, which led to the colonial narrative that Singapore was an inspired expedient in an exigency, stumbled upon by Raffles at the eleventh hour – and hence, the myths of divine favour and British genius. But that is a fallacy. Raffles's first recorded mention of action with respect to Singapore was in his letter to Marsden dated 12 December 1818 from Calcutta.³⁸ Raffles had sailed there in October to seek the Governor-General, the Marquess of Hastings', approval for his plans. Singapore was thus already in Raffles's radar before his celebrated landing there on 29 January 1819. In fact, as we will see, Raffles had already encountered the island back in June 1811 when Minto's fleet, carrying its armament to Java, passed through the Straits of Singapore. And yet, discrepancies between Hastings' approval and Raffles's landing at Singapore have continued to trouble the historian. Before Raffles told Marsden about Singapore in December 1818, he wrote to Marsden in November about 'forming establishments in Acheen and Rhio';³⁹ while after arriving at Penang in 1 January 1819, his efforts subsequently focused on Aceh, Riau, and Carimon, before turning to Singapore. What was going on?

The circumstances behind Raffles's founding of Singapore can be understood by rephrasing the question above: did the Malay Commonwealth's eternal capital spring

³⁸ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, Raffles to Marsden, 12 December 1818, 374.

³⁹ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, Raffles to Marsden, 14 November 1818, 371.

from the 'pre-eminence' that the concept of the commonwealth inheres to the first city to thrive, and eponymously takes the 'name' (or 'nama') of that city, or was the city determined by its location? Where Malacca was concerned, Raffles had in his 1808 Malacca paper believed that both cases were valid. Malacca was, in the native consciousness, the city on a hill, drawing from the Malays a 'constant respect'. But the location of the hill was also a decisive factor. Even in 1808, Raffles noted, Malacca still drew a greater native trade than Penang owing to its 'natural advantages' over Penang. These two considerations of status and location were due to two influences: the first from Leyden, and the second from Barros and Couto. Leyden, we know, had fixed his Malay capital in Madura. That island was located way to the eastward just across a strait from the eastern hook of Java, and at the very heart of the archipelago. Barros and Couto's historical testimonies of Portuguese Malacca, however, led Raffles to recognise that the capital need not at all be at the centre of its empire.

Thus, in March 1811, Leyden got irritated when Raffles's reports to him revealed that Raffles's efforts to engage the Malay States (as Agent of the Governor-General to the Malay States) had not extended beyond Bantam. 'What I am principally dissatisfied at in his hitherto proceedings,' Leyden complained to Minto, 'is that they are not far enough to the East & that Bali & Madura the very key stones of the arch are left untouched, and instead of Raffles being at Lingen with an agent at Bali and another at Bantam, here is he himself at Malacca, with a very stupid agent at Rhio or Lingen & a European still any where else.'⁴⁰ Leyden's 'arch', which traced a curve along the greater and lesser Sunda islands and the Moluccas, and within which was encompassed all the polysyllabic-speaking nations detailed in his *Indo-Chinese Nations* paper, is a key but neglected aspect of the history. It defined Leyden's conception of the Malay

⁴⁰ Leyden to Minto, undated but can be fixed to early March 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5.

Commonwealth as a truly nativist entity: autonomous, insular, yet inclusive of the entire archipelago. At its midpoint sits Madura, and at its focal point sits Banjermassin. Raffles appeared to have recognised Leyden's 'arch' when he fulfilled Leyden's instructions to convene a 'general Parliament of the Malay States in the island of Madura, or some celebrated ancient place, and under the protection of the Governor of Java.' As Governor of Java, the only native ruler to whom Raffles accorded the greatest esteem and friendship was the Panembahan of Sumenep (east Madura), Natu Kusuma, and two of the first residencies he established were at Sumenep and Banjermassin.

However, Leyden's and Raffles's approaches to the Malay capital differed with regard to the nature and degree of British protection. Leyden kept the British protector symbolic and afar, in the person of the *Maha Rajah* of Bengal and his Lord Lieutenants in Malacca (under the Governor of Penang, Archibald Seton, Minto's nominee) and Java (Raffles). As Leyden said, 'the Malays must neither be independent nor get very dependent'.⁴¹ Raffles, on the other hand, saw a more rigorous duty for the British protector to keep order. As he said of Malacca in 1808: 'were Malacca in the hands of a native prince, however respectable, or supported by us, this check [to piracy] would not only be lost, but fleets of piratical vessels and prows would be fitted out, even from its shores, whose depredations the enterprise of our cruisers would find it difficult to keep under.'⁴² This direct function meant that the British protector and his government would reside in the Malay capital, and the Malay capital had to be positioned for access to and from the free seafaring traffic of the archipelago.

In this regard, Portuguese Malacca was clearly a reference model for Raffles. Positioned at the western part of the archipelago, it was still accessible to the central and

⁴¹ Leyden to Raffles, March 1811, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 25.

⁴² Boulger, *Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*, 72.

eastern parts of the archipelago. This was by means of two alternate passages which diverged at the south of the Malacca Straits and fed into two routes to the eastward. Their advantage was such that despite Malacca's clashes with Johor, where the exiled Sultan of Malacca had set up a rival power centre, and which thwarted one of those routes, Malacca was still accessible to and from the furthest reaches of the archipelago through the other route. 'The straits of *Singa púra* being infested by the cruisers of the former king of Malacca, who had been expelled from his dominions by the Portuguese in 1511,' Raffles explained in 1816, citing Barros, 'the straits of *Sában* were the usual route of the Portuguese vessels from Malacca to the Spice Islands, and in this voyage they generally touched at the ports of Java.'⁴³

The 'Straits of Singapore' in Barros's time of writing is now distinguished to have referred to the channel between Singapore and Sentosa Island (the ancient Varela Channel and today's Keppel Harbour).⁴⁴ The 'Straits of Singapore' in Raffles's time referred to what the Portuguese named the Santa Barbara Channel, which follows the southern coastline of Sentosa. Both old and new straits merge after Sentosa to lead eastward to the Tambelan islands before Borneo. There, another divergence of routes occurs: northeast across Sarawak and Brunei to Sulu, Sulawesi, and Ternate in the north Moluccas, or southeast along the Carimata Straits and subsequently portside to Banjermassin or across the Java Sea to Java and Bali. The Sabam (or Kunder) Straits, meanwhile, led southward to the Dryon Straits and Bangka Straits along eastern Sumatra. The passage subsequently diverged into two routes: starboard to the Sunda Straits, 'through which all the navigation of eastern and western India used to pass,

⁴³ Raffles, *History of Java*, xiv.

⁴⁴ See Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill, 'Singapore: Notes on the History of the Old Strait, 1580-1850', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, 1 (1954): 165-214.

previous to the founding of Malacca’,⁴⁵ and portside to the Banten-Jeyakarta passage, ‘which have a great traffic, on account of the trade carried on, not only with Java, but with Malacca and Sumatra.’⁴⁶ The Banten-Jeyakarta passage fed directly eastward to Bali, Sulawesi, and Banda and Ambon in the south-central Moluccas. To the peoples from all these places, in Barros’s time, Raffles understood that spiritually Malacca was at the centre of their world even if geographically it was not.

These established navigational routes did not change with the arrival of those whom Barros termed the ‘Moors’ (the Turks, following a diplomatic engagement between the Aceh Sultanate and Ottoman Empire in 1565) and then the Dutch (in 1595). In fact, the newcomers quickly recognised the advantages served by Malacca’s significance and location, and, with the Moors establishing their influence in Aceh and the Dutch putting a foothold in Johor, they set out to capture the city from the Portuguese. They were not successful – not until 1641 when Malacca finally fell to the Dutch – but their appearance heralded the deterioration of the *Pax Iberica* into a state of disorder. The causes of this descent were internal and evocative of the Malay cycle of *runtuh* and *insaf*, which described the Malacca Sultanate’s earlier decline and fall. A political and moral crisis had set into what Portuguese writers had observed to be ‘an Estado da India that was sclerotic, decadent and moribund, dominated by religious fanaticism and widespread corruption.’⁴⁷ The situation reflected the wider malady of Habsburg Europe, where a revolt against Philip II of Spain and struggle for independence by Dutch republicans in 1568 eventually found an active theatre in the East Indies. As Portuguese Malacca’s first century drew to a close, hardnosed but

⁴⁵ Raffles, *History of Java*, xv.

⁴⁶ Raffles, *History of Java*, xvii. Barros’ text referred to by Raffles reads: ‘Through the channel known as Sabam navigate all those who come and go to Java, Banda, the Malukus and those islands nearby which are situated south of the equator.’ Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), 262.

⁴⁷ Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto, *The Portuguese and the Straits of Melaka, 1575-1619: Power, Trade and Diplomacy*, tr. Roopanjali Roy (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), 40.

articulate Dutch rebels and privateers were cruising the seas and straits of the archipelago, attacking and seizing the richly-laden galleons of Spain and Portugal in the name of free trade.

The ensuing clash between Portuguese Malacca and the Dutch commenced in pursuit of the great prize which was the native trade. The admiral of the Dutch fleet sent out in 1605 to invade Malacca, Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge, was convinced that ‘the East Indies trade depends mostly on Melaka’, and since ‘it can be seen of what importance Melaka is; therefore we should well risk a black eye over it’.⁴⁸ Malacca was besieged in 1606 but not subdued, whereupon the Dutch then considered a substitute port close enough to Malacca to tap into its traffic. The Dutch termed this port a ‘rendezvous’, the intended purpose for which was exactly the same as Malacca’s: to be the capital of the Malay Commonwealth, to where the native people will resort. In a letter to Grotius and his patron the doyen of the Dutch Revolt, and founder of the VOC, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Matelieff described the significance of the rendezvous to the native people in the same way that Raffles portrayed the name of Malacca to the ‘Malay ear’ two centuries later:

I see no way to keep many people in the Indies unless one realizes the things I have explained to the directors: allowing people from these lands who would come and live at our rendezvous to conduct inland trade freely there, like the Portuguese do with their people. As a consequence, we would draw all the trade away from the Portuguese and into our hands, and many Indians would come and

⁴⁸ ‘Excerpt from Matelieff’s memorial of June, 1607, Entitled Discourse on the State and Trade of the Indies’, in Cornelis Matelieff, *Admiral Matelieff’s SINGAPORE AND JOHOR, 1606-1616*, ed. Peter Borschberg (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016), 121-134.

live with us who now live under the neighboring kinds but do the same trade nonetheless.⁴⁹

Matelieff's choice for the rendezvous initially fell upon Johor. And here the decision was made in consideration of Johor's location. From both Barros and Couto, we know that the Portuguese had in the 1580s discovered the viability of the New Straits of Singapore (or Santa Barbara Channel),⁵⁰ which bypassed the hindrances rendered to the Old Straits of Singapore by Johor,⁵¹ and opened a direct channel with Portuguese Macao and Spanish Manila, besides Sulu, Sulawesi, and the north Moluccas. When the Dutch failed to take Malacca in 1606, their naval activity had retreated to this channel. The value of its seagoing traffic was soon realised with the notorious capture of the Portuguese merchantman, the *Santa Catarina*. Thus, out of the privateering tactics of the Dutch had evolved a strategy of fortification to secure control over the Straits of Singapore. A fort was proposed to the Sultan of Johor, but it never materialised.

Interestingly, the Portuguese response to Dutch attacks also followed a strategy of fortification. The writings of Jacques de Coutre, a Flemish jeweller based in Malacca around 1600, reveal the same stance as Matelieff of establishing forts in Singapore and Johor. De Coutre also took the same view of Johor-Singapore as an auxiliary to Malacca: 'It has a beautiful river and a port with many large and small ships, and it is a

⁴⁹ 'Excerpt of Matelieff's Memorial to Hugo Grotius and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, dated 31 August, 1610', in Matelieff, *SINGAPORE AND JOHOR*, 153-158. The phrase 'to keep many people' probably meant to maintain the interest, custom, patronage, and respect of many people.

⁵⁰ Citing Barros, in Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), 32. Citing Couto, in Peter Borschberg, 'Remapping the Straits of Singapore?', in Peter Borschberg, ed., *Iberians in the Singapore-Melaka Area and Adjacent Regions (16th to 18th Century)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 111.

⁵¹ Johor had scuttled junks in the Old Straits of Singapore to make it shallow and unpassable, perhaps to compel traders to use the Johor Straits (or Tebrau Straits) which led directly up the Johor river. The hindrance seemed to have cleared naturally in time, according to Jacques de Coutre's writings from the 1620-30s. De Coutre measured the depth of the Old Straits at its western entrance at 14 fathoms.

place where merchants do vast volumes of trade and there are abundant provisions.’⁵² Borschberg has suggested that this coincidence was due to a possible connection between de Coutre and the Dutch factor in Johor, Jacques Obelaer, another Flemish trader who later decamped to the Portuguese. Their connection, I believe, is representative of a larger context in which the East Indies was seen as a region of free movement of people and property that converged on a pre-eminent capital in Malacca that was necessarily also a free market or emporium. Until the turn of the seventeenth century, this was the predominant view of the Malays, Portuguese, and indeed, the first Dutch visitors such as Matelieff and the ‘private merchants’ to whom he attributed (contrary to our assumptions) the early Dutch activity in Asia.⁵³ It was also the context by which Raffles had conceived of the Malay Commonwealth. In fact, Raffles’s three objectives for Singapore – the Malay trade, China trade, and naval station – paraphrased Matelieff’s early observation that,

The entire trade in the East Indies [which] consists in... Pepper, to be obtained at Banten, Johor, Patani, Kedah and Aceh... Cloves, to be obtained at Ambon and the Malukus... Nutmeg and mace, to be obtained at Banda... the Cambay trade... the Coromandel trade with pieces of cloth... the China trade...,’ all of it, ‘depends mostly on Melaka.’⁵⁴

The intensifying contest between the Portuguese and Dutch for this regional free market, however, spelled its demise. Division and protectionism, signified in the strategies of fortification and armadas adopted by both sides, undermined the pre-eminence of Malacca’s name and promoted the interests of security and geopolitics. From protecting the free movements converging on Malacca (or on its potential

⁵² Jacques de Coutre, *SINGAPORE AND JOHOR, 1594-1625*, ed. Peter Borschberg (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), 54.

⁵³ ‘Discourse on Trade Possibilities for the VOC in the East Indies’, 12 November 1608, in Cornelis Matelieff, *Journal, Memorials and Letters of Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge: Security, Diplomacy and Commerce in 17th-Century Southeast Asia*, ed. Peter Borschberg (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), 280-308.

⁵⁴ ‘Excerpt from Matelieff’s memorial of June, 1607’, in Matelieff, *SINGAPORE AND JOHOR*, 121-134.

auxiliary or substitute in Johor-Singapore), both Portuguese and Dutch deviated toward claiming navigational routes and strategic locations. Already in the 1580s, following the Aceh-Turkish assaults of the 1570s, there was clamour in Portuguese circles, notably by the vigorous and formidable Bishop of Malacca, Joao Ribero Gaio, to invade Aceh as well as Johor,⁵⁵ and to secure the maritime influence of these kingdoms in the Malacca Straits, Singapore Straits, Kundur Straits, Dryon Straits, Bangka Straits, and Sunda Straits, by building forts there and in Banten.⁵⁶ The scheme again became a pressing issue in the 1600s especially after the capture of the *Santa Catarina* by Dutch rebels. Among the Dutch republicans, too, there emerged a consensus that they should consolidate their gains in West Java and build from there. Around 1608, Matelieff's language began to change in favour of Dutch establishments in Banten or Jeyakarta – where they could control the Banten-Jeyakarta passage to Banda and Ambon – over Johor.⁵⁷ Matelieff still conceived of a free emporium for his rendezvous, but in 1611, the first Governor-General of the VOC, Pieter Both, began to enforce compliance by his native clients to their exclusive contracts for deliveries of contingents, the first of which had been signed for Banda's nutmeg in 1602 and Ambon's cloves in 1605.

Geopolitical strategy in Raffles's historical context

Raffles was aware of this changing context, which he perceived in the history. The passages from Barros' *Decadas* which he reproduced in his *History of Java* described discovery and diplomacy by the Portuguese. Barros wrote his *Decadas* in the 1550s and 1560s, and they were resumed by Couto in the 1600s and 1610s. Raffles's subsequent quotes of Couto described geography and defence. 'If the king possessed three

⁵⁵ De Sousa Pinto, *The Portuguese and the Straits of Melaka*, 71-75.

⁵⁶ De Sousa Pinto, *The Portuguese and the Straits of Melaka*, 51-59.

⁵⁷ 'Excerpts from a letter by Matelieff to the next Admiral arriving from Europe, dated 28 January, 1608', in Matelieff, *SINGAPORE AND JOHOR*, 141-145.

fortresses, one in this situation [Banten], one of *Acheen head*, and one on the coast of *Pegu*, the navigation of the east would in a manner be locked by these keys, and the king would be lord of all its riches'.⁵⁸ Raffles's description of the Dutch also highlighted the new context of sovereignty and geopolitics. 'In 1610,' he wrote, 'the first Dutch governor general, Bolt [Pieter Both], arrived at Bantam, and finding the situation of his countrymen in that province not favourable to the establishment of a permanent settlement, removed to *Jákatra*.⁵⁹ 'On the 4th of March, 1621,' he continued, referring to the start of the Dutch imperium, 'the name of *Batavia* was conferred upon the new establishment of the Dutch in *Jákatra*, which from that period became the capital of their East Indian empire.'

