Becoming the State: Territorializing Ceylon, 1815 – 1848

by

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Abstract:

This dissertation studies the political, economic, and cosmological processes through which the idea of “total territorial rule” at the core of the modern state came into being in the context of British colonial rule on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between 1815 – 1848. It develops a decolonial theoretical framework informed by the idea of a “pluriverse” of multiple ontologies to show the empirical and imperial avenues through which the idea of the modern/colonial state became normalized in Ceylon. Specifically, I discuss the *rajamandala* system and its long history in Buddhist South Asia as an approach to organizing political society that is ontologically distinct from British approaches.

The process of “Buddhification” enabled foreign rulers to naturalize into the *rajamandala* system; it provides a context within which to better understand the importance of British rule across the island, traditionally marked as beginning with the 1815 Kandyan Convention. I present the Convention as a moment of sovereign ontological collision where two ontologies of sovereignty conflicted. The ontological conflict manifested in different forms of violence locally, regionally, and imperially, through insurrections, religious politics, and political economic transformations.

By drawing attention to Europe’s externalization of violence in modern state formation, we must rethink the characterization of 1815 – 1914 as “peaceful” as the European peacefulness of this period depended on the violence of colonial state formation. Relatedly, though historians of South Asia tend to mark the rise of the British Raj in 1858 India, one of the empirical contributions this dissertation makes is showing that the period between the 1815 Kandyan Convention and the 1848 Matale Rebellion in Ceylon and the associated contestations between colonizing and anti-colonizing vectors

over land, sovereignty, economy, and spirituality should be considered an earlier site of imperial state (trans)formation.

The dissertation contributes to decolonial international relations, global history, and global political economy by emphasizing one important manifestation of modernity/coloniality: the territorial state. Relatedly, it intervenes in peace and conflict studies by insisting that making sense of postcolonial crises involving territory in the 21st century, we must first understand the historical and conceptual processes that naturalized “total territorial rule.”

Dedication:

I dedicate this dissertation to Mat Nelson, who died on Jan. 17, 2017. I met Mat in a 2006 graduate seminar at the Institute of Political Economy entitled “Other Worlds, Other Globalizations,” and have benefitted enormously from his generous and thoughtful presence over the last decade. We spent much of our time intellectually invested in the 19th century, with our feet grounded in the 21st. We were classmates in study, friends in life, comrades in activism, co-conspirators in independent journalism, and finally, colleagues in academia at the boundaries of our student lives. He carried the burden of his genius with considerable grace, generosity, curiosity, and fierce commitment to working across disciplines. His passing is a loss not only to those who knew him, but also to future generations of scholars and students, now denied the critical insights his work promised.

Acknowledgements

I have the greatest respect for my dissertation committee; without the intersectional, trans-disciplinary guidance of Hans-Martin Jaeger, Cristina Rojas, and Chinnaiah Jangam, I would not have been able to research and write this dissertation. Dr. Hans-Martin Jaeger's critical guidance over the last seven years has been an anchor and a model of how to be an intellectual. I mean this not only in his capacity as my supervisor; I and other graduate students have come to respect his perpetual intellectual curiosity and the depth to which he engages ideas. As my supervisor, he has engaged my work in its most raw and incoherent forms, playing a steady and inspirational role in its gradual refinement. The amount of academic writing he has received from me pales in comparison to the volumes of verbose, panicked emails he has always taken care to respond to with lightning-fast speed, or the unannounced and lengthy visits to his office after which I have always left feeling challenged, inspired, and more intelligent.

Without Dr. Cristina Rojas, this dissertation would simply not have been possible. Through Cristina's constant, generous mentorship and enormous social network, I first learned about pluriversality and decolonial studies, as well as how to be an international colleague. Cristina's humility, precision, and exciting writing and research has driven me (nearly) to learn Spanish to enter her world of research more completely. Beyond her vital feedback on this dissertation, she has also been instrumental in my understanding of publishing and has given valuable eleventh-hour feedback on manuscript revisions.

Dr. Chinnaiah Jangam has also been a critical juncture in my intellectual and professional life. Aside from saving my project when I was denied travel documents to Sri Lanka by urging me to take my research in a more historical direction, he has always seen, several steps ahead of me, the broader, real-world benefit of the research. Every

meeting we had left me excited, and in the early days, I did not realize that this turn towards history would ultimately lead to a faculty position in the Department of History and International Development Studies at Dalhousie University. My committee's collective contribution to this dissertation and to my life cannot be overstated.

I have benefitted from a vibrant intellectual community at Carleton University, particularly the Postcolonial/Decolonial Reading Group that Cristina and I started a few years ago. This trans-disciplinary group of professors and graduate students from Carleton, University of Ottawa, and Queens University has been intellectually and socially important for us all. Special thanks to: Xiaobei Chen, Daniel McNeil, Hans-Martin Jaeger, Maggie Fitzgerald Murphy, Manvitha Singamsetty, Jennifer Matsunaga, and William Felepchuck, who has taken over my role as co-facilitator since I left Ottawa. I'd also like to acknowledge my inspiring colleagues from Migration and Diaspora Studies: Daniel McNeil, Johnny Alam, Jay Ramasubramanyam, James Milner, Alejandro Hernandez, and Ying-Ying Tiffany Liu.

I am grateful to the *Leveller* newspaper for inviting me to their editorial collective in my first year of doctoral studies. Being a part of this publication has been invaluable and provided a crucial, practical refuge through my doctoral studies. The vibrant graduate community at the Institute of Political Economy has, over the years, permeated nearly every part of my life in Ottawa, not least of all the Critical Social Research Collaborative. Special thanks to Robyn Green, Ryan Katz-Rosene, Gulden Ozcan, Mandy Joy, Amanda DiVito Wilson, Chris Hurl, the late Mat Nelson, J.Z. Garrod, Vladimir Diaz-Cuellar, and of course, Donna Coghill, who has been at the centre of this Institute. My first peer-reviewed publication, which was the catalyst for this dissertation, came out of a nerve-racked graduate conference at the Institute of Political Economy in 2011. I am also

grateful to Brookes Fee, who has always acted like an advocate for us graduate students in Political Science over the years.

Many professors have made lasting impacts on my scholarship at Carleton. They have encouraged my publications, rocked my intellectual foundations, and shown me new ways to think. What more could one hope for from graduate school? These people include Fiona Robinson, Jill Vickers, Radha Jhappan, Jeremy Paltiel, Achim Hurrelmann, James Milner, Elliot Tepper, Simon Dalby, Trish Ballamingie, Laura MacDonald, Linda Freeman, Randy Germain, Abdulghany Mohammad, Brian Schmidt, Gopika Solanki, William Walters, Jai Sen, and Martin Geiger.

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I have benefited enormously from the audacity, generosity, and camaraderie of friends, colleagues, and mentors in the Global Development Section of the International Studies Association: Robbie Shilliam, Gurminder Bhambra, Lisa Tilley, Olivia Rutazibwa, Heloise Weber, Martin Weber, Siba Grovogui, and Meera Sabaratnam.

I appreciate the guidance of archivists at the British National Library, British National Archives, and the missionary archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Church held at SOAS. Early inklings of this research appeared in different forms in the pages of *Geopolitics* and *The Caribbean Journal of International Relations & Diplomacy*. I am grateful to Dr. Andy Knight and Dr. Matt Bishop of the Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad for the opportunity to lecture on the subject of the colonality of the state where I benefitted enormously from the perspective of scholars who had lived through the transition of late colonialism and early independence. In particular, I appreciate the critical insights and cautions of Dr. Anthony Gonzales and Sir Sridath Ramphal.

Though I did not have this vocabulary for much of my life, it is clear to me in hindsight that decolonial thought has been the central foundation of my upbringing. Through their lived experiences and limitless love and support, Jaipersad and Seromanie Parasram have been lifelong teachers, instilling inherently political and anti-colonial values in me and my three brothers. They are a constant source of guidance and inspiration. I would like to offer deep respect to my brothers, Shiva, Amit, and Jivesh, all of whom have been fellow travellers in our collective efforts to decolonize, even if we might call it something else. Much love also to Heather, Aurora, and Lisa.

Nothing is possible without Fazeela Jiwa. She has been my partner in politics, friendship, love, journalism, academia, and life. We met, shoeless and idealistic in a vegetarian food line up half a life ago, and through her friendship I have learned to appreciate the poetry in daily life. She is, as Rumi suggested, an entire ocean in a drop.

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Preface: A Canary in the Archives

Working in colonial archives is a lot like working in a coal mine – without constant attention to the canary that judges the quality of air one is breathing and when one might need to resurface for fresh air, one could easily fall victim to the noxious fumes. I have learned an enormous amount about this time period from the scholarship of late-colonial and postcolonial historians, some whose work did not ultimately make it into the final copy of this dissertation. Studying colonial state formation has had the unexpected side effect reflecting on the context of first and second-generation scholars who were “postcolonial” before it was a term, venturing into the archival coalmines without canaries. When coming up for air from the reading rooms, it was a humbling experience to find myself sitting in “Torrington Square” near the British National Library in London, thinking of the young historians from the late-colonial and early post-colonial periods whose primary and secondary accounts I have benefitted from reading. In their time, they had to first make the case to their professors that they even belonged in the university.

My positionality informs this research. I was born on the territories of Arawak and Carib peoples in the South of modern day Trinidad & Tobago, but ultimately raised and educated on the territories of the Sikepnekatik-Mi’kmaq (“Halifax”), Odawa-Anishnabek-Algonquin (“Ottawa”), and Musqueam-Coast Salish (“Vancouver”) peoples in what is legally recognized as “Canada.” Like other immigrant Canadians, I was taught to keep quiet, plug into an “authentic” white Christian culture, and thrive within it. In school I learned lavish half-truths about the “founding nations” of France and England in Canada, but curiously little of the processes of colonial destruction and genocide that created Canada until, as an adult, I sought out these histories from survivors. Colonial power is one of the central points of continuity in my personal genealogy. This is not to say that

the colonial projects in South Asia, the Caribbean, and Turtle Island were the same, only that they were plugged into the same global web administered in some fragmented form from Downing Street in London. In the three months I spent researching at the British National Archives, the British National Library, and the Missionary Archives at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the legacy of colonial power within that city's monuments, museums, and daily life was disorienting. Indeed, sitting directly outside the Asia and Africa reading room of the British Library is a bust of W.M.G. Colebrooke, a British military officer who oversaw the legislative and geographic restructuring of Ceylon in the late 1820s and early 1830s, but who also had extensive experience in India, Java, the Caribbean, and British North America. I regularly ate lunch in Torrington Square – a constant reminder of Lord Viscount Torrington III, Governor of Ceylon during the Matale rebellion discussed in this dissertation. The movement of colonial knowledge and power through embodied colonial officers is a topic for future study, but an important point to note nonetheless.

Embodied presence matters in research, not just for the purposes of conducting interviews, but also for the context the researcher brings to their data collection and analysis. Over the years of developing this project, most people I discussed it with presumed me to be a Ceylon-Tamil. A few surmised that I might be Sinhalese, and many others that my heritage is Tamil from southern India. If I have any biological connection to Sri Lanka or southern India, I am unaware of it. In my particular case, my body and ideas about my identity helped to establish boundaries that has affected the focus of the dissertation because I was denied research travel documents to enter Sri Lanka at the end of 2013. I had originally planned a four-month research trip to the island that would have involved semi-structured interviews with activists, government officials, and researchers,

alongside archival study in Colombo and Kandy. Sympathetic contacts within the Sri Lankan community in Ottawa helped me “read between the lines” to see that foreign researchers were being blocked *en masse* from entering the country, as much of the world’s attention was on Sri Lanka amidst growing condemnation of human rights abuses and the then-upcoming (December 2013) Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The Canadian prime minister at the time, Stephen Harper, had decided to boycott the CHOGM, driving Canada-Sri Lanka relations to an all-time low. Journalists who were entering the country as tourists were being arrested and deported, and the government was cracking down on any group or association of people that might have had some connection to the ousted Tamil Tigers. In practice, since the Tamil Tigers had *de facto* control over much of the North and East until losing the war in 2009, this government crackdown had been silencing people and organizations all over the Jaffna peninsula. Since the war’s end, the government has been accused of standing idly by or even being complicit in the violence, as the inertia of triumphant Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism turned from the Tamil/terrorist trope to the island’s Muslim population.

My inability to physically enter the territory that I am writing about heightened my already considerable anxiety of being a “Westerner.” I am, of course, a “Western” researcher, but simultaneously, I have some experiential knowledge of South Asian culture and history learned from growing up as part of a “double diaspora.” Being raised with a nominal “Hindu” ontological starting point has helped me see and think through key differences between “South Asian” and “Western” worlds I inhabit. The “double” diaspora is an important context because my grounding in culture comes via Trinidad & Tobago, and that has meant that, growing up in Canada, I was a very different kind of diasporic South Asian from others who were born in South Asia or who had direct ties to

a South Asian country. During previous research trips to India, my identity as a diasporic Indian from Canada via the West Indies elicited considerable interest in me by the people I met with and interviewed (for unrelated projects).

My embodied presence thus positions me as a simultaneous outsider/insider. I am an insider because my genealogical heritage is marked by the colonial encounter in South Asia very directly, and my upbringing, body, and ontological starting points in navigating life are less tethered to the canon of Western Enlightenment texts and tradition. I am an outsider because my entry point to South Asian culture is not geographically grounded in South Asia and I do not adequately speak South Asian languages. In this way, I have little in common with South Asian diasporas within Canada that hail directly from South Asia, and no ability to read Tamil and Sinhalese sources unless in translation. Perhaps most significantly, I am an outsider because I have received a quarter century of formal education in Canada, and am now working as a faculty member in the very institution in which I began my post-secondary studies, trying to teach in a way that at times conflicts dramatically with how I was trained. Being engaged in de-colonial politics and learning from indigenous traditions that have always existed outside of the mainstream narrative of settler-colonialism has been a refuge for thinking and working against powerful assumptions, as has the process of researching and writing reflexively. The process of researching and writing this project necessitates a constant struggle to read against and between sources that come largely from the missionary and colonial governmental point of view that fits all too neatly into much of my formal education in the West.

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Introduction¹

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa declared victory over terror on May 18, 2009 and invited the world, embroiled in a so-called global war on terror, to be his pupil in counter-terrorism.² Rajapaksa won the 2005 presidential elections in Sri Lanka with a promise to bring about an end to the island's longstanding civil war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that effectively controlled a large crown of territory in the North and East of the island, and the Sri Lankan government based in the Southwest. The central government, based in the current capital and former colonial fort city of Colombo, appealed to two powerful but related discourses anchored to the international community's defining norm of state sovereignty: the right to defend the state from terror on the one hand, and the right of post-colonies to exercise total territorial rule on the other. Armed with these political tools in the international arena, Colombo skilfully manoeuvred Chinese diplomatic, military, and financial assistance to prevent the international community from violating the government's sovereign right to re-assert total territorial rule over the island.³ At the height of the "counter-state" of Tamil Eelam's power, it operated a judiciary, bank, army, navy, air force, and government that, at times, rivalled and exceeded the efficiency of the Sri Lankan state in the South. Even temporality was territorialized in LTTE territory, as they instituted a thirty-minute time zone difference that distinguished Eelam and Lankan time. After more than a decade of varying degrees of semi-autonomy in Tamil Eelam, Colombo's ability to isolate the LTTE by blocking naval transportation routes and extra-territorial financing networks

¹ Revised portions of this introduction come from my 2012 article: "Erasing Tamil Eelam: De/Re Territorialization in the Global War on Terror," *Geopolitics* 17/4 (2012): 903 - 925

² "LTTE's defeat is victory for country: Sri Lankan President," *India Today*, May 19, 2009, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/specials/asiangames2010/Story/42765/LTTE>.

³ Ajay Parasram, "Erasing Tamil Eelam: De/Re Territorialisation in the Global War on Terror." *Geopolitics* 17/4 (2012): 903

forced LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran into a dangerous gamble. He wagered the international community would not stand by while Colombo's aggressive and anachronistic military campaign into Tamil Eelam continued to escalate.

The result of that gamble puts to rest any lingering post-cold war ambiguities about whether "human" sovereignty can challenge "state" sovereignty. Despite international concern and mass mobilization of the global Tamil diaspora, the discursive power of sovereign state legitimacy was deemed more important than the lives of internally displaced, kidnapped, or generally terrorized civilians. The military drove the LTTE from their "defacto"⁴ capital of Kilinochchi by January 2, 2009 and contained them, along with thousands of civilians, into approximately 250 sq. km of coastal forest terrain.⁵ The details of the dramatic end to the war are disputed by the government, international humanitarian organizations, media, and Tamil sources, but according to *The Economist*, the war ended when two LTTE leaders and their cadres agreed to lay down arms and return to the negotiating table.⁶ As the cadres raised white flags and crossed the battlefield with their families, the military cleared the field with machine guns. Most of the LTTE leadership was crushed amidst the last physically defensible assertion of the

⁴ Fiona McConnell distinguishes "de jure" from "de facto" sovereignty, where the prior describes a legal status, and the latter describes how a political entity engages in practices normally associated with a territorial state without legal recognition. McConnell uses the example of the Tibetan government-in-exile as an example of a "geopolitical anomaly" that does not conform to what Murphy (2009) calls the "dominant political territorial ideal" or the legal state. Though what I describe as "Tamil Eelam" is arguably a type of geopolitical anomaly, I do not develop this particular line of reasoning in this dissertation. For more on de-jure/de-facto sovereignty and geopolitical anomaly, see: F. McConnell, "De facto, displaced, tacit: The sovereign articulations of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile" *Political Geography* 28/6 (2009): 343 – 352; F. McConnell, "The Fallacy and Promise of the Territorial Trap: Sovereign Articulations of Geopolitical Anomalies" *Geopolitics* 15/4 (2010): 762 – 768; A.B. Murphy, "The sovereign state system as political-territorial ideal: historical and contemporary considerations" in T. Biersteker and C. Weber (eds.) *State sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 81 – 120.

⁵ V.S. Shekhawat, *Sri Lanka: The Politics of Tamil Eelam* (Jaipur: Ram Kishore Sharma, 2010): 208.

⁶ "After the Slaughter: Tamil Tigers Contemplate Life without Prabhakaran" *The Economist*, May 28, 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/13754093>.

geopolitical anomaly of Tamil Eelam. Prabhakaran's corpse, his forehead bearing a bullet-hole, was displayed soon thereafter across state media.⁷

As the Sri Lankan military advanced into Eelam, small areas of land were designated "cleared" when political control shifted from Eelam to Lanka; the people caught between the warring factions were declared "liberated."⁸ Those Tamil civilians in "cleared" zones would be ushered into guarded, open-air holding camps so that "terrorists" could be separated from civilians and the government in Colombo could plan its resettlement agenda. A key component of this resettlement, the *Sri Lankan Guardian* reports, was aimed at establishing military and Sinhalese settlements alongside areas resettled by Tamils displaced by the war.⁹ On May 19, 2006, President Rajapaksa of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka announced for the world to hear, "We are a government who defeated terrorism at a time when others told us that it was not possible. The writ of the state now runs across every inch of our territory."¹⁰

⁷ Colombo went to great lengths to block international media, though *Al Jazeera* was able to get pictures and videos from what would later be called the "Killing Fields" in documentaries. *Al Jazeera* was punished for their reporting and banned from covering Rajapaksa's re-election on the basis of their coverage during the war.

⁸ The Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence has an animated "Battle Progress Map" that allows visitors to zoom in on particular battles and see how the military won battles through the Vanni region. It was last updated on May 19, 2009. See: Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law and Order, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, "Battle Progress Map" (2008), <http://www.defence.lk/orbat/Default.asp>.

⁹ N. DeVotta, "The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Lost Quest for Separatism in Sri Lanka" *Asian Survey* 49/6 (Nov/Dec 2009): 1047-1048; "Plan to resettle Tamil IDPs in the midst of Army and Sinhala Settlements" *Sri Lanka Guardian* August 24, 2009, <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2009/08/plan-to-resettle-tamil-idps-in-midst-of.html>. This was not a new kind of plan, as "internal" colonialism, meaning resettlement of pre-dominantly Sinhalese people into areas outside of their home villages (often in predominantly Tamil areas), was a point of government policy since the 1920s at least. See: Crown land: report on new system of allocation" Oct. 1930 – Aug. 1932. British National Archives, shelfmark: CO/54/903/19, chapter IV.

¹⁰ "No Mention of Prabhakaran in Rajapaksa's Victory Speech," *Times of India* May 19, 2009, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/No-mention-of-Prabhakaran-in-Rajapaksas-victory-speech/articleshow/4550436.cms>; Amal Jayasinghe, "Sri Lanka shows rebel chief's 'body', president declares victory" news.com, May 20, 2009, <http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/rebel-chiefs-body-shown-on-tv/story-e6frku0-1225713513715>

Rajapaksa's second sentence catalyzed this doctoral dissertation, ultimately leading to a series of connected studies about how the norm of "total territorial rule" became naturalized through the colonial encounter. Why is it so important that the writ of the state extend across every inch of territory? How did such a spatial ontology of sovereignty grow to become the *universal* model upon which human political activity ought to be ordered in the modern, (post)colonial world?¹¹ In short, in this dissertation I ask: how has the process of becoming the modern, territorial, state worked to legitimize one expression of sovereignty, while de-legitimizing all others? In the four substantive years I spent researching this question between 2012 and 2016, I was struck by how the 21st century Sri Lankan government at times mirrored the military strategies of the British colonial government in the early 19th century, especially in territorializing land with military settlements in a deliberate effort to prevent ethnic enclaves. Of course, mass atrocities were also committed by the LTTE in pursuit of establishing a "pure" Tamil state in the contested "post-colonial," or perhaps more accurately, "post-British" phase of modern history, including the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the early 1990s, conscription of child soldiers, and collective punishment of civilians insufficiently loyal to the military cause of sovereign independence: total territorial rule over the claim of Eelam. My concern in this dissertation is not with whether Eelam or Lanka ought to practice "total territorial rule" over their piece of land; rather, I am concerned with how the norm of total territorial rule became a requirement for existence as a post-colony in a world that remains animated by the tensions of modernity and coloniality.

¹¹ I dwell on the prefixes "uni" and "pluri" throughout the dissertation to draw attention to the singularity and multiplicity of the main essence of the word: "verse." Similarly, the grammar of postcolonial vs. post-colonial is important. When used as a single word, it connotes the ongoing conditions and consequences of the colonial encounter, while hyphenated it speaks to a temporal period. See: Joanne Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (London: Sage, 2009): 3 – 5.

Most scholarly accounts of the origins of the Sri Lanka/Tamil Eelam civil war start with the struggle for political independence from the British – including my own early account. I joined others in situating the conflict’s origins in the rise of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, which was related to the victory of the S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike government in 1955 and its subsequent institutional biases and contestations that stratified Ceylon along ethnic lines, gradually giving rise to militant resistance when civil disobedience proved ineffective.¹² However, in the course of researching this dissertation, it became clear that the root of the problem can be traced to the rise and naturalization of total territorial rule, which as a political project, takes on its modern/colonial implications in the early to mid 19th century. As Manu Goswami argues, with reference to India, there is a need to study the sociocultural, political, economic, and global contexts within which national space is produced:

The very idea of India as a bounded national space and economy, as first elaborated in the last third of the nineteenth century, has made possible both a universal language of national unity and development and engendered terrifying violence and social conflict.¹³

The same is true of Ceylon, but whereas the primary object of analysis for Goswami is the nation broadly defined, I argue that the making of the territorial state requires the

¹² Cf.: A. J. Wilson, *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Vancouver: UBC Press 2000); Sankaran Krishna, *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 1999); A. Wijimanne, *War and Peace in Post-Colonial Ceylon 1948–1991* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited 1996); N. DeVotta, “The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Lost Quest for Separatism in Sri Lanka,” *Asian Survey* 49/6 (Nov/Dec 2009): 1047–1048; C. R. de Silva, “Sinhala Tamil Ethnic Rivalry,” in R. Goldman and A. J. Wilson (eds.), *From Independence to Statehood: Managing Ethnic Conflict in Five African and Asian States* (London: Frances Pinter 1984): 127–132; K. M. de Silva, “University Admissions and Ethnic Tensions in Sri Lanka: 1977–1982,” in R. Goldman and A. J. Wilson (eds.), *From Independence to Statehood: Managing Ethnic Conflict in Five African and Asian States* (London: Frances Pinter 1984): 97–110; N. DeVotta, *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2004); Ajay Parasram, “Erasing Tamil Eelam: De/Re Territorialisation in the Global War on Terror” *Geopolitics* 17.4 (2012): 903 – 925.

¹³ Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004): 5.

same kind of historical and political economic study because prior to the rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth century, the state was first normalized. To understand the rise of contaminated¹⁴, modern, universalistic religion – be it Hindutva in India or ‘protestant Buddhism’ in Ceylon, is to explore the making of the epistemic and material tensions of normalizing total territorial rule out of which the cultural, pedagogical, anti-colonial nationalists would target their discursive framing. Said simply, if the spatial organization of sovereignty in Ceylon enabled a situation of multiple sovereignties prior to the British period, there is something particularly important about the transformations during the British period within which a singular, uni-versal conception of sovereignty became the object of desire for national movements by the late 19th century. This dissertation is not a history of Sri Lanka, Tamil Eelam, Ceylon, Sinhalese nationalism, or Tamil nationalism – all of which would comprise worthy studies in excellent company amidst the many studies consulted in the preparation of this dissertation. While I draw on these texts as well as colonial archival materials, this dissertation is a story of becoming a modern state through the colonial encounter, which is one that is woven into the global economic and imperial system of the 19th century. It is a story of transformations and counter-transformations that have normalized and universalized a Western spatial ontology symbolized in the modern territorial state. This limits the range of political possibilities about how we understand the past, present, and future in postcolonial places

In this dissertation, I argue that that the process of becoming the modern, territorial state, and with it the contemporary requirement to extend the “writ of the state” to “every inch of territory” emerged out of a series of colonial and anticolonial struggles

¹⁴ The word “contamination” in this context comes from earlier comments from Chinnaiah Jangam on this dissertation, in which he used the word “o describe the process of sovereign transformation in the British period.

that was already global by the mid 19th century. The chapters comprising this study pick up on threads connecting imperial political economy; the ontological and cosmological differences separating British and native understandings of sovereignty; and the territoriality of economic, pedagogical, and spatial politics that worked to naturalize the modern state-nation overtop of indigenous spatial practices like a palimpsest. By titling this dissertation “Becoming the State” I do not suggest that South Asian spatial organizations with thousand-year plus histories of practice are insignificant. The distinction is to draw attention to the modern/colonial encounter that disciplined many ways of existing into the mould of the territorial state through the universalization and normalization of Eurocentric “sovereignty.” As such, this dissertation is an attempt to engage closely with one important manifestation of the modern, colonial condition: the territorial state.

Time Period

The island known today as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka has had many names, including Lanka in ancient South Asian accounts, Serendib in Arabic accounts, and eventually, Ceilão in the Portuguese accounts. The British described the territory as Ceylon, and it remained so named until a generation after independence when, in 1972, it was once more renamed as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Over the course of much of the island’s 26-year long civil war between the government in the South and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the North, the northern and eastern crown of the island was organized into a *de facto* sovereign territory called Tamil Eelam. (See Appendix One for maps outlining the shifting political boundaries of Ceylon and Kandy.)

Historically, I draw on events beginning in the early 19th until approximately 1850, with the bulk of the dissertation focusing on the years between 1815 and 1848. The chapters do not advance chronologically, rather, they are thematic engagements with different aspects of state formation across the 33 year period, examining religious and cosmological politics (chapter two), political economic transformations (chapter three) and direct resistance and insurrections (chapter four). This was not a transformative time only in Ceylon, but also across much of the globe. The “Concert of Europe” brokered what is broadly historicized as one of the most “peaceful” periods of international history. The violent events unfolding in Ceylon, and the colonial world more generally offer a counterpoint to the false narrative of peace within the historical international relations literature, a point I return to throughout the dissertation.¹⁵ I emphasize this period because while the latter half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century has much to offer those interested in the development of ethno-religious nationalism and institutional development, in my reading, these issues were already operating by the late 19th century within an ontological framework in which the idea of “total territorial rule” under a central government goes unquestioned. Emphasizing the contamination of South Asian sovereignty, the story of the state takes three main forms in this dissertation. In the first instance and prior to the arrival of the British (yet overlapping with Portuguese and Dutch) is the *rajamandala* system that has developed over the last ca. 2200 years in South Asia. The period of British presence in Ceylon, and the main emphasis of this dissertation, in the early to mid 19th century, marks the period of sovereign contamination or ontological “collision” as I describe in chapter two. The third discernible period of state formation follows the mid to late 19th century, after total territorial rule is

¹⁵ Tarak Barkawi, “Decolonising war,” *European Journal of International Security* 1/2 (2016): 199-214.

normalized, and the project of anticolonial activism takes on the familiar historical path of nationalism aimed at displacing and taking over the reins of the territorial state. It is in this most recent period, from the late 19th century onwards, that the calcification of modern identities, including formal institutional religious identities, begins to be leveraged to defeat the colonial occupiers at their own game, that is, through using the liberal/colonial institutions of the state against the British. I develop a metaphor, beginning in chapter two to which I return in the conclusion of the dissertation, modelled on paralleling these three historical periods with scientific projections of what will happen when our Milky Way galaxy collides with the nearby Andromeda galaxy.

The “middle” period of galactic, ontological collision, is the main focus of the dissertation, and I emphasize the 1815 Kandyan Convention, though in an unconventional way. The Kandyan Convention was an agreement signed by the main chiefs of the independent kingdom of Kandy, and the British government represented by Governor Robert Brownrigg. In most historical accounts, this convention marks the period of British rule over the entirety of the island of Ceylon, and with good reason, as this was the main subject of the Convention. I detail the events and diplomatic intrigue leading to the Kandyan Convention in chapter two, but my point of intellectual departure with the secondary histories of the Convention is that rather than seeing it as the birth of British rule, I instead see it as the beginning of a deep ontological contestation of the meaning of sovereignty, represented in a Kandyan-Buddhist genealogy of sovereignty conflicting with a British-Christian genealogy of sovereignty.¹⁶ Signed on March 2, 1815, the

¹⁶ Though there is a general consensus that 1815 marks the beginning of total British rule because of the Kandyan Convention, some scholars also privilege the 1832 Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms, which marked a significant shift in governance approaches based on the liberal inclination of Commissioners Colebrooke and Cameron. David Scott, and scholars working in the camp of “colonial governmentality” in particular

Convention was the formal end of a longer process of removing the reigning monarch, Sri Vikrama Rajasingha. In essence, this was an internal, elite, Kandyan feud between the monarch and the aristocracy that extends at least to the diplomatic intrigues that led to the installation of a teenaged Rajasingha to the throne of Kandy with the guidance of Pilima Talauve in 1798.¹⁷

The Maha-adikar, or Prime Minister to the king in the lead up to the Convention was a man named Ehelapola Wijayasundara Wickramasinghe Chandraskara Amarkoon Wasala Ranamuka Mudiyanse, or Ehelapola Nillame for short. Ehelapola was the nephew of Pilima Tauve, who had occupied the position of Maha-adikar until being put to death for treason in 1811.¹⁸ Ehelapola succeeded his uncle as Maha-adikar, and continued communication with the British government through their chief translator, John D'Oyly.¹⁹ The king's policies were increasingly alienating him from the aristocracy, and the delicate balance of power at the elite level that helped Vickrama Rajasinghe fend off attempts to dethrone him in the past were severely compromised when he issued an arrest warrant for Ehelapola, seizing his wife and children and ultimately having them put to death in a most heinous fashion. It was Ehelapola, who had fled south to British territories, who then brokered passage for the British forces under Brownrigg through the Kandyan

follow this line of reasoning. While both dates are logical choices, because the focus of analysis in this dissertation is on how the process of state formation universalizes a single understanding of sovereignty, I see both of these dates as important components of a longer process of colonial state formation and normalization. See: David Scott. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Centre, 2005[1952]): 19 – 22.

¹⁸ Tennakoon Vimalananda, *Sri Wickrema, Brownrigg, and Ehelepola : being letters addressed to the Home Government from 1811-1815 by Major General John Wilson and Lieut.-General Robert Brownrigg, Governor of Ceylon*. (Colombo: Gunasena, 1984) British National Library, shelfmark: V 26078.

¹⁹ Ibid.

provinces, unchallenged by Kandyan soldiers, and ultimately into the capital city.²⁰ It is unlikely that without Ehelapola's assistance, the British would have either been interested or able to pursue their total rule over the entire territory of the island, as past attempts had failed miserably, and guidance from the Colonial Office in London was to avoid interference in the affairs of Kandy.²¹

I emphasize the middle period of sovereign ontological collision of British and Kandyan sovereignties in order to a.) demonstrate that universal representations of sovereignty fail to capture the pluri-versal character of sovereignty prior to the violence of the modern, colonial encounter, and b.) because despite the fact that Kandy interacted, warred with, and at times brokered diplomatic relations with other European powers, neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch ever succeeded in controlling the interior of the island. The maps in Appendix A illustrate multiple sovereign arrangements, albeit tenuously, even in the presence of European colonizers. But as the Figure Four in appendix A showing the political boundaries after 1832 demonstrates, it was only in the early to mid 19th century that we could truly talk of total territorial rule in the modern sense.

Colonial powers more generally did not operate within South Asia through direct and alien sovereign rule initially, rather different colonial states and state supported corporations (like the British or Dutch East India Companies) sought to understand

²⁰ "The Case of Ehelapola Maha Nilime, A Kandyan Chief detained at Mauritius as State Prisoner" letter submitted to His Majesty's Commissioner of Inquiry, Jan. 17th, 1828. British National Archives, shelfmark: CO/416/20

²¹ Chandra Richard de Silva, *Sri Lanka: A History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987); Tennakoon Vimalananda, *Sri Wickrema, Brownrigg, and Ehelepola : being letters addressed to the Home Government from 1811-1815 by Major General John Wilson and Lieut.-General Robert Brownrigg, Governor of Ceylon*. (Colombo: Gunasena, 1984) British National Library, shelfmark: V 26078.; K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981); Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

regional geopolitical dynamics and exploit them for economic and administrative purposes. At the same time, since the 1757 Battle of Plassey through which the British East India Company (BEIC) firmly asserted itself on the subcontinent by defeating the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies, the BEIC invested scholarly and administrative efforts towards language and cultural learning to systematize and adjust administrative tactics to reflect British understandings of South Asian history. BEIC official presence in Ceylon was extremely brief, between 1796 and 1802. A system of dual rule operated from 1797 to 1802 in which Britain, through its governor in Colombo administered the territories politically, and the BEIC looked after economic and trade affairs with the promise of monopoly control of cinnamon. “Ceylon,” until 1815, described territory little more than 20 kilometres from the coast and was comprised largely of mercantilist trading forts, eventually administered with some centrality out of the fort-town of Colombo in the Southwest. Only after 1815 was the island even conceptually thought of as being a single political entity, though as I argue in chapters two and four, the degree to which this was agreed upon is exaggerated when taking into consideration the rebellions and everyday acts of non-cooperation defining the early period of British rule. I argue that the struggles over the meaning of territory and sovereignty that defined the first four decades of British rule created the territorial foundations from which anti-colonial nationalism and nation-building would emerge in the latter portion of the 19th century.

Within the period of contamination, monumental transformations occur, from the forced labour construction of early military roads, to the privatization and enclosure of Kandyan land, to mass demographic and economic transformations that integrated Ceylon definitively into the rapidly developing imperial political economy of the 19th century. Alongside these physical, political, and economic changes, missionary education created

a political need for secularism as Christian-educated pupils begin to use their education to calcify and discipline the philosophical practices of Buddhism and Hinduism into “religions” that could meet colonial and spiritual aggression on common terms.²² Similar to the Orientalist scholarship of the late 18th century in India, European Orientalist scholars were interested in *Buddagama*, which they translated and rationalized in early 19th century Orientalist European scholarship as “Buddhism.” As scholars of religion have argued, in attempting to rationalize “Buddhism” and “Hinduism” with a monotheistic sensibility, the historical figure of the Buddha needed to be placed into the general narrative of historical events as understood within an Abrahamic worldview, thereby leading early Western scholars to hypothesize that the Buddha may be Noah, Moses, or other Biblical figures.²³ British support for Christian schools and institutions at the expense of other religious education, especially in the latter half of the 19th century, gave rise to the association of the “Buddhist revival” with anti-British nationalism.²⁴ As interesting as these issues are, they too become possible in a milieu wherein anti-colonial

²² The question of religion is an issue of considerable scholarly and political attention in South Asia. On one hand, Buddhists and Hindus lay claim to having the oldest living religions on the planet, with sacred books and practices spanning some five to seven thousand years into the past. On the other hand, if religion is understood as being an institution for the “administration of grace” and secularism to be the positioning of the state as a neutral institution separating various organized religious points of view, it is historically suspect that “religion” in the tradition of the tribes of Abraham had much meaning in ancient South Asian traditions. While Islam, as part of its genealogy, does have the conception of a global *umma*, the birth of a central, authoritative bureaucracy for the administration of issues of faith required ontological separation of spiritual and manifest domains. What scholars have called “protestant Buddhism” emerged to challenge the particularly aggressive forms of colonial Christianity that had been openly tolerated in the heartland of Buddhist spirituality. It might instead be seen as the birth of Buddhism as a “religion” comparable to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. As discussed in chapters two and four, these divisions and the need for secularism to manage differences are arguably the outcome of British missionary attempts to rationalize Buddhism in the early 19th century, and Buddhist/Hindu attempts to mobilize the now normalized apparatuses of the colonial secular state to defend indigenous spirituality against Christian aggression. See Rev. Spence Hardy *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon* (1839) SOAS Missionary Archives, shelfmark: MMSL S123; Phillip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

²³ Elizabeth Harris, *Theravada Buddhism and the British Encounter* (London: Routledge, 2006): 15 –19.

²⁴ Neil DeVotta, *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004): 29-30.

activists began to use the apparatus of the liberal colonial state of Ceylon to make claims on it, rather than organize against it.

As noted above, much scholarly attention considers the early 20th century and the nationalist movements that ultimately led to independence in South Asia, but comparatively less attention has been devoted to the meeting of British and South Asian expressions of sovereignty, or the ensuing clashes that gave meaning to the state. While the late 19th century and early 20th century are periods of enormous importance to understanding the development of ethno-religious nationalism, when looking for the processes that led to state naturalization, that period represents a time when the peoples of Ceylon articulated their resistance to colonialism through organizing to challenge the newly established assemblage of colonial religion, schools, and state institutions; the “state” in this period was already formed, even if the “nation” was still very much taking shape.²⁵ In contrast, the tumultuous period under study here brings to light the contestations over land, sovereignty, economy, and spirituality, at times spanning the empire, that eventually normalized the political territorial foundations over which ethno-nationalism would later make its claims. In other words, the material and ontological contestations from 1815 to 1848 are the basis upon which the modern/colonial meaning of state territory took shape in Ceylon, as part of an expansive assemblage of global colonial violence that characterized the period of alleged “great peace” in the international realm.

Most secondary literature on Sri Lanka marks the origin of the Eelam-Lanka conflict to a few important events in the early independence era; specifically, the

²⁵ Nihal Perera, “Indigenising the Colonial City: Late 19th century Colombo and its Landscape” in *Urban Studies* 39/9 (2002): 1703 – 1721.

disenfranchisement of a subset of the Tamil-speaking community based in the central highland area, the 1956 Sinhala-Only language Act, and university testing designed to give an advantage to Sinhalese students over Tamils.²⁶ These events were important, but they are merely symptomatic of a greater catalyzing influence. In a more general sense, the civil war was about the modern limits of what it meant to be “sovereign” in the 21st century. The colonial encounter²⁷ in Sri Lanka, as well as across South Asia, did not introduce exploitation and difference, but it did produce a revolutionary new *scale* of exploitation that reformulated and hardened existing kinds of differences, such as caste, race, and gender. Engaging the colonial past to understand how the colonial encounter produced the modern state as a normal spatial entity is central because through doing so, we see the many faces of colonialism beyond administrative rule: ideas about human progress, the separation of material and spiritual realms, distinctions between land and body, and the “refrain” of territorial contestations that have produced material and ideational structures like the nation-state today. As Walter Mignolo explains, global modernity has a co-constitutive “dark side” that has always existed, but has rarely been factored into scholarly consideration: coloniality.²⁸

For the purposes of this research, one issue of investigation is the way the “state” as a territorially complete geographical and political unit with its associated components

²⁶ K.M. de Silva, “University Admissions and Ethnic Tensions in Sri Lanka: 1977 – 1982” R. Goldman and A.J. Wilson (eds.), *From Independence to Statehood* (London: Frances Pinter, 1984) p. 107; N. DeVotta, *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

²⁷ There is an important distinction between “colonialism” and the “colonial encounter.” The latter implies multiple actors engaged in a struggle or contestation of an ideational and material nature. The prior is a uni-directional exercise of power that is marked by a mute victim and audible aggressor. Though not mutually exclusive, the colonial encounter is a more accurate way to understand the ordinary enactment of politics in everyday life that has textured the development of the state as we understand it today.

²⁸ Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

such as race and nation has been read backwards in time as if it existed prior to the colonial encounter in postcolonial places. As R.A.L.H. Gunawardana notes, there exists no equivalent word for “race” in either Sinhala or Tamil until the modern/colonial era.²⁹ In situations in which formal independence has been followed by ethnonationalist civil war, such as the Sri Lankan case, the ontological assumptions that serve particular nationalist purposes in the present day are extremely important to consider. Benedikt Korf, for example, traces the impact of ethnonationalism in the scholarship of Sinhalese geographers in Sri Lanka.³⁰ Relatedly, E. Nissan and R.L. Stirrat speak to the hardening of ethnic identities in social science approaches to engaging with the past, challenging the apparent stability of Tamil and Sinhalese ethnic homogeneity. Their research highlights the presence of Tamil influence in the Sinhalese-dominated South and centre of the island, as well as Sinhalese presence in the Tamil-dominated North and East. In their words,

in the pre-modern states of Sri Lanka, there could not have been signs of incipient Sinhala-Tamil conflict as understood today because these categories did not bear the nationalist connotations that they now bear. The ‘state’ of the past and that of the present are very different; only the latter is associated with the idea of the ‘nation’, an idea which is too often projected back in time.³¹

My objective in this dissertation is not to identify a defining origin moment that could explain the ethnonationalist violence of the current day; rather, I am interested in better understanding the conceptual and historical processes that have, through the colonial

²⁹ R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, “The people of the lion: Sinhala identity and ideology in history and historiography” in Jonathan Spencer (ed.) *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2004 [1990]): 45.

³⁰ Cf.: Benedikt Korf, “Cartographic Violence: Engaging a Sinhala kind of geography” in C. Brun and T. Jazeel (eds.) *Spatializing Politics: culture, politics, and geography in post-colonial Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009): 100 – 121.

³¹ E. Nissan and R.L. Stirrat. “The generation of communal identities” in J. Spencer (ed.) *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*. (London: Routledge, 1990): 26

encounter, created, universalized, and normalized a single, Eurocentric way of organizing “sovereign” territory.

Territory

Within political science, the consideration of colonialism has focused on the foreign acquisition, exploitation, and governance of an indigenous territory, usually employing tactics to exacerbate existing differences within indigenous societies to divide and rule. Forceful application of European ideas such as “*terra nullis*” and papal decrees concerning the natural inferiority of non-white non-Christians facilitated barbarous strategies of domination aimed at imposing their will and then controlling territory and its “resources” through that imposition.³² Marxist accounts, particularly in World Systems Theory and Dependency approaches, have been concerned with the ways in which the structure of the international system perpetuates neocolonial relations after independence, but generally have little to say on the relevance of territorial transformation and the state itself. Rather, the state remains an ontologically assumable geographic entity within which resources can be exploited for the “core” or for the “periphery,” the satellite the owners of the means of production or the workers themselves. Marxist accounts generally accept the historical-economical explanation that “traditional” agricultural society gives way to the technological improvements of industrial society, out of which class hierarchies are consolidated and become the engines of social change.³³ Strategies to

³² Stuart Hall “The West and the Rest” in Bram Geiben and Stuart Hall (eds.) *The Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993): 275 – 332; Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1955]); Antony Anghie, “Francisco de Vitoria and the Colonial Origins of International Law,” *Social and Legal Studies* 5/3 (1996): 321 – 336.

³³ Cf.: Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1* trans. Ben Folks (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1990 [1867]); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (London: University of California Press, 2011

conquer and hold foreign territory include, but have not been limited to, ethnic cleansing, exploitation of internal divisions, slavery, incarcerations, displacement, and forced migration. Generally speaking, the study of colonialism in the “modern” world has been a narrative about European crown corporations and eventually colonial satellite-states using various techniques at their disposal to control and administer territory that was previously controlled by others.

This narrative rests on many assumptions. It assumes that prior to the colonial encounter, territory was constituted in a way that is sufficiently comparable to today’s understanding of territorial nation states. Where that was not the case, European legal thinking supposed that since indigenous people did not have the “common sense” or rationality to understand that they were in possession of “natural resources” in need of the labour of human work to cultivate value they could not be seen as capable of exercising “ownership” over that land.³⁴ Furthermore, the narrative of land and property requires an ahistorical understanding of territory and territoriality in which the structure and social meaning of the state is read backwards in time. In making that assumption, an understanding of territory as something that can or should be possessed, used, improved, and protected is universalized without due appreciation for the contested ways through which concepts such as private property and state territory have historically advanced a project of European domination over much of the world. In the Eurocentric literatures, the birth of ownership over land tends to be related to the historical enclosures in England

[1974]) ; A.G. Frank, ‘The Development of Underdevelopment’ *Monthly Review* 18/4 (1966): 17 – 34; John Beverley, “Dependency theory and the aporias of modernity: lessons from Latin America” Patrick Manning and Barry K. Gillis (eds.) *Andre Gunder Frank and Global Development: Visions, Remembrances, and Global Development* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 142 – 152.

³⁴ Cf.: John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, accessed May 14 2010, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/locke>: 10 – 18. For an alternative explanation in the context of Spanish colonialism in contemporary Latin America, see: Antony Anghie, “Francisco de Vitoria and the Colonial Origins of International Law,” *Social and Legal Studies* 5/3 (1996): 321 – 336.

that pushed serfs off of land that belonged to lords, but was conventionally understood to be “common” land for everyone’s use in exchange for unpaid labour.³⁵

The origins of sovereignty are taken up more centrally in chapter one of this dissertation; however, by way of introduction it is useful to draw out some basic connections between the value of territory and its historical role in shaping an exclusionary understanding of territory and sovereignty. The European origins of the word “sovereignty” itself are related to the authority of a monarch, though in medieval Europe boundaries were blurry and kinship meant more than steadfast borders.³⁶ Following Stuart Elden, the word “territory” derives from the Greek *khora* and the Latin *terra* and later, the classic Latin term *territorium*. The scale at which *territorium* described land that was owned however, Elden says, was always small:

It was understood as a possession, of relatively small scale, rather than as an object of political rule. It is only in the mid-fourteenth century, with the rediscovery of Roman law in the Italian city-states, that the notion of *territorium* became explicitly tied to that of jurisdiction.³⁷

Barry Hindess discusses the etymology of territory starting from the same place as Elden; however, he notes the disputed character of the word, arguing from the Oxford English Dictionary that while the origin of *territorium* could be *terra* meaning “land,” the word could also come from *terrere* meaning “to frighten” via *territory*, or “frightener.”³⁸ The disputed etymology, Hindess argues, offers hints to the political significance of the shared origins of both territory and terror:

While terror may sometimes pose a threat to the territorial order of states, the possibility that *territory* and *terror* derive from the same Latin root suggests that it

³⁵ Karl Polyani *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Times* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]).

³⁶ John Agnew, “The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory” *Review of International Political Economy* 1/1(1994): 60.

³⁷ Stuart Elden, “Thinking Territory Historically” *Geopolitics* 15/4 (2010): 758.

³⁸ Barry Hindess, “Terrortory” *Alternatives* 31/3 (2006): 244.

might also be an integral part of this order's functioning. When we refer to the territory of a state, a tribe, a people, a domestic cat, or a colony of ants, it is always associated with the threat of violence towards those who do not belong.³⁹

Nicholas Onuf's conceptual history of sovereignty complicates the above etymological approach in Elden and Hindess, but drawing attention to the fact that sovereignty as we understand it today is a composite term emerging out of three pre-modern antecedents: majesty, rule, and popular sovereignty. For Onuf, sovereignty is the modern fusion of these three antecedents, and when it is sufficiently challenged, can unravel into its composite parts.⁴⁰ As it will be demonstrated through discussions in the chapters, the use of terror and counter-terror has been an important dynamic that gave shape to state territoriality in the early to mid 19th century Ceylon. More generally, the threat of violence against those who do not belong gets to the heart of the modern dialectic of nationalism and counter nationalism that animate claims to total territorial rule. In the post-independence period of Sri Lankan politics, this has been especially true of the process of essentializing an outsider to fit the historical narrative. In determining the boundary that isolates the national other, one simultaneously produces a national self. As Simon Dalby describes,

The exclusion of the Other and the inclusion, incorporation and administration of the Same is the essential geopolitical moment. The two processes are complementary; the Other is excluded as the reverse side of the process of incorporation of the Same. Expressed in the terms of space and power, this is the basic process of geopolitics in which territory is divided, contested and ruled...the "Other" is seen as different if not an enemy. "We" are "the same" in that we are all citizens of the same nation, speak a similar language, share a culture. This theme repeatedly recurs in political discourse where others are portrayed as different and as threats; it is geopolitical discourse.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Onuf, "Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History" *Alternatives* 16 (1991): 425 – 446.

⁴¹ Dalby, cited in Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) (note 39): 180. See also: S. Dalby, "Geopolitical Discourse: The Soviet Union as Other" *Alternatives* 13/4 (1988): 417 – 418; S. Dalby, "The 'Kiwi

Dalby's concept of geopolitical discourse describes in general terms the problematic competitions and negotiations that occur in pursuit of the norm of total territorial rule. The development of the norms of territory and sovereignty that arguably still encapsulate most thinking and doing of politics in the 21st century have their origins in Latin and Greek, and as Elden notes, their political development occurred in the Italian city-states of the fourteenth century and, later, the rest of Europe.⁴²

Nation and State

Within the body of literature on nationalism, explanations for the link between nation and state vary. Some pursue lines of reasoning wedded to economic modernization, such as Ernest Gellner's contention that societies gradually move through stages of economic organization that later produce the ability to develop national ideology to master state territory, or Benedict Anderson's thesis that the nation-state is a limited sovereign territory held together by an imagined and largely symbolic sense of social solidarity that is proliferated by the modern mechanisms of "print capitalism" and national culture.⁴³ In his 1986 book, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, Partha Chatterjee argues that nationalism in the colonial world has taken the form of a derivative discourse of European ideas about social progress. He discusses the recurrent theme of relativism versus rationalism in social science in the context of the study of nationalism: rationalists normalize their particular epistemic standpoint, accusing relativists of eschewing cross-

Disease': geopolitical discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the South Pacific" *Political Geography* 12/5 (1993): 437-456.

⁴² Stuart Elden, "Thinking Territory Historically" *Geopolitics* 15/4 (2010): 757 – 761.

⁴³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

cultural science, while relativists accuse rationalists of simply asserting that the assumptions they begin with objectively reflect “reality.” Chatterjee argues that “this paradoxical situation is in fact an accurate reflection of the spurious philosophical premises on which the [nationalism] debate has been conducted in Anglo-American social science.”⁴⁴ He discusses at great length what he calls “liberal and conservative bourgeoisie-rationalist” approaches to nationalism, as well as their Marxist counterparts. While recognizing Anderson’s infusion of the ideational and linguistic as valuable determinants of nationalism, Chatterjee observes that, “instead of pursuing the varied, and often contradictory, *political* possibilities inherent in this process, Anderson seals up his theme with a sociological determinism.”⁴⁵ Chatterjee specifically takes up the arguments of Gellner and Anderson to conclude that while each takes a different approach, there is little substantive difference between them. It should come as little surprise then, that in *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Chatterjee seeks to “claim for us, the once colonized, the freedom of our imagination to reject the modular manifestations of sovereignty exported from Europe.”⁴⁶

The differences between Gellner and Anderson are significant. Gellner and Anderson are both clearly informed to differing degrees by historical materialism, but Gellner’s approach bears much more resemblance to the lineage of stage-theory and modernization theory that was particularly influential in early post World War II comparative politics.⁴⁷ Anderson’s model of nationalism is more relationally defined in

⁴⁴ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986):14

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21

⁴⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993):11

⁴⁷ Cf.: Ernest Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* (1983); W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

the sense that *Imagined Communities* advances the thesis that national consciousness actually developed experimentally in the colonies before taking on significance in Europe, a position shared by Stuart Elden in his recent work on territory.⁴⁸ Gellner suffers from the methodological problem of looking for ideal types and generalizable explanations informed by a belief that the making of the modern capitalist world is best seen from the changes in the means of production, which reduces complexity to economic determinism.⁴⁹ I believe that the sentiment Chatterjee is arguing for from a postcolonial perspective can be alternatively understood in light of the last twenty years of postcolonial and decolonial research as diagnosing a problem of *universalism* located within Eurocentric reason, be it in the “ideational” (Anderson) camp or the “structural” (Gellner) camp. The point is more obvious in the case of Gellner, but is worth dwelling on in the case of Anderson. Even within the Anderson’s more ideational approach to understanding the rise of national consciousness, he sets up universal, cosmological conditions as pre-requisites for the rise of modern nationalism. In describing a general, and universal understanding of history and cosmology, Anderson argues that print capitalism enabled people to separate themselves from a sense of political authority deriving from divine hierarchy and toward a more inclusive and horizontal understanding of solidarity.⁵⁰ Marxist apprehensions about the falseness of cosmological realms texture Anderson’s analysis. My problem with his analysis is that he overly homogenizes cosmology and its relationship with sovereignty in this formulation, presuming that the coexistence of cosmology and history does not allow for the rise of modern nationalism

⁴⁸ Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983); Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 245.

⁴⁹ Ernest Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* (1983): 10 – 37.

⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983): 22 - 36

within an imagined community. In this way, Anderson, like Gellner, indeed does present a universal state of being and understanding of linear temporality through which societies must move in order to arrive at modern national consciousness. In so doing, there remains only a single, universal experience of history with cultural manifestations of false consciousness that more or less produces similar spatial outcomes. As will be seen in chapters two and four in particular, two ontologically distinct notions of sovereignty do interact in Kandy, and the eventual rise of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in the late colonial period demonstrates: a.) Buddhist spatial ontology is not the same as Abrahamic ontology, b.) nevertheless, the conflict over sovereignty did produce a universal notion of territory, even if it did not produce a universal notion of nation. The point then, which will become more clear in chapter one, is that a pluriversal approach, calibrated to study multiple ontologies, offers a different kind of narrative than a universal lens grounded in either structural (Gellner) or ideational (Anderson) notions of historical movement. Through a positivist lens, calibrated to see the generalizable, sociological characteristics of the phenomena of the state, even when the colonial question emerges in the study of the rise of nation or the rise of state, the concept of nation or state remains firmly Eurocentric. This gives rise to the problem Dipesh Chakrabarty identifies as doing European history in non-European parts of the world, harkening back to Ranajit Guha's critique of Hegel's universalizing understanding of the state that has been seminal to modern sociology since the 19th century.⁵¹ It is worth highlighting how the conception of territory that emerges from postcolonial and subaltern studies as advanced by Guha and Chatterjee remains highly modernist, caught (as are so many studies of the state) between

⁵¹Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Ranajit Guha *History at the Limits of World History* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002).

a juxtaposition of Marxist vs. Weberian approaches.⁵² Exploring the way that postcolonial approaches have described the arrival of colonized places into “World History” is thus an important moment for understanding the normalization of Eurocentric “universals” that have played a role in sustaining the coloniality of the state, as we will see in the sections below.

The State of the State

Social science research aimed at peace and conflict studies and state failure in postcolonial areas tends to look for explanations based on institutional collapse, the “curse” of having volatile natural resources, and the existence of too many ethnic nations or tribes within a sovereign territory. Most of these studies have no significant engagement with the colonial foundations upon which these postcolonial territories were established. The literature might be broadly categorized as those seeking universal explanations vs. seeking multiple explanations for state failure. Both however, take the prior existence of the state for granted. More nuanced studies point to the need to de-link from overly positivistic explanations, arguing that political reality cannot be reduced to generalizable theories. R. H. Bates exemplifies the positivist approach to post-independence states within political science, positing that ruling elites in Africa are “specialists in violence” who will maintain political order so long as they can protect their privileged place at the helm of the state.⁵³ At face value, this might seem a logical category through which to analyse the Sri Lankan state as I have described it in the first

⁵² Peter Evans et. al. (eds.) *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 3 – 44; 347 – 367.

⁵³ R. Bates, “The Logic of State Failure: Learning from Late-Century Africa,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25/4 (2008): 297 – 314.

pages of this introduction; however, in taking an approach like this, all the nuances that gave rise to modern territorial orders are jettisoned as concerns exogenous to the ahistorical presence of the contemporary state. Relatedly, Paul Collier starts with the independence period, suggesting that state institutions need to be solidified soon after independence through facing external pressure. The inability to solidify sovereignty in many post-colonial states leads Collier to suggest that the United Nations (UN) ought to take over sovereignty in resource-rich areas of Africa until African states can “scale up” their ability to exercise sovereignty.⁵⁴ More insightfully, Martin Doornbas argues that a singular understanding of sovereignty and the state can lead to contemporary policy prescriptions whereby the only way to have a “successful” state is to have a neoliberal economic-incentive structure. Thus, contemporary state collapse provides an “opportunity” to establish market-principles and enable states to jumpstart modernity, which is an aspect of the policy solutions to keep postcolonial states together identified by Bates (2008), Collier (2009), and A. Ghani and C. Lockhart (2008).⁵⁵ On a slightly different trajectory, Stephen Krasner has proposed “sharing sovereignty” in a limited and institutionalized way in order to facilitate the growth of democratic governance in failed or failing states.⁵⁶

These studies exemplify the problem of taking the history and sovereign ontologies underlying the postcolonial state for granted, as the range of political and economic possibilities to resolve political problems remains far too limited. Not all work in this area is so narrowly envisioned; Tobias Haggman and Markus V. Hoehne (2009),

⁵⁴ Paul Collier, “The Political Economy of State Failure” *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 25/2 (2009): 219 – 240.

⁵⁵ Martin Doornbas “State Collapse and Fresh Starts: Some Critical Reflections,” *Development and Change* 33:5 (2002): 797-815; A. Ghani and C. Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008): 169-231.

⁵⁶ Stephen Krasner, “The Case for Shared Sovereignty” *Journal of Democracy* 16/1 (2005): 69 – 83.

for example, draw attention to the distorting effects of assuming that the “state” ought to be the primary organizer of political life. They consider the international community’s emphasis on restoring sovereign power and capability to the Somali capital city of Mogadishu rather than building upon the indigenous practices of sovereignty that have begun to reassert themselves in the absence of state power in places like Somaliland or Puntland.⁵⁷ The fixation with reifying the Westphalian boundaries that are normal to the modern nation state in the peace-building and state failure literatures is so central that, at times, it would appear as though the restoration of peace is marked not by the end of violence, but when a sovereign government can convince another sovereign government and the international community to coerce refugees to return “home” so that aid dollars can begin to flow again.⁵⁸ Such strategies lead to policy prescriptions aimed at “fixing” postcolonial quagmires by simply patching up who controls sovereignty rather than substantively re-considering how the foundations upon which political order is meant to rest might be the source of the problems. The popular catch-phrase, “AfPak” in Western security circles, which reduces the historical colonial relations out of which modern Pakistan and Afghanistan emerged to a balance-of-power oriented Western coalition of interests without regard for the regional geopolitics and substantive issues of decolonization, is a prime example.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Tobias Hagmann and Markas V. Hoehne, “Failures of the State Failure Debate: Evidence from the Somali Territories,” *Journal of International Development* 21:1 (2009): 42-57.

⁵⁸ Ajay Parasram, Michael Spacek, and Martha Chertkow, “Refugees and Peacebuilding in Africa: A review of two-decades of cases” (paper presented at Canadian Association for Forced Migration and Refugee Studies conference, Montreal, Quebec, May 11-13, 2011).

⁵⁹ Ajay Parasram, “Regionalizing ‘AfPak’ in the Graveyard of Hubris” (paper presented at the Canadian Asian Studies Association conference, Vancouver, B.C., Oct. 8 – 11, 2009); Ajay Parasram, “Call In the Neighbours: Indian Views on Regionalizing Afghanistan Strategies” *Asia Pacific Bulletin* May 14, 2009. <https://goo.gl/8urzW0>.

The above studies look to explain the many crises of postcolonial sovereignty as failures of institutional accommodation, “lacking” in sovereign ability or experience, and/or an inability to manage ethnic rivalries across “every inch” of sovereign territory. I maintain that answers to post-colonial crises like Tamil Eelam-Sri Lanka, but also IS-Iraq, pipeline politics in Turtle Island (North America), and across much of the (post)colonial world require a deeper consideration of how the colonial encounter produced the physical possibility for “total territorial rule” to displace other forms of organizing human societies. The chapters of this dissertation are thematic, multi-scalar engagements that connect very local empirical data to broader imperial networks, highlighting the importance of reading anti-colonial and colonial activism as simultaneous rather than sequential or dialectical processes. I maintain that in order to make sense of the many postcolonial crises involving territory in the 21st century, we must first understand the historical and conceptual processes that naturalized “total territorial rule.” Before examining this process however, it is relevant to say a few words about the organization of politics on the island and in the Southern Asian region.