As we saw in chapter two, Raffles's writings had observed the theme of *libertas et imperium*. His *History of Java* had put forward an argument for 'the decline and fall of the Dutch East-India Company', by asking 'whether the system on which the internal government of their eastern dominion was conducted was in itself ruinous under any circumstances'. Indeed, it was. The VOC's empire would, to borrow from Pocock, be 'destroyed, not by a mere vicissitude of temporal affairs, but by causes inherent in its own greatness, even in its own liberty.'⁶⁰ To Raffles, the seeds of a 'Polybian cycle of decline into corruption' were planted already in the 1610s, when the tenacity and boldness of the Dutch traders and mariners that had brought wealth and independence to the Seven Provinces, were centralised, regulated, and militarised under a governing authority. 'Liberty had conquered an imperium greater than it could maintain', and the spirit of conquest which consequently directed the violence and tyranny of the VOC – ironically the epitome and instrument of the liberty of the Dutch Republic – in Banda

⁵⁸ Raffles, *History of Java*, xxi.

⁵⁹ Raffles, *History of Java*, xxii.

⁶⁰ Pocock, J.G.A., 'Rome: the republic as ideal and as history', in Najemy John M., ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

and Ambon ensured the inevitable demise of both the Malay Commonwealth and the empire of the Dutch Republic.

This vicious cycle of independence and dependence may explain the apparent contradiction in the writings of Hugo Grotius between his early conceptualisation of ‘free trade’ – in his works *De Iure Praedae* (Law of Prize and Booty, 1604) and *Mare Liberum* (Free Seas, 1609) – and his later defence during the Anglo-Dutch conferences of 1613 and 1615 of the VOC’s monopoly to the exclusion of all other traders.⁶¹ Not only had ‘Grotius’ endorsement of absolute property rights and his insistence on the inviolability of contracts... resulted in the enslavement of one of the (non-European) signatories’,⁶² it also enslaved the European possessor of those rights to those rights. From the civic humanist standpoint, the natural law concept of ‘rights’ assigned to property also conferred on that property an authority-in-itself that was autonomous of the possessor. The severe inurement of Grotius’ rights of property from Vitorio’s right to commune was played out not only in the conduct of the VOC in the East Indies, but in the turbulence of the Dutch Republic in the 1610s. The very authors of the VOC’s rise, Grotius and Oldenbarnevelt, anxious that the Dutch Reformed Church’s rejection of the *free will* tenets of Jacobus Arminius had placed the spirit of liberty of the Dutch Revolt in jeopardy, acted against the Republic itself when they sided with the Arminians (known as Remonstrants) in violence against the Stadholder.⁶³ As Eric Wilson explained,

⁶¹ The question has long troubled the historian. See Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius*, 99-102. Also Martine van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595-1615* (BRILL, 2006), 370. W. S. M. Knight, ‘Grotius in England: his opposition there to the principles of the *Mare Liberum*’, *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, 5 (1919), 18-19.

⁶² Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, xxxviii

⁶³ On the Arminian controversy, see Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 421-477.

The latent political and religious tensions of the Dutch Republic are themselves reproduced through the deep internal fissures of [Grotius's] *De Indis*... The social divisions within the VOC, the institutional template of *De Indis*, parallel these 'traces' of sectarian and class divisions that structure the text... The single most important sectarian division within the Republic was between the latitudinarian (i.e. anti-predestination) Arminists/Remonstrants, who included Grotius in the ranks, and the anti-latitudinarian (i.e. pro-predestination) Calvinists/Gomarists... It is not misleading to conflate the religious and political disputes of the Republic with the formulation of VOC corporate policy...⁶⁴

It is interesting that Raffles, a civic humanist, was able to perceive the decline and fall of the VOC as a body politic in reflection of the United Provinces, and the deep contradictions inherent in its conception of liberty with respect to other body polities. Indeed, he should. In Raffles's historical understanding, we see juxtaposed again the two republican standpoints mentioned above: the ancient and natural liberty of the French and Dutch traditions, and the ancient constitutionalism of the Florentine and Atlantic traditions. Pocock has argued that the Dutch tradition, which adopted the language of jurisprudence, was far removed from the Atlantic tradition, which adopted the language of virtue.⁶⁵ The cycle of human decline from virtue to vice does not feature in the laws of nature. While the laws of nature have rationalised the freedom and prosperity that are gained from virtue, they remained silent on the corruption and slavery that proceeded from freedom and prosperity. It is rather expected, therefore, that the demise and suicide of the VOC was – although it took two centuries – a predictable event in Raffles's worldview. And it is somewhat reasonable to expect that, in reversing the effects and undoing the causes of the VOC's decline, as his policies had aimed to

⁶⁴ Eric Wilson, *The Savage Republic: De Indis of Hugo Grotius, Republicanism and Dutch Hegemony within the Early Modern World-System (c. 1600-1619)* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2008), 415-6. For more on the intellectual and political connections between the VOC in the East Indies with the Arminian controversy in the Dutch Republic, see Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 421-49.

⁶⁵ Pocock, J.G.A., 'Spinoza and Harrington: An Exercise in Comparison', *Bikdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 102 (1987), 435-449.

do, Raffles believed he was turning back the clock, as it were, to the 'view of the financial and commercial state of Java before the [Dutch] conquest' which he depicted in his history.

In 1814, when his policies in Java were all but systematically implemented, this restoration might have paid off. The Javanese freed and restored to their ancient constitution, the 'former channels' of people and property throughout the archipelago would flow freely again, to converge at a new city on the hill which Raffles would construct, it appears initially, at Bangka. Castlereagh's restitution of Java, Malacca, and vaguely, Bangka, to the Dutch in 1814, however, overturned these plans and the years of hard work which went into them. The pre-eminent Malay capital was still feasible, but conditions have changed with the return of the Dutch. Raffles, who dined with the new King of the Netherlands and his ministers in 1817, knew that with them would return the division and protectionism of the past, and in dealing with such strategic problems Raffles looked to the lessons of the past. These lessons are the historical contexts of Couto and Barros, which saw the Portuguese confront Dutch competition through sovereignty and geopolitics, and the Portuguese engage the native people through discovery and diplomacy. If the Malay capital was to be realised, its navigational routes had to be protected.

'If the king possessed three fortresses, one in this situation [Banten], one of *Acheen head*, and one on the coast of *Pegu*, the navigation of the east would in a manner be locked by these keys, and the king would be lord of all its riches'. Couto's strategy of protecting Malacca's seaways through a triangle of key forts was repeated by Raffles when he returned to the East in March 1818 as Governor of Bencoolen. Raffles still fixed his attentions on Bangka, and around Bangka a similar triangle of key

forts was traced out by Nias, Keyser's Bay, and Penang. In June 1818, he moved to secure Bangka by interfering in rival claims to the throne of Palembang, to which Bangka was a fief. But it met with armed resistance by the Dutch and severe reprobation from George Canning. With Bangka out of the question, Raffles consequently fixed his eye on Singapore, a fief of Johor. His source for the historical context for Singapore, again, was Barros and Couto's *Decadas*. Raffles would have learnt from Couto's account of Johore Lama of 'a very fine city [that] stretched along that [Johor] river bank,' and how 'the city lies on a hill that runs parallel to the beach for the distance of a falcon shot.'⁶⁶ The historical strategic value of Johor-Singapore, at first a Malay rival to Portuguese Malacca, then potentially an auxiliary port and fortress to the Portuguese, and subsequently a substitute rendezvous for the Dutch, was not lost on Raffles. A letter he wrote on 16 January 1819, to John Adam – Chief Secretary to Government at Bengal, and on 9 January 1819, Supreme Councillor – demonstrated some substantial geographical knowledge:

The island of Sincapore, independently of the straits and harbour of Johore, which it both forms and commands, has, on its southern shores, and by means of the several smaller islands which lie off it, excellent anchorage and smaller harbours, and seems in every respect most peculiarly adapted for our object. Its position in the straits of Singapore is far more convenient and commanding than even Rhio, for our China trade passing down the straits of Malacca, and every native vessel that sails through the Straits of Rhio must pass in sight of it... The larger harbour of Johore is declared by professional men whom I have consulted, and by every Eastern trader of experience to whom I have been able to refer, to be capacious and easily defensible, and, the British flag once hoisted, there would be no want of supplies to meet the immediate necessities of our establishment.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ I. A. Macgregor, 'Johore Lama in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (170), Papers on Johore Lama and the Portuguese in Malaya, (1511-1641) (May, 1955), 48-126. Cited in John Miksic, *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300-1800* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), 206.

⁶⁷ Raffles to John Adam, 16 January 1819, Boulger, *Life of Stamford Raffles*, 304-305.

Raffles's knowledge of Singapore goes back, as mentioned, to June 1811 when Minto's fleet sailed through the Straits.⁶⁸ In fact, Raffles first encountered the subject of the Singapore Straits back in 1807, when a Penang vessel fell prey to piracy in the area.⁶⁹ The notoriety of the Straits was largely due to its uncharted waters. In March 1811, during the final frenzied preparations for Minto's fleet to replenish at Malacca, Raffles faced yet another crisis when a Chinese junk, a Bugis *pancalang* (schooner), a Malacca *perahu*, and another Malacca vessel belonging to his friend, Alexander Hare, were systematically attacked by pirates identified to be members of the Riau royal family.⁷⁰ The passage of the Singapore Straits was thus a prominent topic when the question of the route which the fleet was to safely take to Java arose in 1811. It is seldom appreciated just how extensive were the discussions and surveys of the area's maritime topography and conditions during this period. Sophia Raffles's *Memoir* had homed in on a dispute over the Caramata Straits: whether to sail in the circuitous direction around northeast Borneo, or directly to southwest Borneo through the Caramata Straits, which was quicker to Java but uncharted and, from April, against the southeasterly monsoon. The primary sources, however, show that the dilemma began even before Borneo at Malacca: whether to make for Borneo through the Sabam Straits and Dryon Straits before turning portside at Varela Island (Pulau Berhala), or to turn sharply portside at Carimon Island and traverse the Singapore Straits. Raffles, from the input of his ship captain friends, initially proposed to take the Northeast passage⁷¹ by

⁶⁸ An event chronicled in William Thorn, *The Conquest of Java* (Singapore: Periplus, 2004), 11-12. 'In a few days the fleet entered the straits of Singapore.'

⁶⁹ The ship captain James Carnegie. See Sultan Mahmud Syah of Johore-Lingga to Philip Dundas, 5 March 1807, Stamford Raffles, *Letters of Sincerity: The Raffles Collection of Malay Letters (1780-1824), a Descriptive Account with Notes and Translation* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2009), 103.

⁷⁰ Raffles to Raja Muda of Riau, 6 March 1811, Stamford Raffles, *Letters of Sincerity*, 112-3.

⁷¹ 'If the fleet do not quit Malacca by the above period, the only way of their reaching Java will be to go round about God Knows where and not ensure their Passage after all. For god's Sake as you Value the Success of the measure, as You Value the destruction of the Enemy & the glory of your Country, look out well to this point or all will go wrong. I am not neither will I be responsible for any thing after the date I have mentioned.' Raffles to Leyden, 24 January 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5.

way of the Dryon Straits⁷² (contrary to the *Memoir's* claims). But, in the event, the entire question was resolved by Leyden.

On 27 March 1811, annoyed with Raffles's lack of progress, Leyden sent his friend, William Greig, captain of the Company's brig, *Minto*, to survey the eastern seas as well as to deliver letters to the rulers of west Borneo and Bali. A questionnaire, 'Memoranda of Queries, regarding the prevailing winds & Currents & Seasons of Java, & the adjacent Coasts, Seas & Islands',⁷³ which Leyden initially prepared in early March for Raffles,⁷⁴ was left with Greig. It asked, among other questions, what was

The nature of the Channel between Bali & Java – between Java & Matura – can large ships pass the latter, the Straits of Banca, of Sinkapore, & generally all the Straits & Passages that have a connection with a determinate rendezvous from either side on the Northern Coast or opposite to the Northern Coast of Java?... Is it necessary in making this passage to sail towards Borneo, & to circumnavigate that large Island in order to pass to the E. extremity of Java by the Straits of Macasser or beyond them to the East...?⁷⁵

The answers to Leyden's queries were filled in by Greig himself. He made two excursions: the first to Pontianak via the Straits of Singapore, and the second to Bali via the Carimata Straits. Both straits he cleared, and on returning to Malacca on 25 May he recommended for the fleet to make the Carimata Straits by way of the Singapore

⁷² 'On the Northern Passage being given up there remained no doubts whatsoever that the Passage if made on this Side Borneo should be attempted through the Streights of Dryon in preference to every other.' Raffles to Minto, 22 May 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5. 'For clearing the Straits of Malacca they both [Robert Scott and Stewart] preferred the Straits of Dryon to the Straits of Sincapura, suggesting that the wind and current might probably carry the armament too far to the Northward if we entered the eastern Seas by the Straits of Sincapura.' Raffles to Minto, 10 June 1811 (Revised 20 September 1811), *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/7.

⁷³ Leyden, 27 March 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/2.

⁷⁴ Leyden to Minto, 3 March 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/2. 'As it occurs to me that my friend Raffles is likely or rather certain to be most defective in his Military communications, I thought of transmitting him a few explicit queries on some of the chief military heads proposed in the simplest form... to dispatch them under enclosure to him by Capt. Greig.'

⁷⁵ Leyden, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/2.

Straits.⁷⁶ Minto had just arrived at Malacca on 18 May. The fleet subsequently departed a month later on 18 June, adopting Greig's route. In his journal, Minto jotted thus: 'June 20th: Ran through the Straits of Sinkapore'.⁷⁷ Greig in fact drew up a chart of the route taken (see Figure 1) – probably for Leyden, who was his celebrated passenger in the *Minto*.



Figure 1. 'Chart showing the Tract of the Expedition from Malacca to Java' (dotted line), May-July 1811, by William Greig, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5. Microform image from the *National Library of Australia*, MSS Eur F148/5.

⁷⁶ 'The report of Mr. Greig... sufficiently establishes the practicability of the Caramata passage; and he has likewise ascertained both the facility of working along the coast of Borneo by the sea and land breezes, but likewise that of making Borneo through the Straits of Sincapura.' Raffles to Minto, 4 May 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/7. 'Captain Greig in his last return from Bali was decidedly of opinion that the Channel between Caramatta and the main land of Borneo was the most eligible tract for the fleet to go through.' Raffles to Minto, 22 May 1811, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5.

⁷⁷ Minto, *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/5.



Figure 2. Detail of Greig's Chart, showing the route through the Singapore Straits. Added legend refers: (A) Little Carimon, (B) Tree Islands, (C) from south to north, Coney, Rabbit, Barn Island, Alligator Island, (D) Middle Island, (E) St John's Island & Lazarus Island, (F) Romania Islands off Point Romania, (G) Pedra Branca & Middle Rocks, (H) Sentosa, (I) Singapore, (J) Tebrau/Johor Straits, (K) Johor River.

Yet in spite of all this first-hand information that was acquired in 1811, Raffles's description of Singapore in his letter to Adam nonetheless contains elements that did not seem to have been known by the British in 1811. This were his references to the anchorage at (1) the 'several smaller islands which lie off' Singapore's 'southern shores', and (2) the 'straits and harbour of Johore', which Singapore 'forms and commands', and which is 'capacious and easily defensible'. The first refers immediately to Pulau Brani and Sentosa Island, the future site of Keppel Harbour, and further afield to St John's Island. The second refers to the Johor/Tebrau Straits and Johor River. Except for St John's Island, these references are not shown accurately on Greig's chart. According to the chart, the fleet skirted outside Singapore's outlying islands (see Figure 2). Of those islands Grieg's detail is impressive:⁷⁸ i.e. the north-south line of four islands (Alligator Island, Barn Island, and the Rabbit and Coney

⁷⁸ Though not as impressive as his detail of the western Borneo coastline, which, if superimposed on a modern map, is nearly identical.

islets) that have historically provided a navigational mark for mariners; the pair of islands that are St John's Island and Lazarus Island; the cluster between Barn Island and St John's Island comprising Pulau Semakau, Pulau Seking, Pulau Bukum, and Middle Island; the dotted banks that are the Tree Islands (three in number) and Romania Islands (six in number); Pedra Branca with the two outcrops that are Middle Rocks. But of Sentosa, Singapore, the Johor Straits, and Johor River, there is no detail.⁷⁹ A horizontal island, probably representing Sentosa by its old name, Pulo Panjang (long island), was drawn but at an incorrect position – the same is true for Singapore and Pulau Ubin.

Where did Raffles obtain his particular knowledge of the anchorage at vaguely-defined Sentosa and Johor? The passage in his letter to Adam discloses not so much a geographical knowledge as an historical knowledge which he acquired after 1811. It evokes the descriptions of the Varella Channel and Johore Lama by Barros and Couto. Indeed, the particular volumes of the *Decadas* quoted by Raffles (*Decadas* III Book V and *Decadas* IV Book I) are the very manuscripts on which historians of Singapore and Johor today depend for their source. Most probably Raffles gained access to them at the British Museum when he was writing the *History of Java* in London in 1816-17. Raffles was not the first European to see policy in the historical context, but certainly he was the first British historian of Johore-Singapore. His letter to Adam somewhat paraphrases

⁷⁹ William Thorn, an officer who chronicled the Java Expedition, described entering what was possibly the Old Straits of Singapore, noting the 'the tide drifting forcibly over to the Malay coast... [and that] the depth of water through these straits, is generally from sixteen to seventeen fathoms; and the scenery along the shores is highly beautiful' – but that more or less represented the extent of information the British possessed of the Johor-Singapore area in 1811. (Thorn, *Conquest of Java*, 11-12.) The Company's hydrographer, James Horsburgh, too, in 1811 documented the navigational landmarks that are 'Johore Hill' and 'Johore Point', 'which forms the East side of the entrance of the old strait of Sincapour [Johor/Tebrau Straits]; a little inside of which, the river and town of Johore is situated, formerly a place of considerable trade, but now unfrequented.' (James Horsburgh, *Directions for Sailing to and from the East Indies, China, New Holland, Cape of Good Hope, and the Interjacent Ports, compiled chiefly from original journals at the East India House, and from journals and observations, made during twenty-one years experience navigating in those seas* (London: Black, Parry, and Kingsbury, 1811), 181.) Johor was evidently unknown to him. Neither did he describe Singapore and Sentosa.

the following passage by Barros and Couto on the discovery of the New Straits of Singapore by the Portuguese in the 1580s, alluded to earlier:

And seeing that the Strait [the Old Strait of Singapore or Varella channel] was completely impeded by the junks which had been sunk there, he [the Portuguese captain Dom Maneol de Almeida] ordered bantins to investigate the islands and to see if they could find another channel through which might pass the vessels he was expecting from China and the Moluccas... [A]nd passing to the south of that island, they found another channel which had not been used... They decided that the vessels would very easily pass through it, and gave it the name of the Channel of Santa Barbara.⁸⁰

It is interesting how the Varella Channel was known during the early Portuguese era but the New Straits of Singapore awaited discovery, whereas in Raffles's time the New Straits was known but the Varella Channel was forgotten.⁸¹ And it is significant that, unlike the archetype Orientalist, Raffles did not approach the forgotten channel as a *charta rasa* but rather, as he did in Java and in heeding Leyden's example, through the historical record. And yet, the historical record, though it substantiated the historical justification for a strategic location that became of vital interest to Raffles, is still not, when we come right down to it, the cause of that interest. The *Decadas* supports, but does not truly give, the fundamental reason as to why Raffles selected Singapore in the first place to be the capital of the Malay Commonwealth. Indeed, why did Raffles even select Bangka?

⁸⁰ Citing Couto, in Borschberg, 'Remapping the Straits of Singapore?', 111.

⁸¹ Nothing illustrates this better than the contrast between two maps two centuries apart, the first by Maneol Godinho de Erédia in his *Description of Malaca, Meridional India & Cathay* (MBRAS Reprint 14, 2012) and the other by Greig, the first showing detail in the brown water but not the green water, and the other showing detail in the green water but not the brown water.

Malay pre-eminence in Raffles's historical context

At this point, the historical record merges with the historical myth. As mentioned, the Portuguese experience had taught two historical lessons: firstly, confront the Dutch through strategic competition – and here the *Decadas* was invaluable – while secondly, engage the native people through, as Raffles said of Malacca, friendship. The ‘name’ of the new capital, like the ‘name’ of Malacca, must carry ‘more weight to a Malay ear’ than any other place, such that its ‘pre-eminence ensures constant respect from the traders to and from the neighbouring ports’. Here was Leyden’s influence on the status of the Malay capital emerging in Raffles’s thinking alongside Barros and Couto influence as to its location. But where Portuguese friendship was extended diplomatically to the Malay rulers – an event which Raffles noted in the significance of the ‘padroes, or pillars of discovery and possession’ – Raffles sought to engage the common native people themselves. He did this by appealing to their native consciousness, and through a manuscript which had been in his possession since October 1810: Leyden’s transcription of the *Sajarah Malayu*.

It seems puzzling how two centuries of exegetic studies by historians on the *Sajarah Malayu* had never identified its narratives with policy. As we saw in chapter seven, Leyden’s transcription and redaction of the *Sajarah* depicted the rise and fall of the Malay character as the common Malays either became aware of their native and vulgar consciousness, or unaware of it as they found themselves obliged to conform to the forms of civilized life. The *Sajarah*’s first chapter (or first annal) opens, as I explained, with the intellectual ancestry of the Malay character which was attended by a history of war and unrest, and ends with the appearance of a people who realised their native and vulgar consciousness through an exchange with the last descendant in that genealogy. This exchange involved a very human form of social contract. From this

exchange thus commenced, in the second chapter, an era of peace and the founding of countries (*negeri*) at Palembang, Bangka, Pagaruyung, and, in the third chapter, Singapore.

The narrative is not an unfamiliar field in historical scholarship, as the ancient rajas of Singapore give succour to Singapore's historical legend. Interestingly, the Singapore dynasty was also referred to by Barros and Tomé Pires, although they identified the last raja, Parameswara, who fled Singapore and founded Malacca, with the figure who founded Singapore and became its first raja, Sang Nila Utama. Sang Nila Utama's founding of Singapore represents the climax in a cycle of discovery and diplomacy initiated by his father, Sangsapurba, or Bichitram Shah, the last in the lineage of descent from Alexander the Great. In chapter two, Bichitram Shah mysteriously appears at a sacred mountain that was the mystical site of the origin of the Malay people, 'Sagantang Maha Miru', and attracts the reverence of the neighbouring population. Through the social contract he exchanged with the chieftain of Palembang, 'Damang Lebar Dawn', which was sealed through marriage with the chieftain's daughter, Bichitram Shah becomes king to the people of Palembang (historically the capital of Srivijaya).

All the family of Damang Lebar Dawn would submit themselves to him [Bichitram Shah]; but that Sangsapurba [Bichitram Shah] should engage, both for himself and his posterity, that they should receive a liberal treatment... Sangsapurba agreed to these conditions, but he requested, in his turn, that the descendants of Damang Lebar Dawn should never move any treasonable practices against his descendants... From this condition it is that none of the Malay rajas ever expose their Malay subjects to disgrace or shame; they never bind them, nor hang them, nor give them opprobrious language; for whenever a raja exposes his subjects to disgrace, it is the certain token of the destruction of his country; hence also it is, that none of the Malay race ever engage in rebellion, or turn their faces

from their own rajas, even though their conduct be bad, and their proceedings tyrannical.⁸²

This event attracted the deference of the distant ruler of China. 'It was now noised all over the world, that the descendant of Raja Secander Zulkarneini, of the race of Hindostan, had descended on the mountain Sagantang Maha Miru, and was now in the land of Palembang.'⁸³ The process repeats as Bichitram Shah travels to 'Tanjong Pura', where he extended his reverent rule and attracted the deference of the Majapahit ruler. Bichitram Shah then sailed to the 'straights of Sambor' and 'Lingga', where again he extended his rule and attracted the deference of the female ruler of 'Bentan'. At 'Bentan' he marries his son, Sang Nila Utama, to that queen's daughter. Subsequently he travelled to 'Ruco', where from the vantage point of a high hill he observes the 'river of Cuantan' and 'ascended high up the river Cuantan, and... arrived at Menangcabow'.⁸⁴ There too he extended his rule, 'and of him are descended all the generations of the rajas of Pagaroyung unto this day.' The cycle of discovery and diplomacy continues in chapter three through Bichitram Shah's son. From 'Bentan', Sang Nila Utama travels to 'Tanjong Bemban', where from a high vantage point he observes the white 'sands of the extensive country of Tamasak'. He sails there 'to form a settlement in the country of Tamasak... and thus Sang Nila Utama settled in the country of Tamasak, named it Singhapura, and reigned over it'.⁸⁵

⁸² Leyden, *Sajarah Malayu*, 26-27.

⁸³ Leyden, *Sajarah Malayu*, 30.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.



Raffles's Malay Commonwealth
 Locations in the Narrative of the Sajahar Malayu

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Figure 3. Map of the locations of Bichitram Shah's cycle of discovery and diplomacy in the 2nd Annal. (A) Segantang Mahameru (Mount Dempo) & Passumah Country, (B) Palembang, (C) Tanjong Pura (Bangka), (D) Lingga, (E) Banten (Riau/Bintang), (F) Ruco (Rukan islets, Dryon islands), (G) Minangkabau Country (Suruasa, Pagaruyung), (H) Tanjong Bemban (Batam), (I) Tamasek (Singapore).

The cycle of discovery and diplomacy, it seemed, signified the self-realisation by a native people of their consciousness and character, and led in turn to a form of kingship, governance, and peace. Historians have never apprehended the value which this significance must carry with Raffles. Raffles in fact reproduced this narrative, from the line of descent to Bichitram Shah to Sang Nila Utama's founding of Singapore (i.e. the first, second, and third annals), in his *History of Java*, as a contrast to the tradition of the Javanese origin. In rousing the native and vulgar consciousness of the common people and drawing the friendship of foreign rulers, the cycle of discovery and diplomacy had effected the governance (*kerajaan*) of the population and harmony (*mashyur*) with other kingdoms. This *pax et concord* led to the rise and prosperity of the native people – subsequently, the extraneous ideas and forms of *libertas et imperium* created discord and dissension, and caused the fall and enslavement of the native people.

Bichitram Shah's discovery and diplomacy had proceeded in two phases and followed a common pattern. The first phase began at the mountain source of the 'river named Sungey Malayu' (Malayu river) which falls into the 'Muartatang' river (Muara Tatang) that flows to Palembang: this was the sacred mountain origin of the Malay people, Siguntang Mahameru. The second phase began at the sacred mountain origin of the Minangkabau people, Pagaruyung, from where the Kuantan river flowed to the Riau plains and spilled into the Riau islands. Siguntang Mahameru had associated Bichitram Shah with the semi-divine right of kingship which the people of Palembang ascribed to the place. Minangkabau associated him with the semi-divine right of kingship which was ascribed to the place. In each phase, Bichitram Shah's governance repeated the social contract with Demang Lebar Dawn: the people of a place invited him to settle a new country (*negeri*) there which consequently became the resort of more people. In the

first phase, this occurred at Palembang and ‘Tanjong Pura’ (Bangka). In the second phase, it occurred at Pagaruyung. Bichitram Shah’s narrative ended at Pagaruyung, and it resumed with Sang Nila Utama. For his *negeri*, out of all the Riau islands mentioned in the narrative – ‘Lingga’, ‘Bentan’ (Bintang and its port, Riau), ‘Ruco’ (the Rukan islets in the Dryon/Durian group of islands), ‘Tanjong Bemban’ (Batam), and ‘Tamasak’ (Singapore) – Sang Nila Utama chose Singapore.⁸⁶ But at Singapore, the form of kingship also ended: rather than being revered for his association with an ancient homeland, Sang Nila Utama was permitted to settle a country there by a mythical lion figure and after he had thrown his diadem overboard during a storm at the Straits of Singapore.

Remarkably, these phases of discovery and diplomacy were re-enacted by Raffles and, initially, for the same reasons. Immediately upon arriving at Bencoolen from England at the end of March 1818, Raffles set off on an expedition in May to the ‘Passumah country’ (Pasemah or Besemah) which surrounds the primeval village of Pagaralam, and is located at the foot of Mount Dempo, the mystical peak that was Siguntang Mahameru. This trip is more famous to posterity for the discovery of the *Rafflesia Arnoldi* plant than anything else, but for Raffles, he was taking a step back into Malay folk legend:

We proceeded to Tanjung Alem (the point of the world,) another village in the Passumah country, which we reached in about six hours’ walk, through one of the finest countries in the world, having before us nearly the whole way the volcanic mountain called Gunung Dempu, from which the smoke issued in large

⁸⁶ See Thomas Braddell, ‘Abstract of the Sijara Malayu or Malayan Annals with Notes, 2nd Annal’, in *The Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, Vol 5 (Singapore: G.M. Frederick, 1851), 173-179.

volumes... During our stay at Tanjung Alam, the Chiefs entered into a treaty, by which they placed themselves under the protection of the British Government...⁸⁷

Sophia Raffles, for whom the expedition was her first excursion into the Sumatran country, gave more revealing account. 'The pleasure of this journey was great to Sir Stamford, as it opened to him a field of future usefulness,' she wrote. This 'usefulness' derived from the relations which Raffles cultivated with the native people, in much the same manner of relations that Bichitram Shah had cultivated with Chief Damang Lebar Dawn and the Malays of Palembang:

One old Chief, on taking leave, actually fell on his neck and wept; and soon after walked the whole way from Tanjungalum, the most distant place visited, to see him again at Bencoolen. Such simple uncivilised people are soon won by kindness; they are like children, easy to lead, hard to drive. It was Sir Stamford's extreme simplicity of mind and manners that rendered him so peculiarly attractive to them, as they are always ready to be kind and attentive, provided they meet with encouragement and sympathy...⁸⁸

Sophia Raffles's description of the Besemah Malay should be read in the nativist context understood by Leyden and the Scottish School: as a common or vulgar folk who thought freely by their native instincts, who acted freely by their native will, and were untainted by the conventions of civilised society which subjected them to 'those starts of passion so common to more civilized nations'. Indeed, the Besemah was compared to the Scottish Highlander by Malay Raffles's Resident at Manna (south of Bencoolen).⁸⁹ This native consciousness of the Malay, Raffles sought to protect and galvanise, and to this end he adopted the *Sajarah's* account of Bichitram Shah's social contract with Chief Damang Lebar Dawn and the Malays of Palembang. 'Every thing having

⁸⁷ Raffles to Duchess of Somerset, 11 July 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 318.

⁸⁸ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 321.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 334.

succeeded in Pasumah to my wishes, a treaty of friendship and alliance was entered into,' Raffles later wrote.⁹⁰ Consequently, in June 1818, he sent a 'special mission' to Palembang to support the ruler whom he had put on the throne through a military action back in 1812. That client sultan had ceded to the Raffles's Government of Java the islands of Bangka and Billiton, and Raffles's mission was intended to reaffirm that agreement with his Government of Bencoolen and the authority which he now acquired over the ancient homeland of the Malays of Palembang.

Indeed, Palembang and Bangka had long attracted Raffles's interest. It was there where he had, to Leyden's consternation, focused his energies in early 1811 as Agent to the Governor-General to the Malay States. Bangka, in particular, featured prominently in Raffles's reports to Minto with respect to its vast tin deposits. In 1812, he in fact commissioned a survey of the island along the very same lines as the survey which Minto had commissioned for Java under Colin Mackenzie.⁹¹ For Raffles, Bangka was the ideal site for the Malay capital, not only carrying weight to the Malay ear, but also commanding its own abundant supply of the commodity money that was expected to cultivate a commission-commerce among the native traders of the archipelago.

Raffles's mission, however, was foiled by a Dutch force led by none other than Herman Muntinghe, now Dutch Commissioner of Palembang and Bangka, who intercepted Raffles's envoy, Francis Salmond, and placed the original sultan back on the Palembang throne.⁹² This debacle continued until August, and Raffles eventually published an account of it as a 'Protest' against the Netherlands, an account which

⁹⁰ Raffles to Sir Harry Inglis, 12 June 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 387.

⁹¹ The survey was largely conducted by Dr Thomas Horsfield. For his personal account, see Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 605-613.

⁹² For a summary of the entire story, see Ahmat Adam's introduction to and notes on the Palembang Letters in Stamford Raffles, *Letters of Sincerity*, 227-276.

Canning was forced publicly to deny and denounce.⁹³ In July 1818, meanwhile, he set off on another expedition this time to Padang, which he held as a dependency of Bencoolen, and thence to Pagaruyung, the ancient homeland of the Minangkabau people ‘in that part of the country usually called *K’uantan*, near which the Sultan of Pagaruyong has recently fixed his residence.’⁹⁴ Again, Sophia Raffles’s account revealed his true reasons for the journey:

Sir Stamford embarked from Bencoolen to visit Padang, and if possible to obtain some information regarding the situation and circumstances of the ancient Malay city of Menangkabu, which, from his love of Eastern literature, was an object of great interest to him... The capital of Menangkabu, the jurisdiction of which in ancient times extended over the whole of Sumatra, was understood to be situated about eighty miles inland of Padang... From his observations, and the information he collected at Padang, Sir Stamford was led to anticipate that in this inland government, whence all the Malayan states acknowledge to have derived their power, much civilisation was to be discovered.⁹⁵

Raffles’s account of the journey was more emotional this time, for, unlike in Besemah, he found the ancient Minangkabau towns in ruins and the native people seemingly bereft of their original character. This was the result of their proselytization to the Wahhabi creed brought about by the cleric, Tuanku Pasaman, and his violent upheaval of *Adat*, or Minangkabau custom including Minangkabau kingship, in what was known as the Padri War. No longer was there a Sultan of Pagaruyung to whom Raffles had hoped to extend, as with the Sultan of Palembang, patronage and protection:

⁹³ Stamford Raffles, ‘Protest of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, lieutenant-governor of Fort Marlborough, against the aggressions of the Dutch in the Malayan Archipelago’, *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1819* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1820), 216-232.

⁹⁴ Raffles to Marsden, 13 February 1820, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 429.

⁹⁵ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 340.