Rajamandala, Galactic Sovereignty, and the Modern State

Different genealogies gave rise to spatial organizations of political life before becoming entangled with still-developing European ideas about territory and sovereignty, subjects I take up more substantively in chapters one and two. I apply the galactic sovereignty model in chapter two, but here will introduce the concept to provide a historical context for appreciating how territorial politics functioned in the many centuries prior to European arrival in Ceylon. The term “galactic polities” or “galactic sovereignty” has

been advanced in English language scholarship concerned with South and Southeast Asia to better describe spatial organizations of power and will be discussed throughout.

The Mauryan Empire, which spanned much of South and Southeast Asia between 322 and 185 BCE has had a long-term effect on the practice of political association within that large region, particularly under Emperor Ashoka. Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah describes Buddhist rule in Sri Lanka prior to the colonial encounter with Europeans with the concept of “galactic sovereignty” derived through the *rajamandala* (circle of kings) theorized by Kautilya, advisor to the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta in the fourth century BCE.⁶⁰ Galactic sovereignty, following Tambiah, refers to the concentric circles of sovereign authority emanating from a small kingdom outwards. Pre-colonial Sri Lanka had overlapping kingdoms in the North (Jaffna), centre (Kandy) and South (Kotte) and at the “galactic limits” of sovereignty, ordinary people would identify with a kingdom based on who was asking the question rather than an essential relationship to the centre. Tambiah as well as Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne use the concept of galactic sovereignty to describe the Kandyan kingdom in central Ceylon; in the dissertation, I use the concept to describe the territorial politics of *rajamandala*’s encounter with British understandings of sovereignty.⁶¹

Building on the metaphor of galaxies to understand the politics of territorial logics coming into contact, we can imagine the gravitational impact of galactic collisions. Our

⁶⁰ Stanley Jeyaraja. Tambiah, “The Galactic Polity in Southeast Asia,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3/3 (2013): 503 – 534; S.J. Tambiah “The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Political Kingdoms in Southeast Asia,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293/1 (1977): 69 – 97; Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of States: Violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (New York: Berghan, 2011).

⁶¹ Nira Wickramasinghe *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (London: Hurst, 2006); Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, “The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmographical Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhist Tradition” in A. Wagner et. al. (eds.) *Law, Culture, and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2 (United States: Springer Publishing, 2013): 578 – 580.

own “Milky Way” galaxy will collide with our neighbouring “Andromeda” galaxy in approximately four billion years, and once more about a billion years after that. The collision is not so rigid as two bricks colliding; rather, it is porous and will transform both the Milky Way and the Andromeda.⁶² Similarly, the coming together of genealogies of sovereign practice through the colonial/modern encounter represents this kind of collision, one that will change both. These collisions are not unique – spatial organizations have been colliding long before, and will continue long after, the temporal frame of reference that is today. Galactic collisions radically transform the colliding entities in ways that might be astronomically predictable; however, sovereign collisions are not scientifically determined and the outcome is not a question of one model dominating another, rather, the issue is about transformation and the production of something new, albeit on unequal terms. Used differently, James C. Scott applies the idea of galactic systems to describe the relationship between the hill peoples of upland Southeast Asia and the lowland peoples who lived as subjects of states. Though hill peoples were not subjects of the states that exercised sovereign authority through the projection of state-space around them, Scott says,

they were active participants in the economic system of exchange and in the even wider cosmopolitan circulation of ideas, symbols, cosmology, titles, political formulas, medical recipes, and legends... this cultural buffet allowed hill societies to take just what they wanted from it and put it to precisely the use they chose.⁶³

In Scott’s use of the term and its regional application to the spatial limits of Sino or Indic empires, the “galactic system” is a political arrangement that facilitates the inclusion of people beyond the sovereign limits of a kingdom, yet gives those people a great deal of

⁶² See this short video designed using data from the Hubble Space Telescope, projecting what might happen when these galaxies collide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4disyKG7XtU>

⁶³ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009): 305 – 306.

agency in engaging with chosen aspects of statist life.

Scott's understanding of the spatial organization of political life in Southeast Asia differs considerably from the kind of spatial developments documented by Charles Tilly in his consideration of the development of the state in Europe. Tilly's thousand-year macro-history of state development in Europe charts the simultaneous development of three technologies of rule: roving armies, the city-state, and the empire. What made the city-state central to the later development of nation-states, by Tilly's reckoning, was the ability to construct walls and moats that could be used to outlast attacking enemies within fortresses.⁶⁴ Although, as Eric Wolf notes, no human society develops in isolation, the sovereign "galactic neighbourhood" affects the development of spatial organizations.⁶⁵ Similarly, although spatial organizations in South Asia have had long relations with the rest of Southeast Asia, ancient Greece, and Africa, South Asian and, later, Islamic influences played greater roles in the historical development of spatial organizations in South Asia until the colonial encounter with the British. Nevertheless, reviewing the monologues of liberal colonialists in the latter portion of the 19th century, it would seem as though British imperialism was the only influence worthy of having, a developmentalist inevitability necessary for the betterment of lesser peoples around the world. As the barrister Coleman Phillips, writing in Aoteara (New Zealand) in 1875 observes,

By a curious chain of circumstances, we [British] have assumed the position of protectors of native tribes and suppressors of slavery. We are trying to elevate the East Indian; we are appealed to from Africa; and even the inhabitants of Polynesia petition us for protection. It appears as if those races of the human family,

⁶⁴ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990 – 1990* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1990).

⁶⁵ Eric Wolf *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 3 – 22.

inhabiting the tropical lands of the earth, actually required the protection of such a Northern Power as ourselves, not only for the present, but for the centuries to come. Those races are constitutionally unfit to cope with more Northern races, and England may have conferred a very great boon in assuming the position which she has done. True enough, by doing so we have unintentionally pledged ourselves to look to the welfare of hundreds of native and savage tribes, and we must continue to do so. Not only shall we have to regard their welfare, but also their protection from civilized and uncivilized invasion.⁶⁶

Europe in general, and Britain in particular, from the vantage point of those engaged in the project of colonization, was the universe within which all the races of the world could reach for civilization. “Elevation” cannot come via an indigenous political system like the galactic *mandala* system, or any other indigenous socio-political order that would be unfit to “cope” with Northern peoples. The colonial archives are littered with accounts that re-enforce Phillips’ point of view on the subject of British colonialism. Re-engaging the colonial past is not important for disproving such obvious mistruths/myths/fantasies about bringing the savage world into civilization; rather, it is important because through it we better understand how ideas like empire become de-politicized and normalized. The normalization of ideas that crowd out, silence, or otherwise denigrate other ways of being and knowing in the world is one of the most pervasive and long-term implications of the colonial past and postcolonial present. Frantz Fanon captures the problem well with reference to ontology:

Ontology – once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside – does not permit us to understand the being of a black man. For not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man...His metaphysics, or less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Coleman Phillips (Barrister-at-Law, New Zealand). British Colonization and British Commerce (London: Edward Stanford, 55, Charing Cross, S.W., 1875. Price, One Shilling). British National Library, shelfmark: 8154.e.1.(9.)

⁶⁷ Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lamm Markmann. (London: Pluto Press, 2008 [1952]): 82.

The identification of oneself through the boundaries of the colonial state is in some ways a practical necessity today because the past cannot be undone. However, giving too much ontological weight to colonial categories of “separation” is a dangerous urge, either applied to states established through genocide and settler-colonialism (such as those in the so-called “new world”) or through “natives” seeking approval and membership in structures of colonial modernity. Reclaiming uncolonized “pasts” instead of colonial histories is important work if de-colonial futures are to be realized.⁶⁸

Towards enriching a debate of spatial possibilities for post-war Sri Lanka/Tamil Eelam, Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne develops Tambiah’s galactic sovereignty in its application to the central Kandyan kingdom in Ceylon. By drawing attention to the importance of virtual sovereignty practiced through ritual and architectural symbolism at the ideational level, and the spatial structure of political order as replication of the galactic centre in managing and integrating difference, Wijeyeratne makes a compelling case for bringing together traditional and modern aspects of sovereignty.⁶⁹ Wijeyeratne is mostly interested in exploring the ontological starting points of Theravada Buddhism that made galactic understandings of sovereignty possible in pre-British Ceylon, but he begins his essay discussing the civil war between the Tamil Tigers and the predominantly Sinhalese-Buddhist South. He argues that the civil war was largely about the inability to organize space based on a highly fetishized *modern* understanding of territorial sovereignty mapped backwards onto much more complex models of spatial organization

⁶⁸ Robbie Shilliam *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles, Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 1 – 34.

⁶⁹ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, “The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmographical Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhist Tradition” in A. Wagner et. al. (eds.) *Law, Culture, and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2 (United States: Springer Publishing, 2013).

that defined what he instead calls the “*mandala*” state prior to the production of colonial state-space.⁷⁰ As Nira Wickramasinghe notes, there were no clear boundaries between the three predominant kingdoms (Jaffna/Kandy/Kotte) that were in existence in the early days of the colonial encounter. The very practice of what we understand today as “sovereignty” was different, animated by local rituals as much (and perhaps more) than it was by exercising political rule directly.⁷¹ Nevertheless, there is a universalizing tendency in the “modern era” through which conceptions of land, territory, sovereignty, and national identity have all become interwoven. As Derek Hall observes, despite the many different genealogies and traditions of sovereign practice all over the world, modern sovereignty

gives understandings of territory a peculiar precision: this piece of land two meters inside the country’s border is our territory, to be defended to the death, while that piece two meters outside the border is no concern of ours.⁷²

As will be explored in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, the legal document that passed between the marine territories between the Dutch and the British in 1796 might suggest a logical continuity of rule over territory, but there was no agreement about what the relationship between the Dutch and the Kandyan kingdom even was, as the Kandyans saw the Dutch as their subordinates; also the process of incorporation and writing of modern state territory was never uniformly applied or exercised throughout the island. To treat the island as a single territorial entity would be to commit the very kinds of ontological and epistemic crimes I seek to critique within this project.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Nira Wickramasinghe. *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006): 8 – 9.

⁷² Derek Hall, *Land* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013): 13.

The point of considering the above sampling of spatial organizations is to demonstrate to the reader the diverse genealogies of this modern thing we call “the state.” My objective in this dissertation is to consider different pathways through which the spatial organization we call the modern territorial state came to be in one postcolonial place, Sri Lanka, drawing on elements of the region’s history to raise important questions about the politics of “total territorial rule” and its normalization via the colonial encounter. This raises questions about the continuities of colonial violence into the “post” colonial period. Through the colonial encounter, it is not only the case that the norm of total territorial rule became the only territorial option available to freedom-seeking people; the experience of colonially administered modernity also worked to provoke a kind of spatial “forgetting,” or perhaps more accurately, “fetishizing” of national histories.

By the 1940s, the colonies of South Asia and elsewhere had not only endured hundreds of years of indirect and direct colonial rule, they had also endured British-engineered famines and their peoples had travelled across continents to serve in colonial armies fighting so-called “Great Wars” to feed the hubris of inter-European geopolitical expansionism amidst an evolving “balance of power.” Much effort was exerted, much blood spilled, and many diplomatic rhetorical performances made in the long struggles to resist European occupation and rule over the various territories that comprise contemporary South Asia. Indeed, this narrative played out in different theatres across South Asia, continental Africa, and the Caribbean. Over the many generations of anticolonial organizing, colonialism came to be personified – perhaps even *essentialized* – in the body of the outsider as “true” geopolitical discourse.

The subject of this dissertation is of broad interest to scholars concerned with the incubation of colonial violence in the day-to-day practices of *being* a modern nation state. Working in the theoretical and empirical tradition of postcolonial and decolonial social science, I aim to contribute to social science research de-naturalizing the territorial stability of the modern nation-state in order to draw attention to the unfinished (and perhaps unfinishable) business of territorializing spatial organizations. Building a greater understanding of the social construction of state territory, especially the social construction of postcolonial territory, will help us understand the tremors and earthquakes shaking 21st century global security in Sri Lanka/Tamil Eelam, as well as elsewhere in the region and beyond. Rajapaksa's demand to control "every inch" of territory is a logical outcome of the exercise of universalized, modern, state sovereignty, but the inability to think beyond the limits of this single spatial pathway reflects the paucity of ideas about how to organize society in the 21st century.

Methodology, Archival Sources, and the Problem of the "Pre-political"

Archiving in relief and its limitations

This research is designed to contribute methodologically and conceptually to de-centering Eurocentric ontological assumptions and epistemic approaches in the study of postcolonial place. De-centering is important, as it does not mean rejecting or moving past ideas of a Eurocentric ilk; Europe is a *part* of the world, but its localized experiences and ways of making sense of the world have been over-privileged in social science research concerning the nature of the world and the human condition. In order to tell stories about Europe, scholars un-focus the "periphery" in order to focus on what we imagine to be the "core." I un-focus Europe in this dissertation. The result of doing so

makes a geographical region that is very familiar to Western-trained readers seem, at times, over-simplified. This is not because I think that I can collapse the many intricate processes and practices that give meaning to British expressions of sovereignty by the 19th century, for example, when I conflate them as “Christian/British” ontologies of sovereignty contrasted with “Buddhist/Kandyan” ontologies of sovereignty in chapter two. In historical research, moving beyond the biases of the colonial archives and the epistemic colonialism inoculated in secondary literature, one must purposefully un-focus Europe in order to focus on something else. Larissa Lai, working from G.C. Spivak’s work on “reading against the grain,” describes the process of postcolonial research as “reading official documents for the truths that might emerge in their gaps, counter to their intended purpose and thus counter to their overt framing.”⁷³ Histories of colonialism talk about colonial territory as if Ceylon (as a pre-configured and already existing political entity) simply “fell” to the British from the Dutch, despite the knowledge that Kandy was long independent and operating upon its own sovereign system. That both of these conditions coexist in historical records speaks not to a lack of knowledge about territorial diversity on the island, rather, it speaks to an agreement that this diversity does not matter. I disagree, and this project seeks to demonstrate why the pre-colonial pluriversality of sovereignty matters for understanding state formation on the one hand, but also for informing contemporary peace and conflict studies in former colonies which became modern states before nations through the modern, colonial encounter. The archival research conducted in the preparation of this dissertation speaks to the fact that colonial archives were not only disinterested in what ordinary people thought and did,

⁷³ Larissa Lai, *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2014): 14.

colonial administrators and missionaries were, at times, unaware of the significance of their actions. The archives can only take us so far; there are necessary, albeit speculative, leaps that must be made to connect the dots in order to glimpse the agency of colonized people. It is telling of the limitations of colonial knowledge that instances of criminality, in colonial archives that were designed to aid in the bureaucratic administration of colonialism, are perhaps the best way to perceive political agency of colonized peoples.

Methodologically, I practiced “archiving in relief,” which is a sculpting metaphor applied to archiving: when a sculptor carves their piece in relief, it gives the impression that the sculpted material has been raised above the background. Yet, to carve in relief, the sculptor starts with a flat surface, and chisels away the background to elevate the carving. To “archive in relief,” is to use elevated historical artefacts (government ordinances, legal reforms, correspondences, diaries, missionary publications, newspapers, court martials, etc.) to better understand the background that has been discarded in mainstream historical accounts that have been collected to consciously or subconsciously serve a vested political interest.⁷⁴ The archivist, like the sculptor, chisels away the parts of the material that are not relevant to the dominant historical narrative, and these are the parts s/he studies in order to see the background more clearly. In other words, liberal historiography that speaks directly to concerns of statecraft valorises sovereigns, raising narratives concerning kings and states. But around these elevated objects, a background is still visible. By examining the background in particular, I strive to understand how the colonial encounter helped produce Sri Lanka’s “ethnic trouble.” This is related to the

⁷⁴ I am grateful to Fazeela Jiwa for naming this methodology after countless hours of conversation on the subject.

subaltern studies project, specifically Spivak's reminder to look for consequences of epistemic violence while "reading against the grain."

There are important limitations to archiving in relief that are especially central to this study. The most important limitation is the fact that only colonial archival sources were consulted in the preparation of this dissertation. The timing of my research coincided with diplomatic problems between the Rajapaksa led government in Sri Lanka, and the Harper led government in Canada making it impossible to secure the research visa needed to complete my planned studies in 2013 in Sri Lanka. As a next best alternative, I travelled instead to London, where I split my time between the Colonial Office holdings at the British National Archives and the British National Library on the one hand, as well as the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Church held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. The British Library's expansive Asia-Africa reading room offered access to English language newspaper coverage of Ceylon which was of particular importance to shaping chapter four, but also afforded extremely useful publications of primary texts prepared by Sri Lankan historians. Through consulting these sources, I was able to narrow my focus initially to key flashpoints of territorial contestations, though the list quickly became far too vast to contend with in a dissertation. By identifying key moments of concern, like the Kandyan Convention, the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms, and in particular the shifting focus of anti-colonial activism in the late 19th century away from fighting the state directly, I was able to prioritize recurring figures within colonial discourse, and follow up on important local events while identifying points of overlap from different archival sources.

I spent my first month at the British Library, and then the next two months between the British National Archives and the Missionary archives getting thinner, more

bureaucratic and administrative data at the prior, and thicker social and personal accounts at the latter. Within all of these archives, but particularly within the Missionary archives, I read “horizontally,” as looking in adjacent boxes, diaries, and incomplete manuscripts to trace events and people. While in London, I was a visiting Research Fellow at Queen Mary, University of London, where I had five substantive research meetings with Professor Robbie Shilliam, half of which were concerned with the colonality of archives and methods of reading against the archives. His suggestion to read horizontally and to “come up for air” periodically yielded both rich and unexpected findings, and much needed conceptual clarity.

Much of this rich data was not able to make it into the final version of the dissertation, but have nonetheless shaped and directed the search for the pieces of data that ultimately do make it into the final copy. Originally, I had not planned on religion nor ontology being especially important to my research, but the archival research in progress led to the development of chapter two and the ultimate refocusing of the dissertation toward understanding the politics of sovereignty as ontological conflict. Importantly, while I was on occasion able to find original Sinhalese and Tamil sources in the archives consulted, I am not able to read, write, or converse in these languages. Consequently, any representation of ordinary people that I am able to consult comes either through colonial translations in newspapers and government gazettes, or through a reliance on Sri Lankan historians. This language barrier is itself an ontological limitation, the violence of translation is immediately apparent as outlined in the pages below. This is the reason, however, that I do not claim in this dissertation to speak for or on behalf of any particular interest, Tamil, Sinhalese, or any other local population. This presents a kind of ontological horizon beyond which I cannot reach, however, by focusing on the

structural aspect of state formation as a critical juncture in modern, colonial history, I am able to meaningfully discuss the main concern of this research, which is the violence of universal reason applied to the formation of the modern, territorial state. By keeping the focus of the dissertation on the question of sovereign ontological transformation, the key objective of this study lies in explaining the diverse contestations that gave rise to the modern nation state and the associated norm of “total territorial rule” that is at the heart of sovereignty in the state system as we know it, but of particular importance to post-colonies who know better than most what it means to live under the sovereignty of colonizers.

The problem of the “pre-political”

The epistemic violence within historical research and the idea of the archive as a container of facts about the past takes on important implications in the writing of post-colonial histories. In this final conceptual section of the introduction, I discuss some of these assumptions in terms of preponderant dating of the moment of state formation, as well as the normalization of developmentalist reasoning as it relates to state formation. As noted above, most secondary literature identifies the 1815 Kandyan Convention or the 1832 Colebrooke-Cameron reforms as the central issues of concern to the consolidation of British administrative rule.⁷⁵ The Colebrooke-Cameron reforms were extremely important in terms of the reorganization of the colonial government as well political, juridical, and geographical transformations on the island.⁷⁶ They were steeped in both

⁷⁵ Cf. G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Centre, 2005 [1952]): 13 – 24; 52 – 58; Chandra Richard de Silva, *Sri Lanka: A History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1987): 146 – 157

⁷⁶ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 56 – 58

liberal and colonial values: liberal in the establishment of a legislative council to advise the governor and centralizing of the administrative hub of the island in the coastal colonial fort-city of Colombo,⁷⁷ and colonial in the powerlessness of the “unofficial” members of that assembly. These unofficial positions were reserved for three “native” members representing Sinhalese, Burgher, and Tamil people respectively. As unofficial members, they were unable to compel changes in the legislative agenda that were not first agreed to by the Governor. Another particularly colonial and liberal attribute of the reforms was the attempt to chip away at Kandyan autonomy by administratively incorporating the interior into the Maritime Provinces and the overarching administrative capital in Colombo.⁷⁸ This is evident in the new provincial boundaries established in 1832, as shown in Appendix A.

While dates are often used in the writings of Histories as a kind of aid to the reader to imagine great shifts or “critical junctures,” such moments speak to the broad array of contradicting forces that manifest, often in hindsight, as the pivotal change in affairs.⁷⁹ My problem with stating that 1815 or 1832 are the birth of the centralized colonial state under British authority is that this ignores the importance of political

⁷⁷ As Mendis argues, however, the motivation for the administrative changes came from the Colonial Office and not from the administrative headquarters in Ceylon. The legislative councils were not intended to introduce representative democracy so much as they were to serve as forms of checks and balances from the absolute authority of the Governor.

⁷⁸ While the overarching philosophical motivation guiding colonial governance as articulated in the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms can be considered “liberal” in terms of promoting institutions and law and order, the inclusion of an assembly of “natives” to advise the governor should not be confused with ambition for gradual representative government. As K.M. de Silva writes, “The Colonial Office, like Colebrooke, did not regard it [legislative council] as a representative assembly in embryo, but looked upon it as a check upon the Governor in the sense that it was an independent and fairly reliable source of information for the Secretary of State who would otherwise be dependent on the Governor alone for information with regard to the colony and its affairs.” See K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1981): 262. See also: Chandra de Silva *Sri Lanka: A History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987): 149.

⁷⁹ Michael Hardt, “Sovereignty,” *Theory & Event* 5/4 (2002), accessed October 23, 2016. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v005/5.4hardt.html

agency and fundamental equality of the people involved in the creation of state territory, albeit under extremely unequal terms. Politics, as Jacques Rancière argues, is not a conflict within the *arche*; it is a rupture in the logic of that *arche*, the re-inscribing of meaning into social relations that comes from rejecting the logic of the existing order. Though Rancière's thinking developed in the socio-political context of 1968 Paris, this approach to understanding the nature of politics offers an important lens through which to rethink the 30-year period of colonial state formation in Ceylon, because the secondary history only conceives of ordinary people as "looking backward" to pre-political times. The secondary historical literature on the early to mid-19th century in Ceylon is forthcoming about the obvious crimes committed by the British against the indigenous populations, but the authors tend to accept many of the subtler normative assumptions about the placement of the British as being further along in historical development/accomplishment.⁸⁰ Rancière's conception of politics insightfully focuses analytical attention on a non-hierarchical understanding of politics that breaks with conventional histories (both South Asian and Western) of this time period that historicize ordinary people as "pre-political" or, in Rancière's terms, the *demos* who are not meant to speak or are unable to speak sensibly.⁸¹ I agree with Rancière that "politics is first and foremost an intervention upon the visible and the sayable,"⁸² which, requires close

⁸⁰ Partha Chatterjee addresses this to some degree by distinguishing between an "internal" and "external" understanding of nation, where the external nation belies a homogenous kind of solidarity, and the internal aspects of the nation remain fragmentary and contradicting. For Chatterjee, this is a defining difference of the postcolonial context. See: Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

⁸¹ As Rancière explains in his fourth thesis on politics, the term democracy was invented by its opponents, and is meant to refer to those who are lacking the requisite skills to participate in politics. See Jacques Rancière et. al., "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory & Event* 5/3 (2001): 6. See also: Davide Panagia, "'Partage du sensible': the distribution of the sensible," *Jacques Rancière Key Concepts*. Edited by Jean-Philippe Deranty (Durham, Acumen, 2010): 95 – 104.

⁸² Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics" *Theory & Event* 5/3 (2001): 10.

attention to how “natives” appear in the colonial archives.⁸³ Like Rancière’s description of the demonstration that resists the police order to “move along, there’s nothing to see here,” disturbances, arrests, and failed attempts that have occurred and are visible – at least when archiving in relief – ought to be interpreted as democratic politics that shaped the evolution of anti-colonial political organizing and the colonial state that was compelled to respond to these everyday threats. My point differs from Rancière’s in that I am not proposing a binary opposition in which elite interests serve as a kind of police power; I mean instead to argue that elites and ordinary people respond to one another in tandem and that relationship produces something new, in this case, a satellite state embedded in a broader network of British imperialism.

It is possible to re-read colonial archives “in relief” through looking for the enactment of “politics” in the way Rancière describes, because as policies and taxes were often discussed between London and Colombo, the fear of rebellion was part of the policy approach taken by the colonial government.⁸⁴ The thirty-year period covered in chapter four represents the “passing through” and reformulation of two ontologies, out of which the norm of total territorial rule emerged. Although only the Uva (1817-1818) and Matale (1848) rebellions have been historicized as being relevant because of the actions

⁸³ For the purposes of this study, the emphasis of representation of “natives” in 19th century Ceylon is sufficient. However, as historians of Europe have long maintained, a similar problem of exclusion exists with the representation of peasants and women within Europe, giving rise to the project of “history from below” as a strategy to correct or mitigate the severity of these exclusions. See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1966 [1963]); Fredrick Kranz (ed) *History from Below* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Eric Hobsbaum, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004)

⁸⁴ Cf. “A Few Remarks Upon Colonel Forbes’ Pamphlet on recent Disturbances in Ceylon in a letter to Sir R. Peel, Bart, M.P. & C by Colonist, April 12th 1850” British National Library, shelfmark: 8023.cc.7.(1.); see also the collection of exchanges between Governor Torrington and the Earl Grey: K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 1850, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the ‘rebellion’ of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington* (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965). British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

they compelled out of the colonial authorities, smaller scale protests and interventions occurred as well. They represent “dissensus,” by interrupting the normal order of society by “making visible that which has no reason to be seen.”⁸⁵ In this way, Rancière’s radical egalitarianism, though steeped in Western thought as it is, is useful in making visible “subaltern” politics that have influenced the normalization of Eurocentric stateness. Indeed, the secondary literature and the archival material on which much of this is based take as their frame of reference the material accomplishment or official failure of a military action as the marker of importance. Rancière’s definition of politics as interruption helps us to take more seriously the impact of *failed* attempts, as they influenced the culture of governance and the expected order/predictability of resistance in this period of colonial state formation. Not only did they inflect the development of police power (broadly speaking), but they arguably laid the ground for a democratic politics that eventually became subsumed by more institutional (and thus, less radical) forms of resistance through the state by the second half of the 19th century.⁸⁶ Amidst these transformations, a generation of youth were coming of age in the context of watching their relatives being forced to labour to construct military roads under brutal conditions, struggling to find a place in a society that was rapidly globalizing and integrating into broader imperial economic networks (as explained in chapter three). Though not directly accounted for in secondary histories, this is surely political education to young generations of colonized youth, many of whom would be the adults of the next generation resisting colonial rule, and whose children would subsequently become the ones fluent

⁸⁵ Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics” *Theory & Event* 5/3 (2001): 10 – 13.

⁸⁶ Nihal Perera, “Indigenising the Colonial City: Late 19th-century Colombo and its Landscape.” *Urban Studies* 39/9 (2002): 1703-1721.

enough in colonial governance and schooling in the late 19th century to begin organizing within the institutions of the state to take over, rather than dismantle, the colonial state.⁸⁷

When words spoken by “natives,” be they elite or non-elite, were translated into English language newspapers, military court martials, or government documentation, words like “pretender to the throne” were used. When colonial administrators and their assistants tasked with preparing reports, letters, and despatches created documents ostensibly for the purpose of objectively recording events that had transpired, these documents were already steeped in discursive representational power. The very terminology of naming rebel leaders “pretender” implied a legitimate sovereign entity (King George of England) and an imposter sovereign, whose success in swaying public opinion was always taken to be evidence of the “pre-political” or “backward” character of a pre-modern population that was not qualified to differentiate truth from fiction. As Marisol de la Cadena describes, the

historical ontology of modern knowledge both enables its own questions, answers, and understandings and disables as unnecessary or unreal the questions, answers, and understandings that fall outside of its purview or are excessive of it.”⁸⁸

The question of translation of meaning is thus a central blinder, though not one that I am qualified to deal with, as I am not fluent in Sinhalese or Tamil. Methodologically, however, de la Cadena’s point speaks to the importance of not treating the archive as an objective stock-pile of “facts” from which one might piece together different narratives.

⁸⁷ As mentioned in chapter three, see also the request from J.W. Bennet, a colonial officer, to the Governor for compensation for the families of the men and boys forced to labour under the British government’s co-option of Rajakariya to build roads connecting Colombo to Kandy following the brutal Uva Rebellion. See: J.W. Bennet, *Ceylon and Its Capabilities: an account of its natural resources, indigenous productions, and commercial facilities* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1843). British National Library, shelfmark: 793.m.15

⁸⁸ Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 13

The reification of a universal or objective past that can be explained ‘as it was’ is an expression of colonizing epistemology.⁸⁹

As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes, the challenge of writing history is in breaking the cycle of writing European history in different parts of the globe:

It is that insofar as the academic discourse of history – that is “history” as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university – “Europe” remains the sovereign political object of all histories, including the ones we call “Indian,” “Chinese,” “Kenyan,” and so on.⁹⁰

Chakrabarty is referring to the structure in which the historical narrative takes place. For scholars who have tried to do postcolonial or decolonial historical research using colonial archives, there is a constant need to resist the unacknowledged biases and implicit claims to universal knowledge that allow “experts” working from within a Eurocentric intellectual and ontological frame of reference to document the struggles, progress, and problems of subject peoples in what is assumed to be (in the most generous of terms) a slow and coerced march to eventual civilization. As Julian Crawquill, a British resident living in Ceylon and writing in the *Colombo Magazine* in 1839 observed:

And why can England alone of the many nations of the earth, point with pride to her flourishing colonies? Because she has followed out wise and well-matured plans in a Christian-like spirit. She has endeavoured to conciliate and to enlighten wherever she has gone. She has made those amongst whom she settled partakers of her laws, of her arts and of her religion. She carried with her and disseminated, the seeds of Christianity and Civilization, and she has reaped the fruits of prosperity.⁹¹

Crawquill’s statements were obviously ideological and easy to identify. He was also writing at a time when missionary pressure was mounting to convince the British colonial

⁸⁹ Andreas Boldt, “Ranke: objectivity and history,” *Rethinking History* 18/4 (2014): 457 – 474; Helen Liebel Weckowicz, “Ranke’s Theory of History and the German Modernist School,” *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d’Histoire*, 23/April (1988): 73 – 93

⁹⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 27.

⁹¹ Julian Crawquill, “Colonies and Colonization” *The Colombo Magazine* 1/1 January, 1839: pp. 16 – 18. British National Library, shelfmark: 8023cc7.

government to sever its institutional, financial, and legal relationship with the Buddhist tradition.⁹² While there may not be such a clearly stated or acknowledged civilizing project in the documents of colonial administrators, many of whom often laid claim to trying to “keep the peace” or do what was in the objective best interest of the colony and its peoples, these claims rested on a certain *a priori* agreement about what progress was, who “lacked” it, and how best to resolve “problems.” As a consequence, when the ordinary people of Ceylon are found in colonial archival accounts, they often appear as criminals or misled children incapable of understanding the error of their ways. Ordinary people and the importance of their political actions can only appear like ghosts within the limits of modernist historical accounts because, like a spectre, they are hard to perceive, and glimpsed translucently as if from another world.

De la Cadena, drawing on Ranajit Guha’s reading of Aristotle, reflects on the boundaries or limits of what fits within the modern:

...And borrowing from Ranajit Guha, the limit would be “the first thing outside which there is *nothing* to be found and the first thing inside which everything is to be found” (Guha 2002: 7, emphasis added). Yet this “nothing” is in relation to what sees itself as “everything” and thus exceeds it – it is something. The limit reveals itself as an onto-epistemic practice, in this case, of the state and its disciplines, and therefore a political practice as well. Beyond the limit is excess, a real that is “nothing”: not-a-thing accessible through culture or knowledge of nature as usual.⁹³

The idea that ordinary people were pre-modern and thus outside of the limit of the modern lens is an onto-epistemic problem in the writing of official documents, but also in the narration of secondary histories prepared by Sri Lankan historians as well. In terms of the writing of colonialists themselves, for example, Governor Torrington places the blame

⁹²Rev. Spence Hardy, *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon* (1839) SOAS Missionary Archives, shelfmark: MMSL S123.

⁹³ Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 14 – 15.

on the disturbances associated with the Matale rebellion largely on the shoulders of an Irishman in Colombo referred to at different times as a Mr. or Dr. Elliot. Elliot is accused of importing Irish political radicalism into the local newspapers and urging the Kandyan-Sinhalese masses to rise in protest of government tax hikes without meaningful political representation; the possibility that “natives” would have their own political wherewithal is not part of Torrington’s perception of reality.⁹⁴ Sir James Emerson Tennent, Colonial Secretary of Ceylon from 1845-1850, did not share the view common to the British public and governor that the press played a central role in inciting rebellion, and was questioned to this effect in the parliamentary proceedings investigating the events. In response to a direct question concerning the role of the press, he answers, “I cannot help thinking that perhaps too much importance has been attached in Ceylon to the direct influence of the press; but I cannot avoid the equal and even more strong conclusion, it did produce a mischievous and prejudicial effect at that time.”⁹⁵ Pressed further on the circulation of the seditious articles and their presence in the areas of Kandy in which rebellion ensued, he continues:

copies reached those districts, and were publicly read in the temples, or to assemblages of the people on their arrival in the district; but I do not attach the same importance to those articles as many do; I believe they were mischievous in their effect; but to assign them as one of the leading causes of the rebellion, would be to attach much more weight to them than in my opinion they merit.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ “Viscount Torrington to the Earl of Grey Nov. 15, 1847,” in K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 1850, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the ‘rebellion’ of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington* (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965). British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

⁹⁵ James Emerson Tennent, “Tennent to Committee.” *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the March 25 1850. Third Report from Select Committee on Ceylon (Session 1850)*: 168. <https://goo.gl/MeYCyM>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

For Tennant, it was not the vexing words of the Irish newspaper man so much as it was a longer term simmering insurrectionary culture connecting the Isle of France⁹⁷ and conspirators from France to overthrow the British in Ceylon.⁹⁸ It is not ever, in the archival account, a question of the political agency of the Kandyans, but there is an ontological *knowledge* that the Kandyans have been too long isolated from the modern world to be capable of entering into real politics or history. It is this “knowledge,” that they are not true political agents, that bleeds into post-colonial accounts as well.

This has led to an uncomfortable problem that is as much political as it is methodological. Much of the early historical research done on Ceylon on this time period accepted the condition of the archive as a collection of facts about the past out of which new, better, nationalist histories could be written, but has not gone through the process of decolonizing the ontological assumptions necessary to conceive of “pre-modern” people. This has produced a tension in postcolonial historical research and its entanglement in Western academia. On the one hand, postcolonial national elites have, as Chakrabarty notes, been quick to reject the Hegelian idea of “lack” and the Rousseauian idea that the masses must be properly educated in order to exercise political citizenship; yet at the same time, they hold onto Eurocentric ideas which continue to structure the shape of histories since Ramram Basu’s 1802 *Raja Pratapadiya-Charit*.⁹⁹ Consider the representation of what would prove to be the beginning of the Matele rebellion in this dispatch to the Colonial Office in London sent from Governor Torrington in Colombo:

⁹⁷ Mauritius, which became a British colony following the 1814 Treaty of Paris and subsequent destination for exiled political prisoners from Ceylon.

⁹⁸ James Emerson Tennent, “Tennent to Committee.” *Third Report from Select Committee on Ceylon* (Session 1850): 167. <https://goo.gl/MeYCyM>

⁹⁹ Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World History* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002): 11.

In endeavouring to obtain a census of the population, a report was about that 30 new taxes were to be put on, and women and children were to be taxed and women's breasts measured. Proper means have been adopted to explain the intentions of government to the people and Tennent has gone to Kandy and will see the Chieftains there and at other places and point out the advantages they will derive. I am happy to say that the Headman and Chiefs have shown no symptoms of uneasiness – indeed the whole of the disturbance at Kandy was caused by a rascally Malabar (who says he is going to be King) going amongst the ignorant villages, and perhaps a rather wicked thou[ough] clever letter in the Observer Ceylon Papers which was published in Cingalese, and tho[ough] it pretends to disagree with [us] it [is still] sufficiently ably put to mislead many. It is hardly worth taking up all your time with this, but I feel it necessary to watch all these matters, and use every precaution, and my Malabar king will be punished when caught [illegible] as a vagrant.¹⁰⁰

In this quotation, the representation of collecting census data and educating the “ignorant” masses about how taxation for the state is in their best interests presumes a national interest that can or must be led from a centre capable of perceiving the national interest. In this case, it is the British government that is positioned to offer this guidance, and though the native assembly was never intended in this period to be a government in waiting, one can see the presence of the idea of creating an improved class of natives based on their proximity to and familiarity with British ways, which might bring them closer to the direction of true, universal, History.¹⁰¹ Academically, the writing of scientific histories resulted in the production of nationalist histories in the late colonial and postcolonial period that drew from the colonial archives with meticulous empirical detail, but were often complacent with the representation of ordinary people as primitive

¹⁰⁰ “Torrington to Grey July 5, 1848,” in K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 1850, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the ‘rebellion’ of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965), British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

¹⁰¹ Benedict Anderson describes the process of the Anglicization of British India as an effort to create a national culture through bringing Indians closer to the ideal of Britishness. He cites a complaint by Bipin Chandra Pal, in which Pal laments the impossibility of being truly treated as an Englishman while being Indian. The same character is explored by Chatterjee to highlight the internally fractious nature of nationalism and the externally homogenous representation of the nation. See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Partha Chatterjee *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

which did not interfere with the project of writing nationalist, state-centric histories in the 20th century.¹⁰² As Guha, reflecting on the problem of Eurocentric statism and the impact it has had on the discipline of Indian history, observes:

The statism so firmly entrenched in South Asian historiography is an outcome of this narratological revolution which has, by its very success, prevented us as historians from apprehending it as a problem. Incorporated in World-history, we owe our understanding of the Indian past, our craft, and our profession as academics to this very revolution. We work within the paradigm it has constructed for us and are therefore far too close and committed to it to realize the need for challenge and change. No wonder that our critique has to look elsewhere, over the fence so to say, to neighboring fields of knowledge for inspiration, and finds it in literature, which differs significantly from historiography in dealing with historicity.¹⁰³

The coloniality of archives is revisited most substantially in the fourth and final chapter of the dissertation. I have spent only a fraction of the time in archives that the scholars and practitioners I critically engage with in chapter four have, and my criticism is not meant to denigrate their work in any way. I mean only to highlight the ways through which the coloniality of archives continues to texture the narrative of history, and how theory can help us begin decolonizing the ontological assumptions that lay dormant within the archives.

Chapter Progression

The dissertation proceeds as follows: chapter one develops a decolonial, pluriversal theoretical argument aimed at bringing to light how the violence of universal thinking has effectively “colonized” academic attempts at understanding the development and spread

¹⁰² Benedikt Korf raises the issue of nationalism within scholarship in the context of more contemporary geographical scholarship within Sri Lankan geographers. See: Benedikt Korf, “Cartographic Violence: Engaging a Sinhala kind of Geography” in C. Brun and T. Jazeel (eds.) *Spatializing Politics: Culture and Geography in Postcolonial Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009): 100-121

¹⁰³ Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World History* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002): 5.

of “total territorial rule.” After sketching the historical mood of the postcolonial period in which the logic of the state is already entrenched, I take up the historical development of concepts centrally concerning the dissertation’s project of explaining the naturalization of universal notions of state, territory, and sovereignty. I trace the differences between postcolonial and decolonial approaches via the lens of pluriversality, and then apply this lens to key interdisciplinary literatures with a view to establishing how a decolonial approach, which takes as its starting point the simultaneous existence of multiple ontologies, offers the best path forward for decolonizing accounts of the past and de-linking from the universe of modern reason for the future.

In chapter two, I introduce the concept of “political ontology” from decolonial anthropology in order to discuss the ontologies of sovereignty clashing together in the lead-up to the 1815 Kandyan Convention. As discussed in brief above, the Kandyan Convention is widely marked as the essential moment of “total territorial rule” under the British. Empirically, chapter two details the history of sovereign practice in Kandy as well as the court intrigue that led to the capitulation of Kandyan nobility to the British in 1815. Opposite colonial history, my reading focuses on the people of Kandy rather than the British. The chapter also describes the significance of ritual/virtual sovereignty and material sovereignty in the “galactic sovereignty” organization of politics, building off the *rajamandala* structure of sovereignty as it developed in the context of Buddhist Southeast Asia. I emphasize the importance of “Buddhification” as a means through which foreigners, including kings, were integrated into the existing system as a means of drawing attention to the intense ontological conflict arising from mismatched British and Kandyan expectations arising from the 1815 Kandyan Convention.

In chapter three, I describe the pre-colonial political economy of the Kandyan kingdom, and highlight how the liberal/colonial transformations and debates concerning both early capitalism and colonialism were transforming in light of the discourse of “improvement.” Imperial level legal reforms, particularly the equalization of duties on coffee as well as the more general turn towards breaking down monopoly protection of plantation owners in the West Indies in favour of open competition created the imperial economic conditions to incentivize the further dispossession of Kandyan territories at precisely the time that the British government in Ceylon was trying to pacify the rebellious interior. Drawing on archival discussions of political economy in Ceylon and in the empire more generally, I emphasize how the violence of universal thinking applies to imposing a Eurocentric logic of land and ownership as a means of improvement that operated on different ontological terms than before.

In chapter four, I make the argument that even influential and rich secondary historical accounts of 19th century Ceylon internalize key universal assumptions about modernity that are in need of decolonizing. I argue against the characterization of 1820 – 1840s as being a relatively calm period by instead revisiting archival sources to paint this time period as a relatively constant period of radical politics amidst the important institutional and liberal/colonial changes taking place on the island, in the 1830s in particular. Taken together, these chapters constitute a rigorous engagement with the colonial “past” through which the assemblage of modernity/coloniality becomes visible in the multifaceted construction and normalization of state territory.

Chapter One: The Coloniality of the State

Let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies that draw their inspiration from it. Humanity expects other things from us than this grotesque and generally obscene emulation ... if we want humanity to take one step forward, if we want to take it to another level than the one where Europe has placed it, then we must innovate, we must be pioneers.

*Frantz Fanon*¹⁰⁴

This chapter considers the theoretical and historical basis for identifying the structure of the modern nation state itself as a crisis of the ongoing modern, colonial period. In comparative social science, contemporary crises related to questions of sovereign legitimacy and ethnonationalist belonging tend to be studied with reference to former colonies lacking the time and experience to mature as nation states economically, politically, and historically.¹⁰⁵ Thinking along these lines takes for granted a naturalized, developmental, and universal logic to the state as a structure. While there is no shortage of literatures concerned with the state, its particular constitution as a function of the colonial encounter remains comparatively less researched.

I argue that contemporary contestations over postcolonial territory, such as the Sri Lanka-Tamil Eelam civil war, can be interpreted as the fallout of failing to address the constituent colonial violence associated with the history of modern state formation in former British colonies. I trace, in greater detail, the empirical basis for this argument in chapters two, three, and four. In this first chapter, I draw on insights from postcolonial and decolonial theory, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to studying state formation, to argue that the (re)presentation of the modern nation state as the single, universal option

¹⁰⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Groves Press, 2004 [1961]): 239.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Martin Carnoy, *The State & Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Dipesh Chakrabarty *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review* 18/4 (1966): 17-34; Martin Doornbas, "State Collapse and Fresh Starts: Some Critical Reflections," *Development and Change* 33/5 (2002): 797 – 815.

to which formerly colonized people must aspire jettisons the diversity of possible ways of organizing society in favour of an “obscene emulation” that privileges a Eurocentric understanding of sovereignty, territory, and state. By exposing the “coloniality” of the state as a starting point, social science might begin to consider how decolonial approaches can open up paths that have been ignored within modern/colonial studies. This can expand the range of viable solutions and strategies for reorganizing socio-political life in a way that need not pass through the sieve of Eurocentric modern thinking to be viable.

With this context in mind, I seek to present in this chapter a theoretical framework juxtaposing universality and pluriversality and in so doing, argue that generations of modernist, universal thinking about state, sovereignty, and territory within social science have contributed to the epistemic and ontological colonization of scholarly approaches to studying the state, forming it as an inevitable, rather than historically contingent, end point for organizing life. In arguing for the adoption of a pluriversal perspective to studying state formation, I am making a double move of sorts: the first move is conceptualizing the pluriverse as an alternative to the universe, as the “pluriverse” speaks to the simultaneous existence of multiple ontologies. This is implied in the prefix “pluri” as an alternative to the prefix “uni” in the term itself. Importantly here, pluriversal is not the same as pluralistic. While pluralistic implies many discrete possibilities and can be likened to a kind of cultural relativism, pluriversal logic challenges the modern and Eurocentric notion of universalism, which, I will argue here, is little more than the generalization of a particular, European form of relativism. Pluriversal as a concept posits that the only way to conceive of universal is through multiple different ways of knowing and being that are entangled with one another through the “colonial matrix of power,” which operates as a kind of intersectional web of oppressive relations through which

European domination is replicated along the axes of race, patriarchy, and capitalism.¹⁰⁶ In other words, while universal thinking implies many ways of understanding a single reality that is objectively true, pluriversal thinking implies multiple and simultaneous worlds that rest on ontological assumptions that speak to other realities that may include, but ultimately stretch beyond the limit of a universal, modernist, perspective. This is an important condition, because the existence of multiple ontologies does not mean that the many “worlds” do not interact with one another – to hold this opinion would be only to replace one conception of the universe with another, in the way that socialism has positioned itself as a universal alternative to capitalism. Ontologies, as I will elaborate upon in chapter two, rub up against one another and reformulate one another, especially in terms of how different ontological starting points come into connection with one another through the modern, colonial encounter. The pluriverse of multiple ontological starting points is apparent in the distinct evolution of sovereignty discussed through the *rajamandala* system and the sovereign system from Europe that interact in chapter two, but is also quite apparent in the juxtaposition of indigenous economies prior to British contamination of the Kandyan highlands as explored in chapter three.

The second move that I seek to make is the application of pluriversal thinking to the issue of territorial formations that today appear as the “universal” modern, territorial state. My objective in this chapter is not to chart out the many different ontologies of territory, sovereignty, and state that exist; rather, it is to draw attention to the colonial violence of representing the modern state as a universal model. This is not at all to say that things that look similar to modern notions of “state” or “nation” did not exist prior to

¹⁰⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, “On Pluriversality,” October 20, 2013. Accessed July 12, 2011. <http://waltermignolo.com/on-pluriversality/>; Walter D. Mignolo *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 213-251.

the modern/colonial encounter. As G.C. Spivak usefully remarks, human societies have always had “something like nations, collectivities bound by birth, that allowed in strangers gingerly.”¹⁰⁷ My point in this chapter is only that the modern, colonial encounter in the 19th and 20th centuries has effectively colonized and presented a universe in the form of the territorial sovereign state within which all life must be organized in order to exist within the international system.

Modernity is understood to be a temporal period as well as a way of thinking, though it is worth remembering that as a temporal period, it differs depending on the colonial worlds in question. For Latin American scholars, the modern colonial encounter begins with the conquistadors of the 15th century, and they draw attention to the defining characteristics of racism and genocide to the constitution of modernity.¹⁰⁸ In Sri Lanka, the modern colonial encounter began shortly thereafter with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505 and the establishment of Colombo by 1515. To mark the “end” of the era with the formal political independence of a country however, is to overlook the coloniality associated with the process of transforming different kinds of indigenous territories with distinct ontologies of land into something that can be recognized as modern state territory. The colonial encounter then, is not something that can be thought of as existing “in the past” or something that came to a conclusion with the achievement of political independence. The consequences of the violence of universal, modern thinking are more than an academic concern because they limit the range of politically perceivable alternatives to universal sovereignty and the state in the postcolonial period that might contribute to the decolonization of both the South and the North. As I will explain later in

¹⁰⁷ G.C. Spivak, *Nationalism and the Imagination*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 13-14.

¹⁰⁸ Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1/3 (2000): 534 – 535.

this chapter, state formation in the 19th century was not a discrete process of complete European states creating colonial states, rather, the predominant structure of empire in the 19th century was key to understanding the inherently relational process of state making between the archetypal European states and their colonial satellites. In other words, European states are, by extension, colonial creations as well. Representations of the state as either a natural evolutionary attribute of human development on the one hand, or as an institution incubated within Europe and then exported to the rest of the world on the other, encodes epistemic violence into the study of state formation by ignoring or writing out of history the simultaneous constitution of imperial/colonial and national territories.¹⁰⁹ My concern in this dissertation is not with the origin of sovereignty or the state; rather, it is with the *universalization* of the modern territorial state as the only legitimate spatial organization through which independence and freedom from colonial rule could be articulated in South Asia, specifically Ceylon. In other words, I am concerned with how one way of understanding the world came to be the only legitimate way of seeing the world, and a standard to emulate that prevents colonized people from being the “pioneers” that Fanon demands.

The chapter proceeds as follows: section one briefly sketches the political mood of the immediate post-independence era in South Asia, problematizing the way that national elites have interpreted decolonization to mean taking possession of the nation-state. It introduces the concept of “coloniality” and explains the violence of uni-versal thinking,

¹⁰⁹ The state as an “inevitable stage” thesis is exemplified in modernization theory, whereas the somewhat related thesis that the state developed in isolation in Europe is more exemplified in mainstream social science, with important exceptions. For examples that fall in line with the gradual movement of history approach, see: W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1983). For the Europe as incubator of the state approach, see: Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990 – 1992* (Malden: Blackwell, 1992).

discussing key concepts of relevance to the chapter and broader dissertation, including state, territory, and sovereignty. Section two expands the conversation about universal and pluriversal perspectives to review social science literatures concerned with state formation, territory, and sovereignty.

Section One: Coloniality, State, Sovereignty, and Territory

The Postcolonial Moment in South Asia

In the context of 1940s and 1950s South Asia, newly independent governments, many of which were comprised of national elites groomed in subordinate advisory legislative councils to the former British government, took up the reins of government and embarked on projects to “modernize” in order to catch up with the colonial-turned-“developed” countries of the “first world.”¹¹⁰ Colonial ontologies underscoring these values remain under-interrogated. This is especially transparent in modernization theory’s linear account of social progression, as well as in some accounts of the development of nationalism.¹¹¹ This is not a problem of Western scholars alone; it reflects the “geopolitics of knowledge,” a point I will return to below, but for now can be seen as highlighting the centrality of location to theorizing.¹¹² To be invested in a Eurocentric philosophical understanding of reality and of the world does not require one to be European; many scholars from the South are intellectually invested in the ontological and epistemic frameworks of continental philosophy. The reverse is true as well, as many scholars

¹¹⁰ Gurinder K. Bhambra *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 26; Andre Gunder Frank, “The Development of Underdevelopment,” *Monthly Review* 18/4 (1966): 17-31.

¹¹¹ Cf. W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1983).

¹¹² Cf. Walter D. Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101/1 (2002): 65 – 66.

located in the North are not invested in Eurocentric philosophy – the distinction of “North” and “South” is problematic for reasons long noted by postcolonial feminists, but in the context of the geopolitics of knowledge, the distinction can be treated as heuristic device to highlight the hegemonic influence of Eurocentric philosophy in the last half millennium.¹¹³ The importance of scholars’ investment in the lens of universal modernity cannot be understated, however, as organizing pasts into statist histories reifies a conceptual lens that reflects a condition that James C. Scott has aptly described as our collective hypnosis by the state.¹¹⁴ As Karena Shaw reminds us, the structure of modern sovereignty today relies on a shared ontological foundation established in Thomas Hobbes’ first book of *Leviathan*. This conception of state and territory has ordered modern time in a linear fashion, representing systems of organization that are ontologically otherwise from the modern, colonial condition as “pre-political,” representing thus the colonization and transformation of diverse lands into modern states as inevitable, rather than highlighting the profound violence of that transformation.¹¹⁵ The necessity of being a state in charge of a bounded territory in contemporary IR has created havoc across much of the formerly colonized and still colonized world, producing some of the most pernicious forms of ethnonationalist violence in pursuit of total territorial rule in recent memory, not least of all the Sri Lanka-Tamil Eelam civil war discussed in the introduction of this dissertation.

At the anticolonial Bandung conference in 1955, leaders of the former colonies met to discuss the meaning of decolonization and freedom from colonial rule, as well as

¹¹³ Chandra Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anti-Capitalist Struggles,” *Signs* 28/2 (2003): 506 – 507.

¹¹⁴ James C. Scott *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009): 5.

¹¹⁵ Karena Shaw, *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the limits of the political*. (New York: Routledge, 2008) pp. 25 - 34

strategies of anticolonial solidarity, economic modernization, and strategies to ensure that re-colonization by Europe was preventable.¹¹⁶ Formal possession of state sovereignty was understood to be a strategy that, when paired with nationalism, could lead to the rehabilitation of denigrated nations and races, while at the same time enacting bordering practices and international experimentations like the Non Aligned Movement designed to keep former colonies out.¹¹⁷ Challenging the legitimacy of sovereignty was not part of the political project at Bandung, nor was it part of the many struggles across the British Empire for freedom from colonialism. The postcolonial state, and the integration of formerly subject peoples into a liberal, modern/colonial legal and sovereign global order within the fledgling United Nations, was fundamental to asserting the vital components of internal sovereignty, characterized as autonomy within established borders, and external sovereignty, characterized by non-interference and mutual recognition in the international system.¹¹⁸ In pursuit of that essential material goal – that is, the institutional expulsion of direct British rule – the newly independent states could inhabit the state and go about “catching up” to the former colonial states that were beginning to shed the identity of colonial rulers for “civilized” and “developed” states instead. As Fanon’s work makes clear, *inhabiting* sovereignty and nationalism was seen as a politically useful strategy for the time, but it was not uniformly seen as an endpoint.¹¹⁹

Part of what I am trying to show is that in the context of colonial state formation, the state is prior to the modern nation. Nationalism became important later in the 19th

¹¹⁶ Christopher Lee, “Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung” in Christopher Lee (ed.) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010) pp. 1 – 39; Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture” in Christopher Lee (ed.) *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010) pp. 45 – 68.

¹¹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox. (New York: Grove Press, 2005 [1961]).

¹¹⁸ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985): 282.

¹¹⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (2004 [1961]): 97 – 145.

century after the norm of the colonial satellite state was already established, and the institutions of the state became effective tools for political mobilization and articulation of grievances.¹²⁰ Though nationalism is not the main focus of this research, it has played an important role in historicizing pasts, which is very important for this dissertation's inquiry into the process of *becoming* the modern state. Loyalty to the nation and popular nationalism was important in achieving political independence, but it was only one of many ways through which colonized South Asians resisted colonialism. Political independence, particularly in British South Asia, was accomplished through a variety of means, including direct violent struggles, civil disobedience, and national mobilization over the course of the late 19th to mid 20th century in particular. Importantly, South Asian revolutionary thinkers and activists were global thinkers, engaging with Western and Eastern philosophy and movements as well as identifying radical points of overlap through which their anticolonial politics could be articulated and translated.¹²¹

Coloniality and the Violence of Universality

Postcolonial national elites as well as those in the former colonial centers who represent the modern nation state as the single, universal option which formerly colonized people must aspire to as an “end” point mask the ontological, epistemic, and material violence that went into attempts to dismantle other ways of being in service to naturalizing and universalizing a particularly Eurocentric understanding of state and territory in the 19th century. This universal state, conceived of as a “container” that possesses sovereignty,

¹²⁰ Nihal Perera, “Indigenising the Colonial City: Late 19th-century Colombo and its Landscape” *Urban Studies* 39/9 (2002): 1703 – 1721.

¹²¹ Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle*. (Oakland: AK Press, 2001): 155 – 161; Bhagat Singh, *The Jail Notebook and Other Writings*, Bhupinder Hooja and Chaman Lal (eds.) (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2011).

houses nations, and accumulates wealth and power, is at the heart of International Relations (IR) and associated disciplines; it continues to limit the range of what appear to be viable political solutions to postcolonial crises of sovereignty in the 21st century.¹²² It does so because it fails to draw upon the global range of ideas and possible solutions available, which have been violently punished, contaminated, and transformed through the modern state under the liberal justification that this pluriversal reality needed ordering, simplification, and conformity in order to realize the fruits of modern development, which continued much of the economic, political, and cosmological work of colonialism into the “post” colonial age. As Nicholas Onuf has argued, “Liberalism is modernity’s core ideology, capitalism its paymaster, and the state its highest social realization, primary agent, and paramount problem.”¹²³ This is particularly important because in many ways, state sovereignty was meant to be a strategy to border and monopolize violence, as Shaw describes it, sovereignty as represented in Hobbes

constructs the space of the state as the space of identity and meaning. It sets up sovereignty as the answer to all that ails, an answer meant to minimize violence and enable men to pursue their desires. It sets the terrain for the rest of his thought.¹²⁴

To be sure, in the everyday world of IR as constituted by the mid 20th century, sovereignty was an important concept and tool, reflecting, as David Blaney explains,

the value placed on autonomy in international society; it stands as a claim about the right of each political community (conventionally organized as a state) to rule itself and, concomitantly, a denial of any political authority above states.¹²⁵

¹²² Peter Taylor, “The State as Container: Territoriality in the Modern World System,” *Progress in Human Geography* 18/2 (1994): 151-156.

¹²³ Nicholas Onuf, “Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History” *Alternatives* 16 (1991): 426.

¹²⁴ Karena Shaw, *Indigeneity and Political Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2008): 37

¹²⁵ David Blaney, “Reconceptualizing autonomy: The difference dependency theory makes” *Review of International Political Economy* 3/3 (1996): 462 – 463.

This conception demonstrates the centrality of normative analysis to sovereignty, its dynamic and evolving nature, and also to the multiple motivations for wielding sovereignty in the present day.¹²⁶ As Robbie Shilliam rightly maintains, “it is not possible to think about a ‘decolonial project’ in the abstract,”¹²⁷ which is why my emphasis in this dissertation is on the violence of the colonial encounter and how that encounter relied on attempts to erase ways of being in the making of the modern world. The universal approach is challenged by bringing to light the decolonial notion of “coloniality,” which Ramón Grosfoguel argues, “allows us to understand the continuity of continued forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.”¹²⁸ To name this chapter the “coloniality of the state” is to articulate the thesis in the title: the modern territorial state is itself an expression of coloniality, as the state and state system which came into being from the 19th century onwards is one that requires a decidedly modern, Eurocentric structure that required the violent ontological suppression of other ways of organizing sociopolitical life. To borrow from Grosfoguel once more,

part of the Euro-centric myth is that we live in a so-called “post” colonial era and that the world and, in particular, metropolitan centres, are in no need of decolonization.¹²⁹

The colonial encounter was, as Walter Mignolo explains, the “flipside” of the modern encounter, and either modernity or coloniality is inconceivable without the other. The rapid proliferation of state sovereignty in the 19th century, overlapping as it did with the

¹²⁶ On the problem of “static” conceptions of sovereignty in systemic IR theorizing, see John Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Towards a Neo-realist Synthesis,” in Robert Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1986).

¹²⁷ Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 8.

¹²⁸ Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political Economy Paradigms” *Cultural Studies* 2/3 (2007): 219 – 220.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 221

age of late empire, cannot be explained in either the colonies or the colonizing states without a relational approach, which I seek to offer in section two. When the colonies stopped being colonies, they became the “third world” and “developing” countries, the empirical details of which are well documented in World Systems Theory and Marxist accounts of neo-colonial capitalism.¹³⁰ Karl Marx himself reflected on the problem of South Asia’s¹³¹ integration into the imperial economy and the violence of that colonial integration through the destruction of South Asia’s productive capacity due to the encounter with the British.¹³² When I speak here of the coloniality of the state, I invoke the systems of knowledge that have informed long histories of spatial organizations in different parts of the world, and specifically how these ways of being are ignored and denigrated under the lens of “universal” reason that is a defining characteristic of modernity. In addition to the epistemic aspect, there are of course many material relations that demonstrate how the making of European states was fundamentally linked to imperial and colonial expansion. People, knowledge, resources, and approaches to governance circulated in ways that make conceiving of modern Western Europe in general, and the United Kingdom in particular, inconceivable outside of modern, colonial, co-constitution. As David Blaney observes, reflecting on the turn to post-development thinking in the 1990s, one key limitation to dependency theory’s approach has been

¹³⁰ Andre Gunder Frank, “The Development of Underdevelopment” *Monthly Review* 18/4 (1966): 17 – 31; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

¹³¹ Marx and his contemporaries refer to “India” but the cities and areas that he names in his writings on India speak to contemporary South Asia more broadly. In the course of archival research on 19th century Ceylon more generally, I was struck by the lack of distinction between “Ceylon” and “India” in terms of ethnic, social, religious, and political categories. Some of this, particularly in the early 19th century, reflects the fact that the Madras presidency in southern (contemporary) India “controlled” the island of Ceylon remotely from 1796 to 1802, but culturally and socially, European missionaries, planters, and bureaucrats routinely conflated Ceylon, India, Buddhism, Hinduism, and even Malay people into interchangeable terms.

¹³² Karl Marx, “The British Rule in India” *New York Daily Tribune* June 25, 1853 reprinted in *On Colonialism: Articles from the New York Tribune and Other Writings by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (New York: International Publishers, 1972): 40.

expressing itself in modernist terminology, which obfuscated the inherently relational production of both metropole and satellite through the logics of capitalism and sovereignty.¹³³

As Anibal Quijano maintains, there was no greater genocidal violence in the known history of our planet than the one enacted upon the Aztec-Maya-Caribbean and the *Tawantinsuyana* (Inca) of Latin America with the coming of the conquistadors after 1492; sixty-five million people died as a result of microbial genocide and military and economic violence in less than half a century.¹³⁴ Cristina Rojas, working from Anthony Pagden and Karen Shaw, shows that the development of European concepts like “natural rights” was always fundamentally premised on the racial superiority of Europe drawing on the work of John Locke, a co-author of the North Carolina constitution.