‘the Prince, no longer able to make a stand against the oppressor, had fled to a distant retreat’.⁹⁶ Raffles instead met his daughter:

We... reached Suruasa, the second city of the Menangkabu country, and in the immediate vicinity of Pageruyong... it was evident we were approaching the vicinity of some place of importance: but, alas! little was left for our curiosity but the wreck of what had once been great and populous. The waringin trees, which shaded and added solemnity to the palace, were yet standing in all their majesty. The fruit-trees, and particularly the cocoa-nut, marked the distant boundaries of this once extensive city; but the rank grass had usurped the halls of the palace, and scarce was the thatch of the peasant to be found... On our arrival at Suruasa we were conducted to the best dwelling which the place now afforded... Here we were introduced to the *Tuan Gadis*, or Virgin Queen, who administered the country. We were received with all the satisfaction and kindness that could be expected. It was a scene which made me melancholy, and I will not attempt to describe it.⁹⁷

Yet Raffles took away far more than he expected from this expedition. The sublime beauty of the Minangkabau homeland had struck him in a way reminiscent of the awe which affected those travellers who had ventured into the Scottish highlands in search of Ossian. He seems at this time to have been converted to Marsden’s theory that the Minangkabau were the forebears of the Malays in the Malay Peninsula, a theory which Leyden had rejected.⁹⁸ In the Minangkabau homeland, Raffles became convinced that he had located the origin of the Malay race. ‘The extensive population and high state of cultivation by which we were surrounded,’ he wrote, ‘seemed to confirm the opinion I had always formed, and even publicly maintained, as you may see in my History of Java, that the Malayan empire was not of recent origin, and that in its zenith

⁹⁶ Raffles to Duchess of Somerest, 10 September 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 360.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 357-358.

⁹⁸ ‘The *Menangkábow race*, who seem at an early period to have ruled the whole island of *Sumatra*, whose chief assumes the name of MAHA’ RA’JA’ of RA’JA’S, and derives his origin from *Lankápura*, speak a dialect of *Malayu*, which differs considerably from that of the peninsula; but which seems, as far as I can judge, to coincide in many respects with the *Jawa* or *Javanese* language. The race have probably derived their origin from *Lankápura* in *Java*.’ Leyden, *Indo-Chinese Nations*, 165.

it was of comparative rank, if not the rival and contemporary of the Javan.⁹⁹ This association of the Minangkabau homeland with the Malayan empire conferred a similar remit as that which was conferred by the authority of Siguntang Mahameru over Palembang and Bangka:

The whole country, from Pageruyong as far as the eye could distinctly trace, was one continued scene of cultivation, interspersed with innumerable towns and villages, shaded by the cocoa-nut and other fruit-trees. I may safely say, that this view equalled any thing I ever saw in Java; the scenery is more majestic and grand, population equally dense, cultivation equally rich. In a comparison with the plain of Matarun, the richest part of Java, I think it would rise. Here, then, for the first time, was I able to trace the source of that power, the origin of that nation, so extensively scattered over the Eastern Archipelago.¹⁰⁰

What transpired from Raffles's expedition was an assembly, or *thing*, that he was able to convene with the 'hundreds' of Minangkabau chiefs of 'the *Tigas-blas Cotas*, or *Thirteen Confederate Towns*', which lay between Padang and Pagaruyung. In this assembly, Raffles secured from the Minangkabau people a letter to George III which recognised the King of England as their protector. 'They accordingly assembled in the vicinity of the Bali, or town-hall; and having formed a circle, in which a place was reserved for me, I took my seat with all the state which circumstances admitted,' related Raffles.¹⁰¹ 'A letter was then written to the King of England, and signed by the principal Chiefs; and other agreements, of a political nature, entered into.' The parallel between this event and the *Sajarah*'s narrative of Bichitram Shah is uncanny: 'then all the chief men of Menangabow consulted about appointing him their raja, since they had none... Then all the people of Cuantan appointed Sangsapurba their raja, and he was

⁹⁹ Raffles to Duchess of Somerest, 10 September 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 358.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

established raja of Menangkabow'.¹⁰² Now Protector of the Minangkabau, Raffles considered himself licensed to parley with the Malay rulers of the Riau islands.

Hastings' Memorandum

As much as Raffles's writings have led historians to believe that his expeditions to the Sumatran interior between May and July 1818 were the spontaneous curiosity of the anthropologist, they were not. Raffles's missions to Siguntang Mahameru and Pagaruyung were the deliberate measures of the last reformer-critic from Minto's 1811 Java Expedition to salvage its legacy of moral order and native independence from the Dutch reconsolidation of their former East Indian empire. On 14 April 1818, in a private letter, Raffles outlined, rather prophetically, the end objective to which he was aiming:

It is impossible not to foresee, that... Java must eventually either become independant of European authority, or, on some future occasion of hostilities, again fall under the dominion of the English. The seeds of independence have been too generally sown, and the principles of the British administration too deeply rooted, to be eradicated by a despotic order [that was the Dutch policy]. In such an event, calculating upon the bare possibility of its occurrence, fifty or a hundred years hence, we shall equally feel the advantage of the measures I have now suggested. We shall not make any extensive outlay; our object is merely to keep a footing sufficient for general commercial purposes during peace, but which may, if necessary, be found equally convenient for political purposes during war.¹⁰³

The 'footing' which Raffles referred to in this letter was first suggested in the paper Raffles submitted to Canning in October 1817, *On British Interests in the Eastern Archipelago*, just prior to his departure from England. Raffles had proposed to establish a commercial 'station' either at Bangka or, failing that, Bintang/Riau, which since 1790

¹⁰² Leyden, *Sajarah Malayu*, 38-39.

¹⁰³ Raffles to unknown correspondent, probably Peter Auber, 14 April 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 310.

had emerged as the region's premier port. This singular 'station' was essentially Raffles's Malay capital, but for the benefit of his superiors, Raffles ostensibly argued for the necessity of a free trade port, one which was anchored in a triangular network to the Company's possessions in Bencoolen and Penang. In April 1818, when he had settled his government in Bencoolen, Raffles began to expound the details of this station and its triangular scheme. Significantly, and crucially, the station was no longer specifically Bangka or Riau, but rather it 'would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bintang.' Meanwhile, another 'line of stations' was ambitiously extended northward from Bencoolen to Aceh,¹⁰⁴ and southward from Bencoolen to Semangka Bay.¹⁰⁵

This 'line', which stretched across the entire western seaboard of Sumatra, was effectively Raffles's version of Leyden's 'arch', at the focal point of which would sit his Malay capital. From the Malay and Minangkabau homelands that populated Raffles's arch, would spring the persons and property to freely commune, engage, and exchange at the Malay capital. Interestingly, the triangle which was traced out by this scheme also incorporated into it the Portuguese and Dutch strategies of fortification from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Aceh and Penang in the north, with Simangka Bay in the south, were expected to secure the seagoing routes leading to and from the Malay capital in 'the neighbourhood of Bintang', for much the same reasons by which Aceh, Pegu, and Banten had once been thought to secure the routes to and from Malacca or Johor-Singapore.

Raffles appeared to have drawn up these plans toward the end of April. At the beginning of May 1818, before he set off into the Pasumah country, he wrote to Hastings seeking an interview. Hastings' reply arrived at the end of July, when Raffles

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Raffles to Marsden, 7 April 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 293.

had just returned from Pagaruyung. But by this time, both Palembang and Bangka were lost to the Dutch. Even Riau, Raffles suspected, was already visited by the Dutch. ‘The Dutch may be before-hand with us at Rhio – they took possession of Pontiano and Malacca in July and August last; and have been bad politicians if they have so long left Rhio open to us,’ he later wrote to Marsden.¹⁰⁶ In fact, Raffles’s own seat of government, Bencoolen, was also insecure in April: ‘It had gone abroad that the Dutch Commissioners have some idea of obtaining Bencoolen in exchange for Malacca, and to make the equator the boundary between the Dutch and the English possessions’.¹⁰⁷

Hastings confirmed this idea when Raffles finally met him at Calcutta in October 1818.¹⁰⁸ What prospect Raffles had entertained of making the latitude of Biliton the boundary between the Dutch and English possessions – in effect, putting Sumatra under British protection and leaving Java and the Moluccas to the Dutch – went up in smoke. Raffles’s ‘line of stations’ had to be abandoned. Yet Raffles hung on in Calcutta for a second month, during which time he convinced Hastings to pursue his agenda of the singular ‘station’. The result was a memorandum by the Governor-General dated 28 November 1818, which instructed Raffles to secure the ‘free passage of the Straits of Malacca’ by negotiating for a ‘proposed arrangement at Acheen’ and establishing ‘a Station beyond Malacca, such as may command the southern entrance of those Straits.’ Hastings’ memorandum stipulated the location for this station at the ‘Port of Rhio’, which, lying ‘just beyond the entrance of the Straits, exactly in the track of shipping passing in or out of them, enables it effectually to command both the Straits of Malacca and of Sincapore.’¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Raffles to Marsden, 14 November 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 371.

¹⁰⁷ Raffles, 14 April 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 308.

¹⁰⁸ Raffles to Marsden, 16 October 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 369.

¹⁰⁹ John Adam to Raffles, 28 November 1818, Boulger, *Life of Stamford Raffles*, 298-301.

From Hastings' memorandum thus commenced the historical theme of the two 'gates' to the South China Sea: one is the Straits of Malacca, the other is the Straits of Sunda. A British station at a strategic spot hence gave Britain control of one gate at least: the Straits of Malacca. This reasoning originated with James Horsburgh, Raffles's surveyor of Bangka,¹¹⁰ and first appeared in Sophia Raffles's *Memoir*. It was influential in the colonial literature and continued to appear in the 1950-60s in the histories of D.G.E. Hall and Maurice Collis.¹¹¹ From the standpoint of the Company Indiamen and British Country traders, all of whom depended on free passage and access to the China market, it was a sensible strategy. From the standpoint of the Malay Commonwealth, however, it only painted half the picture. In his Malacca paper and *History of Java*, Raffles had understood the seagoing routes to and from the archipelago approach Malacca from the south at the Sabam Straits, Dryon Straits, and Singapore Straits. The Straits of Malacca, which approached Penang and Aceh, was significant only north of Malacca. But even where the intercontinental trade was concerned, Raffles understood that it was not the Malacca Straits but the Sunda Straits 'through which all the navigation of eastern and western India used to pass, previous to the founding of Malacca'.

It was during his two month stay at Calcutta when Raffles, his plan to support his Malay capital from the Sumatran seaboard having been rejected by Hastings, decided that if the Malay capital was to materialise at all, then it had to be supported by Free Trade. In his April 14th letter, he had noted how 'the Commanders of the country ships look to me to protect their interests, and even to support the dignity of the British flag,' while 'the native Chiefs of the independent ports have looked in vain for the protection of the English; they feel themselves deserted by us, know not how to act, and

¹¹⁰ Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 401.

¹¹¹ D.G.E. Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, 539-540. Maurice Collis, *Raffles* (London: Faber, 1966).

from necessity are gradually falling under the influence of our rivals.’ It was at this period, from April to November, 1818, that Raffles began to develop his three objectives for the ‘station’. Those objectives – Malay trade, China trade, naval station – I have discussed in chapter one. Now, where the China trade was concerned, Riau’s existing and thriving port was in fact the logical choice for the British country trader’s transit and re-export facility. Riau, linking with Malacca (now expected to be exchanged for Bencoolen), Penang, where the Company maintained its own facility, and Aceh, certainly secured the Straits of Malacca as a British sea. Yet curiously, as we saw, since April 1818 Raffles no longer considered Riau/Bintang for his ‘station’.

Interestingly, William Farquhar, the former Resident of Malacca and Raffles’s old friend, had under the jurisdiction of the Penang government negotiated a commercial treaty with Riau on 19 August 1818. It was the only successful outcome of a mission to Pontianak, Siak, Lingga, and Riau in July and August, 1818. Riau’s treaty with the Dutch was concluded on 26 November 1818, two days before Hastings’ memorandum. News of the Dutch treaty had not yet reached the British, but Farquhar’s treaty was known to Raffles and the Calcutta government and it in fact featured critically in Hastings’ memorandum. In the memorandum, it was argued that Farquhar’s treaty was insufficient, that ‘although those engagements provide for the freedom and security of our commercial interests, they do not go to the exclusion of the political ascendancy of the Dutch, which, if once established, would speedily be followed by the annihilation of the independence of the Native Government, and consequently of our commercial privileges.’ For this reason, a ‘British Post’ at Riau was necessary to guarantee the observance of Farquhar’s treaty.

Surprisingly, this elaborate argument has never been questioned, and the commercial treaties pursued by the Penang governor, John Alexander Bannerman, never properly included into the context of the narrative. Historians have never considered that, where the British country trader's objective of the China market was concerned, a Dutch-occupied Riau did not imply that it would be closed to the British Country trader, or if it was closed, that the country trader would still be able to call at Aceh or, as was now expected, Malacca. Indeed, any 'convenient port', even 'a British consulate in Java', had, as we saw in chapter one, satisfied Britain's free trade function for the Committee on Foreign Trade. As I have stated, the interests of the British country trade and the Dutch state monopoly did not necessarily clash. It appears that at the same time that Raffles was writing to Hastings for an interview for his Sumatran 'line of stations', Bannerman also approached Hastings but for free trade agreements in the Straits of Malacca – the policy to secure its gates at Aceh and Riau was possibly conceived by Bannerman. Hastings approved Bannerman's proposal immediately, no less because it also chimed with Whitehall's changing attitude toward free trade. When Raffles arrived at Calcutta on 29 September 1818, he thus cut a sorry figure. The free traders – in particular the Anglo-Indian merchants – were ascendant and triumphant. Yet, within two months, Raffles's fortunes completely reversed. In Hastings' memorandum, not only was Farquhar's treaty deemed insufficient, but jurisdiction over the British Post was conspicuously withdrawn from Bannerman and handed to Raffles.

It is the intention and desire of his lordship to consider Acheen, and all the interests within the Straits of Malacca, under the immediate superintendence of the Government of Penang, and to place our relations with Rhio and Lingen, and the general management of our interests beyond the Straits of Malacca, under your immediate control as Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen.

Hastings' memorandum thus represented a sudden change of policy – and of heart – which placed the agenda of the British reformer-critic to salvage the 'seeds of independence... and the principles of the British administration' that have been so painstakingly sown by his predecessor squarely back on the table. The case made out against Farquhar's treaty in Hastings' memorandum served a different objective from British free trade. It aimed to preserve the 'independence of the Native Government' at Rhio or indeed the 'independence of any of the Malay states'. This political consideration was argued to be an essential condition 'of our commercial privileges', and in turn rendered the 'necessity of supporting the arrangements made with those states, by measures of a different character' from Farquhar's treaty. Such measures were invariably 'for permanently establishing the British interests at that port'. As much as this argument might be thought justified with respect to the British Country trade, it actually laid the ground for establishing the Malay capital of the Malay Commonwealth. And, as mentioned, since April 1818 Raffles no longer considered Riau for its site. His actual choice, Raffles kept very close to his chest. But its provision was subtly weaved into Hastings' memorandum through a caveat: that a British Post at Riau was to go ahead only 'in the event... of the Dutch not having preoccupied Rhio,' and that Hastings' 'instructions are framed under an impression that the Dutch have not formed any establishment at Rhio.'

Intriguingly, the person who issued the Governor-General's memorandum was John Adam, Chief Secretary to Government, and Minto's former Military Secretary and Political Secretary. Adam was one of four central figures in Minto's government – the others being Minto's Chief Secretary, Neil Benjamin Edmonstone, Minto's Revenue Secretary, George Dowdeswell, and Minto's Public Secretary, Charles Milner Ricketts – who in 1811 had organised and supervised the entire communications, preparations,

and finance for Minto's Java Expedition. Edmonstone rose to Supreme Councillor and member of the Court of Directors, and in those capacities had defended Raffles during the tribunal that investigated Gillespie's charges against Raffles. In November 1818, Dowdeswell and Ricketts sat in the Supreme Council, and in January 1819 Rickett vacated his seat for Adam. Now, John Palmer, the preeminent Anglo-Indian capitalist, alleged at the time that Raffles had drafted Hastings' memorandum himself.¹¹² Considering that Minto's men still held the reins of government at Calcutta, Palmer's allegation is not unfounded. Indeed, Adam (and Ricketts) appeared to have been complicit in bringing Hastings around to Raffles's cause, because on 5 December 1818 – probably upon receiving unconfirmed reports of a Dutch treaty at Riau – Adam immediately produced the supplement to Hastings' memorandum which stipulated for the very first time the object of Johore-Singapore.

From his experience at Palembang and Bangka from June 1818, Raffles anticipated that it was only a matter of time before the Dutch Commissioner will land at Riau. As he confided to Marsden, almost expectantly, on 16 November, twelve days before Hastings' memorandum: 'The Dutch may be before-hand with us at Rhio... and have been bad politicians if they have so long left Rhio open to us.'¹¹³ In retrospect, the Dutch treaty had been critical to Raffles's calculations, because it (1) made Farquhar's treaty redundant, (2) vindicated Raffles's policy, (3) refuted Bannerman's policy, and (4) activated the caveat that eliminated Riau as the option for the British Post. Indeed, that the Dutch 'have so long left Rhio open to' the British suggests that a game was afoot, with each side waiting for the other to make the first move in order to respond tactically. But the longer this waiting game persisted, Raffles's window of opportunity

¹¹² Bastin, *Raffles and Hastings*, 27. The Anglo-Indian moneyed interest generally looked to the Penang government to further their influence in the East Indies. William Petrie, whose removal by Minto and Grant from Madras was discussed in chapter three, was Bannerman's predecessor as Governor of Penang.

¹¹³ Raffles to Marsden, 14 November 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 371.

narrowed. Ironically, if Bannerman had not sent Farquhar to Riau when he did, and the Dutch had not moved in response on that port, there will be no grounds for Raffles's argument on the 'necessity of supporting the arrangements made with those states' with a permanent establishment. Bannerman's policy of free trade agreements would have retained the upper hand with Hastings, and if the Dutch secured Riau eventually, an alternative port would have been found.