[Locke] rationalizes enslavement of African peoples and the expropriation of Native Americans’ land with the argument that the failure to cultivate the land was a sign of their inability to claim it.¹³⁵

Such interventions draw attention, though not explicitly, to what Argentinian philosopher Enrique Dussel (1977) has named the “geopolitics of knowledge.” The geopolitics of knowledge describes the disproportionate and hegemonic influence of ideas that are situated and deeply grounded within a European epistemic and ontological context; however, as a consequence of this grounding and the empirical histories of colonial modernity, it has been presumed that Western intellectualism is universally valid overtop of different societies that have been scripted as inferior through the colonial encounter by

¹³³ David Blaney, “Reconceptualizing autonomy: The difference dependency theory makes” *Review of International Political Economy* 3/3 (1996): 459 – 497.

¹³⁴ Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” *Cultural Studies* 21/2-3 (2007): 170

¹³⁵ Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse,” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 369 – 382. Quoted from pre-publication manuscript, quote does not appear in published version.

Europeans.¹³⁶ As Donna Haraway has long noted, the idea of a universal and objective perspective relies on an ideology of science that no real scientists believe is possible in practice.¹³⁷ Advancing the ideas of “feminist objectivity” and “partial perspectives,” Haraway argues that the only objective point of view is a partial one, because a universal view is an illusion or “god trick.”¹³⁸ This geopolitical, epistemological grounding of European thought takes on material meaning because the influential philosophies that have informed the modern period exist within a system of knowledge in which it is deemed possible and desirable to make abstract generalizations about universal experiences, using intellectual and empirical points of reference of relevance to Europe, to explain the rest of the world.

As a revolutionary intellectual and political project within Europe, it is important to recognize that European political thought and philosophy with its “degovernmentalization of the cosmos” and corresponding invention of *raison d’Etat* and European scientific reason attempted to assert themselves as secular, universal alternatives to the universalizing world views of Christian¹³⁹ theologies in the context of the scientific revolution and age of Enlightenment.¹⁴⁰ With reference only to Europe, we can see the project of modernity and Enlightenment in the familiar way in which it is represented in the Western academy: a period of intellectual emancipation, where ideas grounded in rationality, progress, and objective evidence offered a *new* universalizing lens through which to experience and study the one reality that existed. As Mary Lousie

¹³⁶ Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political Economy Paradigms,” *Cultural Studies* 21/2-3 (2007): 211.

¹³⁷ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privileging of Partial Perspective” *Feminist Studies* 14/3(1988): 581.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ and to a lesser extent, Islamic and Jewish

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977 – 1978* trans. Graham Burchill. (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

Pratt as well as Enrique Dussel have argued, the emancipatory intellectual discursive appeal to scientific exploration and discovery has long hidden the underlying violence of conquest.¹⁴¹ Gurminder Bhambra argues that part of the founding myths of European modernity has been the belief that important events like the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution were somehow endogenous to Europe without regard for the inherent interdependences that demand a global understanding of modernity from the onset.¹⁴² Dussel has described the totalization of European knowledge as “eurocentrism,” which, according to Rojas:

halts the possibility of an exchange of knowledges. Moreover, this myth [of modernity] hides the other side of history: Europe’s centrality was built upon a colonial project premised upon conquest of the Americas (and, of course, Africa and parts of Asia). Accordingly, there is no modernity without coloniality.¹⁴³

Part of the blindness of Western epistemology is its investment in the “‘ego politics of knowledge’ over the ‘geopolitics of knowledge’ and the ‘body-politics of knowledge,’” a point I will explore more fully in chapter two.¹⁴⁴

In the context of outlining the significance of coloniality for this chapter, however, it is most relevant here to return to the “post”-colonial 20th century, and the discourse of development and modernization. In this context, post-colonial states were understood to be on a socialist or capitalist path towards arriving as equals on the international stage, yet both U.S. capitalism and U.S.S.R. socialism shared universal and totalizing views of

¹⁴¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2008): 15 – 35; Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the myth of Modernity* trans. Michael D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995).

¹⁴² Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014): 40-44. See also Go, Julian, “For a Postcolonial Sociology,” *Theory and Society* 42/1 (2013): 25 – 55.

¹⁴³ Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 375.

¹⁴⁴ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being,” *Cultural Studies* 21/2 (2006): 240 – 270; Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11/1 (2013): 73 – 90.

the world predicated on the inevitability of linear progress. Both saw the existence of ways of organizing life that existed prior to the European encounter as “pre-modern” or “traditional” based on a shared belief in linear temporality. As indigenous scholars and decolonial researchers have long noted, other-than-modern peoples have organized themselves based on different ontological starting points about the world and their contexts within it, such as through relational ontologies, or unified material and cosmological realms.¹⁴⁵ Working to dispel the largely ahistorical but nonetheless common assumption that states serve as natural “containers” in which humans have always lived, and instead considering the particular processes that have *relationally* produced state territory in colonial places like Sri Lanka/Ceylon, brings to light the violence encoded with the early consolidation of the territorial state as the possessor of legitimate sovereignty domestically, and how that violence maps onto the emerging international system. By the time freedom-seeking subjects of the British Empire succeeded in ending British rule in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean in the mid/late 20th century, generations of having been modern, satellite states plugged into the formal imperial political economic networks had long since normalized the state as a natural, or at least inevitable, spatial arrangement with universal legitimacy. Possession of the state, the institutional, social “Leviathan” through which one could “be” was the primary political mandate of independence movements in Ceylon and South Asia more generally. Conversely, one could *not* “be” within an international fraternity of states unless organized as a state.

¹⁴⁵ Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 60; see also Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1973); Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Ajay Parasram 2016, “We Nah Want No Devil Philosophy: A Note on the Decolonial Science of *The Black Pacific*,” *The DisOrder Of Things* Symposium on The Black Pacific. February 1, 2016. <https://goo.gl/L3SPL5>; and chapter two of this dissertation.

The process of social, economic, and political territorial transformation that produced modern states depended on the violent denial and active dismantling of alternative methods of organizing social, economic, and political life that took on particular characteristics depending on indigenous groups and colonial powers, the territories in question, and the time period of the colonial/anticolonial encounters. Following Rojas' work on the violence of representation, the presentation of the state as the universal way to exist in the modern/colonial world can be understood through the lens of a "regime of representation," which Rojas explains "extends in time and space through the construction of meanings that are relatively fixed and distinct, so that the present can be differentiated from the past, and the self differentiated from the other."¹⁴⁶ Rojas' study of post-colonial 19th century Colombia demonstrates the importance of the "will to civilization" as the hegemonic lens through which liberal and conservative reformers contested how to go about civilizing Colombian artisans, indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples either through the liberal push for laissez-faire individualism or the conservative push for strong state management.¹⁴⁷ Through this lens, we can see that the violence of state formation is much more than the material politics of what was physically done in the 19th century to produce states, (i.e. road construction, expansion of administrative bureaucracy, integration into imperial political economy, etc.); it very centrally extends to the ontological conflicts and epistemic violence of what counts as knowledge and viable political options for a world that is always changing.¹⁴⁸ While the literature on state formation varies in terms of when, and by which means, state

¹⁴⁶ Cristina Rojas, "Identity Formation, Violence, and the Nation-State in Nineteenth-Century Colombia," *Alternatives* 20 (1995): 196.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*; Cristina Rojas, *Civilization and Violence: Regimes of Representation in Nineteenth Century Colombia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ Mario Blaser, "Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe: Towards a Conversation in Political Ontology," *Current Anthropology* 54/4: 547 – 568.

sovereignty emerges, it is more or less in agreement that the state is principally a European model, infused with a particular genealogy of thought that includes key European philosophers that extend all the way back to the ancient Greeks.¹⁴⁹

The violence of universality, in terms of the representation of the state as the only viable means of political organization, speaks to the research interest of the Modernity/Colonialty/Decoloniality (MCD) research group, which seeks to prioritize “another way of thinking” based on the dual strategies of “de-linking” and “epistemic disobedience” in order to fracture the hegemonic intellectual influence of Eurocentric scholarship and broaden the intellectual starting point for scholarly research.¹⁵⁰ This is a shared political project with some variants of postcolonial theory, as Gurminder Bhambra explains. Following Homi Bhaba’s call for interrupting Western discourses of modernity with narratives of subalternized and otherwise excluded perspectives and experiences, Bhambra argues that:

The issue is more about re-inscribing “other” cultural traditions into narratives of modernity and thus transforming those narratives – both in historical terms and theoretical ones – rather than simply re-naming or re-evaluating the content of these other “inheritances.”¹⁵¹

The postcolonial objective can be thought of as broadening the limited range of Eurocentric modernity – seeking to provincialize the “insufficient but indispensable” place of European and Eurocentric philosophy – but it remains firmly grounded in the

¹⁴⁹ Stuart Elden usefully identifies the importance of genealogy in tracing the development of territory, stipulating that his 2013 book should be understood as one that is particular to the European development of territory and not easily or advisably transplanted to other regions of the world. See Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹⁵⁰ Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 377; Walter D. Mignolo, “Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality,” *Cultural Studies* 21/2 (2007): 449 – 514; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 121-122

¹⁵¹ Gurminder K. Bhambra, “Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues,” *Postcolonial Studies* 17/2 (2014): 116.

idea of a single modern existence that needs to be pluralized.¹⁵² This overlaps with what Rojas has critiqued as the epistemic orientation of the MCD group, in terms of outlining an intellectual project through which “other” ideas are integrated into the modern framework in order to improve that framework. As she explains, “Notwithstanding its progress in decolonizing knowledges and making visible alternative ways of knowing and thinking, the MCD program still privileges knowledge over practice and over worlds-otherwise.”¹⁵³ Similar to critiques of South Asian subaltern studies, the issue here is the privileging of ideas and thinkers that are squarely part of modern, Western, systems of knowledge; including intellectuals from the Global South but only those who are working within the confines of the (post)modern academe. In the language of decolonial thinking, this is Dussel’s geopolitics of knowledge; in the language of South Asian subaltern studies and its critics, it is the problem of using abstract continental philosophy to understand a Global South that remains an empirical testing ground for Western scholars, who remain the chief producers of knowledge.¹⁵⁴ In both cases, the heart of the matter is an under-problematized intellectual investment with the broader applicability of philosophy that is grounded in a Eurocentric, universal philosophy, its application to the rest of the world, and the ways this kind of commitment silences other possibilities.

This can give rise to two important kinds of problems: the first is the emphasizing of post-structural and post-modern Eurocentric theorizing as the main tool used by

¹⁵² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 6. In a forthcoming publication with Lisa Tilley, we take up Chakrabarty’s defense of enlightenment ideals in his influential “The Climate of History: Four Theses.” See: Lisa Tilley and Ajay Parasram, “Global Environmental Harm, Internal Frontiers, and Indigenous Protective Ontologies” in Robbie Shilliam and Olivia Rutazibwa, *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Studies* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming 2017); Cf. Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses” *Critical Inquiry* 35/2 (2009): 197 – 222.

¹⁵³ Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 376 – 378.

¹⁵⁴ Vinay Lal, “Walking with the Subalterns, Riding with the Academy: The Curious Ascendancy of Indian History,” *Studies in History* 17/1 (2001): 101 – 134.

scholars from the Global South to chip away at the hegemony of Eurocentricity within the modern academe (as in the South Asian and Latin American schools of “subaltern studies”)¹⁵⁵, and the second is what Aymara sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui calls the “political economy of knowledge” through which ideas that originate from outside of the modern framework are “exported as raw material returning regurgitated in a grandiose mix as a final product.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, even when MCD scholars seek to use indigenous concepts in their academic writing, it is assumed that the difficult work of “translation” is credibly done by the academic professional who applies the concept within a modern academic framework. This is, to some degree, an unavoidable complication, but it draws attention to the incompleteness and impossibility of “pure” translation of ideas between pluriversal “worlds.”

The violence of universality then, is something that is not at all reserved to colonial thinkers of the 15th – 19th centuries; it continues as the colonality of knowledge production in the academe. The epistemic work of subaltern studies, postcolonial studies, and the MCD has done a considerable job of exposing the exclusionary nature of modern academia, a point I will revisit in section two. But in outlining the distinction between universal and pluriversal thinking, it is important to note that highlighting the “lack” of Eurocentric modernity as an attempt to arrive at a single story is insufficient for

¹⁵⁵ I do not mean to imply that post-positivist (to use the categorization from IR) research more generally is somehow free from colonial intellectual investments, rather, only to say that within the academe, critical approaches offer comparative more intellectual space. As Pal Ahluwalia has forcefully argued, post-modernism and post-structuralism are counter-discourses emerging from within the boundaries of modernism itself, whereas post-colonialism is a counter-discourse seeking to destabilize Western cultural hegemony. Although Said’s *Orientalism* is widely regarded as the academic launch of post-colonialism, Ahluwalia notes that Said quickly moved beyond his investments in French post-structural theory. Following Ahluwalia, understanding post-structuralism requires addressing post-structuralism’s silence on the question of French colonialism. See: Pal Ahluwalia, “Out of Africa: Post-structuralism’s Colonial Roots” *Postcolonial Studies* 8/2 (2005): 137 – 154.

¹⁵⁶ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, quoted in Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 377.

pluriversal politics.¹⁵⁷ In the context of colonial state formation, to consider the diverse options that have informed social and political life requires both epistemic and ontological disobedience, as historical accounts and archival collections cannot be understood as objective records that are separate from the ideology of those who formed and informed records and collections. By “fracturing the modern episteme,” decolonial approaches that are committed to understanding ontological difference and putting those differences into practice – and *through* practice, which is necessarily much deeper than scholarly writing – open up new possibilities for enacting a pluriverse of possibilities.¹⁵⁸ The fracturing has led to many tributaries, some favouring epistemic maneuvers that contest the singularity of “modernity” with the call for multiple modernities or “our” modernity,¹⁵⁹ and others informing the “ontological turn” in which the project of rethinking modernity requires putting into practice ontological starting points that are not situated within the scope of modern thought.¹⁶⁰ The violence of universality, within the regime of representation through which the modern nation state has been imagined as an emancipatory end unto itself, is precisely the reason that fetishizing “total territorial rule”

¹⁵⁷ Robbie Shilliam, for example, has attempted to counter the violence of universality by taking the process of “delinking” from modern expectations of academic scholarship further, and putting other-than-modern concepts grounded in their own genealogical traditions (specifically the Māori *whakapapa* and the Rastafarai *grounation* as methods of discovering deep relations and history-sharing between peoples and cultures) into practice to reject what he calls “colonial science” in favour of “decolonial science.” Following Shilliam, decolonial science seeks to turn over and engage with “pasts” using other-than modern frames of reference. It is possible to critique the modern/colonial practices of history and science, but also to engage in the *reconstructive* work of decolonial politics by putting into practice what is reclaimed and re-learned through the process. See: Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 1- 11; 43 – 58; 167 – 181.

¹⁵⁸ Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 374 – 378.

¹⁵⁹ Cf.: S.N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129/1 (2000): 1 – 29; Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Dakar: SEPHIS & CODESRIA, 1997).

¹⁶⁰ Arturo Escobar. “Thinking-Feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimensions of the Epistemologies of the South.” *Revisita de Antropologia Iberoamericana* 11/1(2015): 11 – 32. ; Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Mario Blaser, “Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe: Towards a Conversation on Political Ontology” *Current Anthropology* 54/5 (2013): 547 – 568.

remains central to postcolonial conflicts today. Following Isabelle Stengers, universal thinking was, at the onset within the philosophy of science, a way of compartmentalizing and narrowing the range of who counts as speaking with authority and thus possess the capabilities of having and producing knowledge. In a recent keynote lecture at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Stengers explains that the well-established tradition of publishing in academic journals for other narrowly focused experts could be a self-conscious strategy of continuing to exclude unqualified voices on a range of issues of global concern.¹⁶¹

By examining coloniality as the constitutive flipside of modernity, the intertwining of deeply entrenched Eurocentric ideas about the linear movement of human history and spatial developments with the modern nation state as a “natural” end becomes clear. The power of this pervasive statist discourse, I argue, has blocked formerly colonized peoples from charting pluriversal decolonial pathways that challenge the universal singularity of the Eurocentric, territorial nation-state as the only game in town. While critical theory rightly identifies the ways in which capitalism in the Global South has served neo-colonial interests, I contend that in addition to capitalism, both the state and the system of states in which we are embedded are symptoms of the broader problem of colonial modernity. In the time and place of the 1940s and 1950s, especially considering the nationalist movements and institutional organizing that had created the conditions through which independence was brokered in Ceylon, self-rule was indeed the logical starting point of decolonization. Ceylon is a fine example, however, of a country that, by this time, was seen by the international community to be a model example for

¹⁶¹ Isabelle Stengers, “Cosmopolitics: Learning to Think With Sciences, Peoples, and Natures.” Keynote presentation of “To See Where it Takes Us” series, Halifax, Nova Scotia. March 5, 2012. <http://goo.gl/4Pt4du>.

modern post-colonial leadership because of good economic fundamentals and elite-level cooperation of different ethnic groups within the country. Even when the first government of J.S. Senanayake passed legislation to disenfranchise a subset of the island's Tamil population – the descendants of the migrant labourers from the rise of coffee plantations in the Kandyan interior – it was not met with disapproval from the Tamil leaders in the North on the basis that these migrant labourers were understood to be outside of the body politic, or fledgling Ceylonese national identity.¹⁶²

The failure to recognize the inherent structural, colonial violence associated with *becoming* modern nation states works to naturalize the ahistorical assumption that the “state” is the same in the Global North and the South without due regard for how it came into being through relationships of power. By this I do not mean that all states are identical, but that the modern nation state as a concept relies on ontological assumptions that may have resonance in the European genealogy of thought, but that have only been enforced through the modern/colonial encounter as being “universally” applicable around the world. Social science has largely dealt with the fissures arising from the ontological distinctions (see chapter two) by relegating to the realm of “culture” or “mythology” the practices that have given and continue to give territory meaning in different parts of the world as lacking in truth or validity.¹⁶³ Put another way by Walter Mignolo,

Modernity has its own internal critics (psychoanalysis, Marxism, postmodernism), but in the Third World the problems are not the same as in the First, and therefore to transplant both the problems and methods from the First to the Third World is no less a

¹⁶² I have discussed some of the details of the immediate postcolonial transition elsewhere, and will write on this subject in the future in light of recently acquired archival documents from this period; however, with this dissertation's focus on the question of the process of *becoming* the modern nation state, I roll back the clock to the early 19th century to explore the tensions out of which the norms and structures of the modern territorial state first came to be accepted. See: Ajay Parasram, “Postcolonial Territory and the Coloniality of the State,” *Caribbean Journal of International Relations & Diplomacy* 2/4 (2014): 51 – 79.

¹⁶³ Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015): 128 – 129.

colonial operation than transplanting armies or factories to satisfy the needs of the First World.¹⁶⁴

While I disagree with Mignolo about the equivalences of military and intellectual projects in practice – Cortez with a quill would not likely have been as destructive as Cortez with arms – there is good sense in differentiating between intellectual attacks from “within” modernity and those “outside” of modernity.¹⁶⁵ With the context of coloniality, pluriversality, and universality in mind, I turn now to the literatures on state formation to examine their contributions and limitations in terms of the dissertation’s emphasis on becoming the state.

Section Two: State Formation and Decolonial Thinking

Externalizing Violence, Relational State Formation, and Empire

In this section, I seek to demonstrate that the European nation-state is as much a product of the colonial encounter in the 19th century, as the conditions of “internal” peace in Europe represent only the “modern” side of the coin. Its colonial flipside however, speaks to the experience of externalized violence through transformation and attempts to erase logics of land, cosmology, and economy, the empirical stories of which I will elaborate in the rest of the dissertation.

Scholars of state formation are divided about the origins and most significant causes of the rise and spread of the modern nation state, but generally speaking, this tends to be placed sometime during the lead up to the Treaties of Westphalia in the 1640s, the transformation of property relations and rise of Britain as the first modern state, and the

¹⁶⁴ Walter Mignolo. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 239.

¹⁶⁵ A sentiment shared, and well-articulated by Pal Ahluwalia as well. See: Pal Ahluwalia, “Out of Africa: Post-structuralism’s Colonial Roots,” *Postcolonial Studies* 8/2 (2005): 137 – 154.

rise of the 19th century Balance of Power marking the alleged 100 years of peace between the fall of Napoleon and the rise of World War I.¹⁶⁶ The modern, colonial state, as this section will argue, is not a naturally occurring structure, but is rather a particularly important formulation of modern, colonial power. The violence of universal thinking that enables the rise of the state as a universal container, however, is of older vintage. The violence of universality and its silencing of pluriversal traditions through the exercise of material and discursive power in the colonial encounter is not only a British imperial phenomenon. As Antony Anghie observes, writing on the colonial origins of international law in the work of the 15th/16th century legal theorist Francisco de Vitoria, the seemingly progressive granting of rational human status to Indians¹⁶⁷ perversely legitimized Spanish aggression against them by integrating the Indian into a system of natural law that insisted on a common ontological configuration of land and territory. Anghie writes,

The universal divine law administered by the Pope is replaced by the universal natural law system of *jus gentium* whose rules may be ascertained by the use of reason. As a result, it is precisely *because* the Indians possess reason that they are bound by *jus gentium*.¹⁶⁸

Rojas, drawing on Anghie and Pagden, argues that it was the recognition of indigenous peoples as equal to the Spanish, but only through a Spanish reasoning and cultural, spiritual, and legal knowledge that came with its own ontology of land as something separate from humanity and in need of being conquered/mastered, which justified the

¹⁶⁶ Jordan Branch, "Mapping the Sovereign State: Technology, Authority, and Systemic Change," *International Organization* 65/1 (2011): 1 - 36; Benno Teschke, "Theorizing the Westphalian System of States: International Relations from Absolutism to Capitalism," *European Journal of International Relations* 8/1 (2002): 5-48; Stuart Elden *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 310 – 315; Peter Taylor, "The State as Container: Territoriality in the Modern World System" *Progress in Human Geography* 18/2(1994): 151 – 162.

¹⁶⁷ by which he meant the indigenous people of contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean.

¹⁶⁸ Antony Anghie, "Francisco de Vitoria and the Colonial Origins of International Law," *Social & Legal Studies* 5/3 (1996): 325.

genocidal politics of the colonial encounter. The failure of the “Indians” to recognize the universal validity of Spanish values was evidence, for the Spanish, of racial inferiority.¹⁶⁹ Vitoria’s assertion of universal reason thus denies the distinctiveness of indigenous ontologies of “sovereignty,” and through integrating indigenous people into a legal framework that developed genealogically within Europe (but always with reference to an “outside”), could justify the dispossession of indigenous peoples while extending the European imaginary that its ideas carried universal validity.¹⁷⁰

The violence of universality is not always so obvious, however. As Bhambra has recently argued, seminal work on state formation within comparative historical sociology has ignored the imperial context and relationality and transnationality inherent to state formation which counters the methodological utility and influence of “ideal types” of states that can be compared across historical and geographical contexts. This is not a problem of left- or right-leaning intellectuals; rather, it is part and parcel of a commitment to a modern, scientific form of reasoning in the study of state formation, encoded in the canonical works on the subject by Max Weber, Karl Marx, or more contemporarily, Charles Tilly or Anthony Giddens.¹⁷¹ Though she does not frame it as such, Bhambra appears to be in agreement with John Agnew’s famous call to avoid the “territorial trap” which, in IR in particular, is a trap that has enabled an erasure of the complex sociologies and geographies that have given rise to the now universal state.¹⁷² While Agnew is not necessarily in disagreement with the general approach of Tilly’s triumph of the state

¹⁶⁹ Cristina Rojas, “Contesting the Colonial Logics of the International: Towards a Relational Politics for the Pluriverse” *International Political Sociology* 10/4 (2016): 372.

¹⁷⁰ Karena Shaw, *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the limits of the political* (New York: Routledge, 2008): 17 – 39.

¹⁷¹ Gurinder K. Bhambra, “Comparative Historical Sociology and the State: Problems of Method,” *Cultural Sociology* 10/3 (2016): 335 – 351.

¹⁷² John Agnew, “The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory,” *Review of International Political Economy* 1/1 (1994): 53 – 80.

model and its mobster-like use of strategic violence,¹⁷³ or Stuart Elden's call for genealogical specificity in territorial formations where Europe is indeed but one site of inquiry, Bhambra's methodological critique outlines the impossibility of thinking about state territory in the postcolonial world in the absence of its direct relation to European empire, *and vice versa*.¹⁷⁴ Though Bhambra's concern is with the methodological implications of this problem for comparative historical sociology, her intervention highlights the importance of thinking about state formation in the colonial world as a fundamentally global, or at least imperial, project, which helps to expose the violence of universality in scholarship that does not engage with the colonial question in seeking explanations for socio-political developments in Europe. This is a point that Benedict Anderson has spoken to in the context of "nation" formation rather than state formation, referring specifically to the origins of the European "nation" in Latin American nationalism and postcolonialism in the 19th century. Anderson also shows the relationality of modern nationalism and empire in his distinction between "official" nationalism, which is a dialectical response to the rise of popular grassroots nationalism and thus an elite attempt to consolidate sovereign authority in the state. This approach, as Anderson demonstrates, was not unique to Europe, and Japanese nationalism took on a particularly modern and imperial structure.¹⁷⁵

In addition to the empirical and methodological point that Bhambra's article draws attention to, she also demonstrates the way insightful research invested in modern

¹⁷³ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990 – 1992* (Malden: Blackwell, 1992); Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" in Peter B. Evans et. al., (eds.) *Bringing the State Back In*, 169-191. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁷⁴ Gurinder K. Bhambra, "Comparative Historical Sociology and the State: Problems of Method," *Cultural Sociology* 10/3 (2016): 335 – 351.

¹⁷⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Cf. Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in Japan." *The Complete Works of Rabindranath Tagore*. Accessed August 20, 2013. <https://goo.gl/32uj72>.

thinking can often be blind to what ought to be obvious points, as they relate to the colonial encounter. For example, Anthony Giddens' thoughtful work on the relationship of violence and the modern nation-state nevertheless obscures the two-way relationship through which state formation influenced both Europe and the colonies. He uses the term "nation-states" to refer to European states, and flips the concept to "state-nations" to describe post-colonial states with special reference to those emerging from the British imperial system. I agree with Giddens' categorization of "state-nations" in identifying the fact that the normalization of the "state" predates the tenuous nation in British South Asia, but he overstates the discreteness with which states formed.¹⁷⁶ Giddens fits into the methodological critique Bhabra offers of presenting ideal types that miss the inherent relationality of state formation, as his study clearly positions the birth of states in an "original, i.e., Western habitat."¹⁷⁷

Giddens, building off of Foucault, advances the idea that a defining characteristic of modern nation-states in Europe has been the gradual diminishing of the use of violence as a means of coercion within the boundaries of the state.¹⁷⁸ Acknowledging that the degree and effectiveness of internal pacification varied throughout Europe and that its success in Britain was remarkably quick, he explains that the development of industrial capitalism played a decisive role in altering the use of force within European states.¹⁷⁹ Building off of Marx, Giddens argues that, "'dull economic compulsion,' plus the surveillance made possible by the concentration of labour within the capitalist work-place

¹⁷⁶ Here, Partha Chatterjee's distinction between an externally performed or represented homogenous nationalism towards the rest of the world, and an internally fragmentary and contested understanding of nationalism for "insiders" is useful. See: Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993): 1 – 15.

¹⁷⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987): 5.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 187

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 189 – 191

replaces the direct possibility of coercion by the use of force.”¹⁸⁰ Thus, the internalized disorder that preceded the rise of industrial society in Europe was one that relied on the blunt application and threat of force, in which rogues and robbers ruled the highways and the application of force and threat to take life was the only guarantee of safety. Demilitarization of the state is an essential component of coercion by commercial means for Giddens, and this view echoes the views of early 19th century writers like Benjamin Constant, that commerce and capitalism marked a separation between a pre-modern past of violence and war, and a modern present of “civilized” conduct through which the incentive structures of commercial society would render war anachronistic.¹⁸¹

I will return to Constant through Anthony Pagden’s discussion of “divided sovereignty” later in this chapter, but for now, the point to draw attention to is that the claim that internal pacification through demilitarization with modern industrial capitalism in Europe, fails to recognize that at the same time, one sees the *externalization* of European violence in the colonies. In the case of Ceylon, as I will explain in chapters two to four, liberal colonial reforms only transformed violence, they did not pacify subject populations even though from the point of view of colonial officials and missionaries, the population was pacified. Colonial capitalist and administrative reforms did not demonstrate a diminished use of force, rather, they were predicated on the necessity of dismantling ontologically distinct ways of organizing life and replacing them with a satellite commercial relationship to other hubs of the imperial economy.¹⁸² Siba Grovogui masterfully demonstrates how any internal conditions of peace within Europe in the 19th

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 191

¹⁸¹ Cf. Anthony Pagden, “Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe’s Overseas Empires,” *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 28 – 46.

¹⁸² I discuss this in reference to the pre-colonial Kandyan political economy in chapter three.

century were predicated on applying the rules of international relations differently. Grovogui notes that through the colonial encounter, African sovereigns were downgraded from being seen as equal to Christian/European modes to necessarily inferior, which presented “failed” African states under the 19th century balance of power as raw fodder upon which “failed” European states like Belgium could thrive through expropriation.¹⁸³ An obscure state like Belgium, following Grovogui, was viable only because the tacit agreement of the so-called Great Powers externalized violent accumulation to the Congo which exemplifies the inherent racial foundation to primitive accumulation as well as advanced capitalist industrialization.

Sovereignty and Territory

The externalization of British violence to its colonies in the 19th century invites a number of important considerations about the meaning of sovereignty, its relationship to state, territory, and empire. In this section I draw selectively on some of the vast literatures concerned with questions of this nature, with the main objective of highlighting why a pluriversal and decolonial perspective contributes to discussions concerning sovereignty.

There are no easily acceptable definitions for what “sovereignty” means, though few would contest that the most conventional use of the term reflects its pairing with the structure of the “state,” specifically referring to the absolute autonomy of the state to do as it will within the confines of its borders. Following Max Weber, the state can be defined as a “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate

¹⁸³ Siba Grovogui, “Regimes of Morality: International Morality and the African Condition,” *European Journal of International Relations* 8/3 (2002): 315 – 338.

use of physical force within a given territory.”¹⁸⁴ There are many assumptions within this formulation of the state, including the presumption that territory and people are discrete entities, that human communities are the logical point of departure for organizing life, and that violence is a legitimate means of achieving order. I will take up the question of ontologies of “sovereign” practices in chapter two, but for this chapter’s emphasis on the colonality of the structure of the modern state, I wish to dwell on the conventional grafting of state and sovereignty. Here I seek to outline the epistemological and ontological aspects of historical research on sovereignty and territory, situating them within a European genealogy that becomes globalized through the age of empire(s). By bringing a pluriversal lens to bear on this literature, I aim to bring into focus the need to understand sovereignty and territory as pluriversal notions with histories in different parts of the world which come into contact through the externalization of violence in the modern, colonial encounter.

The common account of sovereignty in much 20th century structural IR scholarship emphasized the critical juncture that the signing of the Peace Treaties at Westphalia in 1648 had for wedding sovereignty to internally and externally recognized territorial boundaries, as well as the philosophical importance of Grotius, Bodin, Hobbes, and Rousseau in particular.¹⁸⁵ Many IR scholars argue that 1648 has been a time of exaggerated significance, perhaps even giving rise to a “myth” of the Westphalian

¹⁸⁴ Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” (1919):1. Accessed August 20, 2103. <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago University Press, 2013): 279 – 321; Nicholas Onuf, “Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History” *Alternatives* 16 (1991): 425 – 446; Jacques Maritain, “The Philosophical Attack” in W.J. Stankiewicz (ed.) *In Defense of Sovereignty*, 41 – 64, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Joseph A. Camilleri, “Rethinking Sovereignty in a Shrinking, Fragmented World,” in R.B.J. Walker and Saul H. Mendlovitz (eds.) *Contending Sovereignties: Redefining Political Community*, 13 – 44, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990).

argument sketched together long after the fact and then read backwards into history.¹⁸⁶

John Ruggie reminds us that while systems of rule have always been about the organization of power, systems of rule have not always been territorially fixed, exclusive, and at times, they have not been territorial at all.¹⁸⁷ When, and where, then, does territory and sovereignty fuse together?

Following Nicholas Onuf, the “standard” IR definition of sovereignty refers not to a political community, so much as it does to a defined territory. The eminent classical realist, Hans Morgenthau, dates sovereignty to the end of the Thirty Years’ War in 1648, defining sovereignty as a political “fact” of supreme power.¹⁸⁸ This implies an implicit internal and external dimension of sovereignty. In his genealogical account of sovereignty however, Jens Bartelson argues that it is important to avoid the ontological and historical mistake of tying sovereignty and anarchy together:

the ontological primacy accorded to the state in international political theory implies the *givenness of sovereignty* as its defining property; sovereignty signifies what is inside the state, either constituted by the fall from a primordial unity, or simply taken for granted at the level of definition. In either case, sovereignty is constituted as a primitive presence from which all theorizing necessarily must depart, if it is to remain international political theorizing.¹⁸⁹

Assuming dividing lines between internal and external sovereignty exemplifies a form of presentism through which a late modern (and Eurocentric) understanding is projected into the past, removing from inquiry the ways through which these notions of internal and

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Andreas Osiander, “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth” *International Organization* 55/2 (2001): 251 – 287 ; Turan Kayaoglu, “Westphalian Eurocentrism in International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Review* 12 (2010): 193 – 217.

¹⁸⁷ John Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations” *International Organization* 47/1 (1993): 148 – 150.

¹⁸⁸ Onuf, Nicholas. “Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History” *Alternatives* 16 (1991): 430.

¹⁸⁹ Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 24

external sovereignty took route.¹⁹⁰ As Stephen Krasner observes, the tendency to see sovereignty as merely an attribute synonymous with the state has long since required problematizing. The fact that “final authority” within a given territory has always, in practice, if not in theory, been challenged throughout the history of the state system provides evidence to this effect.¹⁹¹ Belief in the durability of Westphalian sovereignty persists, argues Krasner, notwithstanding its constant violations.¹⁹² The assumption of sovereignty meaning absolute rule over a given territory is well rehearsed and persistent, but as Ruggie in particular has argued, tied up with this assumption is a necessarily static understanding of sovereignty, which in turn is both a historical and conceptual fallacy.¹⁹³ Such a fixed conception of sovereignty, argues Onuf, presents “internal sovereignty” as something that “enables modernity to fulfil its many possibilities within states. Meanwhile, “external sovereignty” denies the possibility of any such change in the relations of states.”¹⁹⁴ In his conceptual history of sovereignty, Onuf argues that state sovereignty is a modern phenomenon and conceptual innovation made possible by the decline of the Roman church in the temporal sphere, alongside a decline in nominal empire, rise in autonomy of principalities and importantly, the international relations and diplomacy between these small units unhindered by the larger scale authority of either church or empire.¹⁹⁵ Sovereignty is a modern, conceptual innovation for Onuf, with

¹⁹⁰ Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 60

¹⁹¹ Stephen Krasner, “Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective” *Comparative Political Studies* 21/1 (1988): 88; David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 215.

¹⁹² Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999): 9.

¹⁹³ David A. Lake, “The New Sovereignty in International Relations” *International Studies Review* 5/3 (2003): 308; John Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Towards a Neorealist Synthesis” in Robert Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and its Critic*, 131 – 158. (New York: Colombia University Press, 1986); Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 61.

¹⁹⁴ Onuf, Nicholas. “Sovereignty: Outline of a Conceptual History” *Alternatives* 16 (1991): 432.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 434

antecedents including the Latin *majestas*, *imperium*, and a sense of the “populace.”¹⁹⁶ In the modern age, “nationalism gave rise to the principle that every nation needs and deserves the protective shell of a sovereign state in order to fulfil its potential.”¹⁹⁷

The political philosopher and theologian, Jacques Maritain argues sovereignty cannot be divorced from the spiritual context out of which the concept emerges. Applying sovereignty to an embodied leader, group of people, or territorially bounded political institutions is a philosophical misconception based on misunderstanding the genealogy of the term itself. Maritain discusses the problems arising from imprecise translation of Greek words in Western philosophy, which give rise to what he sees as the “original sin” that enabled philosophers like Hobbes and Rousseau to appropriate the concept of sovereignty and apply it to an embodied leader, or general population respectively.¹⁹⁸ Maritain takes issue with the translation of the Greek “*civitas*” to the English “state,” arguing that the word should more appropriately be understood as “commonwealth” or “body politic.” Similarly, “the words *pincipatus* and *suprema potestas* are often translated with “sovereignty,” the words *kurios* or *princeps* (“ruler”) with “sovereign.”¹⁹⁹ Critiquing Hobbes’ application of sovereignty to the body of the “Mortal God” within *Leviathan*, as well as Rousseau’s grafting of sovereign power onto the people in the general will, Maritain strives to show how both attempts forget that the etymology of “sovereign” implies the transference of power and authority from the people to a transcendent

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 439

¹⁹⁸ Jacques Maritain, “The Philosophical Attack” in W.J. Stankiewicz (ed.) *In Defense of Sovereignty*, 41 – 64. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

¹⁹⁹ Jacques Maritain, “The Philosophical Attack” in W.J. Stankiewicz (ed.) *In Defense of Sovereignty*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 43. See footnote 9 in particular, where Maritain elaborates upon the specifics of the translation of these words in Aristotle and Aquinas. The question of translation is also fundamentally a question of ontological starting points, as I will elaborate upon in chapter two’s discussion of ontologies of sovereignty in the meeting of British and Kandyian genealogies of sovereignty.

sovereign that is necessarily separate from the people. Hobbes introduces a conception of “the state of nature” as a way to describe the arbitrary violence that prevails in the absence of order, arguing that rational men will seek to leave that state of nature and secure protection through the willing sacrifice of their liberty to a sovereign in exchange for living within the sovereign territory.²⁰⁰ While the immediate context of the Thirty Years War in Europe was clearly on Hobbes’ mind when penning *Leviathan*, it is worth noting the considerable irony of Hobbes’ situation of brutish violence as being characteristic of “uncivilized” existence, given the genocides and subjugation of indigenous peoples as a result of early contact with Europeans in the 150+ years leading up to the publication of his book.²⁰¹ From a pluriversal perspective, ontologically assuming a relationship between territory and sovereignty presupposes that all people relate to territory in the same way, which as Karena Shaw argues in her reading of Hobbes, creates not only a natural division between an inside and outside, but an outside within which there is an absence of order, lawfulness or justice.

The ‘outside’ is awful. Life ‘there’ is not pleasant. But it is also more than that: it is brutish. There is no account of time, no way to give one’s life meaning, no way to change one’s condition, no way to create or relate to a collective, a community. There is no progress. Thus sovereignty is marked not only by peace, but by an entire – quite specific – attitude towards time, history, meaning.²⁰²

The very premise of a state of nature that is “outside” of political order reserves for Europe alone the ability to possess and inhabit order. The ontological point to emphasize here, is not whether Hobbes was right or wrong, rather, it is that the metaphor he develops has been further developed and emerges within a context of indigenous dispossession and

²⁰⁰ Martin Carnoy, *The State & Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984): 15 – 17.

²⁰¹ Pat Moloney, “Hobbes, Savagery, and International Anarchy,” *American Political Science Review* 105/1 (2011): 189 – 204.

²⁰² Karena Shaw, *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the limits of the political* (New York: Routledge, 2008): 32.

active attempts by European colonizers to dismantle ways of being without ever understanding the ontological basis of different notions of territory and cosmology.²⁰³

The political and spiritual context of European “sovereignty” at the time when Hobbes was writing was an imperial one grounded in a secular (temporal) emperor and a spiritual emperor in the form of the Pope within the Holy Roman Empire. It was a conception of sovereignty that is absolutist in essence, which, Maratain contends, is a contradiction because a power that is absolute cannot be territorially bounded. Territory in Europe, however, was not yet a requirement for sovereignty, which is a point developed by Stuart Elden in his genealogical account of the concept.²⁰⁴ Political geographers in particular have drawn attention to the way that social science has used the term “territory” to mean various different things such as land, or terrain, which has created the illusion that territory could be seen to be a “passive spatial recipient” of the state.²⁰⁵ The resulting “trap” of territory has interestingly not been that scholars have ignored the centrality of place and space in the formation of territory; rather, as Agnew argues, “social science has been *too* geographical and not sufficiently historical, in the sense that geographical assumptions have trapped considerations of social and political-economic processes into geographical structures and containers that defy historical

²⁰³ Working from Marx and Fanon, Glen Coulthard develops a concept of “grounded normativity” in which he draws on a Dene placed-based ontology of land to argue that primitive accumulation leading to the rise of modern capitalism depended first and foremost on indigenous dispossession and the denial of indigenous ontologies. See: Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

²⁰⁴ Stuart Elden, *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2009).

²⁰⁵ Cf. A. Brighenti, “On Territorology: Towards a General Science of Territory,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 27/1(2010): 52 – 72; John Agnew, “Still Trapped in Territory,” *Geopolitics* 15/4 (2010) 779 – 784; Stuart Elden, *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2009): 161 – 169.

change.”²⁰⁶ Stuart Elden clearly links territory to history and power, arguing in his 2013 book on the subject that “Territory comprises techniques for measuring land and controlling terrain. Measure and control – the technical and the legal – need to be thought alongside land and terrain.”²⁰⁷ A historical and political analysis of territory, then, becomes very centrally related to the state; however, Elden’s specific definition of the term is not uniformly accepted. For example, Saskia Sassen argues that Elden’s definition of territory is overly limited, and thus gives meaning to territory only truly through the state, when territory perhaps could and should be more abstractly defined to help understand configurations of social power *prior* to the rise of the state.²⁰⁸ Sassen’s critique of Elden’s conception of territory is important in terms of challenging the universality of Eurocentric definitions of terms and the trade-off between specificity and ability to explain, as it opens up the possibility for pluriversal explanations grounded in history.

Maritain’s claims about the absolute meaning of sovereignty is not unprecedented, but it does fall victim to John Ruggie’s criticism that sovereignty is held to be static when it should be understood as an evolving concept – one which, as Onuf suggests – takes on its full meaning only in the modern (colonial) world. Thinking pluriversally about the development of “sovereignty” not so much as a static term, but rather, as a way of organizing life related to different notions of territory, I would suggest that Maritain correctly identifies and traces a an understanding of sovereignty that emerges out of the Christian European experience. As Bartleson insists,

²⁰⁶ John Agnew, “The Hidden Geographies of Social Science and the Myth of the ‘Geographical Turn,’” *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 13 (1995): 379 – 380.

²⁰⁷ Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago University Press, 2013): 323.

²⁰⁸ Saskia Sassen, “Making territory work analytically beyond its connection to the state” in Stephen Legg, “The Birth of Territory: A Review Forum.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 50(2015): 109 – 188.

We cannot demand, however, that the history of thought should supply us with solutions to our own problems... we must learn from the past: the alien character of past beliefs is what constitutes their relevance to our present, since our own concepts nevertheless evolved out of them.²⁰⁹

I agree with Bartleson, but also insist that the genealogies of “sovereignty” are evidence of a pluriverse of multiple ontologies and ways of relating, within which the Eurocentric understanding of territory, religion, and authority is just one among many others. Sovereignty, if it is to be understood historically, cannot be divorced from its geographic, cosmological, and historical configuration. The “standard account” and the preponderant understanding of what this means reflects the violence of universal state formation in the 19th century, as this is the period of imperial expansion through which Europe sought most actively to dismantle other ways of organizing life within a given region, using techniques grounded in Eurocentric ontologies of land. “Territory” then, needs to be separated from its Eurocentric roots if we are to be able to study the process through which one form of territory was made to yield to another form of territory through 19th century empire. Sassen offers a more general description of territory, saying it should be seen as a

complex capability with embedded logics of power (which in our western modernity found its most accomplished form in the modern state) and embedded logics of claim-making (which again, in our western modernity found its most accomplished form in today’s understanding of citizenship).²¹⁰

Following Sassen, territory is untethered from its Eurocentric origins, and as we will see in chapter two, opens pluriversal space to understand ontologically distinct notions of territory and spatial organizations.

²⁰⁹ Jens Bartleson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 65.

²¹⁰ Saskia Sassen, “Making territory work analytically beyond its connection to the state” in Stephen Legg, “The Birth of Territory: A Review Forum.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 50 (2015): 115.

Sassen's point does not, however, undermine the importance of Elden's emphasis on understanding the historical significance of the evolution of territory within Europe. This is precisely the point of looking at the historical and ontological context associated with the development of notions of sovereignty in different parts of the world. As Pat Moloney has argued, written into Hobbes' assumptions that "savages" living in a state of nature presupposes that there are not other manifestations of sovereignty, and so called savages live in anarchy, which we know to be historically incorrect.²¹¹ According to Elden, an important and understated aspect of Hobbes' contribution to the development of territory and sovereignty is the specific referencing to boundedness within his writing. The context of sovereignty before Hobbes was one in which sovereignty, like Maritain reminds us, was limitless, universal, and vested in the spiritual realm. According to Elden, Hobbes is

still trying to work with an earlier model: his aim is for absolute sovereignty – that is, sovereignty without limits – which is what we previously understood as temporal power but without a counterbalance of spiritual power. Yet in other respects his arguments break new ground. The notion of the empowered sovereign being constituted from the individuals who authorized it is a powerful notion. As Hobbes suggests, "The Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of that great LEVIATHAN."²¹²

The point is that in forming the great Leviathan as a literal body politic, the sovereign surveys a bounded Christian territory as represented in the famous illustration on the front cover of the book. This is an important break in political theory, where the centrality of territory to sovereignty becomes important.²¹³ Reading Hobbes through his responses to Bellarmino, Elden argues that Hobbes "suggests that a plurality of Christian sovereigns had

²¹¹ Pat Moloney, "Hobbes, Savagery, and International Anarchy," *American Political Science Review* 105/1 (2011): 189 – 204.

²¹² Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 301

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 302 - 303

rights of sovereignty in their multiple territories, and that the pope does not have civil power except in the territories he directly controls.”²¹⁴ This fragmentation of universal sovereign power across all land vested in the pope as Christ’s representative on earth, and then further down to territorially bounded Christian monarchs, is arguably a central component to the development of sovereign territory at the heart of the much later, modern, territorial state.

Empire

Although most accounts of the rise of sovereignty and its meaning of absolute rule over a bounded territory is traced to Westphalia or 19th century imperialism, Anthony Pagden argues that it is a much older concept originating at least with the age of Cicero. For Pagden, classical notions of empire onwards required a moral justification of defence in order to justify what is in every case, a violent conquest as empire expands. When European powers were expanding overseas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Pagden argues that there was “considerable anxiety as to what kind of rights, if any, they might have in the territories they occupied. The debates to which this anxiety gave rise turned inevitably on the question of how wars of occupation and dispossession could be presented as wars of defense.”²¹⁵ The resolution of these questions, at least from the vantage point of debates in international law as discussed in Rojas’ and Anghie’s work on Vitoria in the above, saw the violence of universal thinking in forcing indigenous people into Spanish categories that precluded their ability to engage in just war and justified Spanish violence against them. Sovereignty, from the time of the Spanish conquistadors

²¹⁴ Ibid., 301

²¹⁵ Anthony Pagden, “Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe’s Overseas Empires,” *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 30.

onwards in the Eurocentric understanding of the term, had neo-Aristotelian roots, meaning “perfect community” that implied undividedness.²¹⁶

This indivisibility was not a constant for empire however, and Pagden argues that it was precisely the change in thinking of sovereignty as something that *was* divisible, particularly in the aftermath of Napoleon’s attempt to build empire from within continental Europe in the late 18th and early 19th century, that enabled a shift into a second period of modern colonial “empire,” - what Pagden calls “empire two.” In the first period of modern empire, which ended between 1776 – 1830, sovereignty followed a logic of indivisibility. In the late 18th and early 19th century in particular, the differences and overlap between the nature of settler-colonial empires in contemporary North America and those parts of the empire like South Asia which were not settler-colonies, created internal imperial debates on the asymmetric treatment of the two. The application of singular sovereignty meant, for late 18th century thinkers like Adam Smith and Edmond Burke, that empire ought to mean a single sovereign state across disparate territories in which everyone was a citizen.²¹⁷ Burke was very critical of the British East India Company (BEIC) in particular, because clearly, company rule in India did not offer subjects and citizens equal rights. Pagden marks this period as ushering in a new generation of colonial officials who saw reformation and liberal, colonial, forms of inclusion as the ultimate goal of the British in India – they were not yet present in Ceylon. This cohort of reformers were informed by the more classical Orientalist scholarship of their BEIC predecessors who sought to translate and integrate Hindu, Muslim, and British

²¹⁶ Ibid., 32; Antony Anghie, “Francisco de Vitoria and Colonial Origins of International Law” *Social and Legal Studies* 5/3 (1996): 329.

²¹⁷ Anthony Pagden, “Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe’s Overseas Empires” *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 33 – 34.

legal traditions. Creating a universal law out of the pluriversal legal tradition within India ultimately failed because Hindu codes, Islamic *Shari'a*, and English codes could not be reconciled. As Pagden writes:

But for all his enthusiasm and Jones's genuine and deep respect for (at least ancient) Indian culture, the distances between, on the one hand, a code based on custom sanctioned by usage, as was the common law, and on the other, those based on the supposed utterances of gods, as were both the various "Hindu" codes and the *Shari'a*, were irreconcilable. Ultimately, if non-Europeans were to be "citizens" of the empires that had engulfed them and not merely their subjects, they could only become so by accepting the undivided legislative authority of their distant sovereign.²¹⁸

This is important for a number of reasons. First, and most importantly from the perspective of pluriversal "sovereignty" is the point that when faced with the irreconcilability of ontologically distinct legal systems, the result of that irreconcilability remains universalizing a single system, understood to be a superior one. Second, it demonstrates a clear break in the nature of empire by the early 19th century if we are to accept Pagden's date range. We see the rise of the moral discourse of colonialism in this generational shift, as I discuss in greater detail in chapter three in the context of Ceylon. Third, and relatedly, we see a moral demarcation between an older "empire 1" and an "empire 2" in which Napoleonic forces are in decline. Drawing on Benjamin Constant, a critic of Napoleon, Pagden shows that in Constant's view, the "modern" world of the 19th century was one ruled by commerce, which made men "gentle" in their actions.

What the invention of commerce had achieved, entirely despite itself, was a radical change in the calculation of interest. "War, then, comes before commerce," he wrote. "The former is all savage impulse, the latter civilized calculation." And in the new world of calculation trade had taken over from empire, since the "infinite and complex ramifications of commerce have placed the interest of

²¹⁸ Anthony Pagden, "Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe's Overseas Empires" *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 35.

[individual] societies beyond the frontiers of their own territories.” Modernity, in other words, cannot be other than peaceful and global.²¹⁹

From a purely Eurocentric point of view, perhaps Constant was correct, until the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. As explained earlier however, the internally pacifying nature of commerce was predicated on the externalization of violence, taking the form of attempting to destroy ways of relating to and with land that did not fit within the ontological assumptions of modern capitalism and the modern state across the other-than European world. Within approaches that consider the role of empire spreading and universalizing sovereignty, it is the critical juncture after which rule by empire and commerce come together in the 19th century under a normative framework of internal (European) pacification, reliant on an externalization of violence of an ontological and material nature in the colonies, ostensibly in service to a changing rationality of liberal improvement by the early 19th century. In Pagden’s “empire 2” differentiation and indirect rule was the method of achieving this form of control, and it came with the assumption that the ultimate goal of colonial rule was to give up rule to a graduated population of “less civilized” others who, under European tutelage, learn the values of capitalism, development, and centralized governance. As Jordan Branch maintains, it was only in the 19th century that “rule came to be defined exclusively in terms of territories with boundaries between homogenous spatial authority claims.”²²⁰

²¹⁹Ibid., 36-37.

²²⁰ Jordan Branch, “Mapping the Sovereign State: Technology, Authority, and Systemic Change” *International Organization* 65/1 (2011): 6.

Relational State Formation: Imperial or Transcendent Sovereignty?

Elden believes that within IR literature, broadly speaking, revisionists tend to undersell the importance of Westphalia and its legacy in the development of modern notions of both sovereignty and territory, but he agrees that traditional readings of Westphalia overstate its importance. Following Elden, Westphalia was the codification of an already existing, internal European imperial logic rather than a radical redefinition of territory and sovereignty. The word “sovereignty” only appears in the English translation of the Treaty of Münster. The Latin version of the Osnabrück Treaty refers to “*iure territorii et superioritatis* [territorial right and superiority]”²²¹ and Elden notes that the rights defined in these foundational texts are articulated with reference to the Latin “*Statibus Imperii*” or “states within the empire.”²²² This seems consistent with Hobbes’ characterization of Christian rulers: “Every Christian Sovereign [sic] be the Supreme Pastor of his own Subjects...in their own Dominions,”²²³ Although the terms of the Osnabrück and Münster treaties did enable states that were contracting members of the treaties to raise standing armies, form diplomatic and military alliances, and raise taxes to support their endeavours, these conditions were preconditioned by the fact that these treaties could not lead to forming alliances against the empire.²²⁴ As Elden explains,

This is indeed the key point: the treaties codified and reinforced an already existing state of affairs rather than distributing a wider set of rights. The elements within the empire were not yet states, because these rights came with their status as constituent parts of the empire. Nonetheless, taken together, these two points can be seen as crucial stages in the assertion of the state as laying claim to the monopoly of physical violence, both within the polity and as the means by which it would exceed its borders.²²⁵

²²¹ Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 313.

²²² Ibid., Elden’s translation.

²²³ Thomas Hobbes, cited in Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (2013): 301.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.: 314.

Elden continues to note that the German word within these treaties that have been translated into English to mean “territorial sovereignty” is “*Landeshoheit*,” which, following Andreas Osiander, ought to be considered “territorial jurisdiction” instead.²²⁶ As Turan Kayaoglu argues, the Westphalian centrality was arguably something that took on its contemporary importance to IR’s understanding of state sovereignty only in the 19th century, when German historians drew out of the Peace at Westphalia the narrative of “mutual independence, political tolerance, and the balance of power”²²⁷ in the political context of Napoleonic imperialism within Europe. Importantly, as Kayaoglu explains,

Nineteenth-century jurists added an external dimension to the Westphalian narrative: lacking a Westphalia-like arrangement, non-European societies remained in political disorder and religious intolerance. When these societies “fulfilled” the so-called “standards of civilization” the European states then “admitted” them into “international society.”²²⁸

Kayaoglu’s account draws attention to the historical construction of what Osiander has called the Westphalian ‘myth.’²²⁹

For Maritain, the political transformations of sovereignty do not free the concept from its essential meaning, and he proposes that a new concept altogether may be necessary.²³⁰ The confusion in thinking of sovereignty as something possessed by a state or a people is that such approaches (in Hobbes and Rousseau) imply that sovereignty resides either at the hierarchically ordered top of the political community, or else

²²⁶ Andreas Osiander “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,” *International Organization* 55/2 (2001): 272.

²²⁷ Turan Kayaoglu, “Westphalian Eurocentrism in International Relations Theory” *International Studies Review* 12(2010): 195.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Andreas Osiander “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,” *International Organization* 55/2 (2001): 251-287

²³⁰ Jacques Maritain, “The Philosophical Attack” in W.J. Stankiewicz (ed.) *In Defense of Sovereignty*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 61.

entrusted to the body politic as they assemble to deliberate and decide. But in order to be true to its history, sovereignty means rising *above* the body to exercise the transcendent authority of sovereignty:

Either Sovereignty means nothing, or it means supreme power *separate* and *transcendent* – not at the peak but *above* the peak (“par dessus tous les sujets”) – and ruling the entire body politic *from above*. That is why power is absolute (absolute, that is non-bound, separate), and consequently unlimited, in its extension as well as in its duration, and not accountable to anything on earth.²³¹

Maritain’s historical and philosophical intervention highlights that the original context in which “sovereignty” enters Europe, but treated in this way, the concept lacks a dynamic quality, which, as Pagden’s views on ancient to modern empire demonstrates, involves considerable change in terms of sovereignty and territoriality.

What is compelling about Maritain’s intervention is that he highlights the fractious nature of sovereignty, even within the European Christian/secular tradition. Nevertheless, it bears remembering that Hobbes, Locke, Mill and other seminal European philosophers were still theorizing about Europe in a way that was fundamentally related to non-European parts of the world, though they rarely acknowledged this explicitly. The distinctions, and the conflations, of terms like “state,” “sovereignty,” and “territory” introduce important questions about the development of these concepts, but also about the political importance of applying territorial conceptions of sovereignty to bounded places globally. As Bhambra notes, the extra-territorial extension of European sovereignty to the colonies in the context of the 19th and 20th centuries relied on a largely assumed ethnic/racialized understanding of “nation” which, in turn, made imperialism a constitutive part of economic and political nationalism in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries:

²³¹ Ibid., 47.

The nation, for Weber, is defined in ethnic terms. It is defined against the Polish people who may have lived within the borders of the Prussian and then the German state for centuries and it is defined against all other nations. This understanding of the nation is simply naturalized – there is no recognition of the historical complexity or contemporary contradiction – and it is established as the fundamental value within which social science should operate...I want to argue that it is perhaps better to reverse this formulation and, instead, see Weber's political value system as central to his conceptualization of the nation. It is only this reversal that enables us to account for his concept of the nation-state failing to take into consideration his commitment, otherwise, to Germany being a world power, that is, an imperial state. What we commonly understand as the nation – and as the concept of the nation bequeathed to us by Weber – was actually an imperial state. While Weber elides the concept of the nation with imperial power, what enables the concept to gain traction in its own terms is the omission of German imperialism from what are presented as “national” histories.²³²

Using Germany as an illustrative example, Bhambra explains that the concept of “nation,” and the application of the national well being as being wedded to imperial expansion in the non-European parts of the world is evidence that the organization of sovereignty and state had imperial foundations in the practice of state and empire-making in the 19th century. Nations were united in shared political destinies, which extended to becoming global powers, scripting the “backward” parts of the world as mere empty land within which qualified European nations could exercise their national will. Whereas Hobbes' universal decree of the “state of nature” strips the world of its pluriversal practices of what we might crudely translate in English as “sovereignty,” Weber opens the possibility of incorporating these “savage” places into a national project as part of an internal Western struggle “to become a world power through overseas expansion.”²³³ Following Pagden however, this imperial impulse is hardly new, as ancient Rome, the expansion of territory for the purpose of glorifying, protecting, and growing the nation,

²³² Gurinder K. Bhambra, “Comparative Historical Sociology and the State: Problems of Method,” *Current Sociology* 10/3 (2016): 341 – 342.

²³³ Gurinder K. Bhambra, “Comparative Historical Sociology and the State: Problems of Method,” *Current Sociology* 10/3 (2016): 343.

was very much a part of imperial calculation.²³⁴ From a territorial point of view, Bhabra's point is very important, as it demonstrates the inherent transnational function of 19th century *European* state formation, and the centrality of colonialism to making that international system function.

The Telescope of Statist History

The centrality of the state as a vehicle of colonial improvement earns its philosophical and methodological guidance from G.W.F. Hegel in the early 19th century. Hegel was instrumental in linking colonization to a moral project by positioning the state as a universal hierarchical marker of human civilization. With Hegel, the earlier Enlightenment dictum, "people without writing are people without history," evolved into "people without the *state* are people without history." The existence of "the state" became a marker of civilization, understood to be a hierarchal model of social evolution, which enabled the logic of European supremacy to take on institutional forms.²³⁵ That Hegel saw the state as a marker for social evolution makes sense if one reads him in the context of growing European imperial power in the late 18th and early 19th century. As Ranajit Guha notes, "Considered in the light of his evolutionary idea of progress it is a Darwinist theory somewhat ahead of its time, but one with no pretension at all to scientific neutrality."²³⁶ Hegel, as Sidney Hook has argued, understands history in divine terms, and sees it as the "autobiography of God."²³⁷ The temporal place of a mortal can only understand a tiny fraction of the larger universal, absolutist purpose of history within a

²³⁴ Anthony Pagden, "Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe's Overseas Empires" *History and Theory* 44 (2005): 28 – 46; Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

²³⁵ Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limits of World History*. (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002): 41.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1950): 36

Hegelian framework.²³⁸ For Guha, whose work emphasizes Indian history, India and Indians entered Hegelian World History in 1802 (and by extension, exited the pre-historical world), when Ramram Basu, a Bengali in the employment of the British East India Company wrote an account of the region that sought to translate the past into a historical narrative recognizable to the British East India Company.²³⁹ Liberal historiography was a foundational intellectual and practical expression of British colonial power, the outcome of which was “history written by Indians themselves in faithful imitation of the Western statist model.”²⁴⁰ Once South Asians were brought into Hegelian World History, state education, and Western academia, they embraced it and took up the practice as a way of proving to the world the worth of “India” and “Indians” through a statist lens. Part of the motivation for doing this, especially in the late colonial era, was to show that people of colour could “play the game” as well as or better than the European colonialists, but the downside is that through accepting the “rules of the game” as established under modern liberal historiography, structures like state sovereignty, territorial homogeneity, and large-scale export agriculture have become markers of political, social, and economic advancement.

By the end of official, institutional colonialism, territorial borders created to protect delicate imperial negotiations between warring imperial European states who had dragged the world into “world war” for a second time were at times challenged (for example, by the partition of India/Pakistan), but the logic of total territorial rule over a bounded territory in a Weberian sense was, at this point, an accepted norm of global

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.): 182.