Founding Singapore

Raffles did not want Riau for his Malay capital. His early experience with the Raja Muda's intransigence toward the problem of piracy in 1811 was probably still fresh in his mind.¹¹⁴ The actual reason, however, revolved upon the question of heritage and prestige. But until the Dutch threw down the gauntlet at Riau on 28 November 1811, those issues would not be obvious to the historian.

Earlier we noted how Raffles had stated in his letter of 14 April 1818, that 'unless I succeed in obtaining a position in the straits of Sunda, we have no alternative but to fix it in the most advantageous situation we can find within the Archipelago; this would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bintang.' The initial position in the Sunda Straits referred to Bangka, but 'if this should be found inadequate, [then he had] to select some other more advantageous situation.' In the same letter Raffles stated Riau a second time but again he was not specific: instead, he loosely referred to 'another station at Rhio or its vicinity'. As an active and the premier port at that time, Riau was naturally the object in view in the considerations of the free traders; but it is also true that precisely because it was an active and the premier port at that time, Riau was also a reference for its 'neighbourhood' or 'vicinity' as the object in view. Raffles's references

¹¹⁴ Raffles to Raja Muda of Riau, 6 March 1811, Stamford Raffles, *Letters of Sincerity*, 112-3.

to Riau fell under the latter case. As we saw with Greig's chart, Riau's neighbourhood and vicinity were nebulously-defined on either side of the tract marked by Minto's fleet through the Straits of Singapore. What other information that Raffles had possessed of the area came from the two century-old *Decadas*, and these were the hoary descriptions of the historic places that gave their names to the channels there: Johore and Singapore. Now, it is precisely because Adam's supplement orders of December 5th had so distinctly captured the uncertainty rendered by the datedness of those descriptions, that we can surmise that his stipulation of Johor had originated with Raffles, and was thus not accidental or an expedient, but deliberate and predetermined.

The position of Johor renders it nearly, or perhaps entirely, as convenient a post for our purpose as Rhio; but the imperfect information possessed by the Government, both of the local circumstances of the town and harbour and the condition and relations of the State of Johor... be incumbent on us... to act with caution and circumspection before we enter into any engagements with a State of which we know so little as Johor. It will be necessary therefore, in any event, to make a previous inquiry with a view to obtain correct information on... the local capabilities of Johor for a British port... the extent and capacity of the harbour, means of supply, and other points of this nature.¹¹⁵

With Adam's supplement orders in hand and the true object of Johore-Singapore out in the open, Raffles subsequently enthused about its potential. We have noted his *Decadas*-esque references to the anchorage at Sentosa and at the Johore Straits and Johore River in his January 16th letter to Adam. Noted also was his letter to Marsden of 12 December on the proposed measures in Johore and 'the site of the ancient city of Singapura.' On returning to Penang on 29 December 1818, Raffles wrote to Bannerman that 'the island of Singapore, or the Districts of Old Johore, appear to me to possess peculiar and great advantages in this respect.' Reporting to Hastings on 8 January, he

¹¹⁵ John Adam to Raffles, 5 December 1818, Boulger, *Life of Stamford Raffles*, 298-301.

again emphasised the ‘value & importance of the Island of Sincapore which commands Johor’.¹¹⁶ All these references to Johore-Singapore by Raffles in support of Adam’s orders, before actually having travelled there, indicate prior knowledge, intent, and planning. Johore-Singapore was already fixed in Raffles’s mind as the site of his Malay capital before Hastings’ memorandum was issued. This decision was probably made at the end of April 1818, when Raffles had settled in Bencoolen, taken stock of the developments in the region, and realised that he had lost the initiative at Bangka. In another private letter on 5 May, he wrote:

When I look around... in the instance of Palembang, I find the Dutch choose to re-instate the man on the throne who has been guilty of treacherously murdering, in cool blood, the Dutch factory at that station [in 1811], rather than permit the Sultan whom the English raised [in 1812], in consequence of the atrocity of his predecessor, to continue on the throne... I likewise discover that they lay claim to all the territory in the Lampong country, and oppose our forming any settlement in Samangka Bay, for the purpose of affording succour or refreshment to our ships passing through the Straits of Sunda; and that they even object to the continuance of the post station between Java and Sumatra.¹¹⁷

It might seem that his plans were being leaked to the Dutch, or, like Muntinghe at Palembang, they were able to predict and pre-empt his actions. Johore-Singapore was thus a tightly-held secret, but Raffles’s consequent expeditions to Siguntang Mahameru and Pagaruyung should have made it obvious to both his Dutch and British rivals (and future historians) that Johore-Singapore was the true end object of his labours. But these signs they missed. Strategy of location described the political contest which the Dutch Commissioners, British free traders, and Anglo-Indian merchants waged among themselves and with Raffles. Raffles, on the other hand, considered his venture to involve and attract a wider audience: the Malays. Topmost of all his calculations was

¹¹⁶ Raffles to Hastings, 8 January 1819, John Bastin, *Raffles and Hastings*, 32-35.

¹¹⁷ Raffles, probably to Peter Auber, 5 May 1818, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 311.

the pre-eminence of the name of the Malay capital. It had to carry ‘more weight to a Malay ear than any new settlement, whatever its importance’, such that ‘this pre-eminence ensures constant respect from the traders to and from the neighbouring ports’.

Riau was at the time a Bugis kingdom. At the time of Bichitram Shah’s and Sang Nila Utama’s annals, Riau was a Siamese tributary. Riau was in fact passed over in the cycle of discovery and diplomacy. When he received the right of kingship at the ancient Malay homeland of Siguntang Mahameru, Bichitram Shah became ruler at Palembang and settled another new country (*negeri*) at Bangka. Subsequently, he received the right of kingship at the ancient Minangkabau homeland and became ruler of Pagaruyung, whereupon his son, Sang Nila Utama, proceeded to settle a new country at Singapore. The Malay capital was not a title to be decreed or conferred upon an existing kingdom. It had to be actively and symbolically settled as a new country, whence it would draw the respect and resort of the Malays and thus establish its population. In this respect, it was Singapore, not Riau, which carried the weight of heritage and prestige to the Malay ear. As Raffles wrote to John Adam, two weeks after landing at Singapore, ‘the views & wishes of His Lordship in Council would be more adequately fulfilled by our Establishment in a Situation which had previously acquired a name, where Commerce and population had already resorted’.¹¹⁸

Hence, ensued the events which have since been immortalised in the history. Raffles, delayed by Bannerman in Penang, surreptitiously left port on 18 January 1819 to catch up with Farquhar, whom he had sent ahead to the Straits of Singapore two days earlier. They rendezvoused at the Carimons on 27 January,¹¹⁹ before making for St

¹¹⁸ Raffles to John Adam, 13 February 1819, Bastin, *Raffles and Hastings*, 53.

¹¹⁹ The rendezvous at the Carimons has become a subject of debate as to whether Raffles had chosen the Carimons before Singapore, and of speculation that it was Farquhar and not Raffles who selected Singapore. For this debate, see Nadia Wright, *William Farquhar and Singapore: Stepping Out from*

John's Island on 28 January. On 29 January 1819, Raffles and Farquhar landed in Singapore and opened discussions with the Temenggong of the island. On 30 January, Raffles sent Farquhar to Riau to determine their claims upon Singapore vis-à-vis their relations with the Dutch and within the Johor-Lingga royal family. He then proceeded to explore the Johor Straits and Johor River. On 1 February, Tengku Hussein, the older of two claimants to the throne of Johor-Lingga, arrived from Riau and, in return for Raffles recognising his title as Sultan of Johor-Singapore, granted to Raffles the establishment of the British Post at Singapore. On 6 February 1819, the agreement was signed, and Raffles founded his Malay capital of the Malay Commonwealth.

A week earlier on 31 January, the day before Tengku Hussein's appearance, Raffles wrote to Marsden:

Here I am at Singapore, true to my word, and in the enjoyment of all the pleasure which a footing on such classic ground must inspire. The old city, and of its defences, are still to be traced, and within its ramparts the British Union waves unmolested. You are already apprised how much I have been disappointed in the necessity of foregoing all the advantages which might have resulted from my visit to Pageruyong; it did not suit the politics of Bengal that they should be followed

Raffles' Shadow (Singapore: Entrepot Publishing, 2017). John Bastin, however, has shown that 'the claim finds no support in the contemporary records, which clearly show that [Farquhar] wanted a British settlement on the Karimun Islands.' Bastin, *Raffles and Hastings*, 45. To this matter, my context that there were two objectives on the British side – Bannerman-Farquhar's free trade port and Raffles's Malay capital – offers the following explanation: that (1) Farquhar had considered the Carimons as the alternative for his failed free trading port at Riau, and (2) Raffles had not only allowed Farquhar this opportunity, but he inspected the Carimons for two reasons that were collateral to his object of the British Post at Singapore, which were (A) the strategic junction where the Straits of Malacca separated into the Sabam/Kundur Straits and Singapore Straits, and (B) as the symbolic peak from where he, like Sang Nila Utama before, would view Singapore from afar before heading there. Farquhar probably did not apprehend Raffles's broad conception of the British Post and its three objectives, understanding only the free trade objective to safeguard the China trade. This was apparent in their later disagreement over the island's administration, and also in the letter which Farquhar wrote in 1830 to the *Asiatic Journal*, upon Sophia Raffles's publication of her *Memoir*, disputing her 'having claimed the *sole* and *exclusive* merit for her husband of having established the new and thriving settlement of Singapore,' himself claiming 'that I had at least a *large share* in forming that establishment, having recommended to Government, as far back as the year 1816, the formation of some new settlement in the Straits of Malacca to the eastward of that town, and lying immediately in the track of our Indiamen and other ships engaged in the China and eastern trade'. William Farquhar, 'The Establishment of Singapore', *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia*, Vol. II (London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1830) 140-142.

up; and it is only now left for me to solicit your support in behalf of my more recent attempt to extend the British influence...

This place possesses an excellent harbour, and every thing that can be desired for a British port in the island of St. John's, which forms the south-western point of the harbour. We have commanded an intercourse with all the ships passing through the Straits of Singapore. We are within a week's sail of China, close to Siam, and in the very seat of the Malayan empire.¹²⁰

In ending this chapter, I would like to reflect a moment upon Marsden's role throughout Raffles's post-Java venture of critique. It is a topic not yet examined, but clearly Marsden took over the part of Raffles's intellectual mentor played by Leyden prior to the invasion of Java. Only Leyden and Marsden disagreed in their views of the origins of the Malay language and the Malay people, and this disagreement must inevitably manifest in Raffles's later views. Leyden's Scottish School Orientalism had conceived of a general nativism consisting in the vulgar consciousness of the common people of any part of the world. Marsden, on the other hand, had located the Malay origin in Sumatra among the Minangkabau race, which through migration had civilised its essential nature and established the ubiquitous Malay maritime societies found in the peninsula and beyond. It is not surprising that after Raffles renewed his correspondence with Marsden on 1 January 1815, his conception of the Malay can be discerned to have gradually adopted the specific monogenism of Marsden's Calcutta Orientalism.

This change in Raffles's conceptual framework affected the linguistic context by which he apprehended the *Sajarah Malayu*. Since his expeditions to the Pasumah country and Minangkabau country, the import of Siguntang Mahameru and Pagaruyung to Raffles seemed gradually to lose their signification of the ancient constitution of the Malays that was their native consciousness or common sense, and began to acquire the

¹²⁰ Raffles to Marsden, 31 January 1819, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 376.

representation of the authority and power of an ancient race. Indeed, one of the first tasks Raffles undertook after founding Singapore in 1819 was to establish a Malay College to further public inquiry into the nature of the Minangkabau Malay. It served not only to legitimise his founding of Singapore as the Malay capital of the Malay Commonwealth, but also to legitimise the British influence over the Minangkabau Malays. Certainly, even after founding Singapore, Raffles did not let up in his efforts to fulfil his 'line of stations' at the western Sumatran seaboard. Raffles's Malay College may mark the moment when the British venture of critique, finally completed through Singapore's founding, quickly faded into obsolescence and was replaced by the first glints of the imperial will.

The following passage from Raffles's Minutes during the founding of the Malay College shows how far the change in Raffles's conception of the Malay had come since his description of the Malay from 1 January 1815, quoted at the end of chapter six. It extols the virtues of a race whose enterprising character was no longer due to their native will, but to their advances in the stadal stakes from agriculture to commerce. Indeed, so extraordinary, so vast, and so valuable was this commerce that it 'must contribute to accelerate the progress of colonization' by (not the Dutch but by Raffles's old bogeymen) the Chinese. Naturally, 'a scene like this cannot be viewed with indifference by the philosophic and contemplative mind', and the remedy must be, other than protecting the Malay, to educate him to improve his nature according to those virtues that have been determined of his race.

The whole of Sumatra, at one period, was subject to the supreme power of Menangkabu, and proofs of the former grandeur and superiority of this state are still found, not only in the pompous edicts of its sovereign, and in the veneration and respect paid to the most distant branches of the family, but in the

comparatively high and improved state of cultivation of the country, and in the vestiges of antiquity which have recently been discovered in it...

It was about this latter period (1160), that a colony issued from the interior of Sumatra, and established the maritime state of Singapura at the extremity of the Malay peninsula, where a line of Hindu princes continued to reign until the establishment of Malacca and the conversion of that place in 1276. Whatever may in more remote times have been the nature of the intercourse between foreign nations and Menangkabu itself, we know that Singapura, during the period noticed, was an extensively maritime and commercial state, and that on the first arrival of the Portuguese at Malacca, that emporium embraced the largest portion of the commerce between Eastern and Western nations. It is not necessary to enter into the history of the decline and fall of the Malay states of Malacca and Acheen, or of the establishment of Johor. The maritime and commercial enterprize of the people had already spread them far and wide through the Archipelago, and the power and policy of their European visitors, by breaking down their larger settlements, contributed to scatter them still wider, and to force them to form still smaller establishments wherever they could escape their power and vigilance.¹²¹

¹²¹ 'Minutes by Sir T. Stamford Raffles, on the establishment of a Malay College at Singapore', in Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, Appendix, 23-39.

Conclusion

The Closed Sea

The appearance of the British reformer-critic in the East Indies, from the Earl of Minto's arrival in 1807 as Governor-General of Bengal until Sir Stamford Raffles's departure as Governor of Bencoolen in 1824, signalled an extraordinary event in the history of the region. Scandalised by the human condition which confronted him following the collapse of the VOC, the British reformer-critic was moved to question what had gone wrong. Drawing on an eighteenth-century political, moral, and legal discourse, he criticised what he saw as the effects of empire's failure to manage the contradiction and conflict between the 'goods of fortune' and the 'goods of the mind', between the sanctity of property and the happiness of the people. The causes for that failure, it was believed, lay with both the materialism and idealism in the commercial policy of empire. What made this event exceptional, however, was that the British reformer-critic ventured to atone for empire's failure by acting to return its policy to the wellbeing of man. In consequence, there emerged an ethics and politics which, for seventeen years, shaped British governance in the East Indies and restored to the region an order of things.

From this historical moment thus sprang the elements that would distinguish the history of the nineteenth century. Free trade, the native body politic, and finance capital defined a protean context of Britain's continued involvement in the East and, in tension with each other and with Dutch state mercantilism, led to the future inception of a

protean British empire alongside a territorial Dutch East Indies – a Dutch East Indies that was compelled a century later, and too late, to undertake an ‘ethical policy’. Yet our event was not quite the historical wellspring it appears to be. For in restoring an order of things, the British reformer-critic also happened to revive a forgotten path that once lay open but was not taken. I refer to that cusp upon which the United Provinces and the United Kingdom both stood at the dawning of the seventeenth century, when they came into their own as free states and reflected upon how their respective societies might preserve their independence and carve out their future in a world dominated by the Habsburg imperium. Those reflections are not dissimilar to the reflections of the British reformer-critic in 1807-1824, when he asked how the native societies of the East Indies might recover their self-dependence and carve out their future in a world transformed by the Dutch imperium.

That the potential unlocked by the British reformer-critic in 1807-1824 was anticipated at this earlier juncture is not unfounded: the antecedent dialectic to the eighteenth-century discourse is to be found in the early seventeenth-century writings of Francis Bacon, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, and René Descartes. But in our historical moment’s previous appearance, the potentiality afforded by the occasion was spurned when first the United Provinces and then the United Kingdom embarked upon the conquest of an empire of fortune and the domination over an empire of the mind. These events consequently informed the discourse which provided the British reformer-critic’s context of critique. By this account, the Dutch and the English had departed from the historical path and followed a divergent road illuminated by new ideas about nature, morality, law, society, and property. Through their newly-chartered East India Companies, they led the East Indies and India respectively down an abyss of debt and slavery, and led themselves in a ruinous cycle of corruption and decline. When the

British reformer-critic arrived at the East Indies in the wake of the VOC's demise, he quickly saw in the vacuum an opportunity to realise the squandered potentiality from two centuries before. In this sense, the historical moment of 1807-1824 was a reset of the context of empire, as it were; a second chance at making the empire of man.

Mare Liberum and Mare Clausum

But what was this squandered potentiality? According to Raffles's *History of Java*, it was the underlying premise for the lost Dutch centuries. What the Dutch had unforgivably done was to divert the East Indies from the continuity that had joined Portuguese Malacca's *Pax Iberica* to the Malacca Sultanate and the Srivijaya thalassocracy. The Portuguese peace was not so much a peace than the inheritance of an order of discovery and diplomacy that had presided over the East Indies society for nearly a millennium. Within this Portuguese-Asiatic order was sustained the free exchanges and communication between individuals and kingdoms which the historian George Coedès in the twentieth century called 'interchange',¹ and the Spanish scholastic theologian, Francisco de Vitoria, in the sixteenth century conceived as the right to commune, or *ius communicationis*. These exchanges identified the East Indies as a maritime commonwealth of sorts.