²⁴⁰ Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limits of World History* (2002): 45.

political existence at the elite level. This is not to suggest, however, that this was a universally shared perspective amongst the people. It is not the case that the hegemony of the state meant the obliteration of alternatives to total territorial rule, as Maia Ramnath's work on South Asian anarchism cited earlier suggests. The point here is that by the time of formal political independence, the many possible political possibilities about how to organize territory were already shrouded in darkness, leaving the modern nation state glimmering in the sun, embedded within a system of states that embodied Eurocentric ontologies of territory and sovereignty made to fit overtop of other-than-modern ontologies.

I argue in chapters two and four that the most important period of contention in the case of Ceylon, where the visibility of pluriversal understandings of these concepts gave way to the universal state, occurs between ca. 1815 and 1850. The point is not that, should indigenous ontologies of territory be the ones informing the logic of the territorial organization, there would be no conflict – my point is only that the force-fitting of Eurocentric understandings of territory and sovereignty creates a particular kind of modern, colonial, constellation that defines contemporary territory in universal ways today. Indigenous ontologies of land have also been fractious, resulting in conflicts, resolution of conflicts, and the effective management of sociopolitical life in diverse ways, and why should it be any other way? For example, the galactic *mandala* system that underscores pre-colonial state operations in South and Southeast Asia, or the Haudenosaunee Law of Peace which managed international relations on eastern Turtle Island for more than 800 years while informing the fledgling American constitution, were not perfect systems, but they were systems that reflected the genealogies and ontologies

of territory and rule within the areas in which they arose.²⁴¹ Part of the colonial violence of universality is in the denial of other-than-modern ontologies and cosmologies, and consequently, part of the work of decolonizing social science lies in reaching into “uncolonized pasts” and using them to inform decolonizing projects intellectually and materially.²⁴²

Standard/conventional historiography’s writing, coopting, and knowing of a “scientifically” modernist model of the past is a reflection of the ideological power of narrating the past using territorial frames of reference that look like states. If one were to think about social science as a telescope, that scope is calibrated with a view to Europe. As a consequence, it provides (perhaps) a clearer picture of the socio-political dynamics of Europe; however, when that scope is swiveled to the east or the west, the calibration no longer captures the most meaningful picture. Of course, History is always a narrative, which necessarily means that elements of a much more complex past are curated out in order to advance a particular master narrative. My point is not that an objective history is either possible or desirable, only that the process of history-ing in modern social science is deeply invested in projecting a universal, Eurocentric, understanding of “sovereignty” and “territory” that limits the scope of possible questions we might ask about how past organizations of “territory” might better inform decolonial futures.

²⁴¹ I explore the meeting of ontologies and galactic sovereignty centrally in chapter two. For more on the Haudenosaunee, see: Susan Hill, “‘Travelling Down the River of Life Together in Peace and Friendship, Forever’: Haudenosaunee Land Ethics and Treaty Agreements as the Basis for Restructuring the Relationship with the British Crown” in Leanne Simpson (ed.) *Lighting the Eight Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, 23 – 44, (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008); Donald A. Grinde Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Centre Publications, 1991).

²⁴² Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 1 – 33.

By the time of the famous meeting of recently independent states at Bandung in the 1950s, IR and related fields of social science saw, through the lens of developing modernization theory, that there was not one inevitable path of “catching up,” but two.²⁴³ The Soviet Union and its representation as *the* alternative path to capitalist modernization further entrenches modernist reasoning, as the genealogy of Marxism and Leninism emerges firmly out of a European philosophical and political tradition with a view to universalism, albeit of a somewhat different economic variety.²⁴⁴ More than just political colonialism and the state are intertwined, the foundation of the capitalist system and Western epistemology is invested in this matrix as well. As Mignolo explains,

The expansion of Western capitalism implied the expansion of Western epistemology in all its ramifications, from the instrumental reason that went along with capitalism and the industrial revolution, to the theories of the state, to the criticism of both capitalism and the state.²⁴⁵

Efforts to justify these processes were philosophically linked to the intellectual project of modernism and the Enlightenment, which has had lasting structural effects across the social sciences, empowering discursively produced notions of the rational, European self over the “profane” Oriental other.²⁴⁶ As Robbie Shilliam notes,

²⁴³ Gurinder K. Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 19 – 39.

²⁴⁴ It is important to acknowledge that anarchism also emerges out of a European genealogy of thought, especially as I have proposed South Asian engagements with philosophical anarchism as a possible avenue for charting alternatives to the state earlier in this chapter. As Ramnath argues, there is a difference between the local lived experiences of organizing society outside of the structure of the state, broadly defined, and this “small ‘a’ anarchism” cannot be wedded to a single intellectual tradition. James C Scott makes a similar argument in his work on Southeast Asian peoples actively seeking to live beyond the limits of the state in uphill Southeast Asia. See: Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011).

²⁴⁵ Walter Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference.” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101/1 (2002): 59.

²⁴⁶ Robbie Shilliam, “Non-Western thought and international relations” in Robbie Shilliam (ed.), *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 2-3; 13; Martin Munro and Robbie Shilliam, “Alternative sources of cosmopolitanism: nationalism, universalism and Créolité in Francophone Caribbean thought” in Robbie Shilliam (ed.), *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 159-177; see also Edward Said *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

It is within this context that European scholars of the comparative tradition could assume a universal standard of civilization modeled upon an idealized Western Europe to define modernity *tout court*, and thus relegate all other peoples and cultures in the world to an object of inquiry rather than as thinking subjects of and on modernity.²⁴⁷

While efforts to “provincialize” Europe have been pursued in postcolonial studies,²⁴⁸ provincialization within a framework of container-states imbued with what are, in reality, Eurocentric understandings of sovereignty and territory represented as universal characteristics of human social organization, still misses the violence of universality encoded in the proliferation of the modern state-nation. Giorgio Shani draws attention to the fact that the inter-state system cannot be understood as free from the structural reverberations of the colonial encounter. In an essay concerning the future of international relations theory (IRT), Shani argues that “the ontological premises of western IRT need to be *rethought* not merely ‘enriched by the addition of new voices’ from the global South.”²⁴⁹ Like Agnew’s warning to avoid the “territorial trap,” Shani’s point warns of the importance of working through a “coloniality trap” within the inter-state system. Failure to decolonize the ontological assumptions that hide the co-constitution of modernity and coloniality further limits our ability to engage the past, and build better futures.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that a pluriversal perspective contributes effectively to the study of state formation because it exposes the co-constitution of modernity, with its

²⁴⁷ Robbie Shilliam, “Non-Western thought and international relations” (2011): 2-3.

²⁴⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²⁴⁹ Giorgio Shani. “Towards a Post-Western IR: The *Umma*, *Khalsa Panth*, and Critical International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Review* 2008, 10/4: 723. Emphasis in original.

particular notions of state, territory, and sovereignty, in relational terms to “coloniality,” its co-constitutive ‘dark side.’ This is the violence of universalism applied to territory, because treating “state-nations” the same as “nation-states” both ignores the centrality of the colonial encounter to the development of imperial states in Europe, and denigrates alternative ways of understanding what we must, due to the limits of the colonial English language, problematically identify here as state, territory, and sovereignty. In this chapter, I have sought to expose the hidden “coloniality” of the state structure, and to make a case for a pluriversal approach to re-engaging with pasts in service to better understanding the processes that worked to artificially universalize Eurocentric notions of territory, sovereignty, state, and history. If, as I have argued, the universal territorial state is indeed a manifestation of coloniality, then the ability of Eurocentric concepts to become universally accepted norms speaks to the de-politicization of “state,” “territory,” and “sovereignty.” By “de-politicized” I am referring to the naturalization of these concepts as universally applicable to the colonial world, and of specific use to better understanding the process of state formation in colonial Ceylon, which is the subject of the remaining chapters of the dissertation. I am not arguing that the methods of mass mobilization and nationalism used to articulate a state-centric anti-colonialism in the 19th and 20th century were not “political;” rather, I am arguing that by the time national movements claiming to represent the total territorial “writ” of the island of Ceylon began mobilizing in the latter half of the 19th century, the terms of the struggle for sovereignty, state, and territory had already been forfeited to a Eurocentric, universal view of what these terms ought to mean in the modern world. In other words, the process of colonial state formation was predicated on the violent erasure, or attempted erasure, of other-than-modern ways of life. As I will elaborate in chapter two, this does not mean that a discrete European

understanding of sovereignty destroyed indigenous notions of sovereignty, it is precisely the ongoing conflict of differing ontologies and cosmologies of “territory” and “sovereignty” that comprise the colonial assemblage of the modern territorial state in Ceylon/Sri Lanka, and relationally to the rest of the international system as well. Thus it is not *just* that the state of Sri Lanka is an expression of coloniality; the international system that developed relationally with states itself encompasses the universalizing colonial violence of state-formation as well.

Pluriversal politics and a decolonial agenda is thus necessarily a global project – the “West,” broadly speaking, is *also* in need of decolonization precisely because of the fact that the modern state and state system is inconceivable without the imperial/colonial encounter. Understanding modernity and coloniality as being two sides of the same coin intellectually and practically means the colonial matrix is, as Mignolo says,

a structure not only of management and control of the non-Euro-American world, but of the making of Europe itself and of defining the terms of the conversations in which the non-Euro-American world was brought in.²⁵⁰

Following this line of reasoning shows that the development of European territory and nation-states was not separate from, prior to, or dialectically related to the colonized places of the world; rather, the constitution of metropolitan-colonial and colonized territory/place was simultaneously linked in practice.²⁵¹ Thinking about the state in pluriversal terms means thinking decolonially about the development of the state as a multi-scalar project unfolding locally, imperially, and globally. In this dissertation, chapters two and four focus on the local scale in the context of Ceylon’s encounter with

²⁵⁰ Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 66-67.

²⁵¹ Gurinder K. Bhambra, “Comparative Historical Sociology and the State: Problems of Method,” *Current Sociology* 10/3 (2016): 335 – 351; Siba Grovogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi-Sovereigns, and Africans: Race and Self Determination in International Law* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996).

the British in the early 19th century, while in chapter three I emphasize the imperial/global political economic linkages unfolding within which Ceylon and Britain were embedded. Emphasizing the colonial side of modern territory brings to light the centrality of slavery, genocide, coerced migration and disruptive geographical transformations of indigenous places into extractive plantations plugged into the world capitalist economy as servicing satellites to more advanced industrial states.²⁵² Europe, especially the territorial units of Spain, England, France, Holland, and Portugal, is inconceivable without reference to genocide, slavery, coerced migration, and state geo-graphing over the top of indigenous spatial systems. These processes have given institutional shape to the post-independence territories across the Global South that have been incorporated into the global system of states. Re-politicizing territory necessitates moving outside of modern/colonial pathways, engaging with other-than-modern ideas about state, territory, and sovereignty, and bringing these ideas into conversation with European ideas. In this way, there is clear overlap in the core motivations of the postcolonial and decolonial projects as I have explained them above, though the radical potential of re-politicizing territory cannot be done using the language and conceptual limitations of modern social science alone.

As rain falls and water moves along a particular trajectory, the earth surrounding the moving water erodes, creating grooves, drains, tributaries, and even canyons. Over time, it can be difficult to imagine that water ever ran another way, especially from the temporal scale of reference of a human being who does not experience this historical process completely. Like the natural movement of water, rivers and streams change form and direction over time. But, unlike moving water, the statist “grooves” in which we find ourselves constricted are not the products of “natural” human development; they are

²⁵² Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1964 [1944]): 126–154.

rather more closely likened to a colonial damming of free-flowing water. These dams have disciplined movement in a way that has provoked an understanding of the state from today's temporal standpoint as being *the* natural way to exist as a human collectivity, but in the *longue durée*, that which appears static is far more fluid.

Re-politicizing territory means destroying the colonial dams and releasing the decolonial waters to find their many paths to exist. This will be a turbulent and violent process, just as the destruction of a dam will necessarily be a turbulent and violent process because creatures embedded in a system respond to the cues of that system. If towns have been built on stolen land around a dammed river, for example, those towns may need to be swept away. There is no theorizing in the abstract alone, as indigenous scholars on Turtle Island working in the indigenous resurgence tradition have long noted, decolonization is a profoundly material process that is grounded to land.²⁵³ It is a radical project, so attempts to integrate “decolonization” into liberal projects, including the United Nations and/or attempts at truth and reconciliation in different colonial contexts remain toothless if they do not mean significant transformation of systemic privilege and dismantling the “universe” of Eurocentric understandings of the world.²⁵⁴

In the early postcolonial period, there was greater attention paid to colonial continuities. While earlier manifestations of regionalism emerging out of the historic Bandung conference in Indonesia, the West Indian Federation, or the Non-Aligned

²⁵³ Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Leanne Simpson (ed.) *Lighting the Eight Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008); Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999); Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson, “Introduction to ‘Indigenous Women: State of Our Nations’” *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice* 29/2 (2005) 1-8; Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, “Decolonizing Anti-Racism” *Social Justice* 32/4 (2005): 120 – 143.

²⁵⁴ Jennifer Matsunaga, “The Two Faces of Transitional Justice: Theorizing the Incommensurability of transnational justice and decolonization in Canada,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 5/1 (2016): 24-44.

Movement all had a better understanding of the fundamental link between colonialism and the world system, time has made these connections far less clear than they were in the 1950s. At Bandung, where leaders from the recently liberated regions of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean met in 1955, a much broader understanding of how colonial power mapped the world was being debated. For example, the Ceylonese Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala provocatively attacked the Soviet bloc, asking,

if we are united in our opposition to colonialism, should it not be our duty openly to declare our opposition to Soviet colonialism as much as Western imperialism? Finally, if we are against both these forms of colonialism, we must also make it clear that we are opposed to any form of colonial exploitation by any power in the past or in the future. Unless our own conscience be clear in this respect and our own hands clean, how can we expect the world at large to heed us when we pronounce colonialist abuses elsewhere? Any such pronouncements cannot but sound hollow unless we are prepared to practice ourselves what we preach to others.²⁵⁵

Kotelawala's comments were received with contempt from his Chinese and Indian colleagues and although his criticism was one based on foreign rule over an undisputed territorial entity, his call for practicing anti-colonialism within a post-independent world remains chilling and important. Although it was not his intent, his comments can draw attention to the violence of universality, through which the false choice of anti-colonial paths are articulated as socialism or capitalism, both of which rely on ontological assumptions about linear human development. Again, it is not that these approaches are invalid or unimportant – my point is that the pluriversal possibilities that reflect intellectual and practical contributions of the globe are not mobilized within either a capitalist or a socialist understanding and articulation of decolonization, because they fail to acknowledge that which is beyond the limit of modernity's ontological horizon. Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, ultimately failed to pursue de-colonial spatial strategies beyond

²⁵⁵ "Reports and minutes of meetings of Asian prime ministers in Ceylon: proposed Afro-Asian Conference in Djakarta, later held in Bandung," British National Archives, shelfmark: FO 371/116981.

the limits of a single territorial state, and the particular coming together of multi-scalar geopolitical influences in the South Asian island produced a twenty-six-year-long civil war out of which a triumphant ethno-nationalist Buddhist politics proudly lays claim to its superior capacity to enforce the writ of the state as it sees fit.²⁵⁶

I have sought to show that the shaping of postcolonial territory cannot be separated from the colonial encounter that has normalized and de-politicized state-centric modernist thinking. By de-politicized, I do not mean that states are uncontested entities, I mean that the structure of the state as a natural “container” of modern life remains the boundary within which and across which politics is supposed to occur. While this has been a subject of considerable discussion in IR and related fields, adopting a pluriversal perspective calibrated to view transformative aspects of “ontological collision” through which cosmologies interact and conflict in the 19th century makes an important contribution to the study of state formation, and also decolonial studies aimed at both historical and contemporary research. A pluriversal critique of the state is important because it shifts the debate from squarely within modernity beyond the limit of modernity. It regards other forms of sovereignty that do not operate along principles that fit with the existing state system as equals, which reflects the violence of state-making in the modern, colonial encounter.

By historicizing “state,” “territory,” and “sovereignty” in the context of relational state formation, I have aimed to illustrate why intellectual and practical engagements with

²⁵⁶ Ajay Parasram, “Erasing Tamil Eelam: De/Re Territorialization in the Global War on Terror” *Geopolitics* 17/4 (2012): 903-925. In the broader context of peace and conflict studies, human security also takes second or third tier importance relative to the significance of state-level interests. Refugee populations are often forced to return “home” so that development and aid money can begin to flow to/through the state because peace tends to be quantified through the global governance apparatus when refugees return home. See: Ajay Parasram, Michael Spacek and Martha Chertkow, “Refugees and Peacebuilding in Africa: A review of two-decades of cases.” Paper presented at Canadian Association for Forced Migration and Refugee Studies conference, Montreal, Quebec, May 11-13, 2011.

postcolonial crises of sovereignty need to break free from the universe of modern reason and draw upon the pluriverse of multiple ontological starting points in order to expand the range of possible avenues for decolonizing politics today. In the process, I have emphasized how work in social science concerned with state formation has made important contributions, especially in terms of drawing attention to the centrality of history and relationality in understanding how states have formed not only in the post-colonies, but also fundamentally through imperial relations in the 19th century. The remaining chapters of the dissertation explore in specific details the processes through which multiple ontologies of sovereignty “collided” in the early encounter between the Kandyan Kingdom and the British government.

The impact of a few hundred years of colonial modernity has also universalized a particular reading of “history” – a point that has been well criticized in postcolonial and decolonial studies in particular. Universalizing History has led to excluding intellectuals who ought to have been engaged as equals, but has also colonized the territorial frameworks upon which philosophical and political debates can occur. This is the value of pluriversal politics: different ontologies are always interacting and transforming, though the violence of universality continues to miss great opportunities as a result. The remainder of this dissertation picks up on only one manifestation of colonial violence in the multifaceted norm of “total territorial rule” in the 19th century. The contemporary significance of modernity/coloniality, then, is truly a global problem that exists not only in history, but in the unquestioned ways through which institutions of colonially administered modernity continue to dictate the limits of what is and is not seen as politically possible. The success of colonial domination over subject peoples consisted/manifested itself in being able to convince us all that our freedom ultimately

rests in our ability to control the systems of government that were used to establish and normalize uni-versal modernity in the first place. As Fanon observed, “how could we fail to understand that we have better things to do than follow in that Europe’s footsteps?”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004 [1961]): 236.

Chapter Two: The Coloniality of Sovereignty: Religious Politics and Sovereign Encounters

The same day we dined with our Baptist friends and in the evening saw the Governor come in from the Kandian [sic] country, where he had been to organize the newly-acquired territory. You will have heard of the overthrow of that system of tyranny and cruel despotism which has for so many years prevented European intercourse with the interior of this island. God understood the cause, and gave their cruel King into the hands of the Governor, together with all his territory, without the loss of any of our troops. Now the way is open for the Gospel into the interior.

Elizabeth Harvard of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society,
in a letter to her parents, March 26, 1815 (Colombo)²⁵⁸

The Religion of Boodhoo [sic] professed by the Chiefs and inhabitants of these Provinces is declared inviolable, and its Rites, Ministers and Places of worship are to be maintained and protected.

Clause 5 of the Kandyan Convention, signed on the second day of March,
in the year of Christ 1815 and the Cingalese [sic] year 1736²⁵⁹

The diary of Elizabeth Harvard, missionary of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, captures the cognitive dissonance of the early British colonial project in Ceylon. From the above quote, one might expect evidence of Christ Himself riding into battle to protect the noble British crusaders in their mission to cleanse the frontier of the scourge of idolatry and heathenism. Harvard was just the latest in a longer chain of Christian crusaders invested in the spiritual cleansing of the island. Indeed, according to Nira Wickramasinghe, the coming of the Catholic Church as the ideological apparatus of Portuguese colonization was so destructive in its aggressions against Buddhism and Hinduism that it ushered in a ‘dark age,’ out of which the distinctions between “Buddhists” and “Hindus” began to take

²⁵⁸ William Harvard, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Harvard, Late of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon With Extracts from her Diary and Correspondence by her Husband* (London: John Mason, 1833). British National Library, shelfmark: T.1587.(7.)

²⁵⁹ “The Kandyan Convention Proclamation of 2 March 1815” in G.C. Mendis (ed.) *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon 1796 – 1833 Volume Two* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956): 227 – 230.

on significance.²⁶⁰ It came as a surprise to the early Christian missionaries that Kandyan Buddhist priests had historically offered shelter and protection to Catholics fleeing persecution by Dutch Protestants in the Maritime regions.²⁶¹ A colonial diary can only tell us what was believed to be true from one standpoint, and from reviewing Harvard's diary, it appears clear that British Governor Sir Robert Brownrigg gave her cause to believe that evangelism had a role to play in the early consolidation of colonial territory. As discussed in chapter one, universal conceptions of territory and sovereignty have genealogical linkages to the European, intellectual tradition rooted in Christianity, and it should perhaps not be too surprising to see Christian evangelism serving a role in colonial statecraft. The problem, which is fundamentally part of the story of colonial state formation, is that "organizing the newly acquired territory" meant entering into the Kandyan Convention earlier that month in a lavishly performative ceremony of sovereign handover, in which King George of England, protector of the Anglican faith, simultaneously became a *Bodhisattva* king and protector of the Buddhist faith.²⁶² I return to this in the conclusion by way of comparison with the Royal Proclamation of Nov. 1, 1858 in India.

There are many layers of rich contradictions that could be explored in the juxtaposition of these two statements, but for the purpose of this chapter's work, I aim to

²⁶⁰ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006): 20 – 22.

²⁶¹ S.G. Perera, *The Jesuits in Ceylon* (Madura: De Nobili Press, 1944): 144.

²⁶² The genealogy of kingship in the Kandyan Buddhist tradition shows that by the late 18th century, the sovereign's role in the symbolic rule of territory positioned him as a *Bodhisattva*, or person capable of attaining Nirvanic enlightenment but choosing to remain in the cycle of birth and rebirth to serve. It is a position within the Buddhist hierarchy just below Buddhahood, in which one escapes the cycle of birth and rebirth. I discuss this later in the chapter, but see also: S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

focus on the pluriversal significance of the conflict between ontologically distinct genealogies of “sovereignty,” as well as the politics of religion that surrounded this conflict and textured the early consolidation of “British Ceylon.” Conventional historical accounts mark the beginning of British “total territorial rule” to March 2, 1815 – the day the Kandyan Convention was signed.²⁶³ To the British elites, the Kandyan Convention meant ousting the reigning monarch of this large native kingdom in the centre of the island, thus ending nearly two decades of simmering warfare. To the Kandyan aristocracy, it meant a temporary alignment with yet another European power in order to oust a dynasty hailing from South India. From the Kandyan point of view, there was every reason to believe that the British would do what the Dutch and the Portuguese before them had done – arrive in the central highland areas, burn some villages, and then retreat to the coast. The British had recently lost two wars with the Kandyans, the last of which led to the massacre of an entire British regiment, and although the Kingdom had been bled economically since the Dutch were able to cut off its access to the sea in the 18th century, one can understand why the Kandyans saw themselves in a position of strength.

The reason this dissertation looks to the British period to understand processes of territorial transformation culminating in the normalization and de-politicization of nation-state territory is that, unlike previous waves of foreigners to the island, the British period saw the first *de jure* as well as eventual *de facto* establishment of a central political administration in the Southwest, made possible in part by bringing the hitherto “foreign”

²⁶³ It is true that a British presence on the island began in 1796 in the Maritime Provinces, and that a Governorship began in 1802. But the surrender of Kandy to Britain on March 2, 1815 marked the first time all parts of the island were believed to be under foreign rule.

interior territories into legible, recognizable, British space.²⁶⁴ The Dutch and the Portuguese colonial powers that preceded the British in the modern/colonial period never succeeded in controlling the entire island, which makes the British encounter specifically important for this dissertation's emphasis on the middle period of colonial transformation into the modern state-nation. Unlike in India, where British officials were able to learn about the functioning of the Mughal imperial state system through first hand knowledge, the case of Ceylon was considerably different. As Bernard Cohn observes, concerning the first fifteen years of Governor General Warren Hastings' career:

he was stationed up-country near the court of the last of the effective nawabs of Bengal. There he acquired first-hand knowledge of how an Indian state functioned and could not totally share the prevalent British ideas that Indian rulers were despotic, corrupt, and extortionate. He believed that Indian knowledge and experience as embodied in the varied textual traditions of the Hindus and Muslims were relevant for developing British administrative institutions.²⁶⁵

Following a 1772 act of the British parliament, Hastings was appointed to the new position of Governor General, and set about blending his knowledge of Indian and British statecraft. As Cohn rightly maintains, one cannot study British and Indian modern state formation separately, as techniques and practices from one affected and were applied in both directions.²⁶⁶ This pre-existing Orientalist knowledge of "India" from late 18th century would have borne only confusion; one, I argue, that stems from the ontological distinctiveness of the *rajamandala* system and its genealogy. The Kandyan sovereign system after all, was based on a very different premise than the imperial state system of the Moghuls. The Kandyan Convention, prepared in English and Sinhalese, was the legal

²⁶⁴ Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 48 – 57; 185 – 195.

²⁶⁵ Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 60 – 61.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 – 4.

basis through which the British believed they exercised “total territorial rule,” yet as this chapter strives to show, the differing genealogies of sovereignty that had been normalized in the British tradition versus the Kandyan tradition meant that this document had different meanings for each party. What would eventually, over the course of the 19th century, develop as a unitary sovereign colonial satellite state floating off the coast of the expansive British Raj on the South Asian subcontinent did not materialize in the way either contracting party thought it would. The dynamics of religious politics and the ontological meaning of sovereignty in the Kandyan-Buddhist and Christian-British traditions produced a clash of ideas that spurred the Uva Rebellion of 1817-1818, and though the next major rebellion would not break out until 1848, a simmering fear of attempts to drive the British out of Ceylon remained during the thirty years between the two.²⁶⁷

This chapter draws on S.J. Tambiah’s work on the galactic *mandala* system to discuss a genealogical tradition of South Asian sovereignty, beginning with Buddhist ontological assumptions and situated historically within the development of the *mandala*-state in the context of the island. I argue, based on the politics of religion and the politics of sovereign ontological conflict, that the standard historical account that identifies the Kandyan Convention of March 2, 1815 as the moment the British consolidated rule over Ceylon needs to be rethought. The Kandyan Convention can better be understood as the moment of sovereign ontological collision, where two genealogical traditions infused with their own ontological starting points and cosmological frameworks came into conflict.

²⁶⁷ There were attempted rebellions in 1817 – 1818; 1823; 1824; 1833; 1843 and 1848. See chapter four for details.

The chapter proceeds as follows: in section one, I offer an historical account of the island's colonial/modern history, discussing the religious politics and the ontological collisions of Christian missionaries and Buddhist/Hindu peoples drawing on archival missionary accounts. The section outlines the early relationship between education, evangelism and colonization, dwelling on how an inability to move beyond a universal ontological framework limited the missionaries' ability to perceive the context of the 'natives' they sought to colonize. In section two, I sketch out the historical development of "galactic sovereignty," and the role of "Buddhification" as a means of integrating foreigners in pre-European Ceylon. Drawing on the work of Sri Lankan anthropologists S.J. Tambiah, and Gananth Obeyesekere and legal scholar Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, this section highlights the important place-based practices that played a central role in defining what sovereignty meant in the Kandyan region. This was not, I argue, merely a function of the kingdom's backwards isolation, as influential historical accounts describe it²⁶⁸; rather, it was a pulsating spatial politics that was capable of integrating external influences into the fold and addressing social, political, and economic affairs with close attention to balancing both cosmological and material realms of existence. In section three I draw upon the work of Mario Blaser, to explain the concept of ontological conflict, a position that cannot be adequately studied through the lens of "universality" as explained in chapter one. In this section, I lay out the conceptual tools necessary to see the value of a pluriversal framework, one that considers multiple ontologies, in exposing the fundamental disagreements grounded in greater cosmologies that are historically

²⁶⁸ Cf. G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]); K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981): 224 – 226; K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon, 1846-50, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'rebellion' of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey and Viscount Torrington*. (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965) British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

distinct. Finally, in section four I apply the pluriversal framework of ontological conflict and the historical account to re-interpret archival materials and secondary literature on the Kandyan Convention. I argue in this section that Buddhist-Kandyan and British-Christian understandings of sovereignty conflicted, in large part due to the latter's inability to reconcile the realities of pluriversality within the uni-versal orientation of British-Christian understandings of sovereignty. I elaborate on the significance of these religious politics, drawing on archival reports and diaries from missionaries and colonial officials present in the period and at the Convention itself to highlight the ontological conflicts that defined the early 19th century encounter with the British in Ceylon.

Section One: Political Ontology and Religious Politics

An Historical Sketch

The island's written history spans thousands of years in which spatial orders rose, fell, converged, and adapted.²⁶⁹ The Bay of Bengal has been a site of trade, migration, and politics for thousands of years. Europe joined in by the early 16th century, becoming a domineering player by the mid-to-late 18th century in the regional geopolitics of South Asian ocean-space. When the British took the Dutch Maritime Provinces of Ceylon in 1796, they administered it out of their Madras Presidency in the south of modern day "India" until 1802.²⁷⁰ As Nihal Perera argues, the institutional politics of Ceylon would

²⁶⁹ James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 25 – 34; Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (London: C. Hurst, 2006).

²⁷⁰ I place India within quotation marks because at this time, "India" did not truly exist. There were a plethora of sovereign native Hindu/Muslim kingdoms, centres of European power around the coast (Dutch/Portuguese/French/British) and enormous areas of *adivasi* territories not meaningfully part of any of this. Though the Moghul empire did centralize much of the administration of the territory between the 16th and 18th centuries, "India" as we know it today is a geographical imaginary negotiated with diplomatic and

have followed a very different trajectory had the 1802 Treaty of Amiens gone differently, as the Dutch then sought to have Ceylon returned to them and incorporated into the short-lived Batavian Republic.²⁷¹ In colonial geographic terms, Ceylon could have been incorporated into what would become British India to the north, or what would become Indonesia far to the west. Much colonial correspondence from this era and well into the 19th century between missionaries to their organizations and families back home made no consistent distinction between India and Ceylon. The early missionaries usually came to Ceylon via British-India, and from their point of view, there was little reason to think the native populations of “idolatrous Oriental heathens” were significantly different; they were equidistant from “true religion.”²⁷² Ceylon was, at times, understood to be both a key to converting the entire subcontinent to Christianity or as a necessary obstacle to overcome toward this goal.²⁷³ Even without European interference, it is conceivable that the island may have been incorporated into a spatial organization involving parts of Dravidian South Asia; the reality of this has always been a major source of postcolonial insecurity for ethnic Sinhalese, who comprise a majority on the island but are very much a minority in relation to the Tamil population in neighbouring continental South India.

coercive force in the mid 20th century and is constantly being renegotiated based on internal and regional political pressure.

²⁷¹ Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 30

²⁷² European scholarship on South Asian cosmologies at the time demonstrated some familiarity with selective readings of Hinduism, but there was a paucity of European knowledge of Buddhism, complicated by the many shared characteristics between the two religions. Coming from an Abrahamic ontology, grasping the Hindu notion of *jiv-atma* and *param-atma* (transcendental soul and divine essence) or the Buddhist disinterest in the existence of a single creator-God was difficult. The development of European knowledge of these practices that have now come to be disciplined by the textual boundaries of “religion” moved through waves of shock, rage, secularization, and patronizing sympathy in the politics of the 19th century. See Elizabeth Harris, *Theravada Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, missionary and colonial experience in nineteenth century Sri Lanka* (London: Routledge, 2006).

²⁷³ In addition to Harvard, see the *Letters, Memoirs and Papers of Rev. James Lynch, 1808 – 1858*, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Archive Special Series (H-2723) Box 628 (1) Ceylon. J. Lynch 1808 – 1814 No. 991.

The significance of these possible sovereign configurations is that one should not see physical geography as a natural bordering process or a limitation to political possibilities. As discussed via Elden and Agnew in chapter one, territorial formulations are historically, geographically, and philosophically specific.²⁷⁴

Although South Asian sovereigns had historically and symbolically laid claim to the entire island in the past, none in over a thousand years had ever materially done so.²⁷⁵ As scholars of the island have well established, the historical imaginaries projected by modern political actors, be they Sinhalese or Tamil, tend to read the contemporary unitary state ahistorically into the past.²⁷⁶ The spatial organization of power on the island prior to British rule was not centralized; at the time of Portuguese arrival in 1505, there were three overlapping areas of political control based around a Northern Tamil kingdom in the Jaffna region, and two Sinhalese kingdoms in Kandy and Kotte. In 1521, the once powerful Kotte fractured into three territories, Kotte, Rayigama, and Sitavacama, with Kotte becoming a client state of Portugal.²⁷⁷ Although Portuguese rule was unable to extend far behind any coastal region, their influence in Kotte was significant enough that the King of Kotte converted to Roman Catholicism and bequeathed the kingdom to the King of Portugal. This marked the first time a Sinhalese king of Lanka was not Buddhist since the conversion of King Devanampiyatissa in 250 BCE, and the outrage in

²⁷⁴ Stuart Elden, "Land, Terrain, Territory," *Progress in Human Geography* 34/6 (2010): 799 – 817; Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁷⁵ See Appendix A, figure two for map illustrating different kingdoms within the island in the early-mid 16th century.

²⁷⁶ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, "Appendix B: Violence, Evil and the State in Sri Lanka: Revisiting an Ontological Approach to Sinhalese Nationalism" in Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011): 309; Benedict Korf, "Cartographic Violence: Engaging a Sinhala Kind of Geography" C. Brun and T. Jazeel (eds.) *Spatializing Politics: Culture & Geography in Postcolonial Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009).

²⁷⁷ James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 31.

neighbouring kingdoms forced Kotte's king to seek refuge in the Portuguese fort of Colombo from his rival, the king of Sitavaca.²⁷⁸ The perceived political opportunities offered by alliance with Christianity reached even into Kandy, where the reigning kings in the 1560s – 1580s converted to Christianity.²⁷⁹ Part of the complexity of South Asian polities was that exact boundaries were not clearly defined, and Kandy was a relatively recent independent kingdom that left Kotte in the 15th century. Neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch were able to centralize their rule over the island.²⁸⁰

The short-lived Treaty of Amiens in 1802 settled the territorial dispute from the perspective of Holland and England, but neither possessed any deep knowledge of the island at this time. Not only did the British know little of Ceylon and the regional dynamics and migrations that textured its history, there is little evidence to suggest they cared to know much about it in the early days; they were not wedded to keeping the Maritime territories nor controlling the entire island.²⁸¹ European geopolitics was the primary motivation for acquiring the territory and using the harbour in Trincomalee as a way of fortifying the Madras Presidency on the mainland from incursion by Napoleon's France.²⁸² This geopolitical vantage point was crucial to British interest in the region, "the

²⁷⁸ Ibid.; 31, 27.

²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Harris, "Memory, Experience, and the Clash of Cosmologies: The Encounter Between British Protestant Missionaries and Buddhism in Nineteenth Century Sri Lanka," *Social Science and Missions* 25 (2012): 270.

²⁸⁰ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2006): 9; Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, "The Mandala State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmographical Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhist Tradition" in A. Wagner et al. (eds.) *Law, Culture, and Visual Studies*, 573 – 598. Volumes 1 and 2. (United States: Springer Publishing, 2014).

²⁸¹ Elizabeth Harris *Theravada Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, missionary and colonial experience in nineteenth century Sri Lanka* (London: Routledge, 2006), especially chapter six on Missionary Scholars.; see also discussion of the Cleghorn Minute in the introduction to this dissertation.

²⁸² Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803 – 1818* (London: Lee Cooper, 1973): 180 – 181.

real key by possession of which alone you can hold the naval superiority of India,”²⁸³ in the words of Britain’s second Governor, Sir Thomas Maitland. Dispatches from the Colonial Office (CO) to Maitland and his predecessor, Fredrick North, clearly outlined that London had no ambition of pursuing total territorial rule in the early days. There was disconnecting policy between the CO and Governor North, however, who actively pursued military expeditions into the interior with consistently negative outcomes.²⁸⁴ When North was removed (at his own request) from the post of Governor, the CO communicated to Maitland that efforts to centralize political rule should not be pursued:

Abstracted from every principle of Justice, there does not appear any principle of Policy which ought to induce Great Britain to wish the entire subjugation of that Island, as the advantages derivable from such a Possession could not be commensurate to the Expense of maintaining it; but when the Principles of Justice are combined with those of Policy (and on all occasions they ought to be inseparable), I feel satisfied that there is no ground for our desiring greatly to extend the territory we acquired by just Rights from the Dutch...²⁸⁵

The policy should not be confused for benevolence, as it is the outcome of several botched military attempts and considerable paid espionage to destabilize the Kandyan Kingdom since the British came to Ceylon in 1796.²⁸⁶

To the British, Kandyan territories were a frontier; it described what British territory was not and when crossing into that frontier, danger was always a lurking threat

²⁸³ Sir Thomas Maitland, cited in Sir Charles Jeffries *Ceylon: The Path to Independence* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962): 14

²⁸⁴ North’s orders upon taking office granted him authority to disarm and deport people aiding the enemies of the crown as well as military action in self-defence of the colony, but explicitly (clause 24) forbid the commencement or declaration of war without prior approval. See “Royal Instructions to Governor North” in G.C. Mendis (ed.) *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon 1796 – 1833, Volume II*, 70 – 79 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); Powell, 1973: 175 – 178.

²⁸⁵ Secretary of State for War and the Colonies to incoming Governor Maitland, 21 Feb., 1805. Cited in Powell, *The Kandyan Wars*, (1973): 179.

²⁸⁶ Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803 – 1818* (London: Lee Cooper, 1973).

from the tropical jungle itself as well as locals skilled in guerilla warfare.²⁸⁷ While maps from this era (see appendix A) illustrate the shifting territorial boundaries of control, according to Simon Cassie Chitty (1972), the physical territorial claim of British “Ceylon” and Kandy prior to the 1815 Kandyan Accord was 10,520 and 14,144 square miles respectively, making “Kandy” the majority of the island, encircled by British Ceylon.²⁸⁸ It was presumed in the colonial writing to be a kingdom with a tyrannical and savage king at the helm, which served to legitimize the British “intervention” on behalf of the Kandyan people in 1815 as well as to fuel contemporary Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism concerning the corrupting influence of the Nayakkar Tamil dynasty that brought about the end of the independent Kandyan kingdom.²⁸⁹ Perceptions of inherent native inferiority relative to Britain clouded the fact that Britain had not been able to actually hold any territory conquered in military expeditions, in large part because of an active anti-road politics pursued by the Kandyans which prevented the easy movement of British troops and equipment into the interior.²⁹⁰ To the Kandyans, the terrain itself represented the most important line of defense against external aggression. The jungle, mountains/cliffs, and rivers in the rainy season enabled Kandyan soldiers to integrate the

²⁸⁷ Part of the justification for Brownrigg’s eventual campaign to bring Kandy under British rule was the recent mutilation of British pioneers who had ventured beyond the frontier in 1815. James Duncan also explores the perception of nature as a degrading and dangerous force to Europeans in his excellent study, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

²⁸⁸ Simon Casie Chitty, *The Ceylon Gazetteer Containing an Accurate Account of the Districts, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Principal Villages, Harbours, Rivers, Lakes of the Island of Ceylon* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1972). Cited in Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 41, note 23.

²⁸⁹ Anonymous, *A Narrative of Events which have recently occurred in the Island of Ceylon, Written by a Gentleman on the Spot*. (London: T. Egerton Military Library, Whitehall, 1815). British National Library, shelfmark: 583.f.14.(1.).

²⁹⁰ Thomas Metcalf offers a compelling explanation of British self-perception in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in terms of how their liberal colonialism fuelled particularly ideological conceptions of what British rule in South Asia offered subjects. See: Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

land into their military planning, forcing invading armies into passes so narrow that they would need to move single file.²⁹¹ As Governor Thomas Maitland, Ceylon's second Governor, wrote in a dispatch to the CO on Oct. 19, 1808, "I shall not enter into any foolish expeditions; I will not throw away the Lives of His Majesty's Subjects by Disease in burning and destroying the defenceless [sic] Huts of the innocent Natives."²⁹² In the colonial writing that would follow the eventual surrender of Kandy in 1815, the event is historicized as a major military achievement that again shows the nearsightedness of the colonial gaze, as the oft-touted fact that the British succeeded without suffering casualties in 1815 was attributed to the people of Kandy's desire for British governance rather than the strategic diplomacy of the Sinhalese aristocracy seeking to oust a weak king in Kandy. This is an especially important condition, in light of the insurrections that would ensue in the coming decades.

The reigning monarch of Kandy in the British period was Sri Vikrama Rajasingha, fourth in a dynasty of Malabar (Tamil) Kings who had been "indigenized" through gradual marriages and rituals (discussed in the next section). It had been a practice of the Sinhalese kings of Kandy to marry South Indian women, and when the last Sinhalese king neared death without a male heir from his main wife, he decreed that his son by a subordinate Malabar wife would succeed him to the throne. The period of consolidating the dynasty was not without difficulty, and it involved careful attention to the rituals and symbolism of Buddhist sovereignty by the Malabar rulers. Vikrama engaged in lavish beautification projects of the capital, many of which remain to this day, but at a time

²⁹¹ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]); Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006): 29.

²⁹² Maitland to Camden, 19 Oct. 1805 CO/64/18. Cited in Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803 – 1818*, (London: Lee Cooper, 1973): 184.

when the economic pressure of being cut off from marine trade routes by the British led to considerable strain and inflation within the kingdom. He accomplished these projects by extending the reach of *rajakariya*, or king-service, from the general population that had historically been used for irrigation and agricultural purposes to include beautification, which was unpopular.²⁹³ Vikrama grew increasingly distrustful of the Kandyan Sinhalese aristocracy with good reason: Pilima Talauvē, his long-time advisor who had been instrumental to installing him to the throne in 1798 and who served as his *mahadikar*²⁹⁴ was plotting against him with the British Governor Frederick North. Talauva sought to leverage a British deal to oust Vikrama – the 18-year-old nephew of the former king, Sri Rajadhi Rajasingha – and convinced North to send an emissary to Kandy to negotiate making the Kingdom a protectorate of Britain in 1800. North obliged and sent General MacDowall to accomplish the task, but Vikrama, who was not convinced allowing a garrison of British troops into Kandy would ultimately serve his interests, dismissed him.²⁹⁵ Nevertheless, MacDowall returned with useful intelligence that would inform the British military strategy in future military episodes.²⁹⁶ In 1803, North gave the order (without clear consent from the CO) for General MacDowall to send an expeditionary force to Kandy. The Kandyans had seen this coming and had evacuated the capital to regroup elsewhere while waging guerilla warfare. The British installed a puppet king for a short time, but as K.M. de Silva describes,

When the monsoon set in, the elements, combined with disease, brought about the destruction of the British troops in the Kandyan kingdom. With the loyalty of the

²⁹³ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Moutan, 1983).

²⁹⁴ *Adikar* is a senior government official, like a “minister,” and the “mahadikar” would be the First Minister.

²⁹⁵ G.C Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services 2005 [1952]): 17 - 19

²⁹⁶ K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981): 224 - 226

Malay troops suspect and the lascarins deserting in droves, the British forces attempted to evacuate the capital they had occupied.²⁹⁷

MacDowall himself had to retreat early to Colombo due to illness, leaving command to Major Davies who, in turn, retreated before the order to do so came from North in Colombo. As the remaining British troops sought to evacuate the capital, the Kandyan forces intercepted them on June 24, 1803 on the banks at Vatapuluva. The puppet king was swiftly executed, along with nearly all of the British forces, save Davie and three others. Perhaps in part because of biased intelligence from Pilima Talauvē, the British underestimated the fact that the people of Kandy supported Vikrama.²⁹⁸ As will be explained in this chapter's discussion of galactic sovereignty as sovereign ontology, Vikrama held considerable *symbolic* power, but material power tended to remain in the Sinhalese aristocracy, whose loyalty to the young king was openly disputed. Part of Vikrama's internal strategy to weaken the position of the Kandyan elites was to appoint junior branches of Sinhalese aristocratic families to vacant posts, punishing chiefs who were being oppressive to the people under their jurisdiction, and bringing back into practice taxes on the chiefs. These internal policy changes within the Kandyan kingdom in the early 19th century were operating within the expectations of caste order, but clearly subverting the desires and power of the chiefs who Vikrama saw increasingly as plotting against him. He encircled himself with his own Nayakkar relatives and began to alter the geographic districts, which, for generations, had been under the material jurisdiction of the chiefs. Long before the arrival of Governor Brownrigg and the eventual fall of Kandy then, the galactic sovereign order was already beginning to fall out of its delicate

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 225.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

balance.²⁹⁹ In response, Pilima Talauvē conspired to assassinate Vikrama with a Muhandiram (headman from the lower country) and some 60 Malay bodyguards, while simultaneously raising a rebellion with the help of Headmen in Udunuvara and Yatinuvara in 1808. The timing was out of sync, however, leading to a premature uprising that was quelled before the bodyguards could kill the king. Vikrama stripped Pilima Talauvē of his titles and authority and, following confession to the charges of treason, he and other conspirators were executed in or around June of 1812.³⁰⁰

Vikrama appointed Talauvē's nephew, Ehelepola, to the post of *mahadikar*, which was likely an attempt to keep his enemies under closer surveillance. Like his uncle, Ehelepola hailed from the southern Kandyan province of Sabaragamuva, where the king's influence was weaker than in the core central regions. The balance of spiritual power and material power that had developed over more than 300 years of Kandyan sovereign practice was disturbed when Vikrama extended his material powers to punish the regions of his kingdom outside of the center. In Sabaragamuva, Ehelepola had long been in correspondence with John D'Oyly, Chief Translator of the British Government in Colombo who had held the post under Governors North, Maitland, and Brownrigg. In letters shared between Ehelepola, Brownrigg, and D'Oyly, it is clear that the destabilization of Vikrama's Kandy was coming as rather unexpected news in Colombo.

Governor Brownrigg in Colombo took his orders from the CO seriously in terms of not overtly seeking to interfere with the politics of the interior. Nevertheless, he

²⁹⁹ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 19 – 21.

³⁰⁰ Colvin. R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume 1: Its Political and Administrative Development* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd, 1953): 130 – 131.

simultaneously sought to ramp up his military resources in the event of conflict.³⁰¹ In a dispatch dated March 29, 1812, Brownrigg explains to the Secretary of War and Colonies that since the capital punishment of Pilima Talauvē and some influential followers in the failed rebellion, all appeared to be quiet in the territory. He assured the CO that John D'Oyly, the Chief Translator, was in regular correspondence with the new *mahadikar*, Ehelepola.³⁰² What led to the merging of Kandy and British territory in 1815, however, was the outcome of diplomacy conducted mostly between Ehelepola and Governor Brownrigg through the translations of John D'Oyly. When open hostilities between the aristocracy and the king broke out, Ehelepola refused to present himself upon royal demand in 1814 for what might well have been his own arrest and execution. Instead, he defected to the British, followed by other chiefs, which resulted in Vikrama exerting an especially brutal punishment on Ehelepola's family in the capital. The executions began with his eight- and ten-year-old sons. As the general story goes, when the executioner came to seize the elder boy, the child clung to his mother. According to many sources, and in a moment memorialized to this day in Kandy, the younger son volunteered to be killed first, following which the children's mother was made to crush her own infant to death with a large mortar. The female relatives of Ehelepola were tied to stones and drowned in the Kandy Lake.³⁰³

As this was transpiring, Ehelepola was with the British. Vikrama's forces had captured many of the chiefs of his province. This was the opportunity Brownrigg was

³⁰¹ Brownrigg to Earl of Bathurst, June 28, 1814. in Tennakoon Vimalananda, *Sri Wickrema, Brownrigg, and Ehelepola: being letters addressed to the Home Government from 1811-1815 by Major General John Wilson and Lieut.-General Robert Brownrigg, Governor of Ceylon*. (Colombo: Gunasena, 1984) British National Library, shelfmark: V 26078.

³⁰² "Brownrigg to the Earl of Liverpool, March 29, 1812" in Vimalananda (1984).

³⁰³ Anonymous, "A Narrative of Events which have recently occurred in the Island of Ceylon, Written by a Gentleman on the Spot," (London: T. Egerton, Military Library, Whitehall, 1815). British National Library, shelfmark: 583.f.14.(1.).

waiting for, and in January 15, 1815 he issued an order in council defending the decision to wage war on Kandy in order to protect the Kandyanans from their king:

But it is not against the Kandian nation that the arms of His Majesty are directed; his Excellency proclaims hostility against that tyrannical power alone, which has provoked, by aggravated outrages and indignities, the just resentment of the British nation, which has cut off the most ancient and noble families in his kingdom, deluged the land with the blood of his subjects, and, by the violation of every religious and moral law, became an object of abhorrence to mankind.³⁰⁴

By the time the British began their invasion, Ehelepola's replacement, Molligoda, along with most of the remaining aristocracy had already defected and the Kandyanans mounted no defence. The next generation of colonial writing about this military "victory" would laud the achievements of Brownrigg and D'Oyly, both of whom were rewarded with baronet. The emphasizing of Brownrigg and D'Oyly over and above the contribution of Ehelepola in the sacking of Kandy also highlights the loss in studying "modernity" in the absence of "coloniality," as it is arguably the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Kandyan aristocracy and not the British that enabled the victory. The "military victory" of Kandy that led to the *de jure* unification of the island under the British in the spectacle of the Kandyan Convention of 1815, then, was really more a story of internal Kandyan court intrigue than it was about superior British military tactics. Opposite the dominant historical narrative of a "pre-modern" indigenous kingdom that could not keep up with the times, the fall of Kandy should instead be seen as a confluence of forces that were mainly driven by the internal dynamics of the indigenous spatial order beginning to fall apart as the symbolic relationship holding king, *adikars*, and territory fell out of orbit.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Order in Council of Jan. 15, 1815. Transcribed in: "A Narrative of Events which have recently occurred in the Island of Ceylon" British National Library, shelfmark: 583.f.14.(1.).

³⁰⁵ This is a somewhat controversial opinion. According to G.C. Mendis, it was only a matter of time before the British occupied Kandy due to the "medieval" characteristics of the kingdom. This is a view shared by K.M. de Silva as well. I take up the epistemic problem of these positions in chapter four. For contrasting points of view, see: G.C Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005

Christian Subjects, but Not Only Christian Subjects

While British Protestant missionaries were only just beginning to learn about what they would name “Buddhism,” South Asians who would later be described and then self-identify as religious Buddhists and Hindus in Ceylon had a lengthy history of experiences with Catholics and Protestants.³⁰⁶ Portuguese destruction of Hindu and Buddhist places of worship in the mid- to late-16th century led to refugees taking shelter within, and then retaliating with support from, the Hindu and Buddhist independent kingdoms of Jaffnapatam and Kandy respectively.³⁰⁷ By and large, however, Christian missionaries were confused by what they saw as a lack of direct resistance to their attempts to convert the masses to Christianity in the first half of the 19th century. This was at times pitied in missionary writing, perceived as evidence of primitive development and a consequence of living in ignorance of universal, divine truth. In one account, the Wesleyan Missionary, William Bridgalle, describes the Kandyan territories in which he is based in the 1820s as “spiritually barren.” He continues to describe what he sees as a logical and gradual decline of Buddhism:

[1952]): 16 – 28; K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon, 1846-50, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'rebellion' of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey and Viscount Torrington*, (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965). British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

³⁰⁶ It is worth reiterating that the naming of meta-concepts such as “Hinduism” or “Buddhism” as a kind of ordering strategy to translate hugely varying local practices extends even to geographical entities such as islands and continents. The name “India” is itself a colonial invention, and while in the past sovereigns have claimed large areas of (and beyond) what is today regarded as India/Pakistan/Bangladesh, the term India was predated by “Hindustan,” which itself speaks to the pre-religious origins of the term Hindu. Before Hinduism recast itself as a modern religion for reasons beyond the scope of this dissertation, the term Hindu came from the Sanskrit word, “Sindhu,” which meant river, specifically the Ganges, and the ocean. The concept, while appropriated by modern Hindu nationalists in the *Hindutva* tradition and mobilized as a method of Hindu religious supremacy in contemporary India, is arguably more about geographical place than structural religion. See: Satish Deshpande, “Hegemonic Spatial Strategies: The Nation Space and Hindu Communalism in Twentieth century India” *Public Culture* 10/2 (1998): 249 – 283.

³⁰⁷ Elizabeth J. Harris, “Memory, Experience, and the clash of cosmologies: The encounter between British Protestant Missionaries and Buddhism in nineteenth century Sri Lanka” *Social Sciences and Missions* 25 (2012): 270 – 272.

It must surely be regarded as somewhat ominous of the rapid decline of Buddhism in the Kandian country to hear so many Kandian children, in the presence of several of their parents and friends, join in saying after the missionary, “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.”³⁰⁸

What Bridgalle and his contemporaries were not able to perceive is that to South Asians emerging from South Asian cosmologies, moving through Christian motions while at times continuing to practice indigenous customs and religions was not in conflict, moreover, it served as an effective way to navigate the material conditions of the colonial present.³⁰⁹

By the late 19th century, it was clear that association with Christianity and knowledge of the English language offered material advantages in terms of government employment, which tended to favour coastal regions of the island that had much longer associations with Catholic Christianity since the early sixteenth century via the Portuguese.³¹⁰ Yet even in the early 19th century, these benefits were present. At a Congress of the Madras-based Wesleyan Methodist Mission in 1822, the Rev. James Lynch offers a report on the progress of the mission to his brethren. In it, he notes that since 1816, some 2500 children had been taught to read and to discuss Christianity in their own languages, with 300 of the brightest advancing to learn English. In Trincomalee (in the Northeast), he notes that sermons are routinely offered in both Tamil and English,

³⁰⁸ Bridgalle to Wesleyan Methodist Church, March 25 1828. Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London) Archive Special Series (SOAS, University of London) Correspondence (H-2715) Box no.: 1814 – 1867. Ceylon: 446 – 1828. No. 108.

³⁰⁹ As Marisol de la Cadena maintains, indigenous people (in her case, indigenous Quechua people in the Andean mountains) have always lived in multiple socio-cultural worlds. See: Marisol de la Cadena, “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections Beyond ‘Politics’” *Cultural Anthropology* 52/2 (2010): 353.

³¹⁰ K. M. de Silva, “University Admissions and Ethnic Tensions in Sri Lanka: 1977–1982,” in R. Goldman and A. J. Wilson (eds.), *From Independence to Statehood, Managing Ethnic Conflict in Five African and Asian States*, 97 – 100. (London: Frances Pinter 1984); K.M. de Silva *Social Policy and Missionary Organizations in Ceylon 1840 – 1855* (Plymouth: Longmans, 1965).

and that many young men who come out of their schools already, as of 1822, occupy important positions in the early colonial administration.³¹¹

At the ontological and cosmological level, there is no particular conflict in being *simultaneously* Buddhist/Hindu and Christian coming from the standpoint of the prior. As scholars of religion and Sri Lanka have long noted, Buddhists and Hindus understood the process of formally embracing Christianity as more of a civic task than a spiritual one.³¹² The simultaneous existence of other conceptions of cosmology was not an *ontological* problem within Buddhist and Hindu genealogies because the centrality of a god or many gods is not nearly as centrally important (or important at all, in the case of Buddhism) as it is in monotheistic traditions. In contrast, Judeo-Christian-Islamic genealogies of thought demand a uni-versal adherence to monotheism; it is not sufficient to acknowledge and accept the existence of the Christian god to satisfy the missionary, but one must *deny* the existence multiple cosmologies. Within the universal gaze of the monotheist British missionary, it is not possible to recognize pluriversality because evidence of pluriversality is confused to be “idolatry” or other such evidence of spiritual primitiveness. Colonialism, then, is also pedagogy, and its inculcation in the liberal-colonial era through schools and legal requirements of conversion for professional advancement produced incentive structures to at least perform Christianity if not genuinely become Christian. Schools, in particular, were understood to be fundamental to civilizing natives and this occurred in a highly gendered way. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth Harvard, one of the

³¹¹ Proceedings of the Third Anniversary of the Madras Auxiliary Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. June 23, 1822. See: Letters, Memoirs, and Papers of Rev. James Lynch 1808 – 1858. Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. (London). Archive Special Series (H-2723) Box Number.: 628 (1) Ceylon J. Lynch 1808 – 1814 No. 991.

³¹² Elizabeth Harris, “Memory, Experience, and the Clash of Cosmologies: The Encounter Between British Protestant Missionaries and Buddhism in Nineteenth Century Sri Lanka,” *Social Science and Missions* 25 (2012): 272

early generations of Wesleyan missionaries in Ceylon, identifies mothers as being particularly recalcitrant sources of heathenism:

The importance of educating the native girls is very considerable. By the blessing of God, a religious education will not only tend to the advancement of their own salvation, but the [sic] better qualify them to act as wives and mothers, should they be spared to fill those stations. *The heathen females are the main support of paganism.* Some of our native converts have repeatedly confessed that their almost unconquerable bias to idolatry arose from the example of their mothers, whose attachment to heathenish worship and ceremonies was such as to lead them to carry their children to the temples as soon as they were able to go out; and while infants, to put their little hands together and teach them to bow before their senseless images. If then we can succeed with the mothers of the next generation, how much of this will be prevented! They will teach their little dears to bow to Jesus instead of idols.³¹³

Here, in the account of this Wesleyan who is based in the Colombo area in the earliest period of *de jure* British rule, mothers are identified as the reason why attempts to proliferate the universal Christian faith has been stymied. British missionaries are limited by their universal ontological framework which prevented them from moving between Christian and Buddhist worlds. Consequently, they lashed out at those who, as a result of the multiplicity of their lived experiences, have some navigational tools to inhabit these worlds.

The Wesleyans did not establish missionary centres in the Kandyan region, but the Anglicans did. In their accounts, one can see quite clearly the ontological irreconcilability of British-Christian cosmologies with Kandyan cosmologies. The Anglicans arrived in Ceylon shortly after the Wesleyans in 1818, following the Kandyan Convention (1815) and the Uva Rebellion (1817-1818). The interior, as Harvard notes in the introductory epigraph to this chapter, was “open for the Gospel” and by 1833, the Church Missionary

³¹³ Elizabeth Harvard to her sister Susan, Nov. 1817, in William Harvard, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Harvard, Late of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon With Extracts from her Diary and Correspondence by her Husband* (London: John Mason, 1833). British National Library, shelfmark: T.1587 (7.) Emphasis in the original.

Society established centres in Kandy, Nellore, Badalgamma and Cotta.³¹⁴ Speaking on the subject of obstacles to the propagation of Christianity, the Rev. John Bailey, secretary to the mission, notes that one of his greatest difficulties is the fact that Hindus appear to make no separation between civil and religious matters:

One of the most obvious difficulties to be encountered, in the dissemination of Christian Truth among the Hindoos, is the *exclusive and unsocial nature of their Institutions, both civil and religious*. These are blended together in all their endless ramifications; and they rest on the same authorizes, viz., the shasters, remote antiquity, and universal practice.³¹⁵

Bailey continues to speak to the ontological difference in terms of understanding cosmology in reference to Hindu regions of the island by arguing that Hindus simply cannot grasp the truth of one god:

Another obstacle ... [is] being *obligated to employ terms which, from their heathenish use and application, necessarily convey to the mind of the hearer ideas different from those intended*. Thus if God be spoken of, the Hindoo, unless he has long been under Christian instruction, will probably understand by it some one of his deities, who yields to the vilest passions, and allows his worshippers to do so too.³¹⁶

Education, then, was clearly seen by the missionaries as the path to correct thinking. As Maldonado-Torres observed, we see the conviction of “others do not think, or do not think correctly.” Bailey argues that the local stories and perceptions of divinity are “monstrous,” and perhaps most importantly from the perspective of modern rationalism, identifies as evidence of their primitiveness the lack of proof necessary in order to be convinced. “With a people so credulous,” he writes, “the evidence arising from real miracles has little weight.”³¹⁷ That the good Reverend sees no complication in knowing

³¹⁴ Statement of the Ceylon Mission of the Church Missionary Society for the Year M.DCCC.XXXII W By the Rev. J. Bailey, Secretary to the Mission. (Ceylon: Cotta Church Mission Press, 1833)

³¹⁵ Ibid., emphasis in original

³¹⁶ Ibid., 33, emphasis in original.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

how to correctly perceive “real miracles” based on nothing more than the ontological assumption of his own universal cosmology draws attention to the limiting lens of universality; perhaps it also highlights a fracturing within Western-Christian cosmology and the tensions between universality within theology and universality within the rapidly expanding project of scientific positivism of the 19th century and its Enlightenment antecedents. Scientific thinking, following Thomas Metcalf, extended logically from British self-perceptions. They never learned the lessons of ontological difference that were being offered as described above, but rather, continued through the 19th century grafting a pseudo-science of superiority onto their initial assumptions of their own inherently superior cosmology that took the form of education. As Metcalf observes of the Victorian era, a generation after the period under study in this dissertation:

No longer a product of mere assertion, in the manner of James Mill, Western pre-eminence was now demonstrated, or, more properly, assumed, as it underlay the scientific structures that grew up around it. Victorian science, like its historicism, thus necessarily if not always consciously fitted India into a hierarchical relationship with Europe and provided the firm footing of legitimacy which the British sought for their Raj.³¹⁸

A generation earlier, one can see a similar logic unfolding in Ceylon.

Modern/Colonial Religious Education

Aside from launching into ignorant misreadings and misrepresentations of Hindu and Buddhist texts, Bailey more empirically observes that while Christian education can offer a way out of incorrect beliefs, parents themselves remain belligerent obstacles to their children’s betterment. While some locals across the geographic spread of their missions are willing to accept missionaries as friends and part of the community, adults remain irritatingly disinterested in their messages about “true” and “correct” religion. Bailey

³¹⁸ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 67

notes that particularly in Kandy, attendance in school is highly irregular. Parents keep children, he says,

at home frequently without any good reasons; and always when they can make any use of them. In harvest-time, and at other seasons when the assistance of the children is of importance to the parents, no objection is made to their being absent from school.³¹⁹

Where missionaries were not able to convince people to adhere to their universal precepts, Bailey hoped to have a longer generational impact through schooling, requiring that pupils memorize scripture: “the minds of a great many of them have become imbued with the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, which, by the Divine blessing, may in after life be found of incalculable advantage.”³²⁰ Missionaries of all stripes took schooling very seriously, and the Anglicans of the 1830s filed daily reports from all of their schools which were systematically analyzed in advance of weekly meetings where superintendents would advise teachers individually and collectively. According to unpublished papers prepared with the intent of writing a book on the Wesleyan mission in Ceylon, authors of the manuscript note that “civil Christians” were a sufficiently large population that the missionaries referred to them as the “Government Christians.”³²¹ Reading missionary reports and diaries shows constant swinging between feelings of optimism that the whole of Ceylon would embrace Christ in the near future, and angry, desperate frustration associated with what they saw as insincere or bad Christianity.

I maintain that this confusion arises out of the ontological irreconcilability of universal thinking with pluriversal lived realities. The well-documented confusion on the

³¹⁹ Ibid., 9

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Unpublished notes for a manuscript on the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon, prepared in 1950. See: Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London) Archive Special Series – Notes and Transcripts. Box No 570, fiches 90 – 93.

part of Christian missionaries in Ceylon in the 19th century is understandable on account of the fact that belief in “a true god” takes on meaning in monotheistic traditions in ways that do not compare with reverence or meaning within Buddhist or Hindu genealogies; the existence or nonexistence of god(s) is simply not a central question.³²² Recall that within Europe, the dominant religions that vied to monopolize the administration of grace were all monotheistic traditions that at least shared the Hebrew Bible in common: Catholicism, Protestantism, and to a lesser degree by the 19th century, Islam and Judaism. These religious traditions were accustomed to making their claims against one another within a discourse that could at least agree on the necessity of one true god, while disagreeing on their particular interpretations or where to draw the line concerning new developments in how to interpret scripture or receive “prophetic” or messianic influences. Jesus was a messianic figure for Christians, who emerged as a fissure *within* the Jewish tradition after the fact. Mohammed was a prophet spoken to by god via the angel Gabriel and meant to update and correct the tradition in his time and place. Islam, in turn, splinters on questions of whether divine authority ends with Mohammad or continues to his nephew Ali and Ali’s descendants. Christians splinter on the question of whether the Church is the ultimate mediator of divinity on earth, or if the Bible ought to be engaged with directly. The brutality of internal monotheistic battles gave rise to perceived needs to “cleanse” Christian territory of Muslims and Jews on the one hand, but also gave rise to the influential traditions of scientific rationalism and secularism in response to this history grounded in the particular time and place of “Europe” as the continent and its ever

³²² D.J. Gogerly (1863). “Buddhism in Ceylon” Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (London) Archive Special Series (SOAS, University of London), Biographical (H-2723) Box664 (3) Various papers/Ceylon 1857/59/66. No. 1996; William Harvard, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Harvard, Late of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon With Extracts from her Diary and Correspondence by her Husband* (London: John Mason, 1833). British National Library, shelfmark: T.1587 (7).

changing political geographies were taking modern/colonial form. Despite the many important differences within and across the monotheistic traditions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, they all share a common (albeit distant) genealogy based in a belief in a God separate from the Earth who, in the book of Genesis, creates the world and man separately, with the former to serve the latter. As discussed in chapter one, this absolutism and cosmological separation of man/land/God has been essential to the development of “sovereignty” in the European context.

The birth of “religion” as a modern category capable of engaging with liberal-colonial states is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it will be sufficient for the purposes of this dissertation to point to the ways through which the Christian-monotheistic ontology worked to fit existing cosmologies into the category of “religion” for ease of categorization and control.³²³ It is not the case that monotheistic traditions were alien to South Asia. Islam had a robust history in the region for approximately a thousand years and was the major imperial presence prior to the East India Company, and subsequent British Raj, on the subcontinent. But the methods of spatial organization in the Mughal Islamic tradition are distinct from European projects of colonialism; my point is not to argue that cosmological distinctness *determined* the outcome of political ontology in early British Ceylon, just that in the particular time and place, the ontologies of “sovereignty” of the major actors (Kandyan and British alike) were informed by differing cosmologies and a differing balance between civil and cosmological relations, as will be discussed in later in this chapter. In order to rationalize South Asian cosmologies into a form that was

³²³ Sanjay Seth makes a similar point about the points of overlapping similarities that make it possible to conceive of a broad concept such as “modern Western knowledge” by virtue of shared background assumptions. See: Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

more legible to 19th century European minds, British missionaries and scholars worked to force-fit local customs and traditions into “religions” as they expected to find them, based around one or many gods and philosophical propositions that could be rationally refuted by “true” religion.³²⁴ Even secularism, as it developed in the Enlightenment, articulated its grievance with theism based on a replacement of universal religious truth with universal “scientific” rationality. Within cosmologies that are other-than-European, the historical and political problems that gave rise to the need for a “secular” division (or attempted division) between “church” and “state” did not happen, and there is no basis upon which to conceive of such a break. “Church” is not a place-holder for the institution of religion, though in the parlance of 20th and 21st century Western social science it often is; the concept of “church,” like the concept of “state” are historically produced institutions that reflect particular cosmologies and ontological starting points. Just as it is incorrect to graft the state onto places that had their own spatial systems without accounting for the historical processes that enabled the universalization of “state,” so too is it a colonial manoeuvre to graft the concept of “church” onto systems grounded in cosmology that are developed along their own trajectories.

What makes the colonial encounter so important from the standpoint of the politics of “religion” or, more accurately, the ontological clash of cosmologies is not the meeting of different ontologies; this has always happened. Islamic and Brahmanical cosmologies met and interacted across South Asia and the Indian Ocean region more generally long before the arrival of the British. For the purposes of this study however, it is the meeting of different ontologies within a historical and political context in which one (the Christian/British), in order to fulfil its internal requirements and expectations,

³²⁴Claims of “true” and “false” religion abound in the letters of missionaries throughout the 19th century.

must dominate the other, enlisting the 19th century institutions of state and developing civilizing mission in its service. Aimé Césaire has elegantly exposed the parasitic ways in which colonial relations with the rest of the world have unfolded. Aside from identifying at the onset the hypocrisy of identifying Christianity with civilization and an all encompassing “paganism” with “savagery,” he also offers a more subtle critique in drawing attention to museums:

And the museums of which M. Caillois is so proud, not for one minute does it cross his mind that, all things considered, it would have been better not to have needed them; that Europe would have done better to tolerate the non-European civilizations at its side, leaving them alive, dynamic, and prosperous, whole and not mutilated; that it would have been better to let them develop and fulfill themselves than to present for admiration, duly labeled, their dead and scattered parts; that anyway, the museum by itself is nothing; that it means nothing, that it can say nothing, when smug self-satisfaction rots the eyes, when a secret contempt for others withers the heart, when racism, admitted or not, dries up sympathy; that it means nothing if its only purpose is to feed the delights of vanity; that after all, the honest contemporary of Saint Louis, who fought Islam but respected it, had a better chance of *knowing* it than do our contemporaries (even if they have a smattering of ethnographic literature), who despise it.³²⁵

Note Césaire’s point that the enemy that respects another ultimately better understands the other than the one who despises, or looks down upon their enemy. As will be discussed later in this chapter, it was precisely the oscillating balance between symbolic and material “galactic” sovereignty that defined pre-European Kandy. It was the term *agama* that missionaries would translate as an indigenous equivalent to “religion” as understood in Europe, and the multiple ways through which Buddhism is referred to in early Christian and colonial writings in Ceylon attest to the confusion.³²⁶ In a Buddhist or

³²⁵ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*. Trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972): 20 – 21.

³²⁶ British administrators and missionaries would at times describe “the religion of the Boodoo,” at other times understand Buddhism as being part of Hinduism, as well as engage in debates about the possible divinity of the Siddharta Gautama himself. See also Kitsiri Malagoda, “Sinhalese Buddhism: Orthodox and Syncretistic, Traditional and Modern,” *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Sciences* (n.s.) 2/2 (1977):

Hindu genealogy, there is no contradiction with multiple, simultaneous expressions of divinity. Indeed, in some Buddhist sutras, the Buddha converses with Hindu gods, including *Brahma*, the god of creation.³²⁷

All this is not to suggest that all converts to Christianity were employing “weapons of the weak” in order to subvert European control. There are many reasons why Christianity and its cosmology were genuinely appealing. In Elizabeth Harvard’s diary, she describes what appears to be a very genuine conversion of a Buddhist priest to Christianity, noting,

it never occurred to him that there was any great Creator; but he imagined that all things came into existence by mere chance. Now he sees that it is only ‘the foolish’ who think, in their hearts, ‘there is no God.’ May he more fully know Him whom to know is life eternal, and become, to his benighted countrymen, a useful minister of the Lord Jesus.³²⁸

Similarly, the fact that two high priests agreed to travel to England and give up their privileges in Ceylon is taken as evidence of the ultimate victory for Christian worldviews over heathenism and idolatry at the time.³²⁹ The account notes that the two priests, upon reaching England, communicated through broken Portuguese and ultimately came to master English and “improve” their knowledge of religion. In the account, the author proclaims that they did not know anything about writing because they merely wrote on leaves in Ceylon, and was amazed at the speed with which they were able to master

246 – 270, cited in David Scott, *Refashioning Futures” Criticism after Postcoloniality* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999): 57.

³²⁷ Bikkhu Bodhi (trans.) *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya, Vol II* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000).

³²⁸ Elizabeth Harvard, letter to her parents from Colombo. August 26, 1816. William Harvard, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Harvard, Late of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon With Extracts from her Diary and Correspondence by her Husband* (London: John Mason, 1833). British National Library, shelfmark: T.1587 (7.)

³²⁹ “Philoyenues,” letter to unnamed “sir” on the Baptism of two High Priests from Ceylon, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. (London). Archive Special Series Biographical. (H-2723) Box No. 628(1) Ceylon Papers of A. Clark Var. Dates No. 1002

astronomy, geography, and religious precepts.³³⁰ My point in introducing this example is not to suggest that the high priests did or did not genuinely become Christian; the more important point is how within a universalizing view of modern/colonial British Christianity, the highly skilled Buddhist scholars and priests were not seen as equals in intellect already, and the confusion surrounding their abilities emerges from the failure to recognize the pluriversality of cosmologies that enabled the encounter in the first place. Though the details of internal cleavages within Christianity in Europe is well beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worthwhile to note that in this time and place, the monastic traditions that had given rise to Western philosophy and science were seen by the British missionaries as being inherently more “true” than the systems of knowledge cultivated in Ceylon and throughout Buddhist Southeast Asia more generally. To the missionaries, the priests were understood to be uneducated, illiterate, and spiritually backwards only in the universe of modernity; they were highly educated people, but educated *otherwise*.

Section Two: Galactic Sovereignty

With an understanding of the historical and political context within which British and Kandyan “sovereignties” were about to interact in 1815, some further elaboration is needed on how sovereignty in the galactic *mandala* tradition operated in order to more fully appreciate the pluriversality of sovereignties interacting in the 19th century. The power dynamics between the centre and periphery of Kandy depended on the balancing of symbolic and administrative duties; sovereignty invested in the centre was largely a

³³⁰ Ibid.

virtual practice, in that the King's power was vested in his role of maintaining cosmological and material balance throughout the territory.³³¹

S.J. Tambiah's work on Southeast Asian Buddhist polities includes Kandy as a key case study. Tambiah elaborates upon his adaptation of the *rajamandala* (circle of kings) model of sovereignty that has its classical political philosophical origins in the continental Mauryan Empire from the fourth to second centuries BCE. Its key characteristic is its simultaneous centralizing and decentralizing tendencies, which define the spatial organization of power. Applied to the Kandyan kingdom, the central capital city was encircled by nine small *rata* (districts), which were functionally controlled by officials. Collectively, these districts comprised the central domain. Around this central area were twelve provinces of varying sizes, divided between the first and second *adikars* in the South and North. The provinces further from the centre experienced the least influence of the king, and also brought the Kandyan territories into more contact with non-Kandyans. Moving outward, the centre's gravitational influence waned and the relative gravitational pull of the *adikars* increased over the smaller agents within their sphere of influence. Think of how the Sun's gravity, from the perspective of universal modern science, animates the celestial bodies of our solar system, yet is in turn orbiting the galactic core of the Milky Way – hence the adjective “galactic” to describe this practice of sovereignty.

At the outer limits of the Kingdom in particular, strategies of accommodation and integration were developed such that foreigners could be brought into the local Kandyan order. This was especially important in post-colonial Sri Lanka, where Kandy was seen as

³³¹ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, “The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition” in A. Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies*, 573 – 596. Volumes 1 and 2, Springer Publishing Company, 2014.

an epicentre of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. Contrary to contemporary ethnonationalist ideas that developed from the late 19th century onwards, incorporation of outsiders was a crucial component of galactic sovereignty. Muslim traders, non-Kandyan Sinhalese, and Tamils from the mainland were incorporated through a differentiation of work and caste relations within the Kandyan galactic order. In practice and in ceremony, this was related to work owed to the king based on caste and status (*rajakariya*). As Tambiah describes,

They elaborated the division of labor, and provided niches for immigrant groups, or stranger groups of different “ethnic” origins and different “religions,” and assigned special functions such as serving as mercenaries, conducting overland trade, or making luxury artifacts...The mandala pattern of devolution and replication could and did solicit and tolerate, positively place and mutually benefit from the presence of and engagement with satellite principalities, specialized minorities and sectarian or heterodox communities, waves of immigrants, and groups of war captives all given niches and incorporated within the larger cosmological and politicoeconomic framework. Indeed it was this galactic blueprint that positively enabled the Sinhalization and Buddhization of south Indian peoples and gods to continue uncoerced.³³²

Galactic sovereignty was as much about fluidity in its incorporation of outsiders as it was about rigid attention to ceremonies bridging the spiritual and manifest domains, the significance of which will be explained below.³³³

For Tambiah, there was nothing in any of the classical Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa kingdoms that could adequately be described as a “state” in the modern sense of the word. Drawing on South Asian sources of political theory, such as the *Arthashastra*, *Agganna Sutta* (The Discourse on What is Primary) and the *Cakkavatti*

³³² S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 174 – 175.

³³³ By making this distinction using separation as a core component of colonial science from Shilliam 2015, I do not mean to imply that the pre-colonial, galactic sovereign system is an example of “decolonial science.”

Sinhanada Sutta (The Lions Roar of the Wheel-Turning Emperor),³³⁴ Tambiah describes territory in flux, organized as “pulsating galactic polities”:

The polities modelled on mandala-type patterning had central royal domains surrounded by satellite principalities and provinces replicating the centre on a smaller scale and at the margins had even more autonomous tributary principalities. The effective political arena extends beyond any single “kingdom”; it is multicentric, with rival “kingdoms” jostling each other, changing their margins, expanding and contracting, according to the fortunes of wars, skirmishes, raids, and diplomacy.³³⁵

The local political spatial constellation was structured in an orbital fashion rather than a ladder-like fashion. This does not mean there were no hierarchies; the point I am drawing attention to is that the force holding indigenous polities in balance was animated more gravitationally than through specific kinds of top-down accountability. Caste relations, for example, played an important role in Sinhalese-Buddhist society, though, according to Chandra R. de Silva, they did not occupy the same role nor have religious centrality as they did in Hindu-India upon their introduction to the island during the Anuradhapura period (377 BCE – 1017 CE). Nevertheless, caste identity did play an organizing role in the exploitation of labour as well as determining the severity of punishments for transgressions.³³⁶ This kind of structured and embodied privilege enjoyed by and taken advantage of by upper caste chiefs in particular, was immediately missed upon assumption of British rule in the Kandyan territories. A person’s caste determined their role in society.³³⁷ In part because the British relied on Dutch archival sources for much of their early knowledge of Maritime Ceylon and the Kandyan interior, they importantly

³³⁴ Named precisely in Wijeyratne’s reading of Tambiah’s work. See: Roshan de Silva Wijeyratne, “The Mandala State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmographical Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition,” in A. Wagner et al. Sherwin (eds.) *Law, Culture and Visual Studies*, Volumes 1 and 2, Springer Publishing Company, 2014.

³³⁵ S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 172.

³³⁶ Chandra Richard de Silva, *Sri Lanka: A History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987): 50 – 52.

³³⁷ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 20 – 22.

misunderstood the dual meanings of “Sinhala” wherein a person could be culturally Sinhalese, or politically Sinhalese, or both. When the Dutch discovered in the 18th century, for example, that South Indian, occasionally Tamil speaking, Nayakkar caste kings were ruling over Kandy, they (unsuccessfully) attempted to use this as an example of “outside” rule to ferment disunity within the Randala nobility (subgroup of the farming Goyigama caste) to press their interests in Kandy. The Dutch, and the British that followed them, did not understand the dual meaning and purpose of Sinhala-ness, and belonging to a cultural Sinhala identity did not have to be more important than a Sinhala political and economic identity, which caste relations make clear. Upper caste elites would have greater reason to relate with other upper caste elites more so than lower caste workers, regardless of a cultural Sinhalese identity, so long as the political Sinhala Buddhist relationships are held in balance.³³⁸

Sovereignty in Ceylon was often a contested terrain in which a European power occupying a small patch of coastal land would proclaim dominance, while the inhabitants of that area would continue their allegiance to another power, not dissimilar to the multiple spiritual allegiances that confused Christian missionaries.³³⁹ In the pre-colonial Vanni region, for example, a region of mixed ancestry of Sinhalese, Tamil, and Vedda (indigenous) peoples at the outer limits of Kandy’s (to the south) and Jaffna’s (to the north) control, the sovereign boundaries fluctuated – but more importantly, they were understood to be in flux. As Nira Wickramasinghe describes it, “Some of the Vanniar chieftains, in the Vanni region in the East of the island, appear to have recognised the

³³⁸ John D. Rogers, “Early British Rule and Social Classification in Lanka,” *Modern Asian Studies* 38/3 (2004): 626-631; R.A.L.H Gunawardana, “The People of the Lion: The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography” in Jonathan Spencer (ed.), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1990): 49 – 59.

³³⁹ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006).

overlordship of the Kotte and Jaffna kingdoms equally and at times acknowledged both simultaneously.”³⁴⁰ The ontological understanding of sovereignty in its Buddhist conception was certainly structured and hierarchical, but it was not characterized by centralized or unitary rule. In contrast to a European hierarchical feudal model, Kandyan sovereignty was based on devolving the practical aspects of governance to the periphery rather than concentrating them in the centre, which was meant to mirror the spiritual centre of the kingdom. Importantly, within South Asian spatial forms of organization such as that of Ceylon, the norm of “total rule” existed in the symbolic and spiritual realm, but did not manifest bureaucratically and politically. This is significant, because the galactic sovereign order was already breaking down prior to the consolidation of *de jure* British rule over the island in 1815, with the longer simmering tensions between the Sinhalese aristocracy and the Nayakkar king leading to tensions within the balance of power and order.³⁴¹ It is within this Kandyan sovereign context that the interventions of the British should be contextualized.

As James Duncan notes, the city of Kandy was meant to be “a heaven to the kingdom as a whole.”³⁴² The king, who symbolically represented the authority of Buddha, did not engage in the details of administration, which was conducted by his *adikars*. In spiritual terms there was a centralizing tendency, while in policy terms there was a decentralizing tendency. The legitimacy and enforceability of policy came not from the king, but required the signature of the *adikars* who were crucial in the devolution of sovereignty. *Adikars* exercised judiciary and military powers, served as go-betweens for

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

³⁴¹ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 19 - 22

³⁴² James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 117.

the king and subjects, supervised the system of public works labour (*rajakariya*), and signed off on state documents.³⁴³ There was thus an important system of checks and balances in the Buddhist system of sovereignty that gave unlimited symbolic and ritualistic power to the king, but severely limited the king's ability to act materially without the consent of the aristocracy. This spatial order, and Sri Vikrama's falling out with the Kandyan aristocracy in the final decade of his rule, is what ensured the fall of Kandy, not any military or technological advantage of Governor Brownrigg or his predecessors.

Symbolism and ritual has always been an important legitimizing component of "sovereignty," and Ceylon and Buddhist Southeast Asia more generally is no exception to this. As Wijeyeratne describes,

The rituals of State were not only an intrinsic part of the symbolic glue that contrived a form of *virtual* unity to a disparate and decentralised *galactic* polity but also refracted the spatial division of the cosmic order within the order of ritual.³⁴⁴

It was not so much that Buddhist sovereignty in the Theravada tradition *required* that the spiritual and material realms be connected; rather, it was that within this ontology of sovereignty, there was never a rupture that might artificially separate them. There are several key ontological starting points for organizing sovereign rule that mark the indigenous practice of sovereignty as distinct from European sovereignty. The first, discussed above, is the pulsating expansion and contraction of rule in the *rajamandala*, or galactic model. Rather than being organized through vertical differentiation of

³⁴³ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne. "The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmographical Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition" in A. Wagner et al. (eds.) *Law, Culture and Visual Studies*, Vols 1 & 2, Springer Publishing Company, 2013.

³⁴⁴ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, "The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition" in A. Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2. (Springer Publishing Company, 2014): 575.

increasingly local duties, the practice of sovereignty was based on replication of the “galactic core.” In a way, this is similar to a fractal relationship in that a fractal represents the schematic of the whole, even within a small part. The next and related point is the practice of sovereignty playing out at local levels in which lesser kings replicated the spiritual and practical obligations of the sovereign in their smaller kingdoms. Part of the duties of enacting sovereignty was careful attention to the spiritual and manifest domain, held together in practice. This particular practice is what enabled the Kandyan kingdom to view the coastal Dutch government as administering territory on its behalf through much of the 18th century. Because of the centrality of symbolism to the practice of sovereignty, it was possible for the Dutch and the Kandyans to each see the other as subordinate; the decentralized and autonomous nature of politics allowed contradicting virtual power relations to exist simultaneously in ways that they could not under a centralized polity. Finally, starting from Buddhist sovereign ontologies within a galactic model, there was no contradiction in a distant subordinate satellite territory exercising considerable autonomy as explained above, nor was there any fundamental problem with a person being a Christian, or Hindu, or a Jain, so long as they fulfilled the ritual requirements of sovereignty alongside the material requirements. The further the distance from the galactic centre, the greater the level of material/political autonomy that was practiced. This spatial characteristic of organizing political power is what enabled Ehelepola and his uncle, Pilima Talauvē before him, to plot with relative autonomy against Vikrama, as they both hailed from Sabaragamuva, far from the centre and close to the British coastal territories. By the time of European arrival in the 16th century, over a thousand years of political history had already defined the spatial parameters of sovereignty and the ebb and flow of power between territorial units on the island.

Becoming Kandyan through “*Buddhification*”

The urban geography of the city of Kandy illustrates the importance of symbolism to the practice of sovereignty. It was constructed and ordered to physically represent hierarchies of moral order in which the connection between the king-as-*Bodhisattva* was connected as closely as possible to the *Buddha* in the spiritual realm in the East, while secular areas were further to the West.³⁴⁵ Urban beautification and emphasis on symbols of sovereignty was especially important to the last dynasty of Kandyan kings, the Nayakkars, because unlike their Sinhalese predecessors, the Nayakkars were of South Indian ancestry and thus needed to emphasize their relationship to Buddhism. In effect, the continental Nayakkars had to “become-Kandyan” through demonstrating their ability to perform the tasks of a Buddhist “sovereign” as well as their additional identity and family association with Hindu Southern India. The *mandala* system’s ability to incorporate outsiders reflects an ontology in which many cosmologies might co-exist in a way that would be very problematic within a universal understanding of “sovereignty” as it developed in the British/Christian tradition. Incorporation of foreigners, especially of Dravidian foreigners, was an important part of Kandyan politics. Although since the formal independence of Sri Lanka, Kandy has been imagined as a place of pristine Sinhalese anti-foreign influence, even rich accounts of the late stages of the independent kingdom written by Sinhalese nobles make no particular mention of Tamils or Malabars³⁴⁶ being a problem within the

³⁴⁵James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³⁴⁶ In the 19th century English language accounts, “Malabar” is most commonly used interchangeably with Tamil. In the postcolonial period, it has been more or less accepted that references to Malabars specifically refer to Tamils. But historically, this was not specifically a language issue, as Malabars (also describing a geographic region in India) included Telugu speakers as well, some of whom also married into Sinhalese royal families in the pre-colonial period. See Gananath Obeyesekere, “Buddhism, Ethnicity, and Identity: A

kingdom.³⁴⁷ Following the capture and exile of Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe, the Uva rebellion of 1817/1818 was led in part by a Nayakkar Malabar of relation to Vikrama named Wilbawe, who commanded considerable loyalty amongst the Sinhalese aristocracy, as evident in transcripts of interrogation of Kohukumbra Ratteralle, a Kandyan Chief.³⁴⁸

Ceremony was essential to legitimizing territorial rule in the Kandyan tradition, and part of the process of what Tambiah describes as “Buddhification” of South Indian sovereigns who rose to power. When the Sinhalese king Narendrasinha died in 1739 without a male heir, his Queen’s brother, Sri Vijaya Rajasinga was crowned king and began the Nayakkar dynasty. Though it had been a tradition since the reign of King Rajasinghe II (1635-1685) for Sinhalese kings to marry South Indian women of Nayakkar lineage based in Madurai, Sri Vijaya’s identity as a South Indian ascending to the throne and his subsequent marriage to a Nayakkar woman established a “foreign” dynasty of South Indians to the Kandyan throne, which offended some of the Sinhalese chiefs and

Problem in Buddhist History” in Mahinda Deegale (ed.) *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka*, 134 – 162 (New York: Routledge, 2006).

³⁴⁷ The beginning of the “ethnic” problems would come with the birth of the plantation economy of the 1830s onwards, and with it, the establishment and rampant proliferation of alcohol-selling taverns, European planters, and migrant South Indian workers. Indeed, in a region well known for its intolerance of alcohol, the fact that 133 arrack taverns opened between 1815 and 1848 and its associated social effects speak to the transformation of the kingdom into an early capitalist “boom” town at a break-neck pace. In the districts of Kandy, Udunuwara, Udapalata, and upper Bulatgama, consumption was as high as 2.2 gallons per head in 1848. See: K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon, 1846 – 50, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'rebellion' of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965): 16, footnote 49. British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

³⁴⁸ There are different accounts of the leading figure in the Uva Rebellion, as will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four. According to newspaper accounts in the early stage of the rebellion, it was believed that one of the main instigators of the rebellion was indeed a Malabar relative of the ousted king named Wilbawe, but in later newspaper accounts and correspondence, this particular person is said to be living in exile in Madras under government arrest. According to these sources, it was a Sinhalese Buddhist monk posing as a Tamil/Malabar relation to drum up support for the rebellion, and allied with Keppetipola, nephew of Ehehepola, who defected from the British to join the rebels. More in chapter four, but see also: Ceylon Gazette May 16, 1818. British National Library, shelfmark: OMF/SM/126

aristocracy.³⁴⁹ Vijaya Rajasinha, having no male heirs of his own, was succeeded by his Nayakkar Queen's brother, Kirti Sri Rajasinhe (1742-1782), who was in turn succeeded by Rajadhi Rajasinhe (1782-1798), who died of fever in 1798 and was also childless. There was considerable intrigue in the Kandyan court as to who would succeed Rajasinhe; following K.M. de Silva's account, the most powerful person at court was Pilima Talauvē, the First *Adikar*. Muttusami, a brother-in-law of the recently deceased king, claimed he was named by the king as successor, and was jailed by Talauvē along with his sisters. An 18 year old Nayyakar protégé of Talauvē was ultimately crowned Vickrama Rajasinghe (1798 – 1815), and following de Silva, it was the intent of Talauvē to control Rajasinghe indirectly rather than attempt to supplant him and re-establish Sinhalese rule in Kandy. This is an important point, as de Silva notes that generations of practice had “indigenized” the Nayakkars to the point where there was no political will amongst the population to supplant them.³⁵⁰ The Nayakkars embraced the Buddhism of their new home, and especially under Kirti Sri Rajasinhe and Rajadhi Rajasinha, “identified [themselves] with the Kandyan national interest and blended the Nayakkar personality into the Kandyan background with consummate skill.”³⁵¹ Although this did not sit well with the Sinhalese aristocracy, to ordinary Kandyans, the Nayakkars were accepted without noticeable concern. Indeed, the first major attempt to re-establish a Sinhalese dynasty came only in 1798, when First *Adikar* Pilima Talauvē installed the 18-

³⁴⁹ It is relevant to note that the two “pure” Sinhalese kings preceding Vijaya both had Nayakkar mothers. See S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 159.

³⁵⁰ K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981): 221-222.

³⁵¹ Ibid. It is worth drawing attention to de Silva's use of “national” in this quote. de Silva's primary research interest is not the rise of nationalism, as he does not view this ostensibly as a characteristic of modern or colonial society. In his earlier work however, he does differentiate between a Kandyan sense of nationalism and a modern form of nationalism. I take this issue up more squarely in chapter four.

year-old Sri Vikrama, against whom he would later unsuccessfully rebel.³⁵² Following Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne's reasoning, by the time of Vikrama Rajasinha's coronation, the contradiction of the galactic/*mandala* model of spatial organization of de-centralizing sovereign authority outward already left the king powerless relative to the distant provinces. As Wijeyratna explains,

Symbolic of the overwhelming power of the nobles who controlled the administrative bureaucracy of the kingdom, in 1798 Pilima Talauvē “combined in himself sixteen offices” of state. The king was the *galactic sovereign* par excellence himself encompassed by the provincial bureaucracy, the *galactic* centre turning into the *galactic* margin. Such was the multicentric nature of the Kandyan polity that it was the king who in the absence of a developed monetary economy remained dependent on the “loyalty of the disavas.”³⁵³

The ritual of sovereign practice is the galactic mass that held together the fluctuating centre, periphery and semi-periphery of the Kandyan state.³⁵⁴ By the fourteenth century, the fertility ceremony of the *Asala Perahera* (procession) had developed into an important spectacle of sovereignty. This procession was a powerful ritual through which sovereignty was annually reaffirmed and performed for all to see; it dramatized state power and further naturalized and entrenched a Buddhist ontology of how Kandy's core replicated cosmic balance and thus social order.

Part of the Nayakkar contribution to the development of the *Asala Perahera* was making the *dalada* (tooth) relic the centrepiece of the *Perahera*.³⁵⁵ The relic further

³⁵² Ibid.; K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981): 132; S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 160 – 161.

³⁵³ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, “The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition” in A.Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2, (Springer Publishing Company, 2014): 591.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 162; Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, “The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition” in A.Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2, (Springer Publishing Company, 2014): 593.

reinforced the balancing of cosmology and materiality, as it was said to come from the Buddha's funeral pyre and taken to symbolize the legitimacy of sovereign rule, a subject of much controversy amongst Christian missionaries and British administrators in the decades to follow. The *Perahera*, with the *dalada* front and centre, reinforced the King's symbolic function as a *bodhisattva* for his people, and ceremonially demonstrated the centrality of the city of Kandy for the galactic kingdom. The procession ordered the entire galactic polity. A state officer in charge of the register of land title led the procession, which solidified how land was managed within the kingdom, and also the centrality of the *goyigama* caste within the procession. The second and third parts of the procession, as well as sections 23-28 represent the central government, such as the elephant department and military. Sections 16-21 represented the religious functionaries of the state.³⁵⁶ Although the material day-to-day operations of the state in practice empowered the *adikars* and represented de-centralizing political tendencies, the overall legitimacy of sovereignty was publicly rehearsed and performed through its mirroring of the spiritual realm, both of which were united in the urban geography of the city of Kandy.³⁵⁷ Despite the material autonomy of the periphery, the *disavas* (officials) in the periphery could not miss the *Perahera*, along with other rituals of the state that held the *mandala* together.³⁵⁸

Gananath Obeyesekere, a colleague of S.J. Tambiah, has also written about processes of Buddhification, drawing on historical texts as well as folk dramas.

³⁵⁶ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, "The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition" in A. Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2, (Springer Publishing Company, 2014): 593 – 594.

³⁵⁷ Ibid. See also Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), which does an exceptional job of laying out the spiritual significance of Kandy as well as the geographic strategies of colonization as they unfolded in the urban re-planning of the city over the period of colonial rule.

³⁵⁸ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, "The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition" in A. Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2, (Springer Publishing Company, 2014).

Obeysekere rightly maintains that historical records would not include most migrants entering Ceylon peacefully and integrating into local societies, but folk traditions can help better understand these processes as well. Obeysekere describes ritual dramas, in which two performers play the role of Buddhist guardian deities at the gates of Lanka, blocking entry to aliens attempting to enter:

These aliens speak a funny kind of Sinhala with a strong Tamil accent and they constantly utter malapropisms, unintended puns, and spoonerisms. In their ignorance they make insulting remarks about the gods at the barrier, they know not Sinhala and Buddhist customs and the audience has a lot of fun at their expense. Gradually, the alien visitors recognize their errors of speech and custom; they learn to speak properly; they begin to properly worship the deities and acknowledge the superiority of the Buddha. Then the gods open the barrier and these aliens enter Sri Lanka.³⁵⁹

This process mirrors the process of Buddhification described in more formal terms at the regal level in the case of the Nayakkar dynasty. Obeysekere argues that prior to European colonization beginning with the Portuguese in 1505, there was an understanding that at the village level, where people were long accustomed to receiving Southern Indian immigrants, understanding integration into the social fabric as a process of Buddhification made sense, as did the lack of differentiation between “Buddhist” and “Sinhala.” While there would certainly have been individuals who would have seen them as “Others,” the deference to Buddhism and respect for the genealogy of sovereign practice did not make their Otherness more significant than the Otherness of Europeans, who exhibited far less tact for 310 years prior to the Kandyan Convention of 1815. As Obeysekere describes, “The universalizing of the unconditional identity, Sinhala=Buddhist, with the primary emphasis on the first part of that duality, namely

³⁵⁹ Gananath Obeysekere, “Buddhism, Ethnicity, and Identity: A Problem in Buddhist History” in Mahinda Deegale (ed.) *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 152.

being Sinhala, is the product of the colonial period.”³⁶⁰ In section three, I introduce the theoretical concept of “political ontology” before applying this lens to the event of the Kandyan Convention itself.

Section Three: Political Ontology and the Pluri-verse

Political Ontology

By the 18th and 19th centuries, starting assumptions about human nature and social development were becoming increasingly “scientific” or pseudo-scientific, giving rise to ideas about measurable degrees of civilization and the centrality of the state as a marker of linear human development/accomplishment. Hegel was central to the state as a marker of civilizational achievement.³⁶¹ When the Spanish, for example, first encountered the indigenous peoples of the “Indies,” their “lack” of writing was taken to be evidence of civilizational immaturity. From within the universal lens of Spanish reason, the organization and gross generational movement of knowledge through means that were indigenous to what we today describe as South America and the Caribbean were unperceivable. What they encountered was ontology *otherwise*, or outside/alongside their own ways of knowing and being. But to Christian-Spanish eyes, how could scantily clothed people without writing – people who seemed so close to the “state of nature” discussed in chapter one – be equals? The question of whether “Indians” were human was

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 156.

³⁶¹ Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World History* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002). My point is not that British colonialists in the early 19th century were reading Hegel and applying his logic in colonial endeavours. The point is that Hegel was observing and responding to the social and philosophical currents within his world within the late Enlightenment in what was still not geographically configured to be “Western Europe.” Hegel’s intellectual influence becomes more entrenched later, in the professionalization of knowledge concerning the inevitability of the nation-state as a natural vehicle for human collectives. The influence is perhaps most bare in expressions of modernization theory popular at the formal end of institutional/political colonialism in the 1950s/1960s. See Gurinder K. Bhambra *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

a topic of intense debate in the Spanish world, and as discussed through Rojas and Anghie's engagement with de Vitoria, Spanish and Papal admission of "Indians" into the human race was its own form of universalizing violence, as it served to legitimize the expectation that humans possessing reason ought to be capable of recognizing their inferiority. This was an ontological collision, because that which *exists* (the humanity, or level of humanity of the Other) is called into question as the Spanish and the Taino, no doubt, searched the recesses of their collective experiences to make sense of one another and their relationships to land.³⁶²

Military, cosmological, and biological warfare were the means through which land was acquired in the Caribbean and South America, but hundreds of years later, colonizers could not ground their territorial claims to South Asia and the Middle East on the basis of "lacking" written language.³⁶³ In India, Orientalist scholars committed considerable energy towards studying Sanskrit, and through their studies, were learning about the Asokan era and beginning to discover the connections between ancient India and ancient Greece.³⁶⁴ As Thomas Metcalf explains, this was an Enlightenment inspired effort, aimed at understanding all cultures, and this ideology influenced the creation of the

³⁶² The Valladolid debate in 1550 – 1551 between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda took up the question of how the "Indians" ought to be integrated into colonial life, with de las Casas arguing that Indians and colonizers should be treated similarly and de Sepúlveda arguing that the unChristian ways of the Indians justified their subjugation by any means necessary. As Tzvetan Todorov shows, even before this debate Christopher Columbus was making the case to Spain that a handful of European soldiers could subdue and enslave the Indian population in the "new world," while at the same time making an evangelical case for sending missionaries across the Atlantic. The tension between the Christian and the Colonizer was thus a subject of considerable debate in the decades following contact. See: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

³⁶³ While gold was the oft-noted reason for Columbus' journey to the "Orient" that landed him in contemporary South America and the Caribbean, as Todorov notes, a fundamental objective of his journey was the aim of spreading the Gospel as well. In a letter to Pope Alexander VI, dated February 1502, Columbus writes, "I hope in Our Lord to be able to propagate His holy name and His Gospel throughout the universe." Cited in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984): 10.

³⁶⁴ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 80 – 81.

Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Under Governor General Warren Hasting's patronage, this organization was a hub of scholarly learning emphasizing translations from local languages into English and the publication of the "uniquely influential journal, *Asiatic Researchers*." ³⁶⁵ As subaltern studies scholars have long emphasized, the BEIC administration and its emphasis on bringing India into "world-history" through recasting seemingly disordered narratives into statist narratives was central to the making of modern, colonial India. ³⁶⁶ The modern state, instead of the written language, became a symbol of modern civilization and played the role of providing "evidence" of indigenous "lack" to legitimize the domination of "pre-historic" people, land, and cosmology, ostensibly for the benefit, improvement, and development of "natives" themselves. ³⁶⁷ What was different in the 19th century was that it was not only alleged civilizational inferiority and divine providence that justified colonialism, but an aligning of ideas and interests emerging into a "science" of racial inferiority, as well as linear, universal temporality in which the structural presence of the state marked the border between civilization and those lacking it. ³⁶⁸

The ontological differences in starting assumptions have been outlined thus far, but what remains to be considered is the consequences of ontological *conflict* and its importance for understanding colonial state formation beginning with the Kandyan Convention. Mario Blaser, working mostly in the area of indigenous studies in Latin and North America, is a leading scholar of political ontology, and by way of explaining the politics of ontology, I lean on his illustrative example. Blaser offers the example of the

³⁶⁵ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 9 – 11.

³⁶⁶ Ranajit Guha *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997): 182.

³⁶⁷ I elaborate on these themes in chapter three, which positions a liberal turn in governance and economy as a way of softening and "improving" both colonialism and commerce.

³⁶⁸ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 80 – 92.

Mowachat/Muchalaht First Nation in what is commonly called British Columbia, Canada, to illustrate the contemporary importance of ontological collision. When Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans tried to launch a plan to relocate a young orca whale in 2012, the Mowachat/Muchalaht intervened on the basis that the whale was their recently deceased chief, Ambrose Maquinna, who had promised to return to his people in the form of a whale.³⁶⁹ The whale's presence represented the chief's desire to remain with the people and should be respected, and as Blaser says,

This was not a conflict between two different perspectives on an animal but rather a conflict over whether the "animal" of scientists, bureaucrats, and environmentalists was all that was there. Ontological conflicts thus involve conflicting stories about "what is there" and how they constitute realities in power-charged fields.³⁷⁰

As Blaser's example shows, what is in conflict is not a question of either A or B, but rather, A being part of B, but not all of. It is not that Mowachat/Muchalat deny that the whale in question is a whale, rather, they point to the fact that the whale that we observe is only part of what is actually there. While the empirical ways in which ontological conflict plays out in particular places are very distinct, there is nothing particularly unique about the conflicts that arise when different ontologies come into contact. In the context of colonial state formation in Ceylon, Blaser's notion of ontological conflict is instructive as it shows the violent implications of failing to understand that there are multiple realities interacting in the political connections between worlds that are ordered along different ontologies.

³⁶⁹ Paul Watson, "Leaving Luna Alone," Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, June 18th, 2004. Accessed on September 2, 2014. <http://www.seashepherd.fr/news-and-media/editorial-040618-1.html>.

³⁷⁰ Mario Blaser, "Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe: Toward a Conversation on Political Ontology," *Current Anthropology* 54/5 (2013): 548.

In the case of the British and the Kandyans, a belief in the uni-versal meaning of what sovereignty and territory meant within distinct genealogies led to ontological conflict, which is also essentially a *political* conflict. From a modernist, universal view, this has been historicized as mere duplicity on part of entrepreneurial leaders within the Sinhalese-Kandyan aristocracy, and I do not dispute the fact that such political intrigue was central to the story. But the more interesting problem is the enactment of politics associated with the meeting of different ontologies of “sovereignty” that inform what it means to exist and practice sovereignty. That the British and the Kandyans conceived of this differently brings to light the relational development and fragility of the concept of state sovereignty as it was developing in the early 19th century. When the Kandyans refused to act in a “proper” way as understood from the perspective of a Eurocentric, universal view of sovereignty, Kandy forced an opening between worlds of meaning. In the meeting of Kandyan and British ontologies of sovereignty, there are, to stretch the meaning of the concept, *two* status quos or established systems of order. This is the importance of pluriversal politics, because both Kandyan sovereignty and British sovereignty represent worlds with long histories of sovereign development.

A pluriversal perspective of the meeting of different histories of sovereign practice highlights the enactment of pluriversal politics. Ontological conflict offers a destabilizing opportunity in which to see and put into practice “other” ways of knowing material and cosmological existence. At the ontological level, modernity demands that there can be only one sphere of being and experience, a *universe*, which has been projected and enforced throughout the colonial encounter as a political project of domination that has manifested differently across time and place. How ontological conflicts are resolved is unpredictable and historically contingent, in large part because

the existence of multiple ontologies does not at all imply that ontologies are not often encountering one another in some way. In the case of the British and the Kandyans, they had encountered one another many times, and the Kandyans, in particular, had a long history of military and diplomatic relations with European powers. Returning to Blaser's example of ontological conflict in 21st century "Canada," we can see one possible outcome of conflicting ontology: a de-politicized, normalized, everyday application of modern, "scientific" universal thinking that cannot comprehend the Mowachat/Muchalaht position. As Blaser describes it,

the claim of the pluriverse (or multiple ontologies) is not concerned with presenting itself as a more "accurate" picture of how things are "in reality" (a sort of meta-ontology); it is concerned with the possibilities that this claim may open to address emergent (and urgent) intellectual/political problems. Central among these problems is the extent to which those of us (persons and institutions) who have been shaped by an ontology that postulates/performs a "one-world world" are ill prepared to grapple with its increasing implausibility.³⁷¹

The truest form of colonization is that which occurs ontologically, in which the world-views and practices of the colonized are made to reflect those of the colonizer – the disciplining of the pluriverse into the universe. Such ontological colonial violence has many manifestations, one of which is the post-independence idea in South Asia that a strong central state must control "every inch of territory" in order to exist in a global system of states connected and constituted through hundreds of years of colonial violence.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Mario Blaser, "Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe: Toward a Conversation on Political Ontology," *Current Anthropology* 54/5 (2013): 554.

³⁷² Ajay Parasram, "Postcolonial Territory and The Coloniality of the State" *Caribbean Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy* 2/4 (2014): 51 – 79.

Multiple Ontologies vs. Multiple Modernities

Thinking about the politics of ontology is a useful way to re-consider the collision of sovereignties in the formal unification of Ceylon in 1815, because it draws attention to the different genealogies of sovereignty and their irreconcilability due to the developing rule of colonial difference. Applied to South Asia, colonial difference positioned South Asia as a place outside of history, relative to a Europe in which progress was a defining characteristic that was divinely ordained. British scholars in the late 19th century went so far as to theorize that Rajput systems of organizing sovereignty, by virtue of more closely resembling European ones, were indicative of their Aryan blending. As Metcalf describes, “A system of government that could be described by analogy with that of Europe, even the Europe of the Middle Ages, was by definition superior to a system which was purely ‘Oriental’ in character.”³⁷³ Clearly the universal ontology of the early 19th century had not given way in the late 19th century, but nonetheless, as a method of historical discovery, the politics of ontology, can be a useful analytical tool through which to study the past differently. Political ontology then, is about how to put into practice many “verses” of history and politics, a pluri-versal rather than uni-versal conception of ontology.

This is not to suggest that “modernity” is not a contested regime of knowledge, either within Europe or elsewhere in the world. There are political reasons why modernity is usually framed in terms of enlightened philosophy, human rights, and freedom from religious persecution rather than in terms of slavery, genocide, and the immiserization of the European working classes. But there is an important distinction between “multiple modernities” and “multiple ontologies.” The idea of multiple modernities draws attention

³⁷³ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 74

to the fact that Eurocentric modernity is an incomplete way of understanding the processes of industrialization, modernization, and development. It emerges in the work of Shmuel Eisenstadt (1974), who was an earlier theorist of modernization theory. Multiple modernity as a concept has become more influential near the end of the 20th century.³⁷⁴ As Bhabra observes, the case for multiple modernities was made to add a cultural dimension and inflection to the processes underscoring universal institutions such as the state and the market. This revision of earlier modernization theory thus sought to escape the charge of cultural relativism by keeping the institutional basis for a universal understanding of modernity, while resisting the Euro-domination of modernity by emphasizing the cultural distinctions of how modernity unfolds in different places.³⁷⁵ Multiple modernity, then, still implies different perspectives on a materially objective and describable “reality,” which, as Blaser’s work makes clear, is not the same as multiple ontologies.

The difference between multiple ontologies and multiple modernities is central to pluriversal politics, in which whole cosmologies, complete with ontological starting points and knowledge cultivated along means that may not be knowable from outside of those worlds, interact. Using political ontology as an analytical lens to understand colliding British and Kandyan sovereignties at an important moment of sovereign transformation allows us to focus on the multiple ontologies that conflict and enact a pluriversal conception of *politics*, in which both Kandyan and British worlds are forced to transform, albeit not on even terms. In light of the work of chapter one, we can see that focusing on pluriversal politics instead of universal politics means that our lens must de-

³⁷⁴ S.N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129/1 (1974): 1 - 29; Gurminder K. Bhabra, *Connected Sociologies*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 34.

³⁷⁵ Gurminder K. Bhabra, *Connected Sociologies*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 32 – 34.

link from the centrality of Europe, and this comes at a cost. As noted in the telescope metaphor in chapter one when a camera's lens focuses on a foreground, the complexity of the background is blurred. Choosing to focus on "coloniality" rather than "modernity" as the focal point of interest in this study means that the complexities and contestations *within* modernity are held artificially static.³⁷⁶ As I strive to show throughout this dissertation, the de-politicization through the violence of universality as it pertains to the histories of modern/colonial formation relies on the discursive power to normalize Eurocentric ontologies, epistemologies, and practices.

Modernity requires an ontological *belief* in universality, whether it is through linear temporality, or through the fundamental hierarchy of difference.³⁷⁷ But the crucial component of this story is that modernity as a mediator or lens through which to know the world is a colonizing master-narrative that has, through 500 years of political practice, normalized its own universality as a standard by which all others must be evaluated in a way that has been axiomatically proclaimed and enforced its validity with coercive power as well as attempting to prove it. This is indeed something that has been central to the colonial encounters of the past, but as the story of the Mowachat/Muchalaht shows, modernity *continues* to depend on the silencing of other worlds. Ontological conflict helps to understand the religious politics introduced earlier in this chapter between the Christian-world view that informed the political and messianic motivations of British missionaries and administrators in the early 19th century as they were just coming to learn and produce knowledge about *buddhagama*, or what they would eventually name

³⁷⁶ As explained in the introduction of this dissertation concerning the methodology of archiving-in-relief, there is an added layer of complexity associated with using artefacts produced by colonizers by piecing together the seemingly unimportant "relief" histories.

³⁷⁷ Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World History* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2002); Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 113 – 158.

“Buddhism.” With the history and theoretical approach in mind, I turn now to the physical encounter between the British and Kandyan aristocracy in Kandy in 1815 to explore the political ontology of the Convention.

The Kandyan Convention as Political Ontology

Though it was not a *Perahera* that marked the ritual handover of sovereignty from the Kandyan aristocracy to General Brownrigg, the ceremony was profoundly spectacular, involving the ceremonial arrival in the King’s palace of Governor Brownrigg alongside the current *mahadikar*, Molligodde, and the most recently deposed *mahadikar*, Ehelepola whose defection to the British catalyzed the course of events leading to the sovereign handover. The British troops assembled in the square in front of the Royal Palace at 3:00 p.m on March 2, 1815. They formed a lane leading from the outside into the King’s hall, where the sovereign of Kandy sat for official ceremonies. Governor Brownrigg, alongside the main *adikars* and Chiefs, passed through this military flank into the King’s Hall where Brownrigg took the king’s place, sitting the recently ousted *mahadikar* Ehelepola to his immediate right. Ehelepola’s replacement, Molligodde, served the role of *mahadikar*, and led the processional of approximately twenty Dessaves of the provinces and principal chiefs. Brownrigg rose to receive them, and he and Ehelepola, who had accepted the official title of “Friend of the British Government” remained standing for the rest of the ceremony.

As they entered the Palace, a British ensign began raising the Union Jack outside, but deep in the heart of the city of the *Bodhisattva* king, attention to ceremony and due process was more important than strength of arms. A Buddhist priest Wariyapola Sri Sumangala intercepted the breach of protocol. Sumangala, apparently,

pulled down the Union Jack, which he saw being hoisted by a British ensign, when Governor Sir Robert Brownrigg entered the Audience Hall at Kandy on March 2, 1815 and placing his foot on it shouted, “The treaty is not signed yet.” A sword was drawn but it went back to its sheath. The Union Jack remained lowered until the ceremony was over.³⁷⁸

The simmering tension associated with the drawn swords and flag-stomping speak to the tenuousness of this moment. The spectacle and ritual of sovereign handover was something significant for both the people of Kandy and the British government, but Blaser’s work on political ontology enables us to see, the meaning of that ceremony was quite distinct. The point of contention between a Kandyan genealogy and practice of sovereignty and their British counterparts was not just a question of who would be sovereign, but about what it meant to exercise sovereignty. From the perspective of the genealogy of Kandyan sovereignty, this required a pulsating galactic order whose legitimacy emerged out of local practices of cosmological and material balance, requiring foreigners to “become-Kandyan” and perform the Buddhist obligations of sovereignty. Indeed, for more than a thousand years, the process of integrating foreigners more generally, never mind sovereigns, into the local political milieu was based on their Buddhification, but this was not ontologically possible for the British.³⁷⁹ To be sovereign in a galactic *mandala* system was to wield power, but it was also much more than the wielding of power, as well.

The purpose of existing within a sovereign system was not to escape a Hobbesian state of nature, but rather, to exist within a kingdom that balanced cosmology and materiality within which borders and boundaries were important, but not necessarily the

³⁷⁸ R.B. Etipola, *Queen Elizabeth of Ceylon and the Kandyan Convention – 1815*, (1952). British National Library, shelfmark: 8157.c.56.

³⁷⁹ Gananath Obeyesekere, “Buddhism, Ethnicity, and Identity: A Problem in Buddhist History,” in Mahinda Deegale (ed.) *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 134 – 162.

defining characteristic of the spatial order. To the British, sovereignty was much more a question of material rule sanctified in a hierarchical organization of authority that placed the British sovereign at the top and endowed him with absolute authority, however problematic this might be as outlined in chapter one. Although what was developing, as I will elaborate upon in chapter three, was an imperial and relational conception of modern sovereignty within modern/colonial conditions, from the perspective of the British in Kandy in 1815, sovereign legitimacy came from a stiffly hierarchical chain of command within a quasi-secular order originating in a Christian monarch thousands of miles from the galactic centre of Kandy. That these differing ontologies of sovereignty would clash, in light of all that has been discussed so far in this chapter, should no longer seem surprising.

While Sumangala and the British ensign clashed outside the palace at Kandy in 1815, the spectacle and rituals of sovereign handover were continuing inside the halls. I quote an anonymous and self-described “gentleman on the spot”³⁸⁰ at length, who was most likely an officer in Brownrigg’s army or a bureaucrat:

A scene no less novel than interesting was here presented, in the state and costume of the Kandian Court, with an English Governor presiding, and the Hall lined on both sides with British officers.

The conference began with complimentary inquiries on the part of the Chiefs, which were graciously answered by the Governor, and mutual inquiries made. His Excellency then thanked the Dessaves for the attention shewn [sic] to the troops in their various routes through the country towards the capital; which gave occasion to the Chiefs to observe, that they considered them as protectors, and that by the arrival of His Excellency and the army they had been rescued from tyranny and oppression.

³⁸⁰ It is unclear who this Gentleman is, but historian Geoffrey Powell believes the most probably person is William Tolfrey, the man who replaced John D’Oyly as chief translator of the colonial Government after the Kandyan Convention in which D’Oyly took up the post of government Resident in the newly acquired Kandyan territories. See: Geoffrey Powell, *The Kandyan Wars: The British Army in Ceylon 1803 – 1818* (London: Lee Cooper, 1973): 243.

The Governor observed he was gratified in having been the means of their deliverance; he assured them of full protection, in their persons, their property, and all their rights; and added, that while he had the honour of holding the administration in the island, it would be his study to make them experience the blessings of His Majesty's benign government.

It was then intimated to the Chiefs, that a paper had been prepared expressive of the principles on which the participation of His Majesty's government was offered to their acceptance, and that it was about to be read; which they requested might be done.

The Treaty was then read in English by Mr Sutherland, Deputy Secretary to the government, and afterwards in Cingalese [sic] by the Modeliar of His Excellency's Gate, Abraham de Saram. This important document was listened to with profound and respectful attention by the Chiefs; and it was pleasing to observe in their looks, a marked expression of cordial assent, which was immediately declared with great earnestness.

His Excellency's part of the conference was communicated to Mr. D'Oyly, and by him to Molligodde Adigar, who delivered it aloud to the audience. A Chief of venerable and commanding aspect was the organ of the assembly, whose person and countenance were equally striking. His figure, the tallest present, was erect and portly; a high and prominent forehead, a full eye, and a strong expression of natural vivacity, tempered with the gravity of advanced age, marked by a long, full, and graceful white beard, and the whole, combined with his rich state dress, formed a subject for a portrait truly worthy of an able hand. His name was Millaawa, Dessave of Godapola. He was a great favourite of the King, and remained with him till a late period. This Chief collected the sentiments of the assembly, generally in silence, but with occasional explanation, and delivered them to the Adigar, with the concurrence of the rest.

Ehelepola, though not ostensibly engaged in the conference, took a marked interest in every part of it. His carriage was distinguished by a courtly address, politeness, and ease; and he was evidently regarded by the assembled Chiefs with a high degree of deference and respect.

After the Treaty was read in Cingalese [sic], the Adigar Molligodde and the other Chiefs proceeded to the great door of the Hall, where the Mohottales, Coraals, Vidaans, and other subordinate headmen from the different provinces were attending, with a great concourse of the inhabitants; and the headmen being called on by the Adigar to range themselves in order according to their respective districts, the Treaty was again read by the Modeliar in Cingalese [sic]; at the conclusion of which the British Flag was hoisted, for the first time, in the town of Kandy, and a royal salute from the cannon of the city announced *His Majesty George the Third Sovereign of the whole Island of Ceylon*.³⁸¹

³⁸¹Anonymous, "A Narrative of Events which have recently occurred in the Island of Ceylon, Written by a Gentleman on the spot" (London: T. Egerton, Military Library, Whitehall, 1815): 47 – 49. British National Library, shelfmark: 583.f.14.(1.).

It was at this point that two distinct ontological understandings of political sovereignty collided, one representing a Western European Christian genealogy and another representing a South Asian Buddhist genealogy in the galactic tradition elaborated by Tambiah, Obeyesekere, and Wijeyeratne. To the British, they were now “sovereign of the whole island of Ceylon” but to the Kandyans, to be “Sovereign” required “Buddhification” and a galactic model of power in which disparate territories exercised considerable autonomy. This was the historical precedent; foreign sovereigns, like the Nayakkars, went to great length and great deference to local traditions and history of the territory to normalize and sanctify the legitimacy of their rule, but to the British, this was not at all part of the plan.

We see this in what appears to be double-speak by Brownrigg when, a few weeks following this event, he led the Wesleyan Missionaries to believe that the “centre was open to the gospel,” which is a far cry from Article five of the Kandyan Convention which declares Buddhism to be inviolable. The year before this, Brownrigg had housed the missionaries at Government House, advised them on where to concentrate their resources as well as where Tamil and Sinhalese language skills would be necessary, and provided them with generous government stipends and grants of land so that they might more effectively evangelize.³⁸² My point is not that Kandyans believed in 1815 that the British were their subordinates, but that two understandings of what it meant to practice sovereignty collided while simultaneously becoming articulated with each other in this document and the ceremony that sanctified it.

³⁸² Rev. William Ault to Mother, 1814. *WMMS Box 628 (1) Ceylon Various Papers Various Dates, No. 1005*. Missionary Archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

The Convention, written side by side in English and Sinhalese, represented the formal legal transference of Kandyan sovereignty, embodied by the ranking chiefs, to Britain, embodied by Governor Robert Brownrigg. It recognizes two different readings of temporality, itself evidence of different understandings of reality, as the text begins noting the difference of years 1815 in the Christian calendar and 1736 in the Sinhalese calendar.³⁸³ The first three clauses vilified the “cruelties and oppression of the Malabar ruler” and importantly, identifies that the ousted sovereign had habitually violated the “sacred duties of a Sovereign.”³⁸⁴ The Convention laid the groundwork for how the British would relate to and with the Kandyans, promising extensive protection for Buddhism (clause 5), the preservation (but subjugation) of Kandyan laws, and the supremacy of British rule and domination over trade in particular (clauses 8 – 11). In clause four, Kandy is hierarchically situated within the British empire, and while Kandyan Adigars, Dessaves, and other positions of authority are recognized, they are subordinated in a legalistic, British/feudal way in clause four:

The dominion of the Kandyan provinces is vested in the Sovereign of the British Empire and to be exercised through the Governors or Lieutenant- Governors of Ceylon for the time being, and their accredited Agents, saving to the Adigars, Dessaves, Mohottales, Coraals, Vidaans, and all other chief and I subordinate native headmen, lawfully appointed by authority of the British Government, the rights, privileges, and powers of their respective offices, and ' to all classes of the people the safety of their persons and property, with their civil rights and immunities, according to the laws, institutions, and customs established and in force amongst them.³⁸⁵

The dispensation of capital punishment was reserved for the British, which is significant in that it was the abuse and cruelty of the previous administration that served the moral

³⁸³ Proclamation at a Convention held on the 2nd day of March in the Year of Christ 1815 and the Cingalese year 1736.” Accessed November 4th, 2014.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/The_Kandyan_Convention_of_1815.jpg

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

purpose of justifying the British intervention in the first place. The British justified their invasion of Kandy on the basis of defending the Kandyan people from a ruthless king in a proclamation leading to the eventual deployment of troops to the city of Kandy.

The political implications of this ontological collision were not immediately obvious, though the effects began to materialize soon after. The meeting of ontologies of sovereignty between the “galactic” model and the Eurocentric model can be understood by an analogy with what happens when galaxies themselves come into contact with one another. In the pluriverse, multiple ontologies have always coexisted, and the implication of this is that they do come in contact and also in conflict. When galaxies come in contact with one another, the implications are not always clear and depend on where in the galaxy one is situated. Galaxies are, at one scale of abstraction, very porous, animated by gravity, and rather than bumping into each other, they pass through one another, reforming one another in a dynamic regime of practice.

Figure 1: Milky Way and Andromeda Galaxies colliding (Time 1), NASA artistic prediction³⁸⁶

In Figure 1, we see a graphic interpretation of the moment of galactic collision between our Milky Way galaxy and our closest galactic neighbour, the Andromeda galaxy, based on predictions from NASA. The ontological conflict of British and Kandyan conceptions

³⁸⁶ “NASA’s Hubble Shows Milky Way is Destined for Head On Collision with Andromeda.” NASA. May 31, 2012. Accessed February 17, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AzdknptCmo>

of “sovereignty” can be likened to this first moment of galactic collision because the implications of the collision are not immediately clear. The galaxies, and the ontologies of sovereignty, can “pass through” one another, where sovereignty has been transferred from the Kandyan territories to the British, but the ontological disagreement about what it means to wield and exercise sovereignty can be misunderstood by both parties.

Figure 2: Milky Way and Andromeda in Time 2, having "passed through" each other³⁸⁷

In Figure 2, the galaxies have passed through one another, and this passing through has affected each of the galaxies. Over time, they will collide again, and ultimately converge into something altogether new. These repeat collisions and encounters constitute political processes between distinct ontologies of sovereignty throughout the subsequent four decades, the details of which are the subject of chapter four.

The ontological collision of sovereignty resulted in almost immediate problems, as the Kandyans believed the British would leave Kandy following the Convention, and Brownrigg instead left troops. The immediate difficulty and borderline impossibility of Christian British rulers to perform the ceremonial obligations of Kandyan sovereigns was apparent. While the British took possession of the *dalada* relic, all that the relic meant to them was a “superstition” that needed to be guarded to trick a backwards people into

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

obedience. It took less than two years for the Uva Rebellion to break out, in which the Kandyan aristocracy, the Buddhist priests, and masses of people rose up to try to re-establish the old order, the details of which will be discussed in chapter four.