To this commonwealth, Raffles recorded the arrival of the Dutch in 1595 and their establishing themselves at Banten.² Following suit were the English in 1602, also

¹ George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 26.

² 'The first voyage made by the Dutch was in 1595, in which year their first fleet, under the command of Houtman (who had been previously employed by the Portuguese in the East India service), sailed direct to Bantam. At this period the Portuguese were at war with the king of Bantam, to whom Houtman offered assistance, in return for which he obtained permission to build a factory at Bantam, which was the first settlement formed by the Dutch in the East Indies. Following the example of the Dutch, the English East India Company, immediately after their incorporation by Queen Elizabeth in 1601, fitted out a fleet of four ships, the command of which was entrusted to Captain Lancaster, who sailed from London in 1602, first to *Acheen* (*Aché*) on Sumatra, where he procured part of his cargo, and entered into a treaty with the

establishing at Banten. The entry in the East Indies by two of Europe's modern sovereign states, joined in common cause of independence against the Habsburg hegemony, held out the promise for the development of the Portuguese-Asiatic order into a kind of global commonwealth, or an international society of free states. But this 'ends of empire' was doomed from the start, as the Dutch quickly turned empire into the means for wealth and power, and turned on their British ally. Both British and Dutch Companies convened for high-level talks in London and The Hague in 1613, 1615, 1619, and 1621-23, but struggled to collaborate. Meanwhile, in the East Indies their merchants descended into open hostilities and in 1623 at Ambon, VOC employees killed ten EIC employees as well as another ten Japanese and Portuguese traders.

Raffles was silent on the Amboyna massacre and the Anglo-Dutch conferences, but the clash between the two Companies' conceptions of their destinies was implied in a terse passage in his *History* which described the VOC's sudden shift to a centralised, regulated, and militarised regime.³ For all the wealth and power which the Dutch Company went on to amass in the East Indies, there would be no Dutch peace. Its rigour and rapacity eventually subjugated its erstwhile host, the independent kingdom of Banten. Again, for its ignominy this event was omitted by Raffles, but his regret is intimated when he stated that, consequently, 'in 1683, the English, who had hitherto maintained a successful rivalry with the Dutch, withdrew their establishment from *Bantam*.' Thence, the fading potential of an international society of free states between Europe and the East Indies breathed its last. Over the next century, the VOC entrenched

king, of which a copy is yet in existence. From *Acheen* he went to *Bantam*, and settled a factory there, which was the first possession of the English in the East Indies. Captain Lancaster brought home a letter from the king of Bantam to Queen Elizabeth in 1602, which is still in the state paper office.' Stamford Raffles, *History of Java*, xvi-xxii.

³ Cited in Chapter 8. 'In 1610, the first Dutch governor general, Bolt, arrived at Bantam, and finding the situation of his countrymen in that province not favourable to the establishment of a permanent settlement, removed to *Jákatra*. On the 4th of March, 1621, the name of *Batavia* was conferred upon the new establishment of the Dutch in *Jákatra*, which from that period became the capital of their East Indian empire.' Stamford Raffles, *History of Java*, xxii.

its legalist system of contracts in the region which closed it off to outsiders and closed in its population within sovereign borders.

To the British reformer-critic, the irony of these outcomes cannot be more acute. Here was the VOC, the instrument of Dutch independence and the child of Grotius, for whose freedom he had spared no effort to guarantee by law, morphing into the very oppressor which once had withheld that freedom from the Dutch people. For the consequences, Grotius, from the extremes he went, in his classic treatise *Mare Liberum* ('Free Sea', 1609), to justify the VOC's violent assertion and possession of its freedom in the high seas, bears responsibility. For the speciousness of the absolute free trade which that justification produced, again, Grotius was culpable. Nothing was more outrageous to the British reformer-critic than the twisted rationale that the native individual's subjection was a corollary necessary to the Dutchman's right of freedom. This contradiction was the outcome of the vicious cycle, of *libertas et imperium*, of abstract ideas and ideals ungrounded in reality. The philosophical ideal that is the law of nature, upon which Grotius had reasoned his rights of passage, property, and trade, had showed itself to act contrarily to reason and tyrannically to man. As David Hume said, reason is the slave of the passions. Who were the real savages in the Eastern Isles, John Leyden thus asked, the learned and civilised European or the rude and vulgar native? The international rules-based order in the high seas that was to have rationally resulted from the observance of those rights never materialised. Instead, observing those rights begat an unnatural system of monopoly and oppression.

This unnatural system was nevertheless excused by Adam Smith for being a false mode of political economy, a temporary aberration which violated the order of nature and which he termed mercantilism. But while the VOC's two-century lifespan

was impermanent, the false mercantile system it spawned and the feudal order it nourished were real and lasting. They proved more ‘natural’ than any altruistic ideal of free trade, and in no way did the Dutch Republic and the East Indies progress to the true commercial and agricultural markets that Smith had anticipated. Rather, Dutch rapacity debased a native population of its character, and native society regressed into the barbarism of piracy and slavery. We are reminded by Leyden as to why this was so:

When despondence seizes the general mass, the character of man embitters with the pain he endures; every virtue, even humanity itself, is destroyed, and society is as really dissolved as among those tribes who acknowledge no ruler... Depressed from their former glory by inveterate oppression, distrust and malevolence have eradicated the natural sense of right and wrong; the opinion of general perfidy prevails; all wish to oppress and plunder, as they have been oppressed and plundered, and consider detection as the only misfortune. A dismal uncertainty broods over life, which impairs the greatest energy of the mind, and stifles every voluntary exertion.⁴

The native people, drinking from the European merchant’s chalice, had become ‘subject to those starts of passion so common to more civilized nations.’ Against these injustices to natural society, Edmund Burke agonised and called for the ‘True Moral Equality of Mankind’. The legal, political and moral order which he believed would potentially restore this equality was already inferred in our historical moment’s previous appearance. In the 1610s, facing Grotius at the Anglo-Dutch conferences so knowledgeably as to be honoured by Grotius as the ‘Glory of the English Nation’,⁵ was the jurist and historian to whose writings Burke had owed his conception of natural rights: John Selden.⁶ In a Latin treatise entitled *Mare Clausum* (‘Closed Sea’, 1635),⁷

⁴ John Leyden, *Historical & Philosophical Sketch*, 22-23.

⁵ Ofir Haiyry, *John Selden and the Western Political Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.

⁶ See Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their origin and development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁷ *Mare Clausum* appeared in manuscript form earlier in 1617.

Selden refuted Grotius' claims in *Mare Liberum* by examining the historical and linguistic contexts of legal terms and concepts, invalidating or validating how they were used by Grotius. Selden's main target was *Mare Liberum*'s treatment of the high seas as a *tabula rasa*, a 'nonterritorial space... that should be open for the free usufruct right of all'.⁸ In response, Selden effectively put forward a pragmatic case for governance in the high seas based on the 'historicity of law, and its mutability within history'.⁹

Mare Clausum's argument, in comparison with *Mare Liberum*'s argument, has been somewhat obscured in posterity. Like in so many historic rivalries, Selden's legacy has tended to be subjected to a moral dichotomy determined by his opponent's legacy. From Grotius' ostensibly righteous and progressive standpoint, Selden's standing has appeared reactionary and, as one earnest Grotius Society vindication of Selden stated, 'less eminent than his contemporary'.¹⁰ It did not help that Selden picked a fraught title and subtitle for his work. The term 'Closed Sea' and its explanation 'Of the Dominion, or Ownership of the Sea', especially because they echo the Spanish-Portuguese dominion over the oceans, are susceptible to misconceptions of autocracy and privilege. In declaring '*That the Sea, by the Law of Nature or Nations, is not common to allmen, but capable of private Dominion or proprietie as well as the Land*', and also '*That the King of Great Britain is Lord of the Sea flowing about, as an inseparable and perpetual Appendant of the British Empire*',¹¹ Selden has been dismissed as often as accepted.

⁸ See Kathryn Milun, *The Cross-Cultural Logic of the Global Commons* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁹ Adam Sutcliffe, 'The Philosemitic Moment? Judaism and Republicanism in Seventeenth-Century European Thought', in *Philosemitism in History*, ed. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 81.

¹⁰ Eric G. M. Fletcher, 'John Selden (Author of *Mare Clausum*) and His Contribution to International Law', *Transactions of the Grotius Society Vol. 19* (1933), 1-12. Baron Fletcher gave a lecture on John Selden again in 1969, this time to the Selden Society, and which was published.

¹¹ John Selden, *The Right and Dominion of the Sea in Two Books* (London: Andrew Kembe & Edward Thomas, 1663).

However, the context of *Mare Clausum* becomes clear if we recognise Selden's language for the language of 'incipient republicanism' which it was. The fact is that no mortal ruler can ever personally preside over the oceans. No ocean can ever physically be possessed and occupied. Therefore, no individual, whether king or commoner or rebel, can without arms and forts truly exercise an idealised *de jure* right of property over the oceans. Selden's private possession of the oceans by the British monarch, on the other hand, related a *de facto* right that was tacit, accustomed, and inherent in the mariner's consciousness. Where the *de jure* right exists only in name, the *de facto* right exists out of common usage. The two rights denote two ethical paradigms: the law of nature (*ius naturalis*) and the law of peoples or nations (*ius gentium*). Both trace back to the two epistemological foundations of reason and faith during the scholastic age, and both inform the intellectual contexts of civil jurisprudence and civic humanism which, in that age, described the discourses of theology and stoicism, and in the early modern period, of law and politics.

Though their interests cross, the two rights do not at first clash. Dutch seagoing vessels entering the Portuguese estate of the Indian Ocean in the name of their free right of passage, do not actually enter because they are in possession of that right. They enter because the ocean is simply open to enter. What changes this status quo is when the *de jure* right of free passage is extended to free acts in the seas, or, in Selden's language, to the 'free use' of the seas. Such a situation arose when the Dutch, in alliance with Johor, seized the Portuguese goods-laden carrack, the *Santa Catarina*, in 1603. If this action was taken in recognition of the natural right of freedom, as the Dutch claimed, then all acts of piracy are legitimised as a natural right of freedom. The consequence is a free for all, a state of anarchy described by Hobbes as a 'war of all against all'. At issue is not whether a vessel enters a sea, but what it does in that sea. Selden, quoting Pliny,

referred to ‘the *Franks* that robbed heretofore in a Piratick manner, as well in the Mediterranean as the open Sea,’ that ‘*they made it appear by the event of their rashness, that nothing could bee shut against the desperation of Pirates, where there might bee an access for Shipping*. That is to say, the Sea was not so shut against Pirates by the *Roman* Emperor, but that they freely used depredation therein.’¹²

Over a populated space, this chaotic ‘state of nature’ may be overcome by transposing all individual rights unto a sovereign authority. But over the *tabula rasa* of the world’s oceans, no such Hobbesian governance was possible. Under the Portuguese, Malacca, Srivijaya, Ming, and Mongol sovereigns, however, a titular dominion had long provided a practicable solution against the risk of a ‘war of all against all’. To close the sea was in reality to keep it peaceful, safe, and indeed, free for all mariners. As the ancient Roman texts informed Selden: ‘*the Sea was safe, beeing secluded*’, ‘*the inner Seas are shut as in a Haven*’. Thus, Selden explained, ‘*to shut* doth not only denote the mere simple Act of shutting... but also it very often signifie's that which is consequent either to a denial of the free use of the thing shut, as also the proprietie and Dominion of him that shut's it... that is to say a free use of the world is forbidden them, or not permitted.’ In observing a sovereign possession over a particular sea, the conduct of all mariners thus regulate towards a common set of manners, or code of conduct, which effectively realised their free actions while precluding harm and injury to each other.

What *Mare Clausum* essentially depicted was a *de facto* social contract, where the mariner’s *de facto* or positive right to act in the open seas was sustained simply by a nominal recognition of the sovereign’s titular dominion. The mariner thus retained, as Hannah Arendt put it, his ‘right to have rights’. Selden’s closed sea in fact distinguished

¹² Ibid.

the primacy of *ius gentium* even in an uninhabitable and unfixable space as the sea. To use his intellectual successor, James Harrington's, dictum, *ius gentium* 'gives law to the sea'. The result was a self-sustaining *ius communicationis* and a responsible free trade, which potentially led to a maritime order and a maritime body. Extrapolated across the globe, it amounted to an international society of free states, or indeed, a universal republic. Limited to the British Isles or the Eastern Isles, it amounted to a maritime nation or commonwealth, which before the English regicide, entrusted *ius gentium* to the protection of the crown. 'And so,' Selden wrote, '*Mare Clausum* is the Sea possessed in a private manner, or so secluded both by Right and Occupation, that it ceaseth to bee common; that is, being claimed by Right of subjection.'

History, however, followed a different trajectory. Shut out of Malacca and failing to find a substitute rendezvous in the East Indies, the Dutch knuckled down to their right to act freely and in 1610 began to assert this right by enforcing their contracts with the native rulers by arms. A 'war of all against all' resulted which shattered the *Pax Iberica* and saw the rise of a mercantile power over and above the competition. The VOC, in enthusiastic pursuit of its liberty and self-preservation, battled and policed the eastern seas in order to guarantee that liberty. But this guarantee came at the expense of the liberty of other nations, and the VOC's successes emboldened a spirit of conquest and domination. As John Pocock explained, '*Libertas* had conquered an *imperium* greater than it could maintain, and the institutions of the latter had replaced those of the former.'¹³ Liberty had won for the Dutch an empire, but it was not an empire of man whose name 'carried weight to the Malay ear'. Rather, it was an empire of fortune which derived its authority by its own interpretation of the law of the sea. In the East Indies, for the next two centuries, the sea was no longer free.

¹³ Pocock, J.G.A., 'Rome: the republic as ideal and as history', in Najemy John M., ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 148.

Natural Law and the Common Law

Mare Clausum, which led to a free sea, and *Mare Liberum*, which led to a closed one, both express the contradictions that are eternally allied to the conception of liberty. *Mare Clausum*, in adhering to the historical context of the common law, extended a sovereign dominion over the seas and sustained the mariner's positive actions as a positive right. *Mare Liberum*, on the other hand, objectified liberty in the public space of the seas and invested in it the authority of *ius naturalis*. Hence, to the mariner 'the sea gives law', as it were. However, the law of the sea decrees his positive actions as a negative right, and proceeding this way in the seas effectively colonised it as public property and rewarded it to the most powerful claimant of that right.

Selden's and Grotius' treatises in fact espoused two conceptions of two republics: the Cromwellian Commonwealth and the Dutch Republic which formed in their lifetimes, and Florence and Venice which thrived before their lifetimes. Indeed, each treatise evoked both the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. *Mare Clausum's* English translator, Marchmont Nedham, was Oliver Cromwell's press agent and a notable 'Commonwealthman'. He dedicated his 1652 edition to the 'Supreme Autoritie of the Nation, the Parliament of the Common-wealth of ENGLAND', who he regarded to have inherited the British sovereignty from the Stuart monarch. There the Cromwellian yeoman, apprehending a language of virtue, saw his independence to lie in the active authority of his person and be secured in his real property of 'twenty acres of ground'. In a closed sea, this led to a positive community of free men that embraced an Atlantic commonwealth comprising Britain, Ireland, and, especially, the Thirteen Colonies. The language of jurisprudence which framed the Dutch Republic, on the other hand, rendered its individual provinces and cities exclusive in their sovereignty, but

rigorous in its exacting the productions of its client colonies in the East Indies that guaranteed that sovereignty.

Of both systems, slavery was a pillar. But each system only perceived it in the other. The British civic humanist could only see the Atlantic commonwealth's relations of dependency between individuals as what Peter Laslett has described to be the society of 'master and servant'.¹⁴ The Dutch Republic's relations of power toward other states, however, which to the Dutch was the natural outcome of their jealousy over their sovereignty, the British civic humanist saw instead to determine the power of property to command the labour of common people and subject their will unto itself. In this warped international division of labour, the distinction between the native cultivator and the fruits of his labour became blurred as those fruits, both current and future, were claimed by the Dutch as their natural exclusive property. Accordingly, in the free sea the right of property became alienated from the person and led to empires of fortune. The Dutch, by principles they nobly declared to be different from the Habsburg claim to possess the territory of the Americas as its natural exclusive property, achieved much the same subjugation of the native individual as the Spanish Conquistadors.

Lamentably, the British would follow in their footsteps. Without its lawgiver and protector, Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth was short-lived. The New Model Army of free men abandoned the Good Old Cause and restored the monarchy. The monarchy in turn quickly augmented its power by appropriating the authority of the law. Charles II ostensibly abolished the feudal tenure system: all, noted Joseph Priestley, 'except the forms of law'.¹⁵ By the law of nature, an historical vindication for the divine right of kings was advanced which challenged the historical basis of the

¹⁴ Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost, further explored* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), 2.

¹⁵ Joseph Priestley, 'Lecture XXXVI', *Lectures on History and General Policy* (Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason, 1788), 262.

common law.¹⁶ The rationale arose that ‘the laws had in the first instance been made by some man, empowered by God to do so and consequently sovereign, whose heirs were sovereign to this day’.¹⁷ Gaining currency, it gave the crown sovereign dominion and positive title over the peoples and lands of the English-speaking commonwealth. Thus surfaced *Mare Clausum*’s misshapen doppelgänger, where both people and property lost ‘the right to have rights’ in the king’s private dominion. It pledged to add Stuart Britain to the club of absolutist empires in Europe and Asia. Dismay ensued in what Charles Fox in his *History of the Reign of James II* termed an ‘æra of good laws and of bad government’, of ‘the inefficacy of human laws, and the imperfection of human constitutions!’ But in these unnatural conditions, the natural power of kings imploded. In 1688, Hume related in his *History of England*, ‘King James, by his maladministration, and his abuse of power, had forfeited all title to the crown’.