To the evangelically inclined of the British Christians, the association of the British government with *dalada* was akin to aligning their Christian nation to idolatry. To the Kandyans in the rebellions and near rebellions that followed (1817 – 1818; 1823; 1824; 1834; 1843; 1848), the *dalada* was a sought-after symbol of legitimacy and a rallying point. Sri Sumangala, the same priest that stomped on the Union Jack on March 2, 1815, would later steal the *dalada* relic and give it to the anti-British rebellion, a treasonous crime for which he was eventually jailed. In the decades that followed the Convention, the British downplayed the significance of the tooth relic and constantly strove for “rational” explanations for why Governor Brownrigg would have agreed to such a commitment to Buddhism. A prime example of this comes from the writing of James Steuart, a colonial administrator in Ceylon for nearly forty years:

When we reflect on the Christian character of Sir Robert Brownrigg and the sterling religious principles of his legal adviser, the late Sir Hardinge Gifford, then Advocate Fiscal, we are both surprised and concerned to find in the treaty of convention of 1815, that the Religion of Buddha professed by the Chiefs and Inhabitants of the Kandian Provinces is declared to be “inviolable and its rites, ministers and places of worship to be maintained and protected.” But when we are told the Kandians believe that the security of the Government of their country depends on the possession of the “Dalada” or relic of Buddha, we may perceive the policy, which prompted the English to avail themselves of this popular superstition to keep down insurrection, by placing a guard of British soldiers over the principle Temple in which the imaginary tooth of Buddha is deposited, and henceforth to promise it British protection... the Kandian Priests of Buddha are indebted for the protection which their Idolatrous worship receives from the British Government.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁸ James Steuart, “Appendix: On the British Protection of Buddhism in 1844” in *Observations on Colonel Forbes’ Pamphlet on the recent rebellion in Ceylon* (Colombo: Examiner Press, 1850. British National Library, shelfmark: 8244.b.3.(2.).

In Steuart's observation, thirty years after the signing of the Kandyan Convention, we see that the ontological dissonance of sovereignty has not lifted. He sees in the *dalada* relic only a strategic technology of colonial rule, not a spiritual relic in the charge of a sovereign for protection of the Buddhist faith that underscores the balance of political order. Within a British framework, it could only be rationalized in instrumental terms, as a technology of colonial rule, but within a Kandyan framework, there was never any confusion about the importance of it. Ontologically, the tooth symbolized a union of cosmological and political realms, rehearsed and practiced in *Peraheras*. That the British could not fully grasp the significance of this or reconcile it with their Christian sensibilities, which demanded that such objects be considered idolatry or demonic in essence, was a problem for the British, not the Kandyans. Like Blaser's example of the Mowachat/Muchalaht, the issue at hand is not whether the tooth relic is an idolatrous affront to Christianity. Rather, it is its importance to Buddhist sovereignty, which starts from distinct ontological starting assumptions grounded in a long genealogy of practice that comes into conflict with a Christian/British understanding of sovereignty in the spectacle and document of the Kandyan Convention. The universal perspective of sovereignty from a British/Christian cosmology cannot comprehend the meaning of the Buddhist/Kandyan cosmology and the significance of the "galactic model" that Tambiah describes.

Four years after Steuart wrote the above reflection, the *dalada* was given back to the Kandyans in the care of Giranagama Ratanajothi Thera, chief priest of the Danbulla temple. The colonies were very much testing grounds for different approaches to government, including liberal government, and Ceylon was one such testing ground, as

will be discussed in the next chapter.³⁸⁹ Like Sri Sumangala before him, Thera would grant spiritual legitimacy to the Matele rebellion led by Gongalegoda Banda by crowning Banda “Sri Wikrema Siddipathi,” King of Kandy, in a treasonous ceremony in 1848.³⁹⁰ Just a few months before the rebellion took off, on August 15, 1847, Governor Viscount Torrington VII (George Byng) describes the tooth relic in a dispatch to the CO as “a mere bit of ivory, very brown in colour, and I should doubt very much as to the estimated value of the jewels.”³⁹¹ The day before, on August 14, Torrington lamented a CO order to place the *dalada* relic in the hands of the locals, which had come as a result of a concerted effort on behalf of missionaries to disassociate the British government from “idolatry” from 1815 to 1848.³⁹² In this letter, Torrington suggests that a far better solution would have been to lie to the locals, telling them that Queen Victoria “has a splendid temple called the *British Museum* in which she would place it and take care of it for them.”³⁹³ In a twisted way, Torrington was perhaps correct, as it was with the ceremonial authority of the sovereign relic that helped grant ceremonial legitimacy to the crowning of Banda as

³⁸⁹ David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁹⁰ “Heroes in the Struggle for Independence” *Sunday Times*, February 5, 2012. Accessed February 7th, 2012. http://www.sundaytimes.lk/120205/FunDay/fut_01.html.

³⁹¹ Viscount Torrington to the Earl of Grey Aug. 15, 1847. See: K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon, 1846 – 50, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'rebellion' of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965) British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

³⁹² Missionary accounts, as well as the accounts of local converts turned missionary aids, consistently resist what was seen as over compensation of “false” religion in the text of the Kandyan Convention and the credibility it lent to the “backwards” order. One of the most important and influential of these texts was a pamphlet written by Spence Hardy, in which he writes: “I rest my argument of the necessity of its [Buddhism’s] destruction upon the simple fact that it is opposed to the truth – denies the existence of God – is ignorant of the only way of salvation, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...” See H. Spence Hardy (1839) *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon*. SOAS MMSL S123. See also Michael Roberts, *Facets of Modern Ceylon History Through the Letters of Jeronis Pieris*. (Colombo: Hans Publishers Limited, 1975) British National Library, shelfmark: X.800/27313.

³⁹³ Viscount Torrington to the Earl of Grey Aug. 15, 1847. See: K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon, 1846 – 50, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'rebellion' of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965) British National Archives, shelfmark: X.700/3328.

King, or in British parlance, “pretender” to the throne. Utterly ignorant of the importance of the Buddhist priesthood, Governor Torrington had the priest dragged out in his ceremonial robes and shot for treason, an event that Torrington would later blame on the priest for not requesting to change his clothes prior to being executed. This act of executing the chief priest in his ceremonial robes would be a catalyst that would bring about the end of Torrington’s administration following a royal inquiry into the heavy handed way he chose to deal with the uprisings of 1848.³⁹⁴

Conclusion

Through examining contrasting ontologies of religion and sovereignty in the early 19th century, this chapter brings to light illustrative archival evidence to re-conceptualize a moment of central importance to understanding the beginnings of modern territorial state formation in Ceylon. The narrative unfolds amidst a hostile milieu of Christian evangelism, diplomatic intrigue, and a conflicted British administration bound by law via the Kandyan Convention to protect and uphold Buddhist ceremony, religion, and traditions, while unofficially supporting Christianization. The well-documented inability of successive generations of British missionaries, administrators, and planters to reconcile the cognitive dissonance of being a Christian/civilizing empire and supporting what they understood as “idolatry” and “false religion” reflects an ontological inability to understand the importance of symbolism present in South Asian pre-colonial sovereign organization that relied on balancing, rather than differentiating, questions of cosmology and material politics.

³⁹⁴ “Copy of a letter from Viscount Torrington to the Right Honourable H. Laboucherie, M.P., Jan. 17, 1857” British National Archives, shelfmark: PRO/30/29/23/10; J. Forbes, *Recent Disturbances and Military Executions in Ceylon* (1850). British National Library, shelfmark: 8022.d.26.

The problem of Christian universalism was not just a problem for Kandy-British relations. In important ontologically conflicting ways, the Kandyan Convention foreshadows the Royal proclamation that brought India under the rule of Empress Victoria following the Sepoy Rebellion in 1858. The protection and privileging of Buddhism in the original Kandyan Convention was a source of ire for generations of missionaries and some evangelically inclined bureaucrats, and as noted before, this privilege was removed in the 1818 proclamation following the end of the Uva Rebellion. Forty years later in Allahabad, it would seem as though the British learned something from their experiences in Ceylon. As Metcalf observes, the British simply could not or would not come to terms with the fact that their liberal, colonial, reform agenda was not received by ordinary people the way British administrators imagined it to be. For example, in the Sepoy Rebellion, the British expected the Oudh peasantry to side with them against the rebels and failed to understand the many different reasons and rationalizations why they would join the rebellion against Britain.³⁹⁵ Though Victoria's proclamation affirms the universal truth of Christianity, it also states that all people regardless of their religious faith "shall enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law." At the same time, the 1858 proclamation acknowledges indigenous ways of relating to land, but immediately subordinates these to the interests of the state:

We know, and respect, the feelings of attachment with which the Natives of India regard the Lands inherited to them by their Ancestors; and We desire to Protect them in all Rights connected therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the State; and We will that generally in framing and Administering the Law due regard be paid to the Ancient Rights, Usages, and Customs of India.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 43 – 47.

³⁹⁶ "Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and people of India (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad, November 1st 1858)." British National Library, shelfmark: IOR/L/PS/18/D154.

As Cohn reminds us, knowledge moved in two directions during the modern colonial period, but I would add that it moves in more than two directions, as the lessons of colonial state making in Ceylon predate some of the problems associated with alien rule in lands with distinct ontologies of land, governance, and sovereignty.³⁹⁷ Like the Kandyan Convention, there is an attempt to speak to both ontological traditions, but, as Césaire’s point about truly respecting one’s adversary informs us, the British (and to a lesser extent, the Kandyans in 1815 and the Nawabs and princes in 1858 India) were not fully able to appreciate the significance of the ontological conflict they found themselves in. Colonial state formation, separate from company state formation, happens first in Ceylon, and studying it offers comparative historical potential for studies of colonial state formation in India as well, though this is beyond the reach of the current project.

While mainstream historical accounts, including historical accounts written by Sri Lankan historians, tend to be relatively at ease with describing the events of the Kandyan Convention in benign terms, in my reading, I see this spectacle as well as the text as central to understanding the kinds of clashes necessary to understand the mutual production of territory that would unfold in the decades to come. In order to demonstrate the depth of this ontological collision, the chapter works with new theoretical developments in decolonial studies-based “political ontology” and applies them to practices of sovereignty, as well as elaborating on the core issue of universalism and mono-theism as it affects the ability to perceive pluriversal ways of being. The chapter offers insights into how British and Kandyan understandings of sovereignty were on very different ontological grounds, leading to an unofficial, unstable harmony of interests

³⁹⁷ Cf. Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 4.

between Christian missionaries and the British government, together confronting an Orientalized and “backwards” native-Other. The confluence of these forces projected a geographical imaginary of the island’s disparate regions as contained within “the state.”

Reading Blaser and Tambiah together offers one historical way to “enact the pluri-verse” by reading galactic sovereignty as an example of territorial organizing “otherwise.” In the Galactic model, Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne also sees the possibility of de-colonizing the modern fetishization of Sinhalese-Buddhist ethnonationalist history. The state is a symptom of the more insidious violence of colonially administered modernity, complete with the ontological conviction that human society develops linearly and that the darker peoples of the world require European assistance if they are ever to “catch up.” If modernity were a palace, coloniality would be the moat that secures the palace; each needs the other to exist. Without the palace, the moat circles nothing and without the moat, the palace would be burned to ashes. The state, specifically the belief that the state must take the form of “total territorial rule” complete with a seat at the United Nations, exemplifies the continuity of structural, ontological, colonial violence in the independent places of the world. Coloniality, writes Nelson Maldonado-Torres, refers to the “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, inter-subjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations.”³⁹⁸ As illustrated in this chapter, this can also be seen in the translation of philosophical ways of being that were practised in Ceylon prior to the colonial encounter into “religions” like Buddhism or Hinduism, as they are known today.

³⁹⁸ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept” in Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (eds.) *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 97.

Coloniality extends quite squarely to scholarship, affecting our ontological starting points and epistemological choices. British self-perception of their enterprise was a benevolent one in which, like good parents, they would hand the reigns of control over to their almost-British colonial children; it was arguably not a question of “if,” in colonial South Asia, but a question of when self-rule could happen. The important question today is no longer one of temporality, but of ontology; what pluriversal potentials exist if we move outside of the modern, territorial, nation-state? The remainder of this dissertation takes up the conceptual work of re-interpreting historical events in a way that highlights the colonial reconstitution of territory.

Chapter Three: The Political Economy of Improvement

I am well aware, that many persons shrink from the phrase “Political Economy,” but I only employ it in its true meaning: *common sense and experience directed to the promotion of private and public wealth.*

Philaethes to the Editor of the *Colombo Journal*, July 21, 1832

There is an old cliché that common sense is not so common. In the parlance of 19th century British colonial writing, assertions of common sense were usually made to preface an argument that would not bother to engage in other possible arguments, establishing a launching pad for a moral tirade. Not so in the case of Philaethes, a frequent writer in early British Ceylon on topics germane to colonialism, imperialism, governance, and especially political economy. In the writing of Philaethes, some of which will be discussed more closely below, one sees an early negotiation with the seductive principles of liberal philosophy as a new and modern way of rethinking not only political economy, but colonialism as well. With the context of galactic sovereignty and religious ontological tensions in mind, this chapter focuses on the political economic aspect of the galactic sovereign system falling out of balance in the early British period in Ceylon. The domestic and religious, ontological issues described in chapter two were situated amidst considerable transformation in domestic and imperial political economy beginning in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in which Ceylon played an important role. The island was always an important area within the regional political economy of

the Bay of Bengal, connecting merchants, sailors, mercenaries, and artisans from South/Southeast Asia and Africa for at least 2300 years.³⁹⁹

Drawing on colonial archival records, this chapter examines the transformative period between what we might broadly call “mercantilist” and “liberal” rationalities in early 19th century British colonialism. In order to explain the rising imperial interest in plantation agriculture in Ceylon, I touch on debates in Britain and politics unfolding in the West Indies that forced the viability of slavery onto the agenda of the British government at a time when pressure from liberals to dismantle mercantilist protectionist policies helped officially end slavery within the empire. The discourse of “improvement,” by the 1820s, I argue, was being applied as a means of modernizing colonial rule as well as modernizing early capitalism, in line with the second-generation liberal aspirations of MPs like David Ricardo. Liberal “improvement” offered a way to mark a temporal and moral boundary between a mercantilist past, and a prosperous liberal future, defined by “benevolent” government and instruction for the betterment of racialized peoples. In Ceylon this took institutional form in the recommendations emerging from the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission of 1829-33, and especially in the rapid rise of the plantation economy that specifically targeted land in the Kandyan interior for “improvement” through capitalist transformation. It enabled a peculiarly modern, universal, and ethnocentric understanding of territory as having “use-value” that could be extracted and enhanced through privatization and integration into imperial political economy. Whereas in chapter two I explored the ontological collision of the different traditions of organizing land, in chapter three I zoom out to see how the transformations

³⁹⁹ Saman Kelegama, “Open Regionalism in the Indian Ocean: How Relevant is the APEC Model for the IOR-ARC?” *Journal of The Asia Pacific Economy* 5/3 (2001): 255 – 274; Linda Shaffer, “Southernization,” *Journal of World History* 5/1 (1994): 1 – 21.

unfolding on the island are part of a larger imperial project of economic and colonial reforms. The related transformations of improving colonialism and trade through embracing liberal reforms is linked to the violence of universal thinking by forcing a single, Eurocentric understanding of land, economy, and governance ostensibly for the “improvement” of subject peoples instead of mere resource accumulation. In essence, the liberal colonial triangulation of political economy in the early 19th century created an incentive for plantation development in Ceylon at precisely a moment in which free trade was displacing monopolistic protection as imperial policy. At the local level, this coincided in the 1820s with the military need for the British to develop road systems in direct opposition to the anti-road Kandyan policy as a method of attempting to consolidate their hold over the island. This was, as chapter four will elaborate upon, always contested by locals who were conscripted using colonially contaminated principles of *rajakariya* to build the roads in the first place, and ultimately continued to a liberal reforms aimed at land “improvement” which further sought to dismantle the traditional economy of the Kandyan interior.

Importantly, this chapter fractures the idea of a single, imperial logic, as it is clear that the imperial interests of West Indian slave owning planters were at odds with the liberal reforms unfolding in different parts of the British empire in this time period. In a way, this exposes the antecedents of the moral project of colonialism in this period of transition in the early – mid 19th century that would become the dominant discourse of “the white man’s burden” by the late colonial period at the turn of the 20th century.⁴⁰⁰ One could examine parallel events happening all over the British empire, my primary

⁴⁰⁰ Cf.: Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands” *History Matters*. Accessed January 8, 2017. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5478/>.

motivation for visiting the West Indian slice in particular is because of the importance given to considering the West and East Indies together in parliamentary debates concerning agriculture, and the decision reached to equalize duties and abolish slavery in the empire created the economic opportunity for the explosion of plantation agriculture in the Kandyan highlands from the point of view of the British. Juxtaposed with the ontologies of land, cosmology, and economy that existed in the Kandyan region however, conflict between Kandyan and British worldviews was unavoidable.

Liberal notions of “improving” what were otherwise considered “waste-lands” valorized ownership, entrepreneurialism, and commodification while discursively depoliticizing the violence of land theft for plantation development, a practice which clashed with local communal agricultural practices across much of the world.⁴⁰¹ The separation of humanity from nature at the root of Cartesian philosophy, and more importantly, the colonial belief that this way of seeing the world can be imagined as universal, is one of the most central expressions of ontological colonialism because it simply asserts, rather than proves, that other ontological starting points are invalid.⁴⁰² The

⁴⁰¹ This is not to suggest that the idea of land being “owned” or even monetized was a purely European phenomenon. The point is that there is a broad spectrum of ways in which to understand land, yet across the British Empire, the Lockean-infused idea that land had value only through its ability to be improved and made productive worked to violently brush aside locally constituted understandings of land-human relations. In some cases, people are understood as being one part of land, as it is for the Dene of today’s Northwest Territories in Canada, or the Quechua of modern-day Latin America. In Ceylon, in particular in the central highlands where the plantation boom of the 19th century occurred, there were practices of communal land use and money was not a central component until the reforms of the early-mid 19th century, marking an important break in traditional methods of relating to and maintaining land. This created considerable animosity between European planters and Kandyan villagers. See: James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Sri Lanka* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Derek Hall, *Land*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2013); Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

⁴⁰² Mario Blaser, “Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe: Toward a Conversation on Political Ontology” *Current Anthropology* 54/5 (2013): 547 - 568; Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 51 – 78; 151-152; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept” in *Globalization and the De-Colonial Option*, Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2010): 98.

assertions of modernization theorists and their colonial predecessors that human society progresses linearly were based on assumptions about the innate superiority of European culture beginning with Spanish-indigenous contact in modern day Haiti. This has continued through different discursive rationalities including liberal “improvement” and contemporary global development.⁴⁰³ The global imperial economies of the 19th century were far reaching and interconnected. In this chapter, I strive to show two related things. The first is the domestic consequences of the political economic transformation within the Kandyan territories after their subjugation by the British. I leave aside for the moment the issue of large-scale rebellion and insurrection within the Kandyan territories, which is the focus of chapter four. The second, as discussed above, is about how the collapse of slavery was related to the decline of West Indian plantations and the rise of East Indian plantations.⁴⁰⁴ Fundamental to the shifting imperial political economy is the violent transformation of indigenous Kandyan space in particular, as British colonialists attempted to apply and enforce their particular ontological understanding of land and nature as commodities to be used in order and owned in the Kandyan region.

In essence, both colonialism and capitalism were subject to “improvement” in the 19th century, and the discourse of improvement provided a lifeline through which both interdependent global projects could be “modernized” such that colonialism and capitalism together could be rationalized as being in service to aiding the colonized. The

⁴⁰³ Ajay Parasram, “Postcolonial Territory and the Coloniality of the State,” *Caribbean Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy* 2/4 (2014): 51 - 79. See also Cristina Rojas, “International Political Economy/Development Otherwise,” *Globalizations* 4/4 (2007): 573 – 587; Cristina Rojas, *Civilization and Violence: Regimes of Representation in Nineteenth Century Colombia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

⁴⁰⁴ It also led to a rise in the forced migration of “East Indian” indentured and non-indentured labourers across the empire to fill the “labour” gap left by recently emancipated Africans. This was especially the case in the West Indian colonies, but also in the Pacific (Fiji, Malaya) Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Réunion) and East Africa.

first section of the chapter focuses on the political economy of Kandy prior to British contamination, and then draws on the writing of colonial thinkers in the time and place of 19th century Ceylon to show how within debates there was pressure being exerted to renew the colonial project as one of order, civilization, and renewal. Liberal reforms and reformers wanted the colonial government to play a more active role in improving the land, constructed in colonial discourse as being in dire need of improvement. The key distinction is in the discursive concept of “improvement” and how the need to improve shifted the political objectives of early colonial Ceylon. This is not to suggest that there is a single purpose or logic to the colonial project; rather, it is to show how the transformations unfolding on the island reflected competing ideas about the purpose of colonialism and the purpose of economy. The second section of the chapter examines the political economy underlying the transition from mercantilism to liberalism in imperial debates, which had significantly negative implications for plantation agriculture in the West Indies, specifically sugar and coffee. In this section I highlight the fragmented interests within the empire, and connect these imperial level considerations to the radical transformations of land in the Kandyan interior resulting from the liberal reforms emerging from the 1833 Colebrooke-Cameron recommendations. Although sugar plantations were only briefly experimented with in Ceylon, coffee and coconuts, with coffee dominating the Kandyan highland region, would be a defining element of the colonial political economy of the 19th century.⁴⁰⁵

Plantations show how the discourse of “improvement” materially connects modern perceptions of colonialism and capitalism because during the emergence of

⁴⁰⁵ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015): 39 – 40.

central governmental institutions in Ceylon, laws were passed in 1835 that forced land used for indigenous purposes out of the movement of time itself by decreeing it “idle.” Indigenous agricultural practices were constructed as being insufficiently productive, and because the land was determined to be “idle” it was written into law that it was “wasted.” Wasteland ordinances are a strategy of inflicting the violence of universal reason, as they deny and actively destroy ways of being that do not conform to Lockean conceptions of value and ownership. Protected through the establishment of military roads in the 1820s, by the 1830s Wasteland ordinances essentially stole that territory in the rebellious interior to sell it to European planters seeking to earn a fortune by making the land commercially “productive.” And indeed, there is a logical case to be made that indigenous agricultural practices developed to serve local and regional needs *are* insufficiently productive to service a transnational empire in which economic decision making is vested in the hands of landholders with economic and social interests that do not align with the well being and histories of local communities. Said simply, the *scale* of colonial capitalism and its alien-ness in this historically sparsely populated and autonomous region was unprecedented. The violence of universalism in this context is most obvious because of the “common sense” rationale that was rife with ontological assumptions about nature, humans, and economy that underscored colonial discourse. This rationale insists that the still-evolving capitalist mode of production represents an “improvement” of land and agricultural practices, rather than a difference of priorities.

Section One: Mercantilist to Liberal Rationalities

Pre-colonial Economy

Since at least the third century BCE, reaching its peak in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods (11th and 12th centuries) sophisticated irrigation systems were developed to collect and redirect water towards upwards of 20,000 villages in Ceylon. These irrigation systems redirected water from hill streams into storage tanks, where they were subsequently channelled to yet larger tanks that were in turn connected to hundreds of smaller tanks.⁴⁰⁶ The elevation of the mountainous Kandyan interior could not facilitate the large scale agricultural methods deployed in the lowlands however, and thus pre-colonial Kandyan economy was organized along much smaller scale agricultural projects. The basic village structure was organized in a way that each home had an adjacent vegetable and fruit garden, and beyond the boundary of the village lay communally maintained *chena* forestlands.⁴⁰⁷ Villagers would get together and slash/burn areas of the neighbouring forest lands which they would then divide into family based plots of land that would be cultivated for the production of maize, various beans, and varieties of rice suited to the region, etc.⁴⁰⁸ Beyond the *chena* agriculture and family gardens, villagers would also acquire honey and firewood from the forests, as well as work in rice paddy fields, which was their primary economic connection to the rest of Kandy.

The village structure was the foundation of pre-colonial Kandyan political economy, and it operated in the absence of waged labour. The cashless society traded in

⁴⁰⁶ Lareef Zubair, "Modernization of Sri Lanka's Traditional Irrigation Systems and Sustainability," *Science Technology & Society* 10/2 (2005): 161 – 195.

⁴⁰⁷ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 26 – 27.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

agriculture and in services. Although all the lands of the kingdom belonged to the king, as outlined in chapter two, this possession was predicated on the balancing of cosmological and material obligations of the king; Buddhist priests, aristocracy, and the villages were part of this balancing. For example, as James Duncan notes, the king determined to whom villages would contribute their rents, by way of agricultural surpluses and *rajakariya* (corvée labour). Four types of villages existed in the kingdom: free villages, those owing rents to the temples, those owing rents to the nobility, and those owing rents to the king. The King could alter these arrangements at his will, however the centrality of Buddhism, perhaps especially since the Nayakkar dynasty, made it far less likely that the king would alter arrangements with temple villages, whereas falling in or out of favour with the king could more readily affect the aristocracy and the villages that served them.⁴⁰⁹ According to John Rogers, following Lorna Dewaraja, 18th century “administration and taxation was organized around hereditary status groups that were associated with particular occupations.”⁴¹⁰ It was only in the 19th century, according to Rogers and Dewaraja, that these occupational relations were solidified into caste relations.⁴¹¹ Until the mid 19th century, Kandy was scarcely populated, and land itself was abundant – scarcity of labour tended to be the major determinant of agricultural production. Kandy’s relative isolation was purposeful however, and the use of the thick boundary jungle as a deterrent to European encroachment was understood as being essential to the security of the kingdom; *chena* land was never allowed to compromise the thick outer jungle defences.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ see also: John D. Rogers, “Early British Rule and Social Classification in Lanka,” *Modern Asian Studies* 38/3 (2004): 627; Lorna Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka, 1707–1782* (Colombo: Lake House, 1988).

⁴¹⁰ John D. Rogers, (2004): 627.

⁴¹¹ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 26 – 27.

⁴¹² Ibid.

This economic geography connects to the organization of sovereignty described in chapter two, and it also offers important historical context to understanding the consequences of the galactic sovereign system falling out of balance during the early period of British presence. Importantly, in terms of understanding the radical economic transformations of the British period in Kandy, the king only extracted surplus from the population through the paddy fields - *chena* fields and gardens were, as Asoka Bandarage observes, autonomous economic spaces that were not subject to surplus extraction. This fact offered economic and agricultural stability to the village population.⁴¹³ Although in principle all land belonged to the king, the inalienable rights of villagers to subsist and use land communally ran fundamentally at odds with Lockean understandings of property which formed the ontological starting assumptions of the British, newly present in the Kandyan interior in the 1820s.⁴¹⁴ By replacing the king of Kandy as bodhisattva king, the British believed a legal arrangement, be it the Kandyan Convention, or the laws and proclamations that follow, meant they “owned” all of the land formerly controlled by the King. As will be seen later in this chapter, this was an important point of contention that was resisted by villagers in everyday acts of resistance and creative non-compliance, ultimately leading to the introduction of specific Waste Land Ordinances following the first major boom in coffee production in the 1830s which effectively declared all *chena*

⁴¹³ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands 1833 – 1886* (Berlin, Mouton, 1983) 19 – 21.

⁴¹⁴ Locke’s Second Treatise on Government outlines his views on property, in which he draws from a decidedly Christian biblical reading of the book of Genesis to argue that land (and animals) can be said to be owned on the basis of laboring upon it. According to David Armitage, at the same time that Locke was writing “On Property” (chapter five of *Second Treatise on Government*), he was also employed to write the 1682 *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*. See: David Armitage, “John Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises of Government*” *Political Theory* 35/5 (2004): 602 – 607; John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*. London: Printed for R. Butler, etc., 1821, accessed May 4 2010, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/locke>.

and communally used lands as falling to the Crown. As Nira Wickramasinghe rightly maintains, this was absolutely understood by the British as a form of civilizing policy, predicated on the liberal assumption that land must be owned, tamed, and rendered “productive” measured by surplus production in order to be used correctly.⁴¹⁵

The early 19th century was a period of phenomenal economic, technological, and social change in Ceylon and the imperial political economy which the island played a role in constructing. The British were an insecure mercantilist power near the end of the 18th century, preoccupied with threats posed to their imperial possessions in South Asia and the West Indies by the revolutionary spectres of France and Haiti. As discussed in chapter two, seizing the Dutch-controlled Jaffna peninsula in the north of Ceylon was a geopolitical calculation from which the British obtained fortifiable positions to secure the Madras presidency while keeping a watchful eye on French Pondicherry, both of which were on the subcontinent. England did not expect to hold Ceylon permanently, but following peace negotiations with Holland in 1797, they decided to keep the territory and administer it financially through the East India Company, until making it a crown colony in 1802.⁴¹⁶

Following the mercantilist tradition of their Dutch and Portuguese predecessors, the British continued to see “Ceylon” as a source of cinnamon, which could best be extracted through the maintenance of local systems of labour and utilized to increase England’s national treasure chest rather than for the commercial development of

⁴¹⁵ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015): 36 – 37.

⁴¹⁶ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (London: Hurst and Company, 2006): 26.

Ceylon.⁴¹⁷ As Nihal Perera maintains, early attempts to begin nurturing a planter-community of Europeans began before the consolidation of the island and legal overhauls to support those projects in the 1830s because in 1810, the British government in the Maritime provinces removed a pre-existing ban on European ownership of land.⁴¹⁸ This was an important piece of transitioning from mercantilist logic to a liberal one, because by banning European possession of territory outside of a small area, the government had effectively prevented capital investment. State monopolies were continued in cinnamon as well as salt and tobacco.⁴¹⁹

Although British governors were instructed not to interfere with indigenous affairs by the Colonial Office (CO), when the opportunity presented itself to exploit internal political divisions within the Kandyan kingdom under the justification of moral intervention, reigning governor Sir Robert Brownrigg seized the opportunity. Reflecting on the significance of this accomplishment from the British perspective, the anonymous “gentleman on the spot” introduced in chapter two made the following observation of the significance of the island’s territorial consolidation:

The advantages to be derived from this conquest are incalculable. The position of Ceylon, its fine harbours, and rich and peculiar productions, must render it a place of the utmost importance in our Eastern dominion. While the interior of the country was governed by a King independent of our authority, and adverse to our views, we held our dominion by a most precarious tenure... We have now identified the interests of the whole population of Ceylon with our own, and converted an object of jealousy, alarm, and expenditure, into a source of national security and revenue. The chiefs of the several provinces affirmed in their authority, which they no longer hold at the mercy of a capricious tyrant, will every day become more sensible of the benefits they have secured to themselves, and

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 14; James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 29. See also Michael Ondaatje’s fictionalized memoir: Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982).

⁴¹⁸ Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 63.

⁴¹⁹ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 55.

the blessings they have assisted in conferring on their fellow countrymen; and the Kandian [sic] nation, a brave and spirited people, restored to and protected in the full enjoyment of their civil and religious rights, will lend a willing aid to augment the power and resources of the human, wise, and liberal government, by whose well-timed interposition they have been emancipated from the most cruel and intolerable oppression.⁴²⁰

As noted before, the “Gentleman” author was most likely a British officer or bureaucrat, and in his observations we see a number of insights into British thinking about native land and people. There is a presumption, reiterated by missionaries as well as in dispatches to the CO, that British “views” are not only powerful, but also superior. This is implied in the guarantees given to the Kandyan chiefs and people in the original text of the Kandyan Convention, which promised to protect their religion and customs, while offering “liberal government” instead of “intolerable oppression.” Exposure to British sovereignty and governance in exchange for the untapped riches of “undeveloped” resources was the barter.

Coopted Rajakariya Paving the Way for Plantations

Governor Brownrigg was rewarded with a Baronet for his success over the Kandyans, and perhaps to justify it, exercised scorched-earth strategies and extreme brutality in quelling the Uva Rebellion when the Kandyans rose up *en masse* to try to drive the British out of the island.⁴²¹ Following the eventual success of Brownrigg’s campaign to end the 1817-1818 Uva Rebellion, a mix of authoritarian and liberal conditions came to define the early governance of the island. Brownrigg ensured that he could arbitrarily

⁴²⁰ Anonymous. *A Narrative of Events which have recently occurred in the Island of Ceylon, Written by a Gentleman on the Spot*. (London: T. Egerton Military Library, Whitehall, 1815). British National Library, shelfmark: 583.f.14 (1.): 50 – 51.

⁴²¹ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Moutan, 1983): 50 – 51.

change the laws at whim, replacing local chiefs from positions of authority and creating offices for British officials in their stead. He also removed some of the protections promised by the British to Buddhism.⁴²² Yet in these early days, the British still possessed little knowledge of the physical geography of the island beyond approximately twenty miles of the shorelines. Without calling in reinforcements from Bengal, including large contingencies of “native”⁴²³ troops, it was clear that acquisition of geographic knowledge was vital to consolidating and controlling territory. With a view to gaining valuable legibility of the physical territory, Brownrigg wrote to his counterpart in Bengal requesting that a “Lieutenant Archer” remain in Ceylon because of his excellent topography skills. Making territory legible to British eyes eroded tactical advantages held by indigenous populations resisting colonial penetration from the earliest days of imperialism, and Ceylon was no different.⁴²⁴ In his letter dated August 8, 1819, Brownrigg wrote,

I doth think myself entirely justified in incurring the [illegible] of his staff allowance for some months from the importance of the information his present labour will add to our knowledge of the interior, and I therefore [illegible] to receive your Lordships sanction to my retaining that officer during the continuance of the Royal Troops in this island in the situation he so ably fills.⁴²⁵

⁴²² “The Proclamation of 21 November 1818 issued after the Rebellion of 1818” in G.C. Mendis (ed.) *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon 1796 – 1833, Volume II*, 231 – 243. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956.)

⁴²³ In this time period, British dispatches, newspapers, and diaries made no consistent distinction between “natives” whether they hailed from the Indian subcontinent, Ceylon, or Southeast Asia. Where native was not used, it would often be “Indian” or “Malay” where the prior appears to reflect anywhere in contemporary South Asia, and the latter from Southeast Asia.

⁴²⁴ Following Gearóid Ó Tuathail, the conquering of Ulster (Ireland) in the 17th century could never have been achieved despite superior arms in the absence of cartographers. Irish rebels knew this, and would raid encampments in order to destroy maps, and assassinate cartographers. See: Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁴²⁵ Governor Brownrigg to the Marquis of Hastings, March 9, 1819. British National Library, shelfmark: IOR/F/4/751.

Brownrigg's successor, Governor Edward Barnes, went further by setting about transforming what were largely seen as mere "foot paths" connecting the Kandyan interior of the island to the coastal areas with "carriage roads" with the initial purpose of ensuring no future rebellion could rely on difficult jungle terrain for protection.⁴²⁶ This was, in and of itself, a radical transformation in the Kandyan region that would have significant long-term impact on the region in terms of increased connectivity, but also in terms of the extension and misuse of *rajakariya*.

In the aftermath of the Uva Rebellion, the British government adopted the concept of *rajakariya* and forced the local populations to build roads connecting Colombo to Kandy. *Rajakariya* was a form of corvée labour through which public works like irrigation of communal lands were done. It was a localized practice, however, within a spatial organization of power in the Kandyan kingdom and its orbits of influence, which were held in balance by the symbolic/ceremonial role of the Kandyan king and the semi-autonomous provinces, as discussed in chapter two. Applying *rajakariya* beyond the limits of Kandy and for the purposes of public works beyond agriculture broke the precedent that had developed over centuries in Kandy; it also transformed a practice that had gained legitimacy based on the material benefits accrued by access to communal lands into a kind of prison labour that perversely created the very roads that would ensure the privatization of the communal lands that *rajakariya* was primarily designed to service. Military working parties alongside forced labourers were responsible for realizing Governor Barnes' road system. As the bureaucrat J.W. Bennet reflected in 1843, it was Governor Barnes' "zeal" and "devotion" to commerce and agricultural development

⁴²⁶ J. Forbes Late Lieutenant-Colonel 78th Highlanders, "Recent Disturbances and Military Executions in Ceylon" Edinburgh and London: MDCCCL, 1850: 5. British National Library, shelfmark: 8002.d.26.

alongside the military necessity of easing the travel between the fertile interior and the capital in Colombo that motivated the rapid construction of roads. The working conditions were so harsh that even a generation later, the long-term effects on those made to labour on the roads evoked sympathy from Bennet. In making a plea for some financial compensation for the widows and families of the men who built the military and plantation roads connecting the Kandyan area to the colonial administrative centre in Colombo, Bennet highlights that compulsory labour

has secured possession of the interior, and ensured the safety of the maritime provinces from a foe in their rear, prompted the commercial interests of the colony, and augmented its resources and revenue.⁴²⁷

Road construction brought with it more than transportation, it broke the “frontier” barrier used by anti-colonial Kandyan soldiers for generations to keep Europeans close to the shore and away from a jungle terrain they could not navigate. As Manu Goswami, working from Henry Lefebvre’s conceptions of state space and territorialization in the context of late 19th century India reminds us,

The colonial state performed its rule over space and society through a spectacular display of its authoritative presence, from the staging of elaborate political rituals and events to the construction of a vast network of dazzling “state works,” the visible, material embodiments of its authority and “civilizing modernity.”⁴²⁸

The broadening of footpaths into carriage roads in the early 19th century might not seem as extravagant or performative as the larger scale infrastructural projects of the late 19th century Raj, however this project served a similar purpose of demonstrating the strength of a government that was still not totally established nor normalized in the long autonomous interior. The carriage roads would go on to make possible the establishment

⁴²⁷ J.W. Bennet, *Ceylon and Its Capabilities: an account of its natural resources, indigenous productions, and commercial facilities*. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1843. British National Library, shelfmark: 793.m.15

⁴²⁸ Manu Goswami, *Producing India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 46.

of coffee plantations, and by 1864, the Colombo-Kandy railway was introduced primarily to transport coffee beans.⁴²⁹

As James Duncan notes, tropical disease and British lack of familiarity with poisonous vegetation killed scores of unprepared European migrants. Even after the interior had been transformed into plantations, merely being present within the tropics was perceived to have a “degenerating” impact on the morality and health of the European body.⁴³⁰ A culture of forlorn masculine sacrifice on behalf of king and country for serving the Empire in these “dangerous” places presented the mid-19th century planter, at least in his own mind, as a kind of imperial patriot. This imaginary reified the colonial imaginary of a backwards, untamed, and ultimately under-developed terrain in need of European improvement.

Liberal Colonialism in the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms

David Scott (1999) describes the early period (1796 – 1832) of British rule in Ceylon as operating under a “mercantilist rationality of sovereignty” that ceased to be hegemonic after the liberal reforms of the 1832 Colebrooke-Cameron Commission.⁴³¹ This commission was convened in 1829 ostensibly as a way of reducing government expenditure. Under a mercantilist rationality of trade and colonialism, the objective of a commercial power is to accumulate the riches of a territory without concern for particular

⁴²⁹ “History” *Sri Lanka Railways*. Last modified August 2, 2011. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. http://www.railway.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137&Itemid=181&lang=en

⁴³⁰ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 43 – 65.

⁴³¹ David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999): 43.

methods of resource extraction, but such an approach to trade incurs costs associated from the more direct role the state must play in managing trade. As G.C. Mendis explains,

The basic doctrines of mercantilism, came under severe criticism, as well as certain of its characteristic features such as economic activities carried on by the State and monopolies which were avowedly set up for the common good but in actual practice benefitted only a few.⁴³²

Liberal critiques of mercantilism were gaining favour in the halls of colonial power by the 1820s, and it was in this context that Commissioners Colebrooke and Cameron were asked to evaluate the governance and administration of Ceylon and make recommendations for reform. One of the first recommendations of the commission was the removal of *rajakariya*, which the British had continued and expanded beyond its traditional purpose. Paid labour was understood as a requirement for modernization, and *rajakariya* in particular was identified as reason for the Kandyan economy to have not yet advanced beyond feudalism.⁴³³ Rather than viewing Kandyan public works and land relations as different and perhaps a direct response to hundreds of years of colonial aggression, the liberal reforms instead rationalized this difference into a universal understanding of gradual development that made sense within their Eurocentric understanding of feudalism. Taking aim at the more contemporary mercantilist oriented policies in place at the time, Colebrooke called for the dismantling of the government's monopoly of cinnamon and also of direct taxes, which induced government interference in markets. As Goswami argues, one of the defining differences between the administration of the East India Company and the British Raj in late 19th century India was the latter's emphasis on homogenization and simplification of financial systems,

⁴³² G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British*. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 52.

⁴³³ Ibid.

which under the East India Company, were much more diverse.⁴³⁴ Commissioner Cameron applied a similar logic to the judiciary systems present on the island. Importantly, Cameron's reforms did not only bring regional courts under the same central authority, they also did away with the separate civil jurisdiction that treated Europeans separately from natives.⁴³⁵ As noted above, following the Uva rebellion much arbitrary power was concentrated in the office of the Governor, including his ability to exert considerable influence over the dispensing of justice, but with a uniform judiciary across the island (with exceptions allotted for Ceylonese who wished to be considered by their own traditions), the executive and judiciary were effectively separated. For Scott, Perera, Duncan, and Mendis before them, the sweeping Colebrooke-Cameron reforms represent a critical juncture that marks a change from mercantilist rationality into liberal rationality. In principle, "benevolent" governance was promised in the Kandyan Convention that officially ceded the interior of the island to the British, but as discussed in the preceding chapter, what sovereignty and governance meant to British and Kandyan elites was fundamentally at odds.

The Colebrooke-Cameron reforms continued the process of colonial domination, but did so with a decidedly liberal rationality that was concerned with the "improvement" of land and subjects. Part of the territorial dimension of the reforms was the changing of indigenous geographies, which, as figure four in Appendix A shows took the form of creating "legible" provinces (East/South/North/West) and dividing the central Kandyan region into coastal areas. This was aimed at mitigating any sense of national identity that could be used to foster territorial solidarities to challenge the universal claim to

⁴³⁴ Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 73 - 102

⁴³⁵ G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British*. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 56 - 58

sovereignty of British rule – the classic “divide-and-rule” strategy of colonialism. Transforming sixteen long distinct districts into a unitary administration based in Colombo (and therefore, London), was clearly a crucial milestone in naturalizing the idea of total territorial rule.⁴³⁶ Aside from the geo-graphing, the Colebrooke-Cameron commission recommended the establishment of a legislature in which natives would be nominated (but not elected) to advise the Governor, the establishment of a national civil service and national school system in English (for the betterment of the language and religiously-deprived native Buddhist and Hindu populations), as well as the abolition of the indigenous practice of *rajakariya*, which was discursively described in British writings as a form of slavery, and is discussed in more detail below.⁴³⁷

In discussing the role of the legislature, Scott notes, “The crucial point here is not whether natives were included or excluded so much as *the introduction of a new game of politics* that the colonized would (eventually) be obliged to play if they were to be counted as political.”⁴³⁸ In this, my interests most closely aligns with Scott and Duncan, though establishing the (semi) liberal institutions of formal political control is an important part of naturalizing the norm of total territorial rule. As Barry Hindess explains, liberalism has always rested on a mixture of liberal and illiberal practices. “individuals may be naturally endowed with a capacity for autonomous action, but this does not mean that the capacity will always be sufficiently well developed for governmental uses to be viable.”⁴³⁹ Liberal reforms like the ones emerging from the Colebrooke-Cameron

⁴³⁶ S. Mangalaruby, “The Recommendation of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission in 1833 Marked the Beginning of a new Era in Ceylon – a view,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Research* 26/1 (2015): 14 – 18.

⁴³⁷ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume 1: Its political and Administrative Development*. (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd, 1953): 75 – 82.

⁴³⁸ David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999): 45.

⁴³⁹ Barry Hindess, “The Liberal Government of Unfreedom,” *Alternatives* 26/2 (2001): 93-111.

commission established institutions and advanced policies that were, depending on one's vantage point, simultaneously liberal and illiberal. As Hindess reminds us, the "government of Unfreedom" coexists with the ostensible goals and aspirations of liberal freedoms, the consequences of which continue long after the formal end of colonialism.⁴⁴⁰ I am particularly fascinated with the processes that led to accepting the *territorial* rules of the game that came much later in the 19th century, and as I argue throughout this dissertation, were defined in large part by everyday acts as well as larger scale moments of resistance of colonized people as well as the government.

From the territorial perspective, it is important to note that part of Commissioners Colebrooke and Cameron's report recommended a significant reduction in the wages of civil servants, with the added stipulation that civil servants ought to be allowed to

own land in the colony and make up for their loss of income through investment in commercial agriculture. This encouragement of civil servants to enter into planting explains the need for the Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance (no. 12) of 1840, the main instrument used for the commodification of land, and the sale of vast tracts of land immediately thereafter.⁴⁴¹

Diminished wages and the expectation that these losses would serve the developing colony better by encouraging economic development brings together the ideas of mitigating expenditure on the public purse and incentivizing improvement through entrepreneurship. As I will show throughout this chapter, there was considerable tension between the still-developing principles of liberal political economy and the mercantilist tendency to protect markets rather than free them.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 63.

⁴⁴² Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 53 – 54.

Improving Land, Improving Colonialism

In the years that followed initial road construction after the Uva Rebellion, newspapers in Ceylon were host to debates about the future of the colony from the perspective of the growing British population resident in and around the main city of Colombo. These 19th century expats were very much engaged in the debates roaring in England between defenders of the status quo mercantilist forms of accumulation that had built the Empire, and the exciting and innovative ideas being proposed by reformists calling for the end of monopolies and protection granted to ensure that corporations like the British East India Company could accumulate for Britain more than its Dutch, French, or Portuguese counterparts could for themselves. As noted above, capital investment was initially blocked in Ceylon, then available in a limited sense, and in the 1820s and 1830s, very much encouraged. The letters of Philalethes are illustrative of the kinds of debates and, more importantly, how liberal economy was seen to be a force for modernizing both economy and people. Indeed, it was the main marker of civility for Philalethes, who wrote in the *Colombo Journal*,

When we speak of the “capital” of a country, we refer to the results of past and accumulated labour, which distinguish a civilized country from a less civilized one...the *real wealth* of a country does not consist in money, but in the successive values which are annually created by industry...⁴⁴³

Through articulating his ideas as “mere common-sense,” Philalethes was engaged in a process of normalizing an understanding of economy, territory, and progress in which labour must be applied to land in order to produce wealth; land must be improved. Philalethes’ words expose the violence of universal thinking in the sense that before any

⁴⁴³ Philalethes to editor of the Colombo Journal, July 13 1832. *Letters on Colonial Policy, particularly as related to Ceylon*. (Reprinted from the *Colombo Journal* (Colombo: P.M. Elders, 1833) British National Library, shelfmark: 8007.b.24. Emphasis in original.

of his claims could have been be entertained, one must have already been thinking in Eurocentric terms about the purpose of land and a hierarchy of civilization. Although the Dutch, prior to British arrival in Ceylon, first experimented with the plantation as an agricultural and economic model on a smaller scale, it rapidly became the main driver of the colonial economy by the mid 19th century.

The plantation, more so than any specific legal reform or agreement, is a useful way to consider the violence of universal, Eurocentric modern thinking as the ontological “collision” discussed in chapter two unfolded. Central to the logic of plantations is first the absolute separation of the material/physical realm from the cosmological realm, which leads to a necessary tension between British conceptions of “ownership” opposite a Kandyan conception of land use. British attempts to transform Kandyan villagers into a proletarian workforce were never successful, which was why the British commissioned migrant seasonal Tamil workforces from southern India.⁴⁴⁴ Next, the implication is that through identifying a commodity (which is arguably not possible without the first step) that has value external to local needs, one can produce excessive quantities of this commodity and trade with others in order to gain goods necessary for local consumption and promote greater imperial production in general. Plantation agriculture and economic specialization was clearly influencing the development of liberal notions of comparative advantage in the early 19th century, and David Ricardo’s sophistication of Adam Smith’s idea of labour specialization into the early theory of comparative advantage was very much involved in discussions and debates of this nature prior to his death in 1823. European experimentation with large scale monocrop agriculture was already well on its

⁴⁴⁴ Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Post-Colonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

way at the *imperial* level, and the imperial political economy of the 19th century was thus the larger economic space within which Ceylon was being incorporated as part of the project of colonial subjugation *and* improvement, or rather, improvement through subjugation. The imperial economic fluctuations affecting one part of the empire, specifically the West Indies as a result of slave rebellions and their associated spikes in raw commodity prices in England, played a role in pressuring the imperial government to equalize the playing field by “modernizing” its own trade policies by eliminating monopolies and slave plantations that favoured plantation production in the West Indies historically.

The plantation as a technology of colonization was not new in the 19th century – the British had been “improving” land cleared by genocide and slavery in the West Indies for many years at this point – but it is the increasingly liberal rationale underscoring the purpose of large scale public works and territorial transformation with a strong moral purpose that is significant in these writings. The point that Philalethes was making in the letter quoted above is that Ceylon’s real value is not what can be gathered up from a primitive and value-less indigenous territory, but what can be produced with the kind of diverse ingenuity that comes from the application of “common sense” principles of capital investment. He further argued that,

Again, let us suppose that this capitalist, as he would be called, instead of making water-courses for irrigation, were to construct rail roads, for the purpose of conveying valuable timber from the Interior to the sea ports, he would look to the interest of his capital from the *new value* which would be created in this timber, when squared, and prepared, for home use, or exportation, it having been previously *without value*, from want of fixed capital to facilitate its transport to those places where there was a demand for the purchase of it...it is not money, but the results of money employed in present, or vested in past or accumulated labour, which increases the real wealth of a country.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 3. Emphasis in original.

In this quotation, the emphasis of value production through improving land via commodification is the central issue. In the process of colonization, land must first be rationalized as a commodity, then nationalized to the colonizing power, and *then* privatized in order to be sold and “owned” for commercial exploitation. That local inhabitants “got in the way” of this process was an important point of discussion in colonial governance, and the patronizing articulation that extending the improvement of land to the improvement of people is what connected capitalism and colonialism in the early liberal period.

For example, as noted earlier in the chapter, Kandyan villagers used the fertile highlands for *chena* agriculture, pastorage, and small-plot gardening. By declaring this to be “unproductive” use of land, the crown effectively declared the people engaged in this work to be unproductive, and like the land, subject to induced “improvement.” According to an Assistant Government Agent in the Kegalle District of the highlands,

I hope that indirect good may be the result (of the diversion of traffic from the Kandy road to the railway which deprived the villagers of a market for the produce of their gardens) if men are induced to seek labour on the coffee plantations. The early age at which marriages are contracted tends to keep the people poor and to prevent the men leaving their homes, but want of food is the best cure for this evil and through a secure remedy it is the only one.⁴⁴⁶

Remedies of this nature are the ancestors of today’s common cliché of “pulling oneself up by the bootstraps” in order to legitimize and draw attention away from the structural determinants of poverty, which in the case of Ceylon, was legalized theft of land that was legitimized through appeals of benevolently rendering people and land more productive.

⁴⁴⁶ Quoted in Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886*. (Berlin: Moutan, 1983): 179.

Some “radical liberals” by the mid 19th century were calling for an end to colonialism on the basis that it was economically inefficient, and in response to such claims, the moral value of improving bodies and land played an important role in maintaining the system through appeals to liberal and religious values popular at the time.⁴⁴⁷ Colonized people, it was argued, could not hope to advance along the perceived developmentalist ladder on their own without the instruction of those higher up the civilizational ladder. The moral duty of improving the lot of the indigenous “public” was seen by some bureaucrats as falling too far by the wayside as the British population increasingly came to the island in pursuit of agricultural fortune, occupying the roles of planters, civil servants, and “public” at the same time.

In a passionate letter to Lieutenant Colonel Sir Colin Campbell written in 1842, the bureaucrat James Steuart outlined his frustration with the shifting mandates of British rule in Ceylon. He complained that the resident British population was forgetting the colonial project demands that Ceylon be a crown possession held for the benefit of the native population in the long term, arguing that British “sojourners” increasingly believed themselves to be the Ceylonese public: “It is OUR DUTY *as the paid servants of the Crown*, to protect the interest and happiness of the Natives over whom we are placed by our paternal Government,”⁴⁴⁸ wrote Steuart. He also highlighted problems associated with making British planters simultaneously serve the role of local magistrates: “...if European sojourners were to become Magistrates in the interior, without some watchful, some

⁴⁴⁷ Those who oppose colonialism on economic grounds are described as “radical political economists” by the Colonial Office in the 1840s. See “The Earl of Grey to Viscount Torrington, May 19, 1848” in K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon, 1846 – 50, the administration of Viscount Torrington and the ‘rebellion’ of 1848; the private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. (Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965). British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

⁴⁴⁸ James Steuart to Lt. Colonel Colin Campbell 1842. See British National Library, shelfmark: T 39161(a). emphasis in original

powerful restraint, what could be expected to result to the Natives, but a state bordering upon oppression?”⁴⁴⁹ The tension between appeals to the moral purpose of British presence and commercial crudeness was ever present in Steuart’s writing, but he should not be confused for being a champion of the rights of colonized people. He explained in this letter that the relative well being of the population was necessary because unlike in the climate of North America that was more suited to European workers, the tropical climate necessitated workers accustomed to the tropics. It was the interdependent relationship between imperial economic necessity and the promise of improvement that depended on a set of ontological assumptions that positioned local, racialized populations as being necessarily below the British. As Hindess, drawing on J.S. Mill, observes,

Civilized distaste for authoritarian rule has always been a significant component of the liberal view of empire. Equally significant, however, is the belief that the dirty work of government is a cross that more civilized peoples will have to bear if they are to bring about the improvement of the subject population.⁴⁵⁰

Though it was Rudyard Kipling who famously called upon the white race to “send forth the best ye breed – go send your sons to exile, to serve your captive’s need” in 1899, the sentiment is clearly being incubated in the liminal transition from mercantilist to liberal colonial understandings of the purpose of colonial political economy.⁴⁵¹

Within this framework, protecting the interests of the natives against the desires of the European population resident on the island was an important component of colonial public policy, because the European capitalist could not but seek his own economic self-interest, and the mute “native” could not but suffer the consequences of his/her

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Barry Hindess, “The Liberal Government of Unfreedom” *Alternatives* 26/2(2001): 106.

⁴⁵¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands” *History Matters*. Accessed January 8, 2017. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5478/>.

backwardsness.⁴⁵² Gayatri Spivak's famous consideration of the practice of *sati* within colonial legal discourse in India in the early-mid 19th century similarly draws attention to the epistemic violence of structurally removing the agency and voice of the sufferer of the violence because of the assumption that others more qualified are best suited to speak on her behalf.⁴⁵³ Steuart draws attention to the "very general opinion" that the abolishment of slavery in the West Indies offered tremendous economic and political opportunities for Ceylon and the British imperial project in South Asia more generally:

It was a very general opinion that the abolition of slavery in the West Indies would be attended with a falling off in the production of coffee, sugar, and sundry other tropical supplies so indispensable to the comfort of the people of England and the support of its revenue. It therefore appears highly probably that these considerations had much weight in Downing Street and suggested the idea that, by means of free labour obtained from Hindostan, the two Islands, Mauritius and Ceylon, might supply every deficiency occasioned by the abolition of slavery and at the same time augment their resources and also, that as Ceylon so closely resembled Hindostan in all except its insufficient population, it would afford the opportunity for the safe trial of certain political measures in contemplation for the continent of India.⁴⁵⁴

Again, the tone of the rationale here is one of addressing market shortcomings associated with the end of slavery.

Philalethes, like Steuart, was a dedicated colonialist with an unusually secular disposition for his time. In making arguments against radical liberals in England who were bringing the viability of the colonial project into question in the mid 19th century, Philalethes argued in the *Colombo Journal* that indigenous people would be left hopelessly behind without European improvements on their behalf. Arguing opposite Sir Henry Parnel who said, "the possession of colonies affords no advantages which could

⁴⁵² James Steuart to Lt. Colonel Colin Campbell 1842. British National Library, shelfmark: T 39161(a).

⁴⁵³ G.C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretations of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988): 271 – 313.

⁴⁵⁴ James Steuart, *Notes on Ceylon and Its Affairs During a period of Thirty-Eight Years Ending in 1855* (London: Printed for private circulation, 1862): 12.

not be obtained by commercial intercourse with independent states,” Philalethes made a series of arguments that shed light on the pro-colonialism side of the debate that ultimately won out in the end. He argued that the colony in his day ran a revenue surplus of 35,000 pounds, and moreover, employed soldiers who would have to be cared for as “pensioners or as paupers” back in England. More pertinent to this chapter’s concerns, he said,

If Ceylon were an independent state, is it pretended to be implied, that her power of production and consequent amount of exportable commodities would be increased [sic]? Common instinct demurs to such a proposition; to maintain it a writer must be utterly ignorant of eastern habits, wants and feelings.⁴⁵⁵

It is the fundamental nature of the “eastern habits” that was the problem for Philalethes, not the physical capability of the land to be “productive” if tended to in a correct fashion. Whereas a generation or two earlier in South Asia, the British were primarily interested in accumulation of resources and geopolitical posturing vis-à-vis their European rivals seeking to do the same on the subcontinent, by the 1830s the mere capability of the land to produce was insufficient to fuel the needs of the modern empire. The way that Philalethes is framing his argument, it presupposes that in the absence of colonialism, Ceylon would try, unsuccessfully, to develop its economy along the principles of monocrop surplus agriculture and thus presupposes that the very purpose of being a state is to become a *satellite* state and producer of raw goods for value-added production in the more advanced economies. Appealing to “eastern habits, wants, and feelings” presupposes the paternal British citizen resident in Ceylon as being best suited to understand such wants. Thus the framing of the debate and the normative assumptions

⁴⁵⁵ Philalethes, “Letter to the editor of the *Colombo Journal* dated July 27, 1832” *Letters on Colonial Policy, particularly as applicable to Ceylon*. Reprinted from the *Ceylon Journal* (British National Library, shelfmark: 793.m.15).

necessary to the framing itself enacts a kind of de-politicizing move with regards to the very purpose of being a state, including the assumed possibility of homogenized national interest which, at the time of Philalethes' letter to the editor, was only *just* made institutionally conceivable by the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms discussed earlier.

Later that week, Philalethes wrote that colonial settlements in Africa were even established “for the suppression of the Slave Trade, such as Sierra Leone and the Gambia.”⁴⁵⁶ The possibility of nations emerging at all, for Philalethes, may not be possible in the absence of colonialism. He explained,

If this Anti-Colonial doctrine be right, the United States *ought never to have been created*. We should have waited until the Aboriginal Indians had, by slow processes, been changed into a civilized nation in the three thousandth year of the Christian era.⁴⁵⁷

Philalethes' liberalism betrays the linearity and universal rationalization of racial hierarchies in his time. It also offers a glimpse into complexities of the moral and economic debates within imperial political economy in the early-mid 19th century as they reflect upon colonialism and capitalism. His liberalism was not always consistent, nor should it be expected to be. As Karl Polanyi has argued, appealing to pure “laissez-faire” was always more of a discursive strategy than it ever was a genuine application of free market principles, with those benefitting from low state intervention changing their tune and asking for state protection when times got tough.⁴⁵⁸ For Philalethes – who was also influential in the religious activities of the island at the time – public expenditure should not be exerted towards short-term projects but rather toward infrastructural development

⁴⁵⁶ Philalethes letter to the editor of the *Colombo Journal*. No date, but follows previously cited letter of July 21 and engages with same content by Sir Henry Parnell.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]).

or public health that benefits all. It is somewhat surprisingly theoretically consistent, as he argued against his own Christian interests in making a case against publicly funding church construction because “*no value greater than itself would be produced by such an expenditure.*”⁴⁵⁹ Philalethes proposed that the state instead pursue expenditure in the long-term public interest, be it infrastructural development or environment “improvements” such as draining swamps to promote public health.⁴⁶⁰ Such thinking foreshadows some of the compelling and contradicting tensions between the stated goals of liberal pluralism in policy, and its racialized application to favour British religion and territorial economic aspirations.

In this section, I have striven to show that marking the transition from mercantilist to liberal rationalities of governance with the critical juncture of the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms of 1833 over-values the significance of central state policy. These reforms were not an end point, nor a beginning point, in the transition from mercantile to liberal thinking in Ceylon; rather, they represent an important moment in broader processes of contestation between efforts to enforce the spatial imaginary of a centralized political authority based in Colombo overtop of the existing spatial order that was rendered as backwards and pre-modern, as discussed in chapter two. The co-option and transformation of *rajakariya* and its application beyond the limits of Kandy to create roads in the aftermath of the Uva Rebellion was happening alongside organized resistance to the British presence, descriptions of which will comprise the bulk of chapter four. We will return to *rajakariya* in the next section, but for our purposes here, the public debates

⁴⁵⁹ Philalethes, “Philalethes letter to the editor of the Colombo Journal dated July 27, 1832.” *Letters on Colonial Policy, particularly as applicable to Ceylon. Reprinted from the Ceylon Journal* (British National Library, shelfmark: 793.m.15). Emphasis in original.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

in the local newspapers as well as in parliament in England about the viability of the colonial enterprise itself highlight the importance of early 19th century economic globalization. Mainstream historical accounts – including empirically indispensable histories written by Sri Lankan historians – view the modernization of economies as a natural, linear aspect of development, highlighting the perceived moral integrity of radical liberals in the 19th century. Within these constructed “natural” attributes of economic development, however, rests the colonial constitution of the modern order, discussed in chapter one.