Yet even in this revolution against the natural law, the natural law ideal continued to determine Britain’s fortunes. John Locke, in his remarkable *Two Treatises of Government*, upended the natural law’s vindication of the divine right of kings to advance the natural law’s vindication of the (also God-given) freedom and equality of all men. ‘The state of nature, then,’ the historian John Dunn explained, ‘is a jural condition and the law which covers it is the theologically based law of nature. It is a state of equality and a state of freedom. That is to say: men confront each other in their shared status as creatures of God without intrinsic authority over each other and without

¹⁶ Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, Or, The Natural Power of Kings* (London: R. Chiswell, W. Hensman, M. Gilliflower, 1685). ‘Filmer’s political theory is in brief this. Natural rights are Divine rights. There is one natural right only, the authority of the father. This is preserved in the sovereign power in all states. All men are born slaves.’ John Neville Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 158.

¹⁷ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 190.

the right to restrict the (natural) law-abiding behaviour of others.’¹⁸ What Locke articulated was a *de jure* social contract in which every individual’s observance of each other’s natural rights, including of property, institutionalised parliament as a jural authority over those rights. It not only inaugurated the Enlightenment in Britain, but importantly it reinterpreted the fiasco of 1688. This was that James II was not overthrown in a revolt against the British crown for violating the ancient *de facto* rights of the people, as Hume later contended, but rather that he was replaced because he had failed to protect their natural rights.

A Whig interpretation of history, which determined the events of 1688 to be a ‘Glorious Revolution’, emerged to advocate the future by essentially joining the idealism of the natural law with the realism of the ancient constitution, or civil jurisprudence with civic humanism. No true equivalence between the two was ever achieved in reality, however.¹⁹ As *Mare Clausum* had subordinated the natural law to the ancient constitution, the Whig history subordinated the ancient constitution to the natural law. Bolingbroke, guardian of the ancient constitution, protested that ‘the “genuine” political society had been undermined... by the destructive work of the economic and social developments in England after 1688, and, equally, by the

¹⁸ John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the ‘Two Treatises of Government’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106.

¹⁹ The equating of the law of nature with the law of nations is a legacy of the scholastic project to fuse reason and faith. The dualism, which extends at many levels to the public and private, vulgar and learned, body and mind, political and economic, etc., has provided an important frame of reference throughout this thesis. In our narrative, no true equality was ever realised, as one concept was usually subordinated to the other. Vitoria, for example, saw ‘The law of nations (*jus gentium*), which either is natural law or is derived from natural law’. James Brown Scott, *The Spanish Origin of International Law: Francisco de Vitoria and his Law of Nations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), Appendix A, xxxvi. Whereas to Selden, ‘all universal rules were treated as by definition natural’, wherefore *ius naturalis* approximated to the universal *iura gentium*. Alan Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676: Law, religion and natural philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 80. Although that is not to say that the unifying of the natural law and the national law is a phantom, and Hannah Arendt has shown how it was forged at both levels of individual and state to total and devastating effect in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 1973).

destructive impact of the liberal and individualistic ideas of John Locke.²⁰ But Burke, the sage of the Old Whigs, saw ‘the men of 1688 as acting within the framework of the ancient constitution and the *confirmatio cartarum* [Magna Carta], and the history to which natural right did violence was a process of gradual adaptation and piety toward precedents’.²¹ The conjunction of the natural law and the common law was necessary in order to end the estrangement between civil (political) society and the institution of real property. The events that followed, however, did not see this necessary violence end.

When James II fled to France, parliament handed the British crown to the president of the very republic being besieged by the divine kings of Europe, William of Orange, Stadtholder of the United Provinces. The constitutional changes were enshrined into law through a Bill of Rights (1689). At a time when France’s might and power threatened Britain’s liberty and self-preservation, the Bill paved the way for parliament to incorporate the Bank of England (1694) and to consolidate British merchant companies, including a bankrupt East India Company, into a new state-helmed East India Company (1698). From Bank and Company were financed a century of wars by Great Britain against the Bourbon empire, initially in Europe and subsequently in America and India. This development uncannily repeated the ‘high Dutch finance’²² of a century earlier following the confederation of the Dutch provinces in the Union of Utrecht (1579) – and repeated it at a time when it was no longer sustainable in the Dutch Republic. By the Act of Abjuration (1581), the Dutch had decreed Philip of Spain to have forfeited all title to the Dutch provinces. The Act paved the way for the States-General to incorporate the Bank of Amsterdam (1609), which, with the

²⁰ Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 84.

²¹ J.G.A. Pocock, ‘The varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform’, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 280.

²² Marjolein ’t Hart, ‘Mutual advantages: State Bankers as Brokers between the City of Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic’, in *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic*, ed. Oscar Gelderblom (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 116.

consolidation of the Dutch merchant companies into the VOC (1610), had financed a century of wars by the Dutch against the Habsburg empire.

Thus, after a century of negotiating a competitive trade in the East Indies amidst the Dutch empire of fortune, Britain closed shop in Banten, turned its attentions to Bengal, and established its own such empire in India. There, Locke's social contract, suckled by the idealist and materialist philosophies from Europe, and already shaping Britain's polite society and plutocratic government while enclosing its choicest lands from the multitude that comprised its 'forlorn humanity',²³ advanced a British version of the Dutch contractualism. By a spirit of conquest and domination, the East India Company became a *zamindari* revenue lord and a mercenary power. These vices combined led to the subsidy system and the rise of the moneyed interest. Liberty had won for Britain a new empire in India, but it was not an empire of man as in the Thirteen Colonies. Rather, it was an empire of fortune which was reflected, in Burke's words, 'in the condition of the Mogul; in the slavery and indigence of the Nabob of Oude; the exile of the Rajah of Benares; the beggary of the Nabob of Bengal; the undone and captive condition of the Rajah and kingdom of Tanjour; the destruction of the Polygars; and lastly, in the destruction of the Nabob of Arcot himself'. '*Libertas* had conquered an *imperium* greater than it could maintain, and the institutions of the latter had replaced those of the former.'

Yet in its triumph, the decline of Britain's empire of fortune was, like the decline of the VOC, already portended in its alter-ego of the empire of the mind. When the Calcutta Orientalists in their exuberance discovered the legacy of an ancient law of nature in India's ancient language, Sanscrit, the Company's 'men of old standing' could

²³ Robert Southey, 'The Pauper's Funeral', *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, Vol. II* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1837), 216.

not be more attentive. Richard Wellesley and the Bengal Council patronised William Jones' Asiatic Society, and its immediate accomplishment was to make the link between Sanscrit, Persian, and the European languages. Jones' Indo-European thesis vindicated the universal authority of the natural law ideal, and from there justified the Company's avaricious approach to India by the appeal to natural private property, natural self-interest, and natural social progress. It was only a matter of time before the Whig interpretation of history was extended to the Indian empire. William Robertson, Principal of Edinburgh University and the fourth luminary in the British Enlightenment quartet after Hume, Smith, and Edward Gibbon, explained how,

The object of the first Indian legislators was to employ the most effectual means of providing for the subsistence, the security, and happiness of all the members of the community over which they presided. With this view they set apart certain races of men for each of the various professions and arts necessary in a well ordered society, and appointed the exercise of them to be transmitted from father to son in succession. This system... will be found, upon attentive inspection, better adapted to attain the end in view, than a careless observer is, on a first view, apt to imagine. The human mind bends to the law of necessity, and is accustomed, not only to accommodate itself to the restraints which the condition of its nature, of the institutions of its country, impose, but to acquiesce in them. From his entrance into life, an Indian knows the station allotted to him, and the functions to which he is destined by his birth... They occupy his thoughts, or employ his hands; and, from his earliest years, he is trained to the habit of doing with ease and pleasure that which he must continue through life to do.²⁴

This shocking apology by Robertson of India's caste system was given in deferent acknowledgment of its reflection of nature. He was, however, in the minority. Robertson's Scottish colleagues too saw the caste system to stem from the linguistic structure of an ancient language, Sanscrit. But they disagreed with Robertson that

²⁴ William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India; and the Progress of Trade with that Country prior to the Discovery of the Passage to it by the Cape of Good Hope* (Dublin: John Ershaw, 1791), Appendix, 248.

Sanskrit was a natural language. Sanskrit was instead invented through man's learned or philosophical reflections on nature: reflections, moreover, which were cognitively flawed. Leyden called Sanskrit the language of religion and science for the conventions of language and behaviour which it determined. For this reason, Thomas Macaulay would later proscribe Sanskrit and prescribe the vernacular Indian languages. And yet the signification of *ius gentium* in the vulgar languages did not excite the Orientalists so much as the sophistication of *ius naturali* in the Indo-European family of languages. Nature dominated the inquiry of the Enlightenment. Unlocked, its laws, as Robertson believed, determined man's place in the natural order. Such learned knowledge brought power. Indeed, to know nature's laws was akin to a brush with immortality. As Volney explained in his *Ruins of Empire*, the law of nature determined

The constant and regular order of events, by which God governs the universe; an order which his wisdom presents to the senses and reason of men, as an equal and common rule for their actions, to guide them, without distinction of country or sect, towards perfection and happiness... Wherefore, as the actions of each being, or of each species of beings, are subjected to constant and general rules, which cannot be infringed without interrupting and troubling the general or particular order, those rules of action and of motion are called natural laws, or laws of nature.²⁵

The Ancient Constitution

In the final year of the eighteenth century, Leyden, politely contemptuous of Principal Robertson's historical views of India and America, penned his *Sketch of the Discoveries and Settlements of the Europeans in Africa* in critique of such views. The human mind was certainly susceptible to 'bend to the law of necessity', but the *theistic non-necessitarianism* imbued in Leyden's view of humanity made him adamant that it must

²⁵ Constantin Volney, *Volney's Ruins: or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires* (Boston: Josiah P. Mendum, 1869), 185-186.

not. The human mind must not acquiesce in the ‘restraints which the condition of its nature and the institutions of its country imposed’. For otherwise, ‘despondence seizes the general mass’, man loses his native character, ‘every virtue, even humanity itself, is destroyed, and society is as really dissolved as among those tribes who acknowledge no ruler’. With a Pelagian ring, three generations of moral philosophers in Scotland’s universities preached that the death of God’s creation of human life lay in beholding the gaze of the Gnostic and Thomist authors of the natural law and its sibling, the divine law. In the stoic and theocratic systems of society framed by these laws, man was simply an automaton, for whom ‘a dismal uncertainty broods over life, which impairs the greatest energy of the mind, and stifles every voluntary exertion.’

This conception by the Scottish School of the Philosophy of Common Sense, of the entropic decay to which the learned laws of nature subjects the vulgar or common native people, thus framed the first criticism of the state of the human condition in the post-VOC East Indies. The means for dismantling the empire of the mind, Leyden believed, lay in reviving the free will of the human constitution in the native character. The Malay character, for example, ‘submits with a bad grace to the forms to which, in a civilized life, he finds himself obliged to conform;’ but ‘when these [forms] are either numerous or enforced with supercilious contumely, or the delays of office,’ by his instinct or intuition ‘he flies to the woods, where, with a little rice boiled in a bamboo, eaten with sprouts of the surrounding trees as a leaf, *he feels he is free.*’

Arriving at Penang from Kerala on 22 October 1805, Leyden’s ancient constitution of common sense found a kindred purpose with another ancient constitutionalist. Raffles’s observation of the human condition was similar to Leyden’s, but whereas for Leyden the root of the problem was epistemological, for Raffles it was

political. Arriving at the newly-minted Presidency of Penang only the month before Leyden as its newly-appointed assistant secretary to government, Raffles could only observe the ‘civil commotions to which every state is liable from the radical want of strength in the sovereign and the constant wars between petty chieftains’. Here was the legacy of the lost Dutch centuries: a state of ‘war of all against all’ growing out of the ashes of the VOC, in which the only semblance of organisation lay in the ‘prevalence of piracy in all the eastern seas’ and the ‘system of domestic Slavery, with all its concomitant evils’.²⁶ They were, for Raffles, symptomatic of ‘the causes which have tended most to the depression of the Malays and the deterioration of their character’.

Where for Leyden, piracy and slavery were the result of the Malays having lost their native consciousness, for Raffles they were the result of the Malays having lost their political, even *national*, independence. Referring to the example of the former sovereign ‘great empire’ in Sulawesi, Raffles noted that the Dutch ‘have not only followed their constant practice of fomenting civil wars and exciting rebellions and commotions of every kind in Celebes, but have encouraged and carried to a greater extent the traffick of Slaves than in almost any other of their eastern possessions.’²⁷ With Dutch oppression came native distrust, malevolence, and perfidy. ‘In this nefarious trade [the destructive traffick of Slaves] which has desolated this Island as well as all the small Islands in its vicinity,’ he wrote, ‘the Bugis men and Macassar men have in a great measure been driven by the monopolies of the Dutch which have in a great measure driven the fair Merchants from the Seas and left the main to kidnappers and pirates.’

²⁶ Raffles to Minto, 10 June 1811 (Revised 20 September 1811), *British Library*, MSS Eur F148/7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Raffles's answer was to restore to the Malays their political liberty. The means lay in proscribing the influence over the Malays of the law of nature, and prescribing in its place the law of nations. The Dutch contractualism was all but impotent by the time he arrived in the East Indies, but Raffles recognised the virile natural law persisting in the 'generally acknowledged principle of Mahomedan law as received by the Arabs'. He saw in the 'constant struggle between the adherents of the old Malay usages, and the Hajis and other religious persons who are desirous of introducing the laws of the Arabs', the unavoidable conflict between *ius naturali* and the native customs and institutions of *ius gentium*. As Raffles later witnessed in Minangkabau, with the latter's demise perished Malay independence. 'Nothing has tended more decidedly to the deterioration of the Malay Character than the want of a well defined and generally acknowledged System of law,' Raffles concluded. 'The Malay nations had in general made considerable progress in civilization before the introduction of the religion of Islam among them. They had accordingly regular institutions of their own, some of which were probably of considerable antiquity'.

The curious reappearance of Seldon vs Grotius implied in Raffles's distinction between *ius gentium* and *ius naturali*, remarkable though it may seem, was nonetheless unsurprising. *Mare Clausum* made a comeback in the mid-eighteenth century with the ascendancy of Bolingbroke's heirs from the Country party, and reshaped Britain's conflict with France over America and India into a contest between two closed seas: the English-speaking commonwealth and the Bourbon empire. Within this contest, *Mare Liberum* was no longer the sole province of the Dutch, but, among the Danes, Swedes, Hanseatics, and Americans, it became a profitable cause for a burgeoning industry in privateering. Oliver Goldsmith, Burke's kindred citizen from the republic of letters, explained in one of the very first history textbooks for English schoolchildren, that

There exists, as it has appeared to the maritime powers of the north, a question... It is the famous question of *mare liberum* and *mare clausum*; that is, whether the navigation of the sea ought to be perfectly free, or subjected to certain restrictions... Great Britain asserts the right of searching neutral vessels; the powers of the north resist it. It is to the interest of the former that her enemies should derive no advantage through the medium of neutral vessels; it is to the interest of the latter that their commerce should be perfectly free; but it should seem undeniable that the first case is supported by general principles of justice, the second only by principles of private benefit.²⁸

Goldsmith's posthumous influence over his young readers was deep. Raffles, determined to end the piratical reign of 'adventurers' and 'interlopers' in the eastern seas, set about to re-establish *Mare Clausum* in the Malay Archipelago. His first exertions were to identify the institutions and customs of the native common law. These he documented from 'every department of public Law whether commercial, civil or criminal, and are recited in the Undang Undang, and Addat Malayu, which are the system of national Law among the Malays'. The result was Raffles's 1810 treatise 'On the Maláyu Nation with a Translation of their Maritime Code', later published in the *Asiatic Researches* in 1816. Together with Leyden's 1806 paper 'On the Indo-Chinese Nations', published in the *Asiatic Researches* in 1810, they documented the two ancient constitutions in the Malay Archipelago: in Leyden's paper, the native consciousness of the common Malay people, and in Raffles's paper, the political liberty of the Malay citizenry.

In 1806, however, Leyden was scorned by the Calcutta Orientalists and the Bengal establishment. Raffles did not complete his draft until 1810, but already in 1807, when his patron, the first Governor of Penang, Philip Dundas, died suddenly, he found himself a pariah of the Penang Presidency and an exile in Malacca. The Company's

²⁸ Oliver Goldsmith, *An Abridgement of the History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Death of George the Second*, by Dr. Goldsmith (London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, 1808), 318.

commercial ‘men of old standing’, chafed by the reforms of Charles Cornwallis and Charles Grant, and drained by the crackdown against Warren Hastings, determined to restore their authority. With horror, therefore, they learnt that the Earl of Lauderdale, the darling of the New Whigs, the ideologue of paper money, and an exponent of the French Revolution, was slated to take over the reins at Calcutta. The mayhem this created in London was exacerbated further by mutiny in Madras, and in that moment of anxiety, Grant deftly manoeuvred for the political heir to Burke himself, the Earl of Minto, to head out to India.