Section Two: Imperial Political Economy

The West Indian Connection

Eighteenth-century colonial mercantilism, as briefly discussed above, rationalized land and natural resources as something relatively static, and historically in South Asia, relied on existing indigenous labour practices to accumulate and trade in natural resources. Thinking about land as something to be improved through labour changed perceptions of how value ought to be extracted from land. Indigenous farming practices in the early 19th century relied on small scale coffee plots, small gardens, paddy fields, and chena agriculture, which involves clearing areas of jungle rich in soil quality to plant rotating crops.⁴⁶¹ Commodifying land, alongside spatial strategies of urban restructuring, worked to de-territorialize local places and simultaneously re-territorialize them as visible, legible, Eurocentric places.⁴⁶² While the idea of land improvement was clearly also at

⁴⁶¹ Roland Wenzlhuemer, “The Singhalese Contribution to Estate Labour in Ceylon, 1881 – 1891,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48/3 (2005): 444.

⁴⁶² Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 61 – 85.

play in the mercantilist model of colonial plantations popular in the Caribbean in the 18th century, under this logic of imperial political economy, monopolies, protectionist tariffs, and insulation from external competition were also part of the package. These were mobilized to serve the interests of economic nationalism that was criticized by liberal political economists of the day.⁴⁶³

When plantations were first established in the British Caribbean, planters were guaranteed monopolies within the imperial economy for their sugar and coffee, as well as guaranteed use of enslaved African labour. While the sale of slaves was not a European invention, the *scale* at which the practice transformed into commercial sale and trafficking of human “property” to fuel British entrepreneurship and imperial wealth in the 18th century *was* a European invention. Though the plantation model enriched England and other European and Euro-descended populations throughout the mercantilist economic period, it was precisely the ending of mercantilist era trade protection and the turn away from slavery that birthed the boom in commercial plantations in Ceylon. As David Scott argues, Ceylon and other British possessions were seen as testing grounds for liberal experimentations in governance (along with their illiberal undersides), and eventually the “*systematic redefinition and transformation of the terrain on which the life of the colonized was lived.*”⁴⁶⁴ It was not as simple as moving the plantation model from

⁴⁶³ Cf.: Eric Helleiner, “Economic Nationalism as a Challenge to Economic Liberalism? Lessons from the 19th Century,” *International Studies Quarterly* 46 (2002): 307 – 329. Helleiner cautions against exaggerated differences between economic nationalists and economic liberals of the 19th century. There were many variants of economic nationalism, and Helleiner argues that even a defining economic nationalist like Fredrick List supported the liberal objective of free trade. List however, insisted on the caveat that countries first attain equal economic power to Britain prior to embracing the principles of free trade. List’s ideas became more influential in the developmental post-WWII era, influencing the development of policy measures such as import-substitution industrialization and the developmental approach of countries like Japan and South Korea. See also: Fredrick List, *The National System of Political Economy*, translated by G.A. Matile (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott & Co., 1856 [1843]).

⁴⁶⁴ David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999): 41. Emphasis in the original.

one part of the Empire to another, however. The plantation model needed modern “improvement” in line with liberal reformist thinking to answer to the demands of moral activists and opportunistic capitalists alike.

Although Atlantic slavery enriched Britain, it was the discourse of being *against* slavery that helped denigrate local practices like *rajakariya* in Ceylon at a time when being against slavery carried considerable moral and economic “capital” within the British Empire.⁴⁶⁵ As Ceylon was being incorporated as a British crown colony following the Kandyan Convention and Uva Rebellion, important imperial policies affecting slavery were coming into place. Discursively, identifying the indigenous practice of *rajakariya* with slavery was a common point reiterated by British colonial administrators as well as the missionary population. There was a moral boundary differentiating modern, increasingly liberal, British governance over the island from a “backwards” or not-yet modern native existence. Ironically, the British invoked the right of *rajakariya* as new sovereigns on the island to force local men and boys to toil without remuneration under the term “compulsory labour,” which was seen as different from slave labour in that it also served a pedagogical role of “educating” lazy natives on the virtues of a hard day’s work.⁴⁶⁶ The belief was that with plantation agriculture and the availability of paid labour,

⁴⁶⁵ The British were leveraging moral superiority as a tactic to overcome revolutionary America in the early 19th century as well. In the war of 1812, in which a fledgling American state sought to invade British North America, the British benefited by promising Afro-descended Americans freedom: if they deserted the American army and fought for the British, they would not be returned to their “masters” afterwards. Afro-descended and Indigenous forces played important roles in enabling the burning of the White House and favourable terms of negotiation for the British. See: Andrew Cockburn, “Washington is Burning: Two centuries of Racial Tribulation in the nation’s capital,” *Harper’s Magazine* August 29, 2014. Accessed Aug. 29, 2016. <http://harpers.org/archive/2014/09/washington-is-burning/?single=1>.

⁴⁶⁶ Being a forced laborer or being an enslaved person would often result in a person’s death. Enslaved persons were de-humanized, or “thingified” as Robbie Shilliam has argued, in law and practice such that their value or existence at all was as a commodity. In the context of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, enslaved workers could, and were, worked to death with the knowledge that they could be replaced at the next auction. Following the formal end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807, enslaved persons were not humanized in the eyes of plantation owners; rather, their commodity value increased as they were no longer

the recalcitrant Kandyan natives in the interior would fill the labour needs. Working conditions were atrocious, and although planters were technically subservient to the central government in Colombo, in practice they operated as de-facto sovereigns over their plantations, creating economic and health conditions that made survival a challenging feat for the labourers.⁴⁶⁷ When the Kandyans would not work, the British turned to the subcontinent for a cheap supply of waged labourers, recruited from the Tamil population.⁴⁶⁸

Far from being starkly different from the working conditions in the West Indies, scholars of South Asian plantation workers have argued that the plantation model in South Asia represented a new form of slavery.⁴⁶⁹ Approximately one in four migratory workers who were compelled to make the journey from Southern India to the plantation fields in Ceylon would die en route, and even when at work, these allegedly free labourers would only be considered “sick” when they collapsed in the fields; they were also routinely beaten as a method of improving and correcting what was considered to be

as easy to replace. While many of the material conditions would have been very similar, from the vantage point of 19th century racial thinking, the very fact that the British saw South Asians as a race able to learn and develop and thus be pupils of improvement marks an important difference in British approaches to colonization in South Asia, Africa, and the West Indies. It also informs the history of racial tension between descendants of slavery and descendants of indentureship in the Caribbean. See: Robbie Shilliam, “Forget English Freedom, Remember Atlantic Slavery: Common Law, Commercial Law, and the Significance of Slavery for Classical Political Economy,” *New Political Economy* 17/5 (2012): 591 – 609; Ajay Parasram, “The long road to de-colonisation: Understanding our political present” in J. Parasram, *Far from the Mountain: Political notes and commentaries*, xxi – xxiv (St. Anns: Paria Publishing Co. Ltd., 2013).

⁴⁶⁷ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing House, 2007): 67 – 68.

⁴⁶⁸ The secondary literature is mostly in agreement that the overwhelming majority of coffee plantation workers were migrant Tamil workers from Southern India, but there are some important dissenting opinions. Eric Meyer has argued since the 1970s that Sinhalese locals were also involved in the waged labour. See: Eric Meyer, “‘Enclave’ plantations, ‘hemmed-in’ villages and dualistic representations in Colonial Ceylon,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 19/3-4 (1993): 199 – 228; Roland Wenzlhuemer, *From Coffee to Tea Cultivation in Ceylon 1800 – 1900* (Boston: Brill, 2008): 311.

⁴⁶⁹ Rana P. Behal and Prabhu P. Mohapatra, “Tea and money versus human life: The rise and fall of the indenture system in the Assam tea plantations, 1840 – 1908,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 19/3-4 (1992): 142 – 172; James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing House, 2007): 67 – 99; Patrick Peebles, *The Plantation Tamils of Ceylon* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001): 53 – 71.

immoral behaviour.⁴⁷⁰ Patrick Peebles maintains that the West Indian model of slave-based plantations served as a manual for plantations in the early years of coffee cultivation in Ceylon.⁴⁷¹ Entrepreneurial Europeans were the source of circulated knowledge about the management of plantations and the discourse of racial hierarchies that legitimized the brutal extraction of value through enslaved and near-enslaved racialized workers. Although the deplorable conditions of forced road labourers and coerced migrant plantation labourers were modelled upon slave plantations, the discursive logic from the vantage point of the British government was increasingly that such tactics would ultimately promote an industrious and morally superior colonial subject. Thus, it was not simply the physical land that was being improved through these means, the workers themselves, as scholars of colonial governmentality have argued, were subject to liberal improvement. This made at least an important discursive difference within colonial debates, even if it made little to no difference to workers themselves.

With the end of slavery and the gradual diminishing of the mercantilist trade policies that insulated slavers from competition, plantations were closing in the West Indies leading to an Eastward migration of white plantation workers and owners. One such migratory person was Robert Boyd Tytler, who travelled in 1837 to Jamaica armed with a second-hand copy of Laborie's *Coffee Planter of Santo Domingo*. Tytler sought to learn the "West Indian" system of plantations, and after three years of study, travelled to Ceylon to share his knowledge in developing the plantation sector in the interior of Ceylon. The book Tytler brought with him was perhaps more influential than his personal

⁴⁷⁰ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing House, 2007): 94 – 95; Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); I.H. Vanden Driesen, *Indian plantation labour in Sri Lanka: aspects of the history of immigration in the 19th century*. (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 1982).

⁴⁷¹ Patrick Peebles, *The Plantation Tamils of Ceylon* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001): 55 – 58.

observations, and it quickly became the definitive planter's guide to managing effective plantations.⁴⁷² Laborie's book contained detailed information concerning the "natural state" of enslaved Africans being one of fulfilling only base subsistence and needing firm instruction in order to remain productive:

His [Laborie's] conclusion about the character of Afro-American slaves applied equally to the Ceylon planters' view of their labourers: Such, nearly and in a general view, is that creature whom we are forced to keep in his *natural* state of thralldom, in order to obtain from him the requisite services; because it is now proved by experience, more decisively than by speculative reasonings, that, under a different condition, he would not labour, unless to remove actual wants, which are few and small in the West Indies.⁴⁷³

The above quotation exemplifies the pseudo-scientific approach to management as well as the colossal ignorance of profit-seeking planters. In no way did they try to understand the enslaved people whom they "owned." Racism in the late slavery period of the 18th and 19th centuries saw general comparisons made between slaves and other races of "inferior" people. Peebles quoted an Assistant Government Agent in 1847 discussing the productivity of workers of different races, measured as a ratio of Tamil to African:

Mr Blainey, a gentleman who had charge of the Green Wood Estate for about three years, and was previously employed for several years at Trinidad considers that on average it requires six Malabars [Tamils] to perform the work of one Negro, even subsequent to the abolition of Slavery in the Colonies.⁴⁷⁴

Accounts like those described above tell us far more of the culture of white supremacy underscoring 19th century colonial economy than they can offer insights into how colonized and enslaved people understood their contexts. White supremacy at the top of an imagined racial hierarchy was economically influential in terms of strategies aimed at

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 56. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 56 – 67.

economic productivity both in the mercantilist oriented slaving era of production, and in the liberal era of “free” waged labour after 1832.⁴⁷⁵

Free Trade vs. Private Property

Liberal political economy, with its abolitionist proponents like liberal political economist-turned-MP David Ricardo, also favoured the establishment of waged labour over slavery because an enslaved person had no incentive to work beyond their basic means of subsistence.⁴⁷⁶ Waged labourers, from within the modern/colonial worldview, conversely, had an incentive to save and spend money to improve their own lives. One of the ideas considered by Britain, but ultimately not pursued, was to transform enslaved Africans into indentured labourers, which would enable a kind of apprenticeship work-to-freedom model that could protect the economic interests of slave owners.⁴⁷⁷ In the 19th century, just as much as in the 20th and 21st centuries, questions of justice and correct action were stymied by concerns for the destabilizing effect that such just actions might have on the stability of the global economy. This model of indentureship as “voluntary” labour was ultimately not applied to former slaves, but *was* applied to scores of South Asian coerced migrants suffering famine as a result of the political economic policies pursued by England in South Asia, which demanded that peasants prioritize the production of textiles

⁴⁷⁵ Robbie Shilliam, “Forget English Freedom, Remember Atlantic Slavery: Common Law, Commercial Law, and the Significance of Slavery for Classical Political Economy,” *New Political Economy* 17/5 (2012): 591 – 609; Barry Hindess, “The Liberal Government of Unfreedom” *Alternatives* 26/2 (2001): 93 – 111.

⁴⁷⁶ Ricardo in particular, in his four years as an MP, worked on parliamentary committee evaluating and seeking to bring an end to the charter monopoly of the East India Company, such that free trade across the Empire could be realized.

⁴⁷⁷ “Plan for the Safe and Profitable Conversion of Colonial Slaves Into Free Labourers” c. 1832. *British National Library, shelfmark*: General Reference Collection 8154.e.1.(6.).

and inedible material for foreign trade rather than producing the means of their own subsistence.⁴⁷⁸

The application of indentureship as a policy was fused with indigenous caste relationships, and labourers were recruited through *kangany* supervisors who would receive payment from plantation owners to travel to southern India and recruit teams of workers to travel from the subcontinent to Ceylon for work on coffee and later tea plantations.⁴⁷⁹ As Perera describes, migrating and impoverished Tamil workers

were first marched up to the south Indian coast of Rameswaram, where they were placed in a fishing boat, *dhoney*, to Talaimannar of Ceylon. They then marched another two hundred kilometers or more through the jungle to the estates. These roads meant death for many, with corpses strewn along the sides. According to the estimates of the *Ceylon Observer*, twenty-five per cent of immigrants died during the period between 1841 to 1849, totalling as many as 70,000 persons.”⁴⁸⁰

Slavery had an enormous impact on the kind of economic development that enriched the coffers of British imperial metropolises under the mercantile world economy. Official indentureship replaced slavery in the West Indies, while free(r) trade modelled as an improvement on the labour practices of the West Indies brought about economic opportunities in South Asia just as Governor Barnes’ road systems were opening up Ceylon’s lush interior. The problem, following Eric Williams’ train of thought, was not truly a question of moral abhorrence to slavery by the British; rather, it was slavery’s anachronism with the principles of liberal political economy.⁴⁸¹ The very fact that

⁴⁷⁸ Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (New York: Verso, 2002); Ajay Parasram “The long road to de-colonisation: Understanding our political present.” In Jai Parasram, *Far from the Mountain: Political notes and commentaries*, xxi – xxiv. (St. Ann’s: Paria Publishing Co. Ltd., 2013).

⁴⁷⁹ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 201 – 210.

⁴⁸⁰ Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 69. See appendix A, figure 5 for map outlining this migratory path.

⁴⁸¹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1964 [1944]):126 – 153.

parliamentary debates and working papers were aimed at the gradual “improvement” of racially inferior peoples via instilling a work-ethic based on land and human improvement speaks to the continuity of racial inferiority and white supremacy within imperial thinking at the time. Explained in a different light, the problem is not necessarily one of anachronism, rather, it is that liberalism has always been rife with contradiction and predicated on assumptions that subject peoples require instruction in order to stand a chance at becoming autonomous economic and political agents.⁴⁸²

The 1833 abolition of slavery in the British West Indies all but collapsed Caribbean coffee industries. As Williams maintains, it was the stubborn greed of the planting community and their feelings of entitlement that blocked them from adapting; in Jamaica more than 188,000 acres of coffee plantations were abandoned in the 1830s alone.⁴⁸³ While the idea of emancipation and trade liberalization together were seen by the planters of the West Indies as an affront to their right to private property, to capitalist investors discouraged by the monopoly conditions which asymmetrically protected the commercial well being of inefficient West Indian planters, liberalization and waged labourers offered the promise of a more even and competitive playing field. The two core liberal issues of private “property” according to the West Indian planters, and free trade to British investors came to a head in early-mid 19th century debates.⁴⁸⁴ Furthering the impending decline of West Indian coffee plantations within the newly forming liberal rationality was the equalization of duties on West Indian and East Indian coffee in 1835. Long before the actual equalization of duties, MP David Ricardo had been calling for the

⁴⁸² Christine Helliwell and Barry Hindess, “The ‘Empire of Uniformity’ and the Government of Subject Peoples,” *Cultural Values* 6/1&2 (2002): 139 – 152.

⁴⁸³ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 36-37.

⁴⁸⁴ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1964 [1944]):133 – 134.

elimination of differential tariffs and the introduction of South Asian commodities into the general pool of imperial trade with the aim of reducing commodity prices and increasing efficiency through competition. For example, on May 4, 1821, the British parliament debated extra duties on East Indian sugar. Ricardo voted against applying extra duty on East Indian sugar on the principle of the tax itself without making any particular argument about slavery.⁴⁸⁵

It is difficult, and perhaps even impossible, to think about the development of capitalism without the development of colonialism, and as Emily Erikson has argued, the relationship between liberal economic theory and the British East India Company in particular is remarkably strong. In her doctoral thesis, Erikson shows that the 1707 union of England and Scotland was negotiated, in part, with a promise of including Scottish elites in positions of power within the East India Company. As Erikson writes:

David Ricardo was a member of the Company's court of proprietors. Ricardo's close friend, James Mill wrote his major life's work on the history of the British in India and went on to serve as Assistant Examiner of the India Correspondence, a very respectable position within the East India Company. His even more influential son also worked for the Company. Thomas Malthus served as the chair of history and political economy at Haileybury, the East India Company's college for the education of young men. And, although eventually passed over, even Adam Smith at one time put considerable effort into seeking a position within the Company. These are only the more familiar names, the earlier, more obscure theorists of the seventeenth century with close associations to the East India Company include Thomas Mun and Josiah Child, both at different times directors of the Company, and Edward Misselden, who negotiated contracts on the Company's behalf.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ "Duty on East India Sugars." United Kingdom, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates* Volume 5 (May 4, 1821). Accessed February 24, 2014. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1821/may/04/duty-on-east-india-sugars>.

⁴⁸⁶ Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free-trade: The English East India Company 1600 – 1757*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014): 67 – 68.

Eurocentric historical accounts of the rise of capitalism and the industrial revolution tend to focus on the centrality of the factory within Europe, but this is really only one part of an imperial network of relations; decolonial histories of capitalism instead start with the genocides, servitudes, and economic modalities that made industrialization in Europe a possibility.⁴⁸⁷ My argument here is narrower, speaking to a particular imperial connection that pitted the white planter interests of the colonial West and East Indies against one another at precisely the time that the British government in Ceylon was actively engaged in the aggressive colonization and violent transformation by legal means of indigenous Kandyan territory into legible British capitalist territory.

Colonial Liberalism and the Rise of Commercial Coffee

As noted earlier, the plantation model in Ceylon was not introduced by the British, but it was enlarged considerably by a variety of domestic and imperial policies in the early- to mid- 19th century. Perhaps none of these policies would have been sufficient to produce the kinds of geographical, environmental, political, and economic shifts if the market demand for coffee was not as important as it was in the mid- 19th century. Coffee was big business around the world in the 19th century because of the relatively recent introduction of coffee houses in European metropolises.⁴⁸⁸ Coffee is a crop that is geographically limited to highland areas within tropical climates, as it requires a frost-free, cool, and humid environment to flourish.⁴⁸⁹ Although coffee flourished in Ceylon in the 19th

⁴⁸⁷ Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1/3 (2000): 533 – 580.

⁴⁸⁸ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 32 – 33.

⁴⁸⁹ James Duncan, "Coffee, Disease, and the 'Simultaneity of Stories-So-Far' in the Highlands of 19th Century Ceylon" in C. Brun and T. Jazeel (eds.) *Spatializing Politics: Culture and Geography in Postcolonial Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009): 47.

century, Muslim traders linking East Asia to Europe via sea routes that stopped in coastal Ceylon first introduced the crop.⁴⁹⁰ Prior to the 1820s and the development of the coffee sector after the liberalization of trade policy in the imperial political economy, coffee was collected haphazardly from wild plants and smallholdings. Under the Governorship of Sir Edward Barnes in 1820-1822 and 1824-1831, the industry's foundations were strengthened with significant land acquisition and infrastructural development to service the sector.⁴⁹¹ Upon assuming office, Barnes sought to encourage commercial plantation agriculture in coffee, cotton, and pepper in particular, erasing the export duty of five per cent on home-grown coffee in his first year, and exempting coffee from the 1/10 land tax upon resuming his office in 1824.⁴⁹² Barnes set an example for the European public in Ceylon by opening his own coffee plantation in the Kandyan region.⁴⁹³ The transition from mercantilist to liberal rationalities in Ceylon was not neat or uni-directional, but from the British perspective, a foundational shift in thinking occurred when colonial South Asia was transformed from a place where exotic things could be collected into a terrain out of which European capitalists could perform modernizing work on land and people for the purposes of rendering both more productive.

Although in chapter four I intend to problematize the perception of peace and tranquillity in Kandy in the 1820-40s, it is certainly true that, relative to the state of war and insurrection that marked the early British period on the island, these decades were relatively stable and enabled the deepening of centralizing political institutions.

⁴⁹⁰ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 34.

⁴⁹¹ I.H. Vanden Driesen, "A Note on the rise of plantations and the genesis of Indian labour migration to Sri Lanka," *Asian Studies* 14/2 (1976): 16.

⁴⁹² Ibid. The land-based tax was applied to paddy rice agriculture as part of a series of reforms under the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms discussed earlier.

⁴⁹³ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 58 – 60.

Commissioners Colebrooke and Cameron believed that compulsory labour would not be necessary with the introduction of waged labour. Informed by the prevailing colonial wisdom of liberalism discussed thus far, the Commission's universal view failed to comprehend that Kandyan sovereignty and political economy was not a subordinate part of the British civilizational imaginary, rather, both were systems with long genealogies of practice operating on ontologically different premises. The villagers refused to work either on roads or as labourers on the rapidly forming coffee plantations. Their logic is easy to see, and exposes an enactment of what James C. Scott has described as "weapons of the weak," or the simple refusal to participate.⁴⁹⁴ This provided an ample thorn in the side of colonial planners of the day. Although the last great rebellion had been fourteen years prior, smaller skirmishes and uprisings were always afoot in the Kandyan region. It seems a daft proposition that one should spend arduous days labouring in pursuit of inedible fruit for export, only to use the wages garnered from this labour to buy food one has always produced for oneself in abundance. Any minor need for cash could be solved from growing small coffee plots, which many people had been doing for many years in any case.⁴⁹⁵ Yet this was precisely the "common sense" novelty of liberal improvement at the time, discussed by locally based political economists and commentators like Philalethes, and also in Ricardo's literature on comparative advantage and his forceful arguments within parliament.⁴⁹⁶ As G.C. Mendis has argued, following the abolishment of *rajakariya*, Sinhalese villagers had little need for external work on the plantations that

⁴⁹⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁴⁹⁵ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 32 – 38.

⁴⁹⁶ David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (London: John Murray, 1817); "Agricultural Distress," United Kingdom, *Hansard Parliamentary Debate* Vol. 1 Sec. 635 – 93 (March 30, 1820). Accessed February 24, 2014. <https://goo.gl/dKayJd> (See sections 671 – 676 for David Ricardo's intervention.)

would have involved travelling away from home villages, particularly amongst those born to high castes.⁴⁹⁷ That local Kandyan villagers would not work on plantations was understood by the British as evidence of native inferiority; they did not seriously consider indigenous grievances with the radical, cosmological and territorial transformations unfolding on their villages no doubt aided by the fact that most planters were also British civil servants.⁴⁹⁸ Letters, government reports, even missionary accounts from this period remark on the need to “lead by example” in order to instil a sense of ambition and pride achievable through a hard day’s work upon the “lazy,” “backwards,” and unindustrious local population. Available evidence of the demographic breakdown of plantation labourers supports the claim that ethnic Sinhalese people were not significantly employed as labourers on the plantations, as according to available statistics they comprised less than five per cent of plantation workers in the mid- to late- 19th century. Even then, this was only after the demise of the coffee industry and its replacement with tea, which required year-round labour and greater mass production based on economies of scale, which was a level of capital investment not readily achievable for smaller scale Sinhalese coffee producers in the region.⁴⁹⁹

The violence of universal thinking as it applied to colonial efforts to transform indigenous space into capitalist plantation space took many forms; chief among them was

⁴⁹⁷ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume 1: Its Political and Administrative Development*. (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd, 1953): 68

⁴⁹⁸ It should be noted that although I focus on plantations in Kandy here, the same logic was applied to cinnamon peelers and other forms of forced laborers. In Commissioner Colebrooke’s report on compulsory services, he notes that upon his arrival in the colony in 1829, he learned that cinnamon peelers resisting government orders to work resulted in military troop deployments, floggings, and prison sentences. See: “Report of Colebrooke upon the Compulsory Services” in G.C. Mendis (ed.) *Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon 1796 – 1833* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956): 189 – 190.

⁴⁹⁹ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 189 – 191. Cf.: Eric Meyer, “‘Enclave’ plantations, ‘hemmed-in’ villages and dualistic representations in Colonial Ceylon” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 19/3-4 (1993): 199 – 228; Roland Wenzlhuemer, *From Coffee to Tea Cultivation in Ceylon 1800 – 1900* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

the belief that workers' everyday forms of resistance represented a moral failing on the part of the workers. Part of the liberal approach of colonial governmentality that was unfolding in the mid- to late- 19th century was a need for the government to intervene on behalf of workers to impose certain minimum standards of health that planters would deny to their workers. For example, sick workers would often starve to death, leading the government to impose a law that said sick workers must be provided with food. Workers would also hide from their supervisors on the plantations, cut holes in heavy bags of coffee to lighten the load, or deliberately damage machinery.⁵⁰⁰ As Bandarage notes, the foremost journalists and record-keepers in Ceylon regarding plantation economy, A.M. and J. Ferguson, publicly argued that raising revenue in "oriental" lands ought to be based on taxing items that are required by the masses. Taxing the native population while reducing taxes on the British population of "job creators" was beneficial because "the pinching of the stomach is morally good because it will induce the peasants to work on plantations."⁵⁰¹ This observation should be considered in light of the planters' and the colonial government's inability to comprehend why Kandyan villagers in particular would choose not to "better" themselves by engaging in an honest day's paid work. When controversial flat taxes (discussed in the next section) were being discussed between the CO and Governor of Ceylon in 1848, Lord Grey in London was urging Governor Torrington to impose even greater taxes on the local population with a view to improving both public services and the tax base, as well as deliberately setting up the legal

⁵⁰⁰ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 89 – 90.

⁵⁰¹ Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 180.

incentives such that forced labour through work houses would induce local people to pay taxes. As Grey writes:

I sh[oul]d be much inclined to carry this principle further and impose a poll tax of 10/ per year the penalty for default being the exaction of labour reckoned at such a price as to make it clearly the interest of the people to prefer the money payment – This w[oul]d create a fund not only for the improvement to the roads but for other local purposes, especially education and relief to the sick and infirm. I am of opinion that great advantage w[oul]d result from the establishment of district hospitals and workhouses where all the sick w[oul]d be treated gratis and the destitute and the infirm relieved. ...If a part of your poll tax were to support hospitals and dispensaries it w[oul]d merely amount to establishing a compulsory medical club. These institutions if combined with workhouses (on a very small scale) w[oul]d afford likewise an effective instrument for putting down vagrancy and be of great use to the Coolies. The imposition of such a tax on the whole population w[oul]d be of use not merely by the money it brought into the Treasury but also by compelling the Cingalese [sic] to exert themselves, instead of contending themselves with getting a mere subsistence.⁵⁰²

In Grey's letter, one can see the experimentation with liberal governance that governmentality scholars like Scott (1999) and Duncan (2007) speak to. Faced with limited resources and a foot-dragging form of resistance from local populations, improvement becomes the vehicle through which colonial transformation can continue. Similar processes were unfolding in Europe itself, spurring trade unionism, socialist and anarchist revolutionary movements, poor houses, and industrial technological revolution. Under the veil of improvement, violent enforcement of ontologically alien norms and laws become the rule of law, ostensibly for the improvement and betterment of the colony and its people as a whole.

⁵⁰² "The Earl of Grey to Viscount Torrington, May 19, 1848." In K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50 The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

Resisting the Plantations

Most secondary literature on the 1848 Matale Rebellion identifies these new taxes as a major catalyst for the rebellion, alongside the writings of a radical Irish editor of a local newspaper named Mr. Elliot who translated an article into Sinhalese calling for people to reject taxes without proper representation.⁵⁰³ There is plenty of documented evidence of local people's disdain for the large-scale coffee plantations gobbling up Kandyan territory, and efforts to resist the legal and governmental usurping of common land varied from simply ignoring the territorial claims of private property to threatening to murder European planters.⁵⁰⁴ Although, as discussed earlier, the British becoming sovereign over Kandy entitled them, in their minds, to possess all crown lands and do with them what they pleased, this came up against generations of entrenched practices that enabled peasants to use royal lands for communal purposes; in the terminology of chapter two, this represented a political ontological clash because the British believed they could pick and choose the responsibilities of being sovereign without regard for the galactic sovereign model that had developed over centuries of practice in Buddhist/Hindu societies.⁵⁰⁵ As another example of this ontological conflict, when efforts to demarcate and impose boundaries of private property were made by European planters in the 1830s staking out territory in the interior, locals would use the fence-wood for fire. In the

⁵⁰³ K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50, The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'Rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. Kandy: K.V.G. de Silva, 1965: 13. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

⁵⁰⁴ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 148 – 149.

⁵⁰⁵ S.J. Tambiah as well as Bruce Kapferer have done compelling research on the history of Buddhist/Hindu models of politics. See chapter two of this dissertation, but also S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against Historical Background* (Cambridge University Press, 1976) and Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (New York: Berghahn Books).

accounts of Colonel Watson, villagers confronted a planter while he was planning the construction of a road to his plantation, and the village spokesman told him,

Who sent you white people here, we did very well without you; look there (pointing to a coffee estate) that forest was mine...then to open ground upon which some estate cattle were grazing “that was mine”; you have levelled our forests; seized our chenas and now you are turning our paddy fields into roads. But we have a man up there (pointing to the Knuckles range of the mountains about 12 miles distant) who will soon get rid of you; he will cut the ...(drawing his hand across his throat with a vicious smile) of everyone of you....⁵⁰⁶

In the opinion of Colonel Watson, statements of this nature “betrayed the voice and feelings of the Kandyans in general.”⁵⁰⁷

It was in the context of indigenous resistance to colonial endeavours to demarcate and privatize common land that the government passed the 1840 Crown Land Encroachment Ordinance #12, which decreed that land must have a deed. Where no deed was available, that land then belonged to the crown.⁵⁰⁸ The territorial politics implicit in this move is remarkable in terms of its inversion of a negative. The law does not seek to appropriate land directly; rather, it assumes the land *already* belongs to the state, and in this way, presumes and enforces a Euro-centric ontology of land and territory that it can be, and indeed *has already been* parcelled up for ownership and use. In some ways, assuming that all land belongs to the crown respects the idea that land is communal – as discussed in chapter two, there was a poorly translated assumption that all land “belonged” to the king. But the crude simplification that being “sovereign” meant “owning” the land and having the right to do with it what one pleased simply ignored the balance of symbolic sovereignty exercised by the king through ritual, and the practical

⁵⁰⁶ Colonel Watson, cited in James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 149.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ “Ordinance # 12, 1840: To Prevent Encroachments Upon Crown Lands,” British National Archives, *shelfmark*: CO 56/1.

everyday sovereignty exercised in a de-centralized manner based on labouring in service of public works that came with rights to use land.⁵⁰⁹ This conception of ownership over land that could then be parcelled out and sold to be “improved” by plugging into the imperial political economy was a violent intrusion over local practices of relating to and through land.

Taxes, Roads, Mandatory/Voluntary Labour: Liberal Colonial Difference

Coffee production was growing rapidly under the favourable, if contradictory, liberal policies of the colonial government, which essentially drew taxes and rights from the peasantry to invest in infrastructural projects in service to the growing plantation economy that asymmetrically benefitted British planters. At the same time, barriers to inter-imperial commerce in the West Indies and England were being drastically reduced, as previously discussed. By the mid 1840s, however, coffee consumption was slumping in European markets and European workers themselves were rising in rebellion across the continent. The Colonial Secretary in Colombo, Sir James Emmerson Tennant, had been working with the Colonial Office under Earl Grey in London to advocate market-friendly reforms to aid the floundering coffee industry. These reforms were continued under the new Governor, Lord Viscount Torrington in 1847. Part of the Grey/Tennant plan involved measures to cut export and import duties in order to allow for freer trade of goods. To recover the lost revenue, they sought to levy “flat taxes” on the national population that were, in practice, taxes on the indigenous population concerning land, dog licencing, and roads. A disciple of the principles of liberal political economy, Grey saw it

⁵⁰⁹ Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne, “The *Mandala* State in Pre-British Sri Lanka: The Cosmological Terrain of Contested Sovereignty in the Theravada Buddhism Tradition” in A. Wagner et al. (eds.), *Law, Culture and Visual Studies* Volumes 1 and 2, (Springer Publishing Company, 2013): 573 – 596.

as a colonial duty to remove impediments to industry and establish free trade across the Empire.⁵¹⁰ Yet his liberalizing efforts were tempered by the political rebellions rising up around Europe in 1848. For example, when Governor Torrington attempted to eliminate the mandatory military chest contribution of Ceylon to England as a way to increase revenue needed for the fortification of the port of Trincomalee, Grey made it clear in a letter dated May 19, 1848, that the political climate in London was completely unfavourable to such a request:

Never was there so violent an outcry for reduction of expenditure, and more especially of Colonial expenditure, many of our great economists going so far as to say it is of no use having Colonies at all – In such a state of feelings it w[oul]d of course be hopeless to think of asking for money to fortify Trincomalee or to relieve you from the £24,000 a year you have to pay into the Military Chest.⁵¹¹

Grey urged Torrington to roll out aforementioned flat tax on roads, which Torrington ultimately did as the 8th Ordinance of 1848. The Ordinance outlines that all men must pay a road tax of 1.5 rupees and if they cannot afford it or refuse to pay it, they will be obliged to give six days of labour per year. After stating that all men must pay the tax, the ordinance then outlines exemptions for the Governor, military servicemen, people representing the British monarchy, and migrant Tamil labourers coming from India. There are 80 clauses to this ordinance, and among them are stipulations outlining various other financial infractions, including clause 57 which establishes a fee of up to ten shillings if cattle is found wandering onto the road, clause 58 which would seize such cattle, and many other punitive clauses outlining consequences associated with resisting

⁵¹⁰ K.M. de Silva (ed.) *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50, The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'Rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*: 5 – 6. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

⁵¹¹ “Grey to Torrington, May 19, 1848” in K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50, The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'Rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

or refusing to work.⁵¹² In other words, even though the British had long advanced a moral argument that their liberal approach to governance would get rid of backwards practices of forced labour, in practice they would often bureaucratically alter the laws of the land in a way as to make voluntary compliance with seemingly reasonable requirements – like road taxes or mandatory-volunteerism – a liberal covering for repackaged forced labour.

In Governor Torrington's quest to balance the books in light of diminished demand for coffee in revolutionary Europe, the gift of tax exemption was offered only to large-scale coffee producers. While in theory this did not exclude local Sinhalese farmers, again in practice, due to European banks being unwilling to extend loans to natives, this was effectively a racialized economic subsidy to wealthy European planters that was paid for by the local population *en masse*. Furthermore, the tax exemption did not extend to indigenous rice producers, who were obligated to pay taxes by way of contributing 1/10 of their rice crop.⁵¹³ Torrington, in consultation with Secretary Grey and Colonial Secretary Tennent, essentially re-instated *rajakariya* disguised as a technocratic liberal pay-per-use policy applied to roads via the Road Ordinance of 1848. The practice of the law brings into stark focus the hypocrisy of 19th century liberalism: as the slavery which made the empire wealthy in the mercantilist era was being dismantled in the West Indies, legal manoeuvres were employing forced labour by writing laws that made forced labour appear to be a choice. In this way, the British could present themselves as a liberal and benign government that had abolished slavery in the West Indies and *rajakariya* in the

⁵¹² "Ordinance # 8, 1848: To make provision for the formation and improvement of the means of communication on the island." *British National Archives*, shelfmark: CO/56/5. See also: Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka: The Political Economy of the Kandyan Highlands, 1833 – 1886* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983): 249; James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 180.

⁵¹³ James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Topics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 180.

East Indies, which they understood by the mid 19th century as feudal slavery in Kandy, and then essentially reconfigure the practice of forced labour in a lawful way. Through using the “backwards” *rajakariya* system prior to the end of slavery in the Empire to build the roads that would pave the way for plantation development in the post-slavery era, the British were able – at least in their own minds – to create a legal avenue for forced labour and land theft while at the same time advancing the moral civilizing benefits of these “benevolent” acts of liberal government on the “pre-modern” masses.

Forced labour was debated and legitimized with a liberal, and increasingly statist/nationalist rationale: if you *choose* not to pay your fair share to the collective good, you may pay it with your labour instead. As said in the legislative council of Ceylon in 1842:

Roads, like the a[ir] we breathe, are common to all the inhabitants of th[e] country: - but while Providence provides us with ai[r] man must make the roads; therefore as every ma[n] makes some use of the roads, so every man should contribute towards their formation and upkeep. We will go further and meet the objection, which we have heard stated, that it is not equitable to claim as large contribution from the poor man as from the rich, but reminding these objectors, that the rich pay tolls which the poor do not, and that therefore the contributions of the rich and the poor are not equal, as they have supposed.⁵¹⁴

Gone is any reference, if any reference in the colonial parlance existed, about the roads serving to ensure the conquering of the indigenous population, even though only one generation had passed at this point. State infrastructural development was seen as a universal “good” regardless of the consequences it had for the expropriation of land and forced “choice” of hard labour when unable to pay the taxes associated with the road’s existence. Comments such as the one in the above quotation could be seen to have much in common with economic policy espoused by liberals and conservatives today. Under

⁵¹⁴ “Legislative Council” in Pamphlets on Ceylon, circa 1842. British National Library, shelfmark: 8023.cc.7.

the 1848 Road Ordinance, a worse form of *rajakariya* took the form of mandatory cash payment or in exchange of cash payment: manual labour of six days. Rather than being only applicable to land-holding people as it was in the indigenous application of the concept, it took the form of a general head tax on all men, eventually making accommodations for Buddhist priests who were obliged not to engage in work. So pivotal to the economic policy of the mid 19th century was this policy, that Tennent himself went on a circuit through the interior to hold meetings with upper class Sinhalese villagers, attempting to “educate” them on the merits of the policy and its importance for the national economic interest of the colony. Before Tennent could even return to Colombo, a major rebellion had broken out, the details of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to focus on the significance of the discourse of “improvement” in the transition from mercantilist to liberal rationalities for both commerce and colonialism in the early to middle 19th century, with a view to understanding how improvement and liberal/imperial political economy was related to the radical transformation of indigenous Kandyan territory into commercial British territory. The Empire was far from a unified agent in terms of its actions, as the desires of planters in the West Indies differed substantially from liberal philosophers and politicians in London, British planters and bureaucrats in Ceylon, coerced South Asian labourers, and Kandyan villagers. By bringing the fragments of colonial liberalism to light through the rise of plantations and their associated imperial political economy, this chapter shows that British colonialism/imperialism was not as organized and centrally emanating from the metropole as is commonly believed. Rather, what we see in scaling out to an imperial

political economy level is a much more cobbled together project that is contested in multiple directions, and rife with philosophical and practical contradictions at multiple scales. This more everyday view of liberal colonialism suggests a lack of coherence within the universal view of modernity itself, which, I maintain, is the constitutive logic of coloniality and illiberalism. In this way, we see less of a project of gradual universal modernization and much more of a contested project of co-constituted (albeit on uneven terms) of colonizers and colonial subjects.

The mercantilist approach of accumulation via gathering up existing resources using “primitive” indigenous techniques was seen as cold and unbecoming of a scientifically superior race of British men. In the early to mid 19th century, colonial development itself needed improvement such that a boundary could be drawn not only between primitive peoples and their British superiors, but also to mark a divide between the British slaving period and the British period of emancipation. The discourse of colonial improvement was one that could connect both territory and racialized people under a positive discourse that saw itself as “modern” opposite the “backwardness” that was grounded in at times contradicting attitudes towards compulsory labour and servitude. The limits of real choice under liberal colonial policy, as evidenced from land encroachment ordinances and road taxes combined with the birth of large-scale plantation agriculture as a function of trade policy reform and anti-slavery activism, highlights the interdependency of colonialism and capitalism in the 19th century, as well as the interplay of free conduct and coercive measures within liberal, colonial governmentality.

Chapter Four: The Coloniality of the Archives

While there are many kinds of assumptions that can be naturalized within archives, the one of greatest concerns in a study of colonial state formation is the way in which assumptions about concepts such as state, territory, nation, and the gradual linear development of human societies bleed into the archive, as well as the epistemologies underlying scientific historical research since the mid-19th century. There is already a healthy body of literature in postmodern and post-structural historiography that has sought to draw attention to the impossibility of authoring “objective” histories; this chapter is a subtler critique of the ability to write standpoint histories or national histories while taking for granted the ontological assumptions housed within archival “data.”⁵¹⁵ In this chapter, I focus on the various insurrectionary attempts to drive the British out of Kandy and Ceylon that largely defined the “middle period” of sovereign ontological contestation outlined in the first half of the dissertation. Building off the problems identified in the introduction’s discussion of the ‘coloniality of the archives’ and the representation of colonized people as “pre-political,” in this chapter I spend considerable time looking to instances of small and failed rebellions, which I strive to show played a role in creating a simmering culture of insurrection that impacted the evolving shape of the colonial state. This is particularly clear by the time of the 1848 Matale Rebellion, in which Governor Torrington’s heavy handed approach at quelling the uprising is informed by his fears of the 1817-1818 Uva rebellion, but also, as colonial testimonies after the fact

⁵¹⁵ Cf.: Alun Munslow, *The Future of History* (London: Palgrave, 2010); Keith Jenkins (ed.) *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997); Elizabeth Clarke, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

illustrate, the general culture of insurrection that was long simmering through the 1830s - 1840s.

In the first section, I discuss the epistemological problem of relying on influential secondary histories of Ceylon for this dissertation, highlighting in particular how Sri Lankan historians themselves have been complicit with some of the ideological assumptions of colonial modernity as it pertains to representing people as “pre-political” or “pre-modern.” In section two, I offer my own readings of archives in order to draw attention to why the period of relative peace between the Uva and Matale rebellions of 1817-1818 and 1848, respectively, need to be reconsidered in light of what little of the agency of ordinary people may be glimpsed and inferred from available data. In particular, I draw on newspaper accounts, military court martials, and government correspondences “in relief,” as outlined in the introduction, as a way to paint a more complex picture of the transformative period through which we can see the colonial state as the product of both colonizing and anti-colonizing vectors. As Nihal Perera argues,

Society and space operate together: they influence and affect each other, but one does not determine the other...If the Lankans were attempting to escape colonialism until the 1850s, from the 1860s they were increasingly focusing on appropriating colonial structures, spaces and symbols and making a livelihood or strengthening their positions within the colonial order.⁵¹⁶

Perera maintains that by the 1860s, an element of “reverse-Orientalism” unfolding in Colombo led to the simultaneous Westernization of the nascent national Lankan elite, and the indigenization of foreign social and spatial structures. I am in agreement with his reading, which is why I am particularly interested in the roughly three decades of simultaneous colonizing and anti-colonizing politics between the Kandyan Convention of

⁵¹⁶ Nihal Perera, “Indigenising the Colonial City: Late 19th-century Colombo and its Landscape,” *Urban Planning* 39/9 (2002): 1706.

1815 and the Matale Rebellion of 1848 as central to the sovereign ontological collision that produced the colonial satellite state. With reference to the concept of ontological conflict introduced in chapter two, this is the important period in which we can see the two “galaxies” or ontologies of “sovereignty” colliding and merging into a single framework: that of the modern, territorial state. By the end of this period, I argue, the logic of the colonial state had become firmly entrenched, and we can see this in the shift in anticolonial tactics in the latter half of the 19th century. I expand on the broader significance of this in the conclusion to the dissertation, which brings together the significance of each chapter to revisit the dissertation’s question: how has the process of becoming the modern, territorial state worked to legitimize one expression of sovereignty, and de-legitimize others?

Section One: Towards the Modern Science of History

Elite Histories and the Coloniality of the Archive

The concerns of this section are not to re-hash the secondary literature on the broad empirical contours of the history, but rather, to highlight the epistemic violence implicit in dominant historicizing of the events. I draw on illustrative examples taken from three eminent scholars of Sri Lankan history, G.C. Mendis, C.R. de Silva, and K.M. de Silva. Before introducing these examples, a brief biographical note is warranted to place these scholars into the political and academic contexts in which they lived and worked.

G.C. Mendis was born in 1894 in Moratuwa, outside of Colombo, where his father was the priest of the local Methodist church. Mendis studied and taught in Kandy and was personally engaged in early national political organizing with his older brother, distributing pamphlets and newspapers promoting the Ceylon National Congress. While

he was a lecturer at the Ceylon Government Training Centre, he was able to take leave and begin his PhD studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, under the supervision of Rhys Davids, a Pali scholar who spent a decade as a colonial civil servant in Ceylon. As a student in London, Mendis also spent time in Germany, studying with the German orientalist, Wilhelm Ludwig Geiger. Mendis' dissertation was a critical reading of the Sinhalese/Buddhist Pali text, *Mahavamsa*, and he went on to write some of the seminal pieces on Ceylon and Sri Lanka history. Mendis helped to institutionally create the space as well as the texts for the study of history on the island. Among his many contributions is *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy 1796–1933*, which has served as a basis for most historians of the period. Indeed, as Michael Roberts, another important historian of Sri Lanka notes, after Mendis' retirement, this valuable collection became a central text for fourth year History students in Sri Lanka.⁵¹⁷

Born in 1907, Colvin R. de Silva was a contemporary of Mendis and was also involved in anticolonial organizing. He was imprisoned for his activism during the independence movement of the 1940s in Ceylon. During that time, he wrote *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795–1833: Its political, administrative, and economic development*, and entrusted the proofs and editing to Mendis.⁵¹⁸ A founder of the *Lanka Sama Samaja* Party – the first communist party on the island – he won a seat in independent Ceylon's first elections in 1947. C.R. de Silva had earned a PhD from

⁵¹⁷ Michael Roberts, "A Tribute to G.C. Mendis: Pioneering Tertiary Education in History for Lanka," *Thuppahi's Blog*, July 2, 2016. Accessed January 3, 2017. <https://goo.gl/g0s9Wx>; Kalasuri Wilfred Gunasekara, "G.C. Mendis – One of Sri Lanka's Pioneer scientific historians," *Daily News* Oct. 28, 1999. Accessed December 8, 2016. <https://goo.gl/Pp3187>.

⁵¹⁸ Kalasuri Wilfred Gunasekara, "G.C. Mendis – One of Sri Lanka's Pioneer scientific historians," *Daily News* Oct. 28, 1999. Accessed December 8, 2016. <https://goo.gl/Pp3187>.

University College of London and his dissertation was the material on which his manuscript written in prison was based.⁵¹⁹

Kingsly Mutumuni de Silva was born in 1931 and, as such, would have been in the next generation of Sri Lankan historians. Educated initially at the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya, he completed his doctoral dissertation on missionary organizations in 19th century Ceylon at the University of London. He has written prolifically on Sri Lankan history, ethnic relations, nationalism, conflict, and post-conflict, with his most recent book on the Lanka/Eelam civil war having been released in 2012.

With this context in mind, I now take up more centrally the ways through which the ideas of scientific history and the development of society have moved in an under-problematized way through the scholarship of these authors. Take, for example, the contestations grounded in the authenticity of the “Cleghorn minute” of 1799 that has served as a historical artefact for both Tamil and Sinhalese nationalists in the late 20th century. Many of the island’s post-independence conflicts have been associated with contrasting claims to authentic pasts and territories between Tamil and Sinhalese, in which the historical record becomes a contested battleground. Proponents of the claim that the pre-dominantly Tamil-speaking North and East of the island represent a historic and distinct homeland based on an ancient history of Tamil sovereignty point to this minute written by Hugh Cleghorn in 1799. Cleghorn, a visiting academic from England touring the island as part of the new British government that was taking over the Dutch Maritime territories of Ceylon at the time, observed that the northern and eastern regions

C.R. de Silva also coined the response to the oft cited British saying, “the sun never sets on the British empire” with “God does not trust the British in the dark.”

of the island were the historic homeland of the Tamil people.⁵²⁰ K.M. de Silva lambasts this claim in a conference paper given at an International Conference on Separatism in 1987, where he argues that Tamil separatist leaders rely on Cleghorn's minute for their claim to statehood: "It was a claim based on a hazy memory of statehood in centuries past, remembered and newly interpreted (and generally misinterpreted) to mean a continuing tradition of independent statehood and an unbroken national consciousness."⁵²¹ Cleghorn, de Silva argues, was a foreign academic with no knowledge of, or experience on the island, and he most likely relied on flawed Dutch archives to come to his conclusion. De Silva further argues that Tamil nationalists rely only on a portion of the minute that supports their claim to a separate homeland in the North and East, while ignoring important errors that draw the historical accuracy into question. Cleghorn writes:

Two different nations, from a very ancient period, have divided between them the possession of the island. First the Cingalese [sic] inhabiting the interior of the country, in its southern and western parts, from the river Wallouve (Walawe) to that of Chilow [sic], and secondly the Malabars (Tamils), who possess the northern and eastern districts. These two nations differ entirely in their religion, language and manners.⁵²²

According to de Silva, Tamil nationalists tend to ignore that the memo continues: "The former, who are allowed to be the earlier settlers, derive their origin from Siam, professing the ancient religion of that country."⁵²³ De Silva points to this significant empirical misreading of South/Southeast Asian history as evidence of the dubious credibility of the minute in its entirety, and rightly so.

⁵²⁰ K.M. de Silva, *Separatist Ideology in Sri Lanka: A Historical Appraisal of the claim for the "traditional homelands" of the Tamils of Sri Lanka* (Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1987).

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Quoted in de Silva, 1987. 7, see also de Silva's appendix for full Cleghorn Minute.

⁵²³ Ibid.

De Silva's critique of the Cleghorn minute, however, also betrays his own intellectual investments towards a history of the island tinged with a methodological investment that naturalizes – and thus removes from investigation – the norm of total territorial rule. If “unbroken” continuity is a requirement to make a legitimate claim to statehood, then why assume that the British period is not a break in this chain in the South of the country? To perceive it as a continued chain of governance is to misrepresent even the history of political rule during the Dutch and Portuguese occupation, not to mention the much longer history of fragmented and galactic sovereignty on the island that de Silva is well aware of.⁵²⁴ Contemporary Tamil and Sinhalese nationalists lay claim to their legitimacy by being grounded in a history of the island that naturalizes a modern norm of territorial exclusivity that is anachronistically rigid and largely indifferent to the colonial encounter.⁵²⁵

By following the norms of modern social science research, there is a presumption that objectively analyzing history can uncover and prove contemporary claims based on the past. But faith in the rigor of the historical method to adequately mitigate the distorting effect of social power is misplaced, in part because of a belief in the historian's ability to be detached from the social past they seek to describe.⁵²⁶ As Sanjay Seth observes, “there is no Archimedean point from which we can survey and know the world without being influenced by our place in it.”⁵²⁷ This highlights the importance of being

⁵²⁴ Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006): 1 – 35.

⁵²⁵ Indifferent, because of course the colonial encounter is present in all histories, but the idea of total territorial rule and the main subject of this dissertation is generally treated as an assumed constant.

⁵²⁶ Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007): 79 – 85.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

reflexive about the assumptions, or ontological premises, that the historian brings to the historical narrative.

Consider the following description of the Matale rebellion, also written by K.M. de Silva, in its representation of nationalism:

Between 8th July and 29th July – the day of the riots at Matale – the mass movement against the taxes was taken over by a small group of men who sought to channel this discontent into an attempt to drive the British out of Kandy. The force that inspired these men was that of Kandyan nationalism, a nationalism poles apart from the nationalism of the 20th century but none the less nationalism for all that. [Governor] Torrington came nearest to understanding this force when he explained that, “By [Kandyan] nationality I mean the feelings, the habits, associations and customs which still obtain among a people who only 34 years ago were for the first time subjected to our authority and whose amalgamation with the Maritime Provinces never appears to have made much progress.”⁵²⁸

De Silva draws on Torrington’s reflection of the events after the fact, in *The Report of the Committee of the Executive Council on the Fixed Establishments of Ceylon* in 1852. In his observations on nationalism, Torrington importantly reflects on the relatively brief time (34 years) of geographical effort towards forcing the Kandyan region into a political administrative system including other regions of the island. The important aspect of historical analysis I dwell on in this section is not de Silva’s analysis of the colonial government, but rather, the alignment of his analysis with the epistemic perspective of the documents he reads. Consider his analysis of why the rebellion emerged in the introduction to his important edited collection of letters between Governor Torrington and the Secretary of Colonies in London, the Earl Grey:

To men in this “pre-political” state of existence, the ruler symbolizes and represents the people and their way of life. The ruler and the system of government which he represents may be evil, corrupt and unjust, but in so far as the society over which he presides is stable and the tradition he represents the

⁵²⁸ K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50, The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'Rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*: 21. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

norm of life. This norm may not be a very happy one for the common people but because it was the traditional society they would accept its manifold defects as part of man's fate, the more readily when a new form of society had arisen which brought unfamiliar distractions but no compensating advantages evident to themselves. The pretender and his associates provided the people of the Kandyan region with an opportunity to return to the rule of their own "kings," to their norm of life, to the traditional society, and to a world where there were no planters, no migrant Indian labourers and no new revolutionary taxes. The Kandyans could understand monarchy and authoritarian rule but they could make little sense out of the cold and impersonal British administration.⁵²⁹

In contextualizing the events of the 1848 failed rebellion, he denies political agency to the individuals participating in the uprising in ways that serve to reinforce the normative narrative, of lack and people not being ready for history, that is contained within the colonial archives. Kandians are both "pre-political" and outside of History; unqualified placeholders caught in the maelstrom of the inevitable march to modernity that they are unqualified to perceive. The problem speaks to the issue raised by Chakrabarty in his description of how History structurally superimposes "Europe" upon the rest of the world, and this affliction is not at all unique to K.M. de Silva. C.R. de Silva accounts for the Matale rebellion in a similar way, noting that the taxation enabled a few districts in Kandy to rise in rebellion, though not uniformly.⁵³⁰ Describing the events of the Uva Rebellion a generation earlier in 1817/1818, C.R. de Silva notes:

With the exception of Nuvarakalāviya, Ūva and Vellassa were perhaps the most backward and least known provinces in the Kandyan Kingdom. They were thinly peopled; and the settled inhabitants were hardly less primitive than the aboriginal Vāddas of the Bintānna jungle. The land was sparsely cultivated and the people were poor. Even in the days of Sinhalese independence, the central government had exercised little control over these provinces, the only line between it and the Vāddas being the scanty annual tribute of honey and wax. Yet these provinces were thoroughly loyal to the old regime. In 1815, although the British met little or no resistance in this quarter, the people deserted their villages and kept sullenly

⁵²⁹ K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50, The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'Rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*: 23. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

⁵³⁰ Chandra Richard de Silva, *Sri Lanka: A History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987): 150.

aloof. These provinces were never properly subdued. For several months after the occupation the people evinced “a certain shyness and coldness” and refused to return to their homes from the jungles in which they had sought refuge.⁵³¹

In this description, the backwardness of the people is doubly described based on distance from two elite orders, first the Kandyan galactic/*mandala* order, and second the British administrative order. The history “as it was” perhaps allows for the description of the sparsely cultivated and poor, but cannot support the claim to “most backward” and “less primitive” than the indigenous Vaddas who here represent a placeholder of the people within the imagined state of nature. There is a presumption in C.R de Silva’s description that the distance and autonomy enjoyed by the people of Uva and Vellassa represents a lack of development, but as James C. Scott has shown, there is considerable precedent for peasants going to great lengths to live away from the reach of a centralizing political authority.⁵³² The area of uphill Southeast Asia that Scott writes about is quite distinct from Ceylon, but in light of Scott’s body of work on the state and ordinary people at the boundaries of the state, it should not be controversial to say that minimal engagement with the sovereign order via tribute at the boundary of Kandyan authority need not be considered *lack* of political sophistication if one rejects the idea that there is only a linear, universal, development of political practice.⁵³³ Difference, or organizing society in accordance with ontological starting assumptions that are distinct from the imagined universality of European thought about reality, is still confused with “primitiveness” and “lack” in these cases. More than just a question of degrees of specificity or choice of wording alone, this example highlights the normative and ontological assumptions about

⁵³¹ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume 1: Its political and Administrative Development*. (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd, 1953): 176.

⁵³² James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵³³ Ibid.; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Conditions Have Failed*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

the movement of history and the hierarchies of societies; these are important points of continuity between the values of the colonial archive and the values of post-colonial historians trained in scientific history whose accounts have become seminal to the study of the island.

K.M. de Silva continues to rationalize the 1848 Rebellion as backwards looking:

Their aim was a return to the old Kandyan system with its traditional values, which – somewhat naively perhaps – they aspired to cherish by making one of their number king. Theirs was a blind protest against the changes and uncertainties brought by British rule, and they yearned for the old society, the only one they knew and understood. They had the support of a substantial section of the population and some at least of the *bhikkhus*, though the aristocracy stood aloof from their movement.⁵³⁴

In this interpretation, people are incapable of imagining a future or enacting meaningful politics, even though the failed actions did provoke the revocation of the Governor and legislative changes. G.C. Mendis' account is roughly in line with both C.R and K.M de Silva's. Linking the disturbances (as they were called in the government records) to the institutional changes catalyzed by the legal and institutional reforms of the 1832 Colebrooke-Cameron review, Mendis discusses a crowd of some 4000 people petitioning against tax reforms on July 6th, 1848:

Led by two low-country Sinhalese who were professional robbers, mobs sacked public buildings and shops at Kandy, Matale and Kurunagala, as well as some planters' bungalows. These riots can hardly be called a rebellion, but Government which was ignorant of the real conditions of the country misjudged the situation and took severe measures to put them down.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ K.M. de Silva (ed.), *Letters on Ceylon 1846 – 50, The Administration of Viscount Torrington and the 'Rebellion' of 1848: The private correspondence of the Third Earl Grey (Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 – 52) and Viscount Torrington*: 23. British National shelfmark: X.700/3328.

⁵³⁵ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume 1: Its political and Administrative Development*. (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd, 1953): 87.

The recurring issue in these histories is perhaps a blend of relying on the tone of the colonial archives to describe the impossibility of material success, as well as the latent elitism of the statements. For both C.R and K.M de Silva, ordinary people are not truly qualified to partake in the elite practice of politics, an idea akin to Rancière's critique of Western philosophy that argues that the *demos* is unqualified to participate in politics.⁵³⁶ There is a proper way to lead or to wage insurrection, or to represent oneself that villagers have no experience with. This is precisely the kind of thinking that Rancière challenges by removing politics from the realm of elite debate and positioning it instead in the *partage du sensible*. As Davide Panagia explains, "the inequality of a *partage du sensible* that establishes a hierarchy between those who know and those who do not know, between those whose speech makes good sounds and those whose utterances are mere noise, holds the potential of its own dissolution."⁵³⁷ The lay leaders of the Matale rebellion may have been unqualified to speak in elite circles, yet elite-level conspiracies between Uva and Matale ultimately did not succeed in driving the British from Ceylon either.

Within C.R and K.M de Silva's accounts of the Matele rebellion, they see a correct way to raise a rebellion and often harken back to the elite-driven attempts during the Uva Rebellion. The *lack* of being able to convince the *sangha* and the elites in the subsequent rebellions is often highlighted as a major cause for their failure to overthrow the British. Perhaps this is true, but politics, in a radical sense, must be much more than simply the criteria for success; it is the *process* that makes something political, not the outcome. The fact that rebellions throughout the period of 1818-1848 failed is not

⁵³⁶ Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics" *Theory & Event* 5/3 (2001): 1 – 18.

⁵³⁷ Davide Panagia, "'Partage du sensible': The distribution of the Sensible" in Jean-Phillippe Deranty (ed.) *Jacques Rancière Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen, 2010): 98.

evidence of their lack of enacting politics – if it were, then history must indeed be little more than a narrative of victors. Thucydides’ oft-cited analysis from the Melian Dialogue, “Right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must,”⁵³⁸ is turned on its head by Rancière’s understanding of politics as everyday acts of resistance. It is precisely the weak’s rejection that they “do what they must” that makes something political, by disrupting the normal order of things and forcing a re-negotiation. When considering the writings and observations of the colonial archives, one sees quite clearly that events like these failed rebellions actually had a significant impact on the everyday processes of governance, or what we might more generally describe as the becoming-colonial police order.

Section Two: Archiving in Relief

In this section, I look for the enactment of “politics” in places that have not been heard, highlighting the importance of the everyday struggle against colonialism rather than the military victory of those struggles. I move illustratively between ca. 1818 and 1848 to draw attention to the subtler ways in which the actions of the people allegedly “outside” the limit of historical and political consciousness enacted a radical form of politics throughout this important 30-year period.

⁵³⁸ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Mount Holyoke College. Accessed April 13, 2017. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/melian.htm>

Uva Rebellion

I discussed the Uva rebellion briefly in chapter two, and its shadow has been cast upon much of the history of colonial Ceylon throughout the dissertation and across historical accounts of the early 19th century. The details of the rebellion are well documented in the secondary literature; in summary, however, it is relevant to point to the fact that the British nearly gave up and retreated from the Kandyan territories as they had historically done during previous military conflicts in the interior. In order to turn the corner in the military conflict, the British resorted to brutal scorched-earth military strategies, burning villages and destroying lands and irrigation systems to break the will to rebel.⁵³⁹ The arrival of native reinforcements from India and the loyalty to the British of Molligode, the Dessave of the Four Karoles, kept a line of intelligence and communication open between Kandy and Colombo, so they remained in the fight.⁵⁴⁰ Historical precedent was very much on the Kandyan side in this rebellion, as both the British forces and the Kandyan aristocracy were very aware that the ease with which the British sacked Kandy in 1815 was a diplomatic arrangement brokered by Ehelepola and Sir John D'Oyly then chief translator attached to the British government of the Maritime provinces. The complicity of the Kandyan aristocracy, as discussed in the Introduction and in more detail in chapter two, can be explained by the internal power struggles within the Kandyan galactic system which arguably began with the coronation of Kandy's last king, Vickrama Rajasinha, in 1798. Elite aristocratic attempts to remove the king were not always supported by the ordinary masses, and as the king concentrated material power under his control, the principle of galactic sovereignty that balanced power and responsibility between material

⁵³⁹ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume I: Its political and Administrative Development*. (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries' Co., Ltd, 1953): 23.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.,; Chandra R. de Silva. *Sri Lanka: A History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987): 148.

and cosmological realms was falling out of balance. It was in this context of power concentration that Ehelepola attempted to seize the opportunity to leverage British power to stage a (relatively) bloodless coup, though for reasons explored in chapter two, while the aristocracy did not plan on a permanent British presence in Kandy. The preceding military conflicts between Kandy and the British had all ultimately led to the British retreating back to the Maritime provinces. Following the capture of the “pretender” to the throne in 1818, the British ordered a revision to the Kandyan Convention through the Proclamation of 21st November that sought to punish the areas of Kandy that rose in rebellion and reward those that did not.⁵⁴¹

The Proclamation of 21st November, 1818 has a triumphant and patronizing tone, chiding those who rebelled for “forgetting” the vast resources of the Empire (clause 4) on the one hand, but also noting that the rebel king brought forth by Keppetipola was found eventually to not hail from the Nayakkar Malabar dynasty, but instead from more humble and Sinhalese ancestry.⁵⁴² This is an important inclusion because it speaks to the fact the galactic sovereign order required the right lineage to occupy the role of the king at the centre of Kandy, otherwise Keppetipola or any of the other rebels would not have needed to hide the identity of the rebel king. In the original 1815 Kandyan Convention (clause 3), all male relations of the Malabar (Tamil) king were deemed “enemies to the government of the Kandyan provinces,” and Malabar claim to the throne of Kandy formally abolished.⁵⁴³ Clearly this clause did not truly extinguish the social and symbolic importance of the most recent dynasty. Importantly, it altered the wording of the fifth

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² “Proclamation of 21st November, 1818” *Revised Edition of the Ordinances of the Government of Ceylon, Vol. 1 1799 – 1882* (Colombo: G.J.A. Skeen, Government Printer, 1894): 18 – 21.

⁵⁴³ “Proclamation of 2nd March, 1815” *Revised Edition of the Ordinances of the Government of Ceylon, Vol. 1 1799 – 1882* (Colombo: G.J.A. Skeen, Government Printer, 1894): 16 – 18.

clause of the convention that favoured Buddhism to more broadly offer protection to all religions in the area which opened the door for robust debates amongst civil servants and missionaries about the relationship between the colonial state and “heathen” religions.⁵⁴⁴ The major thrust of the November 21st Proclamation was to punish the chiefs who rose against the British and reward those who did not by exempting them from paying taxes.

The issue of rugged roads was central to British frustration during the Uva Rebellion. According to the *Ceylon Gazette* from Feb. 28, 1818, it would take British troops nearly nine hours to march as little as eight miles in some parts of the interior, leaving them vulnerable to raids.⁵⁴⁵ Effort is exerted in this newspaper article to re-assure the British public and perhaps the British troops themselves that history would not repeat itself:

Such is the present state of affairs in the Interior; that it does not bear out any expectation of a speedy end to the insurrection is undeniable, but while the health of the Troops continues to be good and the most powerful efforts of the Rebels occasion no greater loss in casualties than as yet have been sustained, we see no cause for despair of the ultimate success of the British arms against the undisciplined rabble opposed to them; we know that those who predict the most direful results in the present struggle refer to the melancholy Catastrophy [sic] in 1803 as authority for their dismal speculations; but they surely must omit to advert to the very different state of our Hospital Returns at that unfortunate Period.⁵⁴⁶

The “catastrophe” in question refers to the 1803 attempt of the British to militarily defeat the Kandyan, which ultimately led to the massacring of an entire regiment and the execution of soldiers in their hospital beds by the Kandyan forces. The spectre of this particular defeat haunts accounts within the exchanges between Colombo and the

⁵⁴⁴ Cf.: Rev. Spence Hardy *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon* (1839) SOAS Missionary Archives, shelfmark: MMSL S123; Phillip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁵⁴⁵ *Ceylon Gazette* Feb. 28, 1818. Re-printed in the *Madras Courier*. British National Library, shelfmark: OMF/SM 126

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

Colonial Office in London throughout the early- to mid- 19th century, and manifests in public discourse in newspapers as well.⁵⁴⁷

As discussed in chapter two, the reason the British were able to win legal control over the entire island was largely because of the diplomatic and symbolic authority wielded by Ehelepola, the condemned *Mahadikar* of Sri Vikrama Rajasinha. Ehelepola was a controversial figure during the Uva rebellion, often appearing as though he were playing both sides. In his own account of what happened during the beginning of the rebellion, he highlights that he tried, on more than one occasion, to alert the British and to dissuade his countrymen from taking up arms against the government. Symbols were important in raising this rebellion, and part of the reason why the British were suspicious of Ehelepola was the fact that his relative, Keppetipola, was the British-appointed Dessave of Uva province after the Kandyan Convention of 1815. After the convention, important symbols of sovereignty had ‘gone missing’ and Governor Brownrigg was looking for them. Keppetipola Dessave was found to be in possession of the Royal Regalia of the recently ousted king. Keppetipola, who was a signatory to the 1815 Kandyan Convention, was sent by the government when the rebellion began to really heat up to take concrete steps to crush it. He and five hundred men went looking for the rebels, and upon finding them, joined them instead of bringing them to the British. After joining them, he returned the guns he was armed with to the British, reportedly saying that he did

⁵⁴⁷ It is interesting to observe that in most cases when “natives” defeat British forces, there often appears to be a requirement to render the enemy forces exotic or especially barbaric in their defense. In the sources consulted in the preparation of this dissertation, explanations for British military failures in North America, Ceylon, India, and Afghanistan all sought to explain and rationalize the losses based on the savagery of the native Other and the moral virtue of the British forces.

not want to defeat them with their own weapons. According to Ehelepola, Keppetipola did so using Ehelepola's name to inspire other Kandyans to rise up as well.⁵⁴⁸

The *Ceylon Gazette* published the interrogation of a Kohnhumbra Ratteralle, a rebel chief captured by Malay troops on behalf of the British. Although the text is clearly translated and most likely edited for print, it offers a rare glimpse into the political thinking of a local leader engaged in political insurrection at the time. When asked where he was going on the night of his apprehension, Ratteralle answers, "We had received instructions from the Pretender to take the Camps in the neighbourhood and in the event of our success, we were promised great promotion."⁵⁴⁹ He confesses that he was the first chief in the area of Welasse to join the rebellion, and when asked why he took up arms against the Government and how long he intended to fight, he answers:

I don't know that any particular period has been contemplated. We intended continuing the struggle to the end of our lives, because we could not expect pardon if we submitted.⁵⁵⁰

Ratteralle prefaces some of his comments with, "although I am to be put to death" and offers very matter-of-fact answers that betray an allegiance to the older sovereign order. Though it is not clear if Ratteralle would have used the word "Pretender"⁵⁵¹ to refer to the leader of the Rebellion who was crowned King of Kandy in a dramatic performance of sovereignty that was given legitimacy with symbols (including the *dalada* relic), his answers seem to suggest that there was little reason to question the sovereign authority of the newly-crowned Kandyan king. At the same time, the deprivation and brutality of the British military tactics underway to starve and render ill by disease the Kandyan

⁵⁴⁸ "The Case of Eyhelapola Maha Nilame, a Kandyan Chief detained at Mauritius as State Prisoner." British National Archives, shelfmark CO 416/20.

⁵⁴⁹ "Interview with Rebel Chief Kohnhumbra Ratteralle" *Ceylon Gazette* May 16, 1818. Reprinted in the *Madras Courier*. British National Library, shelfmark: OMF/SM 126.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ The language of "the pretender" is used in the English translation of the interrogation.

population would have been acutely felt by May 1818, when Ratteralle would have been questioned.

Symbols of authority were central to the colonial forces as well. While the Governor, Robert Brownrigg, was based in the interior during the rebellion, Lady Brownrigg was playing an important diplomatic and symbolic role in Colombo. In reading the dispatches and newspaper accounts that followed the Uva Rebellion from 1817-1818, a major recurring and underappreciated fact is that the majority of important victories and apprehensions came from the *non*-British troops, either Indian reinforcements, Malay mercenaries, or local forces from the South. In somewhat rare recognition of this fact, Lady Brownrigg presented official colours to the “Native Militia” in August of 1818. Her speech was simultaneously translated into Sinhalese so the troops receiving the honours would understand:

In presenting this Standard to the Militia of Ceylon, I have great pleasure in expressing how much gratified I have been by the favourable reports of your attention to the necessary exercise to enable you take the field with effect. Every well disposed man, who wishes for the happiness of his Country and the safety of his family must feel anxious to rally round this Standard, and while their Governor is devoting every moment and thought of his life to put down the Rebellion, and unite this Island under one Government, the Caste of fighting men will all step forward and show the utmost diligence and zeal to support his measures and obtain the grand object of his unceasing endeavours, that of restoring peace and prosperity to Ceylon.⁵⁵²

In Lady Brownrigg’s presentation we see a performative contestation of sovereignties at play during the Uva rebellion. Within the interior, still inaccessible and unknowable to the British who relied heavily on non-European forces to traverse the boundaries, Kandyans were contesting the sovereign claim of the British using important spiritual symbols that represented Kandyan sovereignty. This included the royal regalia mentioned

⁵⁵² “Lady Brownrigg speech to Native Militia,” *Ceylon Gazette* Aug. 8, 1818. British National Archives, shelfmark: OMF/SM 126.

earlier, but also the *dalada* relic which was stolen back from the British by the rebels. In Colombo, natives who were much further removed from the activities in the Kandyan centre were being encouraged to rally around the British flag to restore “peace and prosperity” while, at the same time, being led to practice scorched-earth military strategy against indigenous forces who were mostly armed with spears, swords, and bows and arrows.⁵⁵³ As the rebellion unfolded, with each side operating under conflicting ontologies of sovereignty, ordinary people were the ones who suffered the consequences of the ensuing violence. Estimates of the deaths vary, but in general the figures identify about 1000 deaths on the British side, mostly due to disease rather than direct fighting, and more than 10,000 deaths suffered by the Kandyans, many of them induced by the deprivations associated with the military strategies deployed by the British forces.

In the aftermath of the Uva Rebellion, Governor Brownrigg sought to ensure control of the Kandyan interior by establishing strategic military fortresses throughout the passages leading to Kandy from different directions of the island. This strategy proved inefficient, as it relied on British troops being stationed within the jungle, where they often fell victim to malaria and fever. Sir Edward Barnes assumed the governorship in 1820 and sought to change the approach to controlling the interior by moving away from periodic fortifications to, instead, altering the transportation infrastructure such that additional access points on more easily traversable roads could guarantee a rapid military reaction force from territories more favourable to British bodies.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵³ Why Keppetipola returned the guns in his position to the British upon defecting to the Rebels is a mystery, though perhaps it was to instill a sense of national, indigenous pride in the traditional warfare tactics that had protected Kandy through hundreds of years of colonial advances to this point.

⁵⁵⁴ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation 1795 – 1833 Volume 1: Its political and Administrative Development*. (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd, 1953): 25 – 27.

Although Uva and Matale were the bigger uprisings within this period, there were important “disturbances” that were quietly noted in the colonial records as well. The table in the Appendix, re-created from confidential government records printed in 1849, summarizes these events. As the table in appendix B shows, between 1815 -1848, there were at least half a dozen organized efforts to drive the British out that can be seen in the archival record. As described by former Colonial Secretary James E. Tennent,

We obtained possession of the Kandyan provinces, which completed our tenure of the whole island, in the year 1815. That is 35 years ago, and within that period there have been six treasonable movements of considerable importance against the Government. There has been on the average one such movement in every six years. There was open rebellion in 1817, in 1823, and in 1848. There were three conspiracies detected before their explosion, in 1820, 1834, and 1843, and those are independent of the treasonable plots which were detected and arrests which took place in 1816, 1819, 1820, 1824, 1830, and 1842.⁵⁵⁵

Priests were actively involved in the insurrections throughout this period. According to a government report tabled by Tennent at his testimony, the 1817/18, 1823, 1834, 1842, and 1843 resistance attempts were heavily influenced, or even directed, by Buddhist priests. During the Uva Rebellion, the priest Ihagamma was tried by court martial and sentenced to death, but ultimately, this sentence was changed to political exile in Mauritius for life. During the 1823 uprisings, Kahawatte Unase, a priest from Matale was tried in criminal court at Kandy and sentenced to death for his role in organizing the uprising. He was hanged on August 5, 1828. In the 1834 conspiracy, Dembewe Unanse, Tibboteewew Unanse, and Kettacuimburi Unanse were all priests who were tried for their role in the conspiracy by the Supreme Court but ultimately acquitted. In the attempt of 1842 and 1843, Chandroyottey Selewananse Saranankere, also a priest, was tried for

⁵⁵⁵ James Emerson Tennent, “Tennent to Committee.” *Third Report from Select Committee on Ceylon (Session 1850)*: 162-163. Accessed July 12 2011. <https://goo.gl/MeYCyM>.

treason and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court, a sentence ultimately downgraded to prison with hard labour for 14 years.⁵⁵⁶

Though the statistics in Appendix B describe the disturbance of 1824 as very minor – and it was in terms of resources expended to quell it – what is worth bringing to light is the particularly dramatic aspect of how it unfolded. The leader of the attempt was named as “Mootoo, alias Juan Pulle, alias Kanewada Pulle” who claimed to be the rightful heir (in the line of the ousted Sri Vikrama Rajasinha) to the throne of Kandy. According to the available records, Mootoo decried the British government as illegitimate in a rousing speech from a large rock near a village in the Seven Korales. In the discussion that ensued, villagers argued that past rebellions had led only to the loss of land and life. Mootoo attempted to persuade the people on the basis that via his legitimate link to the throne, his relatives were waiting to rise up against the government in different parts of the country following the outbreak of rebellion. Moreover, he argued that the British, too, were in a weakened state at the moment, as they were fighting in Siam (modern day Thailand). Eleven men followed Mootoo, and they were invited at a later date to receive gifts and endorsements at a nearby village. Fearing treachery, they made their would-be hosts swear upon their swords their loyalty to Mootoo as King of Kandy, and cautiously agreed to go in order to rally more support. Upon arriving, they were invited into a house, which they did not initially enter, but after much persuading and reassurance, Mootoo and three others entered. At that point, the door was sealed shut, and a sword and spear fight ensued as they fought their way out of the trap, ultimately

⁵⁵⁶ Paper prepared by J. Fraser, Keeper of Government Records. Tabled during Tennent’s testimony to committee, 1850: 210. See: James Emerson Tennent, “Tennent to Committee. *Third Report from Select Committee on Ceylon (Session 1850)*: 162-163. Accessed July 12 2011. <https://goo.gl/MeYCyM>.

surrendering with the arrival of troops armed with guns. At the trial, there was a feeble attempt to claim there was no attempt to rebel, but the public spectacle of the whole process undermined the claim. British statistics identify that five men were executed, and eight were exiled, though they did not name them.⁵⁵⁷

The source of enacting politics in this scenario rests not in Mootoo or the British, but in the villagers who intervened in the prevailing convention of elite-led armed insurrection to put a stop to the rebellion before it began. We catch a glimpse of this in the above-mentioned interrogation of Kohnhumbra Ratteralle, who although committed to fighting unto death in principle, was willing to engage in a negotiated agreement that would secure the relative safety of his family from war-induced deprivation.⁵⁵⁸ By the time of Mootoo's attempt to raise a rebellion in 1823, there had already been nearly constant minor uprisings throughout the territory. Although the chart in the Appendix notes a smaller uprising in 1823 as the only one between 1818 and 1824, the *Ceylon Gazette* of July 29th, 1820 also reports that there was an ongoing insurrection in Kandy, and that rewards were offered by the Governor for information leading to arrests of people disrupting the lines of communications linking Kandy to Trincomalee in the North.⁵⁵⁹ The emphasis on disrupting lines of communication is important, as the preservation of lines of communication afforded by Molligodde's loyalty to the British

⁵⁵⁷ "Notes on the trial of 12 prisoners regarding the attempted rebellion of 1824. Tried in Kandy," British National Archives, shelfmark: CO/416/20; "Confidential: Ceylon. Appendix No. 6 to Memorandum on Colonial Policy.

Comparative Statistics of the different Insurrections and Insurrectionary Attempts which have taken place in Ceylon" *British National Archives*, shelfmark: CO 882/1/5.

⁵⁵⁸ Part of the published interview with the rebel chief included the possibility of surrendering in exchange for assurances that his family would not be punished. See "Interview with Rebel Chief Kohnhumbra Ratteralle" *Ceylon Gazette* May 16, 1818 Reprinted in the *Madras Courier* British National Library, shelfmark: OMF/SM 126

⁵⁵⁹ "Ceylon Gazette, 1820" reprinted and reproduced online at *A People's History 1793 – 1844 from the Newspapers* by Roger Houghton. Accessed Sept. 21, 2016. <http://www.houghton.hk/>.

throughout the Uva campaign was what enabled the coordination of troops and the eventual arrival of troops from British India. To target lines of communication at the same time as Governor Barnes was coopting the traditional practice of *rajakariya*, forcing survivors of the rebellion to labour to construct new roads connecting Kandy to Colombo, was a radical political act.

Age of Insurrections: 1830s – 1840s

There were a number of insurrectionary attempts in the 1830s, as well. According to Colonel Jonathan Forbes, there was an attempt by an “imposter prince” to “frighten” villagers in 1831; however, the imposter was arrested and “on his way to the gaols within 24 hours” before anything further could unfold.⁵⁶⁰ In 1834 a “very extensive conspiracy” sought to assassinate local government agents and poison British officers and the Governor at a feast.⁵⁶¹ Among the conspirators was Mollegodde, the former *adikar* who remained loyal to the British during the Uva Rebellion. On August 6th, 1834, the government raided the group ahead of their scheduled plan to disperse across the region to prepare provinces for rebellion. In the process, 27 men were captured. According to government records,

The motives for this intended rebellion were apparently the same as those which led to all the former ones, viz., a desire on the part of the chiefs and priests to regain the power and influence which they had lost under the British rule; and the manner in which they designed to gain their object, fully proves at the time the justice of Sir R. Brownrigg’s remarks respecting the excessive treachery and ingratitude of the higher orders of Kandians, and their extreme ignorance. Their intention was, after the massacre of the English officers, to offer the island either

⁵⁶⁰ J. Forbes, *Recent Disturbances and Military Executions in Ceylon* (William Blackwood and Sons (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1850): 17. British National Library, shelfmark: 8022.d.26.

⁵⁶¹ “Appendix No. 5 to Memorandum on Colonial Policy: Memorandum of former Insurrectionary Attempts at Ceylon, 1849.” British National Archives, shelfmark: CO 882/1/4.

to the French or the King of Siam on condition of their assistance against us, but these new allies were also to be disposed of on the first opportunity.⁵⁶²

Interestingly, and no doubt related to the very recent overhaul of the legal system intended to create a single universal judiciary under the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms, when Mollegodde and five others were brought to trial on January 12th, 1835, the jury was comprised of seven natives from the Maritime provinces. According to the government, “though there was no moral doubt of the truth of the facts alleged against them, they were acquitted, and the vote of the seven Kandyans was “Not guilty.”” The government records describe the native jurors as “Kandians” but from the “Maritime Provinces,” which likely also speaks to the recent re-geo-graphing of the boundaries of Kandy and their administrative integration into the Maritime provinces in the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms.⁵⁶³ Similarly, the inclusion of “natives” – albeit not truly the “peers” of the Kandyan suspects due to their coming from the Maritime region – as *majority* jurors speaks also to the liberal thinking underscoring the reforms. The accused were acquitted by a jury that included natives, which had benefits for the perception of legitimacy during the increasingly liberal turn of the colonial project. As described in the document, “...the effect produced upon the natives by the submission of the English Government to the laws which they had themselves made was perhaps better than could have been occasioned by the execution of these men.”⁵⁶⁴

News of the crushing British defeat at the hands of the Afghans during what would later be called the first Anglo-Afghan war of 1839-1842 inspired two small-scale and connected attempts in Ceylon. In this case, a priest named Chandrayotty who was

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

arrested for sedition in 1842 instigated them, but he was ultimately acquitted due to lack of evidence.⁵⁶⁵ According to James E. Tennent, reports from Badulla asserted that Chandrayotty was “stirring up the people to sedition” but the central government in Colombo ignored the warnings, a recurring theme since 1815. Major Kelson, the Assistant Government Agent at Badulla, was determined that he was correct in his suspicions and eventually, Governor Campbell sent Major Rogers to investigate the claim. Within a few days, over 100 people were arrested for high treason. Chandrayotty made a “voluntary” confession leading to his conviction and the acquittal of the other 13 men put on trial by the British, as outlined in the appendix. One of those 13 men acquitted was known as “Dennis” to the British, but went by Alludenia Banada or Gongalagode Banda or Kapurobastelagey Dennis Appohamy. What is interesting about “Dennis” is that he would go on to play a leading role in the 1848 Matale rebellion, and it was his younger brother, “David,” aka Gongalagode Tikery Banda, a.k.a Kapurubastebanddalagey David Vederalle, who was crowned king of Kandy during the 1848 Matale rebellion.

According to “wanted” posters circulating in 1848 attempting to capture the two brothers (offering £150 for “David” and £100 for “Dennis”), David was actually employed by the police under the command of a Mr. Dalziel during the 1842 conspiracy attempt.⁵⁶⁶ This would mean that his own brother, “Dennis,” might well have been one of the men that David would have been pursuing in his capacity as a native colonial police officer. Another man named Poorangappoo was among those tried and acquitted in 1842 according to Forbes, and he would later become the sword-bearer for King David during

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.; James Emerson Tennent, “Tennent to Committee.” *Third Report from Select Committee on Ceylon (Session 1850)*. Accessed July 12 2011. <https://goo.gl/MeYCyM>.

⁵⁶⁶ “The Rebellion,” *Morning Star* Sept. 14 1848. *British National Library*, shelfmark: 14172.k.4.

the Matale Rebellion in 1848.⁵⁶⁷ According to Tennent, one of the main charges brought against the conspirators in 1833 included attempts to convince natives employed in the service of the colonial governments to engage in seditious activity and ultimately join in rebellion. The “wanted” posters from 1848 for David and Dennis, issued by the Acting Assistant Colonial Secretary W. Morris, indicates that the men are both between 35 to 40 years of age, which would have meant they would have been young children around the time of Kandyan Convention and grown up amidst the military road construction and rise of coffee plantations.

What can be gleaned from the events during the 1830s and 1840s, small and aborted as they were, is that there was a simmering anti-colonial politics that took strategic form in light of the geographical and technological transformations rapidly unfolding in the interior. The construction of new military-cum-plantation roads in the 1820s was contested by small-scale insurrections, but the completion and maintenance of the roads mitigated the territorial advantage enjoyed by the Kandyans over the British, as well as their Dutch and Portuguese predecessors. Resistance was transformed from attempts at open rebellion into smaller conspiracies during the 1830s-1840s. Priests were often times at the centre in one way or another, either through performing sovereign ceremonies of crowning kings, or organizing conspiracies of their own. The transformations within the Kandyan region in the 1830s-1840s were especially centered on the rapid rise of the coffee plantations. According to Tennent:

Within the last 10 years [1840-1850] the Kandyan provinces may be said to have been the only portion of the island in which an attempt has been made to convert an Indian [sic.] settlement into an English colony, and the scene of those very

⁵⁶⁷ Jonathan Forbes, *Recent Disturbances and Military Executions in Ceylon* (William Blackwood and Sons (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1850): 18. British National Library, shelfmark: 8022.d.26.

disasters is now the scene of the planting operations, and the locality of coffee estates throughout the district.⁵⁶⁸

That a former colonial police officer would become the “pretender” of the 1848 larger-scale rebellion implies either some sort of radical politicizing during the 1840s, or a longer term strategy, both of which speak to radical enactment of anti-colonial politics. During the 1848 Matale rebellion, villagers focused their attacks around the plantations themselves, even though according to the secondary literature and much of the colonial discourse at the time, the problems were supposed to be related to the Guns, Roads, and Dog ordinances.⁵⁶⁹

I am not suggesting that these unfair, liberal, colonial legal reforms which imposed flat-taxes on villagers and British residents alike were not a source of great irritation, only that the taxes are not the entirety of the issues at play. Forty million pounds of coffee moved along roads built by forced labourers and due to pressure from the planters, all duties were waived that would have been gained. The contentious liberal taxes rolled out by the government essentially shifted the burden of paying for public goods from a modest tariff on European planters onto the native population in order to make up the deficiencies in the national budget. As Lieutenant-Colonel Forbes describes this policy move,

Every male, from age eighteen to fifty-five years of age, is now, by the road ordinance, to work six days or pay three shillings; therefor, if I take the population at a million and a half, and that of the Europeans, not exempted, at half a thousand, we shall at once see that it was removing a moderate indirect taxation from the European capitalist, to inflict large direct taxation on the native.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ James Emerson Tennent, “Tennent to Committee.” *Third Report from Select Committee on Ceylon (Session 1850)*: 167. Accessed July 12 2011. <https://goo.gl/MeYCyM>.

⁵⁶⁹ “A Few Remarks Upon Colonel Forbes’ Pamphlet on recent Disturbances in Ceylon in a letter to Sir R. Peel, Bart, M.P. & C. by Colonist, April 12th 1850.” Page 4. British National Library, shelfmark: 8023.cc.7(1.).

⁵⁷⁰ J. Forbes *Recent Disturbances and Military Executions in Ceylon* published 1850: 12. British National Library, shelfmark: 8022.d.26.

The unfairness of the taxes became the historical counter-point to the government position of “rascally” troublemakers, but both explanations miss the essential politics associated with the simmering trend of anti-colonial resistance that textured the period between 1818 and 1848. Ordinary people were “criminals” and elites were “backward-looking” in the discourse. According to colonial records, which were also the basis for the secondary histories written about the rebellion, many of the key players in the rebellion were “criminals” or “thieves,” but having been a criminal, a thief, or even a murderer hardly disqualifies one from engaging in direct and significant anti-colonial politics. It is true that coming from low-caste backgrounds and the fact that, among the leadership during the Matale rebellion, the brothers Dennis and David were from the low country and thus had a different and non-Kandyan ancestry, but this is more of a problem only if one accepts the rationale that Kandyans wanted only to be backward-looking and sought to re-establish the ousted dynasty. Such a starting assumption removes from politics and from history the long tradition of Kandyan sovereign practice and implies that it cannot *continue* to exist and evolve alongside British efforts to uniform governance. The final four kings of Kandy were Nayakkar Tamils with roots including southern India as explained in chapter two, and the very fact that the Sinhalese aristocracy was plotting against the young and brutal Vikrama Rajasingha implies a sovereign and political regime that is open to change and very much engaged in political practice. The violence of universal thinking enacted through historical remembering here is the situation of the Kandyans as outside of, and prior to history and politics. It was certainly the view from the archives, but it persists in the writing of post-colonial histories as well.

By the 1840s, notwithstanding fluctuations in international demand, coffee plantations had become the economic engine of colonial Ceylon, and targeting them was a deliberate political act. Governor Torrington responded to the rebellion with a very heavy hand, enlisting everyone he could as peace officers, executing prisoners by court martial, and calling for reinforcements from Madras in an effort to prevent an insurrection similar to Uva thirty years prior. His methods were hotly controversial in the press at the time, with former colonial officials like J. Forbes decrying publicly the heavy hand dealt to the Kandyans. The planter population and British public resident in Ceylon however, largely favoured such actions. As one self-described “Colonist” articulated in his condemnation of Forbes’ published pamphlet on the subject in a letter to the British Prime Minister,

We hear not one word of the bullets or cries of the rebels, which if not fatal or murderous, were only harmless before the courageous daring of our troops. We hear not one word of the Prisoner the rebels succeeded in capturing – an Englishman, and who was cut down by our troops from a stake where the firewood was heaped around him ready for an Auto-da-fe!⁵⁷¹

A similar sentiment is espoused in the *Morning Star*, newspaper by a self-described “Jaffna man living in Kandy”⁵⁷² where he writes,

It is said that one or more estates were set on fire by the Rebels, and plundered, that a European planter was unmercifully beaten and wounded and that his wife was carried away by some of these rude fellows.⁵⁷³

Both of the above statements highlight the political nature of parts of the rebellion, regardless of whether or not there was a strong centralized or elite aspect to the project.

⁵⁷¹ “A Few Remarks Upon Colonel Forbes’ Pamphlet on recent Disturbances in Ceylon in a letter to Sir R. Peel, Bart, M.P. & C. by Colonist, April 12th 1850.” Page 4. British National Library, shelfmark: 8023.cc.7(1.).

⁵⁷² It is not clear whether the author is British or not. That he identifies as a “Jaffna” man might suggest that he was perhaps a Tamil man from Jaffna writing in English, but it is not clear enough to determine from the letter.

⁵⁷³ “Letter to the Editor of the *Morning Star* by A Jaffna Man Residing in Kandy, Aug. 10, 1848” *British National Library*, shelfmark: 14172.k.4.

The politics of simmering insurgency through this time period affected public perception of the challenges facing the colony, and the self described “Colonist,” writing to Prime Minister Peel above, goes on to make an important point that speaks to the public feeling and anxieties at the time of the 1848 rebellion:

That the Pretender was of lowly origin goes for very little; suffice it that he was *crowned King of Kandy* by certain Priests with great Buddhistical ceremony, at their Chief Temple and this was all that the people cared to know. Were not Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simnel equally dangerous to the English monarch though both of obscure birth? But the intimidation of the innocent alluded to by the Colonel [Forbes], must have been very extensive – extraordinarily so, for a few low country adventurers to exercise, when we are told by respectable Planters that during the nights of the rebellion many gangs of 200 and 300 Kandians marched through their Estates on the way to the scene of the disturbance, all armed in a variety of modes. Did this look like a mere rabble-riot? Was this the intimidation of a few low-country thieves? At any rate in the East where the European power is so much feared, any acts of this kind can bear but one construction.⁵⁷⁴

Planters themselves spoke to the great anxiety and fear of the natives from the point of view of the European population. The above colonist highlights the attention to Buddhist ceremony in the coronation and speaks to the lived anxiety of seeing hundreds of armed rebels in the plantation estates. According to one self-identified planter writing on the subject of the debate in London unfolding about the 1848 Matale:

...it must be borne in mind that the Coffee Planter of Ceylon was just at that time in a most critical, I may even say a dangerous position. I am not theorizing – I am not *supposing* cases, but I tell you what I *know* to be the real truth, that at the time I am speaking of, the Planting interest of this island was quivering in the balance. We were in truth getting desperate. Protection had made us pay dearly for our land and our labour: our prices had all but broken our hearts. Many an estate was just kept on in the desperate hope that something might turn up in our favour. But had we lost our crops as might have been the case, at that juncture, in our position it would have been absolute ruination. Three fourths of the Plantations in the island must have been abandoned, and how bitter would have been our disappointment

⁵⁷⁴ “A Few Remarks Upon Colonel Forbes’ Pamphlet on recent Disturbances in Ceylon in a letter to Sir R. Peel, Bart, M.P. & C. by Colonist, April 12th 1850.” Page 8. British National Library, shelfmark: 8023.cc.7(1.).

to have seen the home markets for our produce rise, as it has recently done and we unable to profit by the golden opportunity.⁵⁷⁵

The author writes that coffee fruit was just at maturation, and the timing of the uprising would have also scared away many of the migrant Tamil labourers who would have been just arriving from their deadly journey through the jungle to arrive at work.⁵⁷⁶ In the court martial account from September 14th, 1848 discussed above, we see mention from the accused of their willingness to send away the plantation workers with food, suggesting that these “criminals” were nonetheless calculating political actors with a sophisticated understanding of the rhythm of the planting season and the economic sensitivities of the global markets for coffee. The difficulties the planters faced by virtue of diminished global demand for coffee in 1848 was no secret, and was well discussed in newspapers and government gazettes. Planters were the British public in the interior, and to think that ordinary workers, thieves, or villagers were simply unaware of these developments relies and the ontological starting assumption of their primitiveness and lack of political sophistication, charges that ought to be decolonized if one is to understand the rhythms of de-colonial activism that textured the development of the colonial state. An observation of this nature from a planter is very illuminating, as it brings the intersection of territory, capitalism, and politics to the foreground. If we break with the prevailing scholarly consensus that the ordinary masses would have had no understanding of modern politics and economy, it is possible to conceive that those who rose up were well aware of the sensitive timing of their uprisings. As noted in government records around the 1842 failed

⁵⁷⁵ A Ceylon Planter, “Is Ceylon to sacrificed at the Shrine of a Party? A Letter Addressed to Sir R. Peel, Bart M.P.” Colombo, 1850. British National Library, shelfmark: 8023.cc.7.(7.).

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

attempt, it was knowledge of British exploits and their brutal defeat by the Afghans⁵⁷⁷ that inspired the events, which suggests that knowledge of the Empire's exploits was not a secret.

Neither should it lead one to deduce that everyone in the Kandyan region were of a single mind with respect to rebellion. During the Matale rebellion, ordinary people were caught between rebel forces and a government that was especially paranoid and trigger-happy in light of fears that the rebellion could blossom into something as large, or perhaps larger, than what transpired in 1817-1818. Part of that fear on the side of the government manifested in the trial and execution of "natives" by court martial; a controversial practice during the uprising that drew harsh condemnation of the miscarriage of justice and the brutality with which people were tried and often executed. According to Colonel Jonathan Forbes in a published pamphlet, the use of Court Martial was excessive, unnecessary, and unlawful:

I aver in common sense and common justice, that those who are made liable to the penalties of martial law, are also entitled to its privileges: if so, the inhabitants of Ceylon were entitled to be tried by a general court-martial, legally constituted, for crimes clearly and distinctly specified, and according to the common and statute law of England, and cognisable by such a tribunal. The oath which the members of all courts-martial take, leaves, I think no doubt of what the prisoners had a right to expect, and without which, in my opinion, trials for "high treason" were at best but solemn mockery.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁷ In the first Anglo-Afghan war, Dr. William Brydon was the only survivor of the 16,000 strong British Indian army retreating from Kabul in 1842. The infamous Rudyard Kipling penned a popular poem in the aftermath:

"When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains
An' the women come out to cut up what remains,
Just roll to your rifle, and blow out your brains,
And go to your Gawd like a soldier."

Cited in Gregory Freemont-Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars 1839 – 1919* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009): 1.

⁵⁷⁸ J. Forbes, *Recent Disturbances and Military Executions in Ceylon* published 1850: 22. British National Library, shelfmark: 8022.d.26.

The most important point to take away from the Matale rebellion is not whether the government was or was not justified in its heavy handed tactics to quell the rebellion, rather, it is in what the genuine sense of fear amidst the British population, planter and bureaucrat, *felt* was necessary in light of the political actions of rebels. The enactment of politics, whether elite planned or more grassroots emergent, affected the kinds of policy choices pursued by the government and shaped the development of the state in the process.

While many people did take up arms and raid the plantations, as discussed above, it is important to note that others, based on their testimonies at these “court martials,” were caught between contending violent situations. In the case of the court martials of Nikolla Punchyrall, Melpitia Appoohame, Alutgamma Banda, and Allawelle Goda Leortin of September 6th, 1848, all were found guilty of high treason and subsequently shot to death the following morning. In reviewing the translations of their testimonies at their trials, the narrative that emerges is one of villagers seeking to escape *both* the rebels and the government by leaving their home villages. Upon leaving, they were conscripted into serving the rebel forces in the jungle. Faced with execution for treason by the authority of the rebel King on the one hand, and execution for “high treason” by the authority of the British government if they were captured, the element of “choice” seems utterly absent for ordinary people caught in the midst of the rebellion.⁵⁷⁹ I would argue

⁵⁷⁹ “Confidential despatch: Court Martial” British National Archives, shelfmark: CO54/263. Though I have not engaged in the subject of migrant Tamil plantation workers and everyday acts of resistance by workers in this dissertation, it is relevant to note here that, on occasion, reference is made to Tamil workers and kanganies (higher caste overseers and recruiters of migrant labourers) who encountered the rebels as well. In the proceedings of a court martial from September 14th, 1848, those charged reported that they had heard word that the pretender King had control of the northern region of Ceylon as well as Kandy. They permitted migrant Tamil labourers and kanganies to leave the plantations they were attacking with food. This is an important point, because the general colonial narrative was that the Tamil workers were held in utter contempt by the Kandyan locals and seen as “simpler” people than devious or lazy Kandyan locals. This

that *leaving* the contestations between the British and the Kandyan expressions of sovereignty in this moment was both a political and a logical course of action, though in the unfortunate case of these men, execution awaited them at any turn.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have strived to show first that the logic of coloniality permeates seemingly objective recordings of “facts” in the form of archives. Building on my argument concerning archiving in relief from the Introduction, I argued that the epistemic violence of representation that positions ordinary Kandyans between 1815 and 1848 scripts them as non-political and mute. Moreover, influential secondary historical accounts are complicit with this representation in part through accepting the “modern” narrative of gradual developmentalism and linear progress, without attending to the co-constitutive “coloniality” that enables the modern narrative.

Drawing on the method of archiving in relief, I have sought to engage differently with colonial archival records in order to draw attention to elements in discarded background of the history that demonstrates the political agency of both elite and ordinary people resisting colonial attempts to contaminate and transform Kandy into Ceylon from 1815 to 1848. In so doing, I seek to challenge the conventional narrative that presents the time between the Uva and Matalle rebellions as “quiet.” If we take a more radical understanding of politics, we can better apprehend the simmering insurrectionary politics of the early period of British presence as the logics of Kandyan galactic sovereignty and

narrative is doubly strengthened by the fact that the new taxes that were supposed to have been the motivation for the uprisings in 1848 were in part related to the road tax, in which migrant labourers were excluded from having to pay to upkeep the roads on the basis that they were migrants. In addition to the court martial record, see also: Ordinance No. 8, 1848 (Road Ordinance) British National Archives, shelfmark: CO 56/5; James Duncan, *In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race, and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

British imperial sovereignty were in the process of colliding and transforming one another.

Conclusion

“What I forgot is better than whatever they remember.”

Yasiin Bey⁵⁸⁰

In 1956, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike’s Freedom Party was able to denounce 400 years of Christian rule in a Buddhist country to ride a wave of Sinhalese Buddhist ethno-nationalism into office. This was preceded by a general consensus among postcolonial elites that disenfranchising “Indian-Tamils” or “Estate Tamils” (categorized as such in 19th century censuses) who migrated to the island in the British-colonial period was an acceptable legislative act of political independence in 1947. This was soon followed by deportations to an India many did not know. From the late 19th to early 20th century, the rise of a national class of elites became influential in colonial politics. Many who would go on to form parties of government and opposition participated in young national roundtables and associations debating impending constitutional reforms ahead of formal independence. Men like S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (fourth Prime Minister), Sir John Kotelewala (third Prime Minister), G.G. Ponnambalam (leader of All Ceylon Tamil Congress), J.R. Jayewardene (President 1978 – 1989), were at times jovial comrades in the late colonial period, as evidenced by transcripts of roundtable conferences in the 1940s.⁵⁸¹ Notwithstanding the late colonial solidarities that were brokered between ethnic groups and across ideologies, postcolonial anti-Tamil propaganda amongst politicians vying for political influence over the post-colonial state manifested in a series of pogroms targeting Tamil civilians in 1958, 1965, 1971, 1978, and most significantly, in “Black July” of 1983. After decades of unsuccessful peaceful civil disobedience in the tradition

⁵⁸⁰ Yasiin Bey, “R.E.D.” *Halluci Nation*. Turtle Island: with Narcy, BlackBear, and A Tribe Called Red. Recorded 2016, Radicalized Records. Compact Disc.

⁵⁸¹ “The Roundtable Conference: A Conference of Leaders of Various Communities held to discuss the Parliamentary Commission on the Constitutional Reforms of Ceylon,” *Young Ceylon*, August 1944. British National Archives shelfmark: FCO/141/2339.

of *satyagraha* seeking equal accommodation within a single, united Ceylonese nation-state, young Tamils began organizing and taking direct, military action in pursuit of a nation state they saw as their traditional homeland in the East and West. On July 23, 1983, a small group of rebels ambushed thirteen Sri Lankan soldiers in Jaffna, and within two days of national media coverage (which censored government retaliation), Sinhalese civilians were waging a street level campaign of terror against Tamil businesses, property, and bodies. In the words of the Minister of Development in 1983:

Sri Lanka is inherently and rightfully a Sinhalese state...this must be accepted as a fact and not a matter of opinion to be debated. By attempting to challenge this premise, Tamils have brought the wrath of the Sinhalese on their own heads; they have themselves to blame.⁵⁸²

Seen as the critical juncture that marked the official beginning of Sri Lanka's civil war, the collective punishment of bodies deemed enemy or external to an ethnonationalist state was resisted using a modern, dialectical strategy – the creation of an opposing modern ethnonationalist state, Tamil Eelam (see Appendix A, Figure 6).

The logic of total territorial rule and postcolonial sovereignty had, by the time of independence, become normalized. By the late 20th century, it had become fetishized, essentialized as the only legitimate marker through which a formerly colonized people could live in peace and freedom. Within the politics of ethnonationalism, however, we see not the extinguishing of *rajamandala* and Buddhification, but rather their contamination and transfiguration into a modern, colonial, statist exoskeleton tasked with the objective of protecting a nation on modern, universal grounds. The process of Buddhification, as Obeyesekere and Tambiah's work speaks to, was historically a process of integration and inclusion rather than an ethnically determined exclusion. Its application

⁵⁸² Minister of Development. Cited in O. Yiftachel and G. As'ad, "Understanding 'Ethno-Cratic' Regimes: The Politics of Seizing Contested Territory," *Political Geography* 23/6 (2004): 658.

in the post-colonial period appears to serve precisely the opposite purpose, and this is historically related to the normalization and de-politicization of the state. Normalization was a logical extension of the historical contestations of the early 19th century discussed in this dissertation. For the generations of children practicing “civil” Christianity in the mid to late 19th century, educated in missionary schools and challenging missionaries and government officials in public debates, writing, and institutions, the opportunities afforded by the structure of the still forming liberal, colonial, state offered more promising results for ending British rule than did the armed insurrectionary movements of their elders. As Perera argues, by the turn of the 20th century, the centre of Buddhism on the island had shifted from Kandy to the outskirts of Colombo so as to allow for more effective lobbying of the colonial government, towards independence.⁵⁸³

The footpaths, turned military roads, turned commercial plantation roads, turned railroads throughout the 19th century, had increased the rate of transportation and the “modernization” of the island. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, there is no decolonial organizing in the abstract alone; in the context of the monumental changes of the 19th century and the limited success of armed uprisings, the rise of anti-colonial national consciousness that strove to inhabit the existing apparatus of a colonial satellite economy and sort out the “internal” problems of colonialism later was understandable, and not at all unique to Ceylon. In the garb of this historical version of anti-colonialism, the rise of what Tambiah has called “protestant Buddhism” and its Hindutva cousin in India has adopted a fetishized modern form that has become complicit with singular narratives; *universal* aspirations, rather than the pluriversal histories that have fragmented

⁵⁸³ Nihal Perera. “Indigenising the Colonial City: Late 19th-century Colombo and its Landscape.” *Urban Studies* 39/9 (2002): 1703 – 1721.

and diversified practices only named “Hindu” or “Buddhist” through the modern, colonial encounter.

Throughout this dissertation, I have striven to show how before the universe of total territorial rule, there was a pluriverse of uncolonized options that operated along diverse ontological starting points and trajectories. The treatment of the “nation state” as a universal container in which to exist is perhaps one of the most normalized expressions of the violence of universal, colonial politics. However, the politics of the pluriverse teaches that the temporal hegemony of universality does not imply the extinction of the pluriversal realities. Pluiversal thinking, instead, engages differently with pasts to challenge the “histories” and the normative assumptions and exclusions within them, and ultimately to resuscitate important diversity that can help build decolonial futures. Articulated in a different vocabulary, Robbie Shilliam has called this rejecting the “colonial science” of categorical separation in favour of a “decolonial science” of rebinding and rehabilitation.⁵⁸⁴

One of the key empirical contributions arising from this dissertation is that the birth of the British “Raj” in South Asia should not be attributed so centrally to the Sepoy Rebellion and subsequent Royal Proclamation that ended the East India Company’s rule on the subcontinent in favour of direct British rule in 1858. Rather, a generation earlier it was trial and error, with emphasis on error, that largely defined direct British rule in its early days in Ceylon. Unlike in India, where generations of East India Company officials had developed relationships and an understanding of Mughal state behaviour, in Ceylon, exposure to the Buddhist *rajamandala* system was poorly understood. Orientalist scholars

⁵⁸⁴ Robbie Shilliam. *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

were still trying to understand the differences between *buddhagama* and their particularly Brahminical understanding of the varied practices they would later call “Hinduism.”

Historically, we can see through this study that there is no single logic of empire in the 19th century. The economic interests of British plantation owners in the West Indies differed greatly from those in the East Indies, and the discourse of liberalism as an antidote to mercantilism created incentives at precisely the time the British were trying to subdue and transform the Kandyan highlands. Plantations offered a way to “improve” an entire colony by way of liberal colonial reformation in education, economy, religion, and law. The colonies were not the only ones taking on their modern attributes in the 19th century, but the colonizers were doing so as well. As argued in chapter one, it makes little sense to consider state formation in isolation from its global context; Europe was also taking form through the process of colonialism, making European states products of the modern colonial encounter just as much as colonial states, albeit on radically asymmetric terms. The logic of externalizing violence from Europe to the colonies through territorial and ontological transformation guaranteed a measure of “peace” within Europe, but one that was largely dependent on deliberate attempts at destroying other-than-modern ways of being. The political economy of plantations offers a particularly salient example of this in the context of Kandy in the 1820s – 1840s, and connects the broader imperial political economy to the dispossession of Kandyan land in service to the colonial logic of commodification and “improvement.”

This dissertation has taken up the question of how the process of “becoming” the modern territorial state worked to legitimize a universal understanding of how to exist free from colonial rule. I have taken as the object of analysis the territorial state itself, offering a critical re-reading of the early British encounter with Ceylon to show how,

through ontological, economic, religious, and political struggles, the logic of “total territorial rule” gradually became de-politicized such that it was a passive terrain upon which anti-colonial struggles would eventually unfold. This was not a natural process. In chapter one, I argued that the period of European colonialism was much more than a time when Europeans ruled swaths of land outside of Europe; it was also a set of territorial and conceptual transformations that were produced out of ontological, economic, and social struggles concerning the universal application of Eurocentric concepts and philosophy in places that had already developed their own for thousands of years. By using a decolonial theoretical approach to intervene conceptually within bodies of social science theory concerned with questions of state, territory, and sovereignty, I have argued that a decolonial reading brings to light the material and conceptual violence of universal thought in the form of colonial state formation. This manifestation of violence has sought to push the multiple and diverse ways of organizing social, political, and spiritual life outside of the “limit” of a reality that, in turn, treats Eurocentric ontological starting points as “given” or as “common sense.”

The significance of postcolonial crises of sovereignty cannot be grasped with the conceptual tool that is universality, and this is abundantly clear when considering the universality of the state as the only acceptable way to exist within the colonial international system of the 20th and 21st centuries. In this dissertation, I argued that while political independence was of monumental importance in the mid 20th century, inheriting and controlling the reigns of the state became an end unto itself rather than a means to a

greater end of building free societies. Controlling the state has been confused for de-colonization.⁵⁸⁵

The coloniality of the state thus draws into question the degree to which a government, simply by exercising Weberian sovereignty over a territorially bounded imaginary national community, can truly lay claim to being “post” colonial. If one untethers colonialism from a temporal period and examines its material processes on economic, political, and social grounds, independence can be only the beginning of a much longer process of de-colonization that requires fundamentally rethinking how human communities are constituted. We modern political subjects are, as James C. Scott argues, “hypnotized by the state”; we think about the past mediated through a statist lens without due regard for the ways through which the modern territorial nation state and the system of states came to be.⁵⁸⁶ Understanding the colonial context through which material practices emerged – such as large-scale agricultural production for export, centralization of political sovereignty, private property, or elite-level representative government (instead of participatory democracy) – can enliven debates today about what de-colonization ought to look like in terms of practice, as well as within scholarly debates.

In chapter two, I re-interpreted the significance of the 1815 Kandyan Convention that established a *de jure* sense of total territorial rule. In this chapter, I argued that rather than seeing this legal document as evidence of the cessation of sovereignty and the unification of the island under British authority, it can instead be seen as a kind of

⁵⁸⁵ Ajay Parasram, “The long road to de-colonisation: Understanding our political present” in Jai Parasram, *View From the Mountain: Political notes and commentaries*, xxi – xxiv. (St. Anns: Paria Publishing Co. Ltd., 2013).

⁵⁸⁶ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); John Agnew “The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory” *Review of International Political Economy* (1994) 1/1: 53 – 80; Stuart Elden, “Thinking Territory Historically” *Geopolitics* (2010) 15/4: 757 – 761.

ontological conflict. The result of this conflict was that a single text (the Convention) meant two very different things because of the ontological differences that have characterized the genealogical development of “sovereignty” in a Kandyan/Buddhist tradition and a British/Christian tradition. To describe the depth and scope of the long ontological conflict, I drew upon archival records of early British missionaries that tried to make sense of “natives” and ultimately failed to do so because of an inability to comprehend the ontological distinctions between Buddhist/Hindu cosmology and Christian/British cosmology. Positioning *rajamandala* and Buddhification as empirical, historical, examples of pluriversal sovereignty, the dissertation makes theoretical and historical contributions to both South Asian and decolonial studies.

The legal relationship between the British “sovereign” and the sovereign obligations of rule in Kandy offered a longstanding problem, where the British attempted to rationalize the Kandyans’ other-than-modern ontology of sovereign practice by using what they believed to be an unproblematic and universally applicable understanding of sovereignty as it developed in their own traditions. Thus, the British partially fulfilled the obligations of Kandyan sovereignty but understood them as necessary to placate the uncivilized superstitions of locals rather than as a serious involvement with the obligations of sovereignty.

Drawing on S.J. Tambiah’s work on “galactic sovereignty,” modeled upon comparative studies in Southeast Asian Buddhist polities including Kandy, I strove to show that the political ontological clash of the Kandyan Convention represents a kind of galactic collision, the consequences of which were not immediately apparent, though the contemporary problems of ethnonationalism can be seen to be part of its logical outcome. In this chapter, I proposed using a metaphor to extend Tambiah’s work: as a device to

understand the period during which a Kandyan genealogy of sovereignty and a British genealogy of sovereignty interacted, represented in the roughly three decades (~1815 – 1848) that the dissertation dwells upon, this time period of ontological conflict can be likened to the collision of galaxies. Rather than experiencing full-on contact, the galaxies are porous and pass through each other several times before merging. Their gravity keeps the stars operating around a galactic core, but it also interacts with the external galaxy. If the 1815 Convention represents the first collision and “passing through” of sovereign ontologies, then by the 1850s, Ceylon had reached the following period of galactic unification:

Figure 3: Galactic Convergence

In Figure 3 the two galaxies have collided more than once, and have formed something new. The history of spatial organization, as explained in the introduction, can be thought of in three general periods. The first marks the galactic *mandala* system and its 2200 year genealogy in the South/Southeast Asia region. The second is the moment of ontological tension and colonial contamination through which the galaxies pass through each other, the time period the dissertation emphasizes. By the time we arrive in the third phase in the late 19th and early 20th century, we are in the above frame, within which the colonial

structure of universal territorial rule has become a naturalized structure within which to struggle.

We have yet to leave this period, but there is no reason to believe that it is a finale. Elements of both the Milky Way and the Andromeda galaxy exist within this new galaxy, and like its predecessor galaxies, the new one is not solid, stable or unchanging. Elements of pluriversal sovereignty similarly remain within the contemporary state system, however its modern contamination is in need of decolonial treatment, as the practice of Buddhification has taken on violently ethnonationalist connotations as recently calcified ethnicities continue to vie for total territorial rule. Such decolonial treatments may, and perhaps must, begin within the context of a state; the limits of the modern state cannot be the limit of the potential application of multiple approaches to understanding and practicing sovereignty. In a contemporary context of triumphant Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism, de-colonizing the modern/colonial edifice of the state can offer a resurgent decolonial politics.

The findings of this aspect of the dissertation contribute to colonial and postcolonial historical research by identifying moments of treaty-making as ontological conflicts arising from different genealogies of “sovereign” practice. By identifying the moment of sovereign ontological collision as a source of deep and comparative historical research, social scientists can de-link from the modern/colonial category of the nation-state and state-container as well as all the associated academic blind spots. “National” histories may not be the best way to understand the past, as they tend to take for granted key ontological starting points about state, territory, nation, and sovereignty that ought to be investigated historically. Inspiration and leadership on how to begin de-colonizing our scholarship ought to come from studying the colonial constitution of modernity through

the Other genealogies of thought that we can excavate, as well as through studying the enactment of decolonial politics in our worlds. In terms of informing scholarship aimed at peace and conflict studies, the dissertation offers empirical and theoretical guidance as to why the discourses of “state failure” may not provide the kinds of long-term solutions needed for peace and reconciliation. Instead, this dissertation aims to suggest that deepening the historical understanding for the reasons why territorial conflicts begin can open sites of historical and political research that will diversify sources of practical and intellectual inspiration for building decolonial political societies.

In chapter three, I discussed the colonality of liberalism and the political economy of “improvement.” I traced the discursive power that the idea of “improvement” offered during the nascent turn to liberalism in both economic and political thinking within Imperial Britain. Although the British profited enormously from the slave trade as well as from mercantilist economic imperial planning in the 18th century, in the 19th century, being morally opposed to the practice of slavery served to strengthen their position in Ceylon by representing the indigenous practice of *rajakariya* as slavery. Simultaneously, the British engaged in forced labour projects aimed at “improving” the moral and ethical resourcefulness of the native population in Ceylon and literally paving the roads to the interior that would enable the forming state to be administered more effectively from Colombo. Inducement took the form of taxation, forced labour, commodification, and theft of land, resulting in its ultimate repurposing in service of the still forming imperial and global political economy. Here, the context of precolonial agriculture and economy serves as a basis for understanding the violent transformation of “progress” and “improvement.” The representation of Kandyan villagers as “lazy” or unindustrious relies first and foremost on the acceptance that land is ontologically a

commodity in need of improvement, which, I have argued, is grounded in a Eurocentric genealogy of property. The ideology of liberalism as an improvement upon mercantilism and a more civilized method of colonization – a form of obligation on the white race to aid the darker peoples of the world – allowed for authoritarian rule to coexist with liberal and rights-based understanding of governance in colonies, as Barry Hindess reminds us. The clearing of land in Ceylon's fertile interior was enabled by the forced labour construction of military-cum-plantation roads, and the Eurocentric logic that land must be owned and "improved" in order to extract its potential value served as justification for describing communal land as "wastelands." In practice, this served a powerful justification for aggressively transforming Kandyan lands into legible, productive, Eurocentric territory.

In chapter four, I sought to show how the idea of the archive, while being an improvement upon previous methods of writing histories, led to the biases of colonial authorities in their representation of "natives" as primitive, backward, or criminal, being unconsciously integrated into the writing of postcolonial histories as well. I draw on canonical texts in Sri Lankan history to highlight their complacency with the colonial/modern idea that peasants are pre-political or outside of the limit of history and politics. I then offered a different reading of archival resources informed by a decolonial lens to reinterpret the a thirty year period between the Uva and Matale rebellions as a period of simmering anti-colonial activism. Here, I strove to show that it is only with the acceptance of Eurocentric philosophical starting points about race and development, which are related very fundamentally to the development of the state, that one could miss the more radical politics being enacted in different ways throughout the time period. It is

important historically to see this period as an active period of insurrection and radical politics rather than gradual development and pacification.

The starting assumption that villagers were backward-looking and trying only to re-establish the old monarchy further pushes ordinary people outside of the rhythm of history and politics. Relatedly, it artificially places into stasis the dynamic processes that underscored galactic sovereignty in the Kandyan tradition over many hundreds of years of practice; it also mitigates the ways through which that model of sovereignty developed ways to integrate other people, notably Tamil kings from South India, into the social system. The epistemic violence of scientific history, then, colonizes not only the way we historicize the colonial encounter, but also – and perhaps more importantly – the ways through which we engage with our own pre-colonial pasts. In so doing, this serves as an ontological and an epistemological block that normalizes and universalizes a linear path to social development predicated on the denial of pluriversal politics.

This aspect of the dissertation draws attention to scholarship interested in building theory and decolonizing politics by reading everyday enactments of politics as sources of theory building. It contributes to historical international relations research that is interested in the transnational foundations of state formation through better understanding several aspects of the processes of colonial state formation and resistance to them; it also has implications for contemporary studies of ongoing colonization, or “internal” colonization as it is sometimes called. Whether the colonizing state is a settler colonial society like Canada, or a postcolonial society like Sri Lanka, focusing on the material practices of state-building as a colonizing technology allows us to better understand the radical implications of resistance to these processes. For example, the many ongoing sites of indigenous resistance to mega-projects of resource extraction across Turtle Island are

led by, and informed by, indigenous ontological starting points about water, land, and interconnectivity of living things.

Despite the moral discourse advanced to legitimize colonialism, which spoke to the need to improve land, bodies, and souls in order to bring them to an approximation of British-ness, colonialism was not about speeding up developmental understandings of time. Rather than bringing people into “modern” time, the colonial encounter can better be understood as the removal of people from both time and history. Colonialism sought, unsuccessfully, to halt the vibrant, moving living cultures that all had their own histories of inclusion, conflict, trade, cosmology, and materiality that did not go through the same experiences as Europe did. The colonial encounter was not about accelerating time and development for the darker peoples of the world so that they could catch up with modernity – it was a dam, built to halt the many movements, along multiple tributaries, that have nourished many peoples across many pasts. The dam has allowed for a rapid scale of progress within a single-verse of history, a uni-verse of modern reason.

This dissertation is an attempt to chip away at that dam by better understanding the modern/colonial violence associated with the dam’s construction, which is often under-problematized, although breaking of such a massive dam may well come with dangerous flooding. More specifically, as outlined in the introduction, the dissertation was catalyzed by the present conditions that enabled an anachronistic military expedition by a “legitimate” sovereign power against an “illegitimate” one occupying a significant swathe of territory on the same island. The territorial dynamics of the Sri Lanka/Tamil Eelam civil war, and the centrality of “total territorial rule” to both warring sides begs the question, “how has the process of becoming the modern, territorial state worked to legitimize some expressions of sovereignty while de-legitimizing others?” In the course of

seeking an answer, what has emerged is the radical potential of decolonial resuscitation, not as a backwards-looking, linear project, but as a means of rehabilitation and decontamination. This historical and theoretical dissertation is hardly the venue for 21st century policy prescriptions, but out of the research one can clearly see how a reclamation of “buddhification,” free from modern/colonial contamination, might serve to bring a greater measure of justice to light in the now-post-conflict but still highly divided society, as well as serve as a basis for rethinking what it means to be “Sri Lankan” in a “post” colonial age. While the application of a *rajamandala* system would be anachronistic, what insights might be gleaned from the emphasis on balancing material and cosmological realms? Asking questions of this nature is not restricted only to the British and “Sri Lankan” encounter; looking to historical moments of ontological collision with a view to thinking through the implications of universalism as a form of violence can be particularly useful in better understanding the continuities of modern colonialism.

I began this conclusion with an epigraph from a decolonial work of art that proclaims: within that which is forgotten rests more than that which is known today. The violence of universal thinking has actively silenced the many verses of the world. In beginning to answer this project’s research question, I argue that the process of becoming the modern territorial state was predicated on the violent silencing of worlds that were other-than European – but that which has been silenced need not remain so. The colonial process was never complete, and significant opportunities abound today for building decolonial futures and options that put into practice the diverse knowledge that universal reason has silenced.

Appendix A: Maps

Figure 1: Shifting boundaries in colonial Ceylon. Source: De Silva *A History of Sri Lanka xvii* reproduced in Perera 1998, 30

Figure 2: Approximation of Kingdoms in Ceylon in early 16th century. Source: Wikicommons

Figure 3: Map of Ceylon showing Wesleyan Methodist Missionary locations, 1822. Source: William Martin Harvard, *A Narrative of the Establishment and Progress of the Mission to Ceylon and India* (London: Printed by the author, 1822)

Figure 4: Provincial divisions of island after 1833 Colbrooke-Cameron Reforms. Source: G.C. Mendis *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2005 [1952]): 59

Figure 5: Migratory paths of "free" labourers from southern India. Source: Nihal Perera, *Society and Space: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Postcolonial Identity in Sri Lanka* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 69

Figure 6: Map of Tamil Eelam, 2005. Source: Wikicommons

Appendix B

Confidential: Ceylon. Appendix No. 6 to Memorandum on Colonial Policy.

Printed at the Foreign Office, February 1849. British National Archives, shelfmark: CO 882/1/5.

	1818	1823	1824	1834	1843	1848
Duration of rebellion