With Minto, Leyden’s and Raffles’s two ancient constitutions of the Malay peoples struck a chord. They provided the moral and political contexts that he needed for the intervention to restore the balance or order of society in an East Indies unnaturally distorted by the commercial innovations and conventions of the natural law. But Minto was not content to test the native individual’s free will and positive freedom to stand their ground against the vicious turn of European and Chinese commerce. If the native states and their populations were to be liberated from the Franco-Dutch power, the moneyed interest, and the machinery of debt which facilitated its monopolising power to command labour, had also to be destroyed and dismantled. Minto’s 1811 Expedition to Java turned these contexts of critique into a venture of critique. It paved the way for his ‘radical reform’ of the island’s monetary system, landed tenure, and revenue. The person to whom he entrusted the task, Raffles, nevertheless faced macroeconomic difficulties far exceeding what Minto had foreseen, and accordingly tweaked Minto’s policy with an innovation of his own. In February 1814, with lasting consequences, Raffles implemented the agrarian law in Java. Describing this decision in 1817 in his *History of Java*, Raffles summarised his thoughts with a reference to Goldsmith’s celebrated poem, *The Deserted Village*:

‘A time there was, ere England’s griefs began,
When ev’ry rood of ground maintain’d its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life require’d, and gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.’

Raffles had left school at fourteen, fatherless and penniless. But he evidently devoured the reading list in the non-conformist seminary he attended at Hammersmith. Dr Goldsmith’s abridged *Histories* of England, Rome, Greece, and ‘of the earth and animated nature’, had provided the standard texts for middle school classes for English, Latin, Greek, and Geography.²⁹ Their narratives did not demonstrate a Whig interpretation of history. On the contrary, in a century in which many shades of Whig histories of England made their appearance,³⁰ Oliver Goldsmith seemed to have been one conduit through which the Commonwealth context of ancient constitutionalism was transmitted unto Raffles’s time. In Goldsmith was reiterated not only Selden’s *Mare Clausum* but also Selden’s *De jure naturali et gentium* (‘Law of Nature and of Nations’, 1640), in both works of which the natural law was subordinated to the ‘universal law of nations’ or ‘common law of mankind’.³¹ Schoolchildren were instructed as to how ‘the first tribes were divided by Ro’mulus into thirty *cu’riae*, and each *cu’ria* contained ten *gentes* or associations,’ the members of which ‘were united by certain laws, which conferred peculiar privileges, called *jura gentium*’.³² By its account of the ‘Roman tenure of land, and the nature of the agrarian laws’, Goldsmith’s *Roman History* in fact declared at the outset to correct what it claimed to be the ‘strangely misrepresented’

²⁹ And later for the mission schools in Asia, many of which received Raffles’s support.

³⁰ See Pocock, ‘Varieties of Whiggism’, 215-310.

³¹ Christopher N. Warren, *Literature & the Law of Nations: 1580-1680* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 209.

³² Oliver Goldsmith, *Pinnock’s Improved Edition of Dr. Goldsmith’s Abridgment of the History of Rome: to which is prefixed an Introduction to the Study of Roman History, and a great variety of valuable information added throughout the work, on the Manners, Institutions, and Antiquities of the Romans* (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle, 1835), 31.

context of the ‘struggles between the patricians and plebeians, respecting the agrarian laws’.³³

It is evident that an agrarian law only removed tenants who held from the state at will, and did not in any case interfere with the sacred right of property... It also appears, that had not agrarian laws been introduced, the great body of the plebeians would have become the clients of the patricians, and the form of government would have been a complete oligarchy... It is evident that a law for sending out a colony was virtually an agrarian law, since lands were invariably assigned to those who were thus induced to abandon their homes.³⁴

If Goldsmith did not inspire a civic humanist turn in the students of England’s dissenting academies, he introduced them to the Commonwealth’s pantheon: Francis Bacon, who ‘of all mankind... deserves, as a philosopher, the highest applause’,³⁵ Selden, Harrington. ‘Oliver Goldsmith praised the Levellers’, wrote Christopher Hill: ‘Algernon Sydney, Marchmont Nedham, Edmund Ludlow.’³⁶ The ancient virtue, the common law, and the commonwealth encapsulated the active life in which was articulated the individual’s political liberty and personality. For Raffles, these forms and values gave meaning to the Britain of financial and moral bankruptcy in which he grew up, as they did to an East Indies of financial and moral bankruptcy in which he found himself at the age of twenty-four. In both places, a despotic empire of the mind had necessarily emerged collaterally with a corrupting empire of fortune, and in Penang during the months from October to December, 1805, Raffles and Leyden enthused that in the East Indies both vicious empires could be overthrown, the alienated native *self* redeemed, and a virtuous empire of man restored to the Malay Archipelago. It is

³³ Ibid., 4.

³⁴ Ibid., 38.

³⁵ Oliver Goldsmith, *Pinnock’s Improved Edition of Dr. Goldsmith’s History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Death of George II, with a continuation to the Year 1832* (Philadelphia: F. W. Greenough, 1838), 196.

³⁶ Christopher Hill, *England’s Turning Point: Essays on 17th Century English History* (Chicago: Chicago Publishing Co., 1998), 153.

staggering that within only six years, their resolve was realised by the ‘great cause’ that was Minto’s Expedition to Java.

Tragically, Leyden died within weeks of Java’s fall. Minto returned to Bengal in October 1811. Raffles, beyond all their expectations, went on to revive Seldon’s *Mare Clausum* and Harrington’s *Commonwealth of Oceana* in the Malay Archipelago. Whether or not these conceptions truly reflected the *pax et concord* of the original Malay thalassocracy, what is certain was that they utterly changed the character of native society in the East Indies as it was found. The British reformer-critic’s language of virtue and common sense have so deeply lodged the concepts of the ancient constitution, the *de facto* social contract, and the cycle of decline and fall, within the native idiom – e.g. the people (*rakyat*), their governance (*kerajaan*), and self-consciousness or self-dependence (*sedar*) – as to reconceive a new humanism and humanist history of the people of the Malay Archipelago. Here was the moral and political context that had informed Munshi Abdullah’s portrayal of the Malay identity. To be Malay, Anthony Milner said, ‘was to behave and think in a particular way’.³⁷ And this particular way, the system of *kerajaan*, rather reaffirmed the ‘rules and spirit of the common law’ articulated by Burke, which was that ‘we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives.’³⁸

Perhaps, in the ‘*entailed inheritance*’ of the common law, Burke’s visions of the reconciliation and brotherhood of men succeeded in the Malay Archipelago where they had not in India. In which case, the historical categories of ‘empire’ and the ‘colony’ are

³⁷ A. C. Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 89. As opposed to Carlyle’s ‘fixed ways of acting and of believing’ or ‘System of Habits’ – see Chapter 6, n.25.

³⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Burke and the Ancient Constitution’, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 211.

completely turned on their heads. They take an historical context which Leyden's teacher at St Andrews University, William Barron, likened to the settlements of *Magna Graecia* (Great Greece) and to the early Roman colonies. 'As the principal object of Grecian colonization was, to discharge supernumerary members, or to preserve the constitution of the parent state,' hence 'the only connection known, for many ages, between the mother-country and the colony was that of affection or alliance.'³⁹ Indeed, the republican constitution of the parent state was a constant feature in the language of our reformer-critics. 'We must have a general Malay league,' Leyden had instructed Raffles, 'and these must all be represented in a general Parliament of the Malay States, like the Amphictyonic Council of the Greeks'.⁴⁰ Hence, Raffles wrote that 'the English came to Java as friends.' Pace Goldsmith, 'a law for sending out a colony was virtually an agrarian law'. In a historical moment from 1807 to 1824, therefore, the Malay Archipelago was not a colony of Britain but a kindred nation to the British nations; not an appendage of the British empire but a branch of the British republic or commonwealth.

Epilogue

The Malay amanuensis whose manuscripts had provided the basis for Leyden's *Sajarah Malayu*, Ibrahim Candu, and whom Raffles had brought with him to Calcutta in July 1810, leaves us a picture of the fervour when the Expedition to Java was secretly being planned. 'How rejoiced was I to reach the house of *Tuan Doctor Layten*,' he recorded of his arrival there. Leyden's 'house' was really 'the writers buildings, to the north of the government-house,' which, according to Maria Graham, 'look like a shabby hospital, or

³⁹ William Barron, *History of the Colonization of the Free States of Antiquity, applied to the present Contest between Great Britain and her American Colonies* (London: T. Cadell, 1777), 32. The distinction between *Mare Clausum* and *Mare Liberum* is given a parallel by Barron in the distinction between Greece-Rome and Carthage.

⁴⁰ Leyden to Raffles, March 1811, Sophia Raffles, *Memoir*, 25.

poors-house; these contain apartments for the writers newly come from Britain, and who are students at the college of Fort-William'.⁴¹ Here, befittingly, Leyden, previously judge of Calcutta's native slum district of the Twenty-Four Parganas, now Commissioner of the Court of Requests (court of the vulgar and poor) and Secretary of the Asiatic Society, ruled the roost. On 15 September 1810, he invited Ibrahim to attend the public disputations (and award of degrees) at Fort William College.⁴²

When I entered the palace, and my Tuan said, "Ibrahim follow me, don't be afraid,— this is the house of the Rajah, and he is kind to all people, particularly to Malays," my heart rejoiced... Two sida-sidas, who were youths, went each into dark wood cases that had been placed in front of the Rajah, and then began to address and reply to each other... They spoke in different languages... When this was over, the Rajah, who had hitherto remained silent, and spoken only by his kind looks and smiles, took from the skirt of his bajee, on the left side, a book; and... he spoke aloud from the book; and how long did I hear the Rajah's voice!⁴³

Minto ended his speech with a cryptic allusion to the Expedition:

I welcome those who have quitted with honor the College for the world, and have passed forward from the season of instruction to that of action. Their new harness will sit easy upon necks which have borne sturdily a heavier yoke, and like well-trained legions, they will find the service of the field lighter than the discipline of the camp... Those among the Grecian youth who aspired to the Olympic crown and immortality, would by no means trust their hopes to the flattering gifts of nature, however lavishly endowed, but fought to fix their fortune, and secure their laurel, by long and vigorous preparations for the contest. Be these your models; and crowns shall not be wanting to reward your toil, and grace your victory.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Maria Graham, *Journal of a Residence in India* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company, 1813), 138.

⁴² *Public Disputation of the Students of the College of Fort William, in Bengal, before the Rt. Hon. Lord Minto, Governor General of Bengal and Visitor of the College, together with His Lordship's Discourse, 15th September, 1810* (Calcutta: London: Black, Parry and Kingsbury, April 1811).

⁴³ Ibrahim, 'An Account of Bengal, and of a Visit to the Government House, by Ibrahim, the Son of Candu the Merchant', in Maria Graham, *Journal*, Appendix, 201-207.

⁴⁴ *Public Disputation*, 54-55.

Another account of that critical moment is given by Edward Robarts, a Welsh mariner who in between escapades in the Eastern Islands and South Sea Islands was once Raffles's housekeeper in Penang. In 1810, he found himself at Calcutta:

One day, as I was going thro Tank square, S^f T. R. [Sir Thomas Raffles] passed me in a palankeen... Some few days after, I found out where S^f T. R. lived. When I came to the house, the first I saw was a malay boy that was formerly servant to M^{rs} Thompson. On seeing me the Boy ran up stairs to inform S^f T. R. that I was below. He run half way down stairs to meet me. He received me with that friendly manner, as tho I was his equal. He conducted me to the room where the Immortal D^f Leydon was sitting and introduced me to him...

After [Raffles's] departure I went every day to write to D^f Leydon's house. He allowed me forty rupees pr month to live on, and, Just as I closed my narrative this far, January 30th, 1811, D^f Leyden received orders to accompany Lord Minto on the expedition to Java... The next day D^f L. requested that I would accompany him to the Bankshall ghaut. He had previously recommended me personally to D^f Hare and had mentioned me to C. M. Ricketts Esq^r. He gave a letter to each of them. I accompanied him to the Ghaut. In the way he called to take Leave of D^f Hare and then embarked on board a vessel waiting for him. He took leave of me. I could make no reply. I stood rivetted to the spot, looking as long as I could see him. I should have gone with him to Java...⁴⁵

Eight years of unrelenting contest would pass before Singapore's crowning as the Malay capital of the Malay Commonwealth in the Malay Archipelago rewarded Raffles's toil and graced his victory. When he left the East Indies in 1823-24, Raffles had like Sparta's lawgiver and protector, Lycurgus, expected to return. 'Do not cry,' Raffles had ominously told Ibrahim's nephew, Munshi Abdullah; 'if my life is spared, I shall come back to Singapore one day.'⁴⁶ 'Do not worry,' he assured, 'for we shall meet again in the future.' But they will not meet again. Back in England after a labour of

⁴⁵ Edward Robarts, *The Marquesan Journal of Edward Robarts, 1797-1824*, ed. Greg Denning (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), 206-208.

⁴⁶ Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, *Hikayat Abdullah*, Tr. A. H. Hill (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS Reprint No. 29, 2009), 191.

public service spanning nearly two decades, Raffles's energies, though not his will, deserted him. True to his beliefs, he made regular pilgrimages to Nuneham Courtney, the seat of the Earl Harcourt and the site of the fictional 'Auburn', Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*.⁴⁷ Raffles was also a regular guest at Bowood House, the seat of the Marquess of Lansdowne and another '18th-century deserted village'.⁴⁸ He became a yeoman farmer, and found an illustrious neighbour in William Wilberforce, at whose house he got to know the young Tom Macaulay.⁴⁹ But within two years, he was dead.

In 1826, Singapore, which had been under Raffles's jurisdiction as Governor of Bencoolen, and Penang, the governorship of which by rank of seniority he had a legitimate claim to, was amalgamated by the Company with Malacca into the Straits Settlements. The office of governor went not to the party of 'legislators and governors' but to yet another professional merchant from Penang of the ilk of John Bannerman and William Petrie: Robert Fullerton. At Bengal (where Raffles also had a legitimate claim to the succession to the council), John Adam, the last of Minto's Argonauts, was replaced as Governor-General by the Earl of Amherst, a free trader. In 1833, however, the Company's China charter was finally withdrawn and who remained of the friends of Cornwallis, Grant, and Minto, returned to power. William Bentinck became the first Governor-General of British India; Charles Metcalfe's tenure in the Bengal Council was extended; and Macaulay, secretary to the Board of Control and the historian of Goldsmith, was sent to Calcutta bearing the hopes of a generation upon his shoulders. There, he built a legacy by reforming India's education system, which he raised upon the histories of Goldsmith.

⁴⁷ Mavis Batey, 'Nuneham Courtenay: an Oxfordshire 18th-century Deserted Village', *Oxford Architectural & Historical Society* (1968), 108-125.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *The Christian Observer* (London: Hatchard and Co., 1865), 789.

Throughout these events, the Malay Commonwealth in the Malay Archipelago seemed to prevail. The trade carried by native vessels resorting to the Malay capital surpassed not only Dutch Java's native trade, but also the China trade and European trade carried by both Company and country vessels.⁵⁰ For twenty years after its founding at least, Singapore remained above all else a native capital and only subordinately the emporium or entrepôt of British imperial history. There, the native body politic, self-conscious and self-dependent, stood its ground alongside the British country trader and the Anglo-Indian capitalist. But, as the English-speaking commonwealth had crumbled without its lawgiver and protector, without Raffles, cracks began to appear in the Malay states. First to falter was Johor in the 1840s. Its civil problems correlate with the ascendancy in Singapore of British and Indian capital, the result of the Opium Wars and the repeal of the Corn Laws. The precarious balance between the native consciousness and European commerce, between the common law and natural law, between *Mare Clausum* and *Mare Liberum*, was breaking. *Oceana* no longer gave law to the sea. The sublime spirit of conquest made its reappearance, as a familiar moneyed interest reared its head and cast a monopolising spirit in the direction of the Malay body politic.

Yet neither did the sea give law to Venice. No empire of fortune arose from the collapse of the legal, political and moral order of the Malay Commonwealth. The general perfidy of the 1780-1800s merely returned. Already in 1839, while sailing to Leyden's 'great Island of Borneo', James Brooke observed the condition of the natives and avowed 'to carry to the Malay races, so long the terror of the European merchant-

⁵⁰ Based on exports to Europe and China (Table 1), in A. Kobayashi, 'The Role of Singapore in the Growth of Intra-Southeast Asian Trade, c. 1820s-1852', *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, December 2013, 443-474.

vessel, the blessings of civilization, to suppress piracy and extirpate the slave-trade'.⁵¹ 'I go,' he said, 'to awaken the spirit of slumbering philanthropy with regard to these islands; to carry Sir Stamford Raffles' views in Java over the whole Archipelago'. Disorder turned into peril, however, when the 'Great Depression' of the 1870–90s dealt British capital a blow.⁵² Around this time, as in the century before, self-criticism reappeared to rekindle the British reformer-critic's moral anxieties. In 1886, on the eve of Malay Confederation, the ancient constitution was again invoked by James Froude:-

What Nature had divided, man could not bind together; without continuity of soil there could be no single empire... [But] The ocean which divides, combines also... An 'empire' of Oceana there cannot be... But a 'commonwealth' of Oceana held together by common blood, common interest, and a common pride in the great position which unity can secure.⁵³

⁵¹ Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy: with extracts from the Journal of James Brooke, Esq. of Sarawak, Vol. I* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), 3-4.

⁵² Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York: Random House, 1987), 35.

⁵³ James Anthony Froude, *Oceana, Or, England and her Colonies* (1886) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11-12.

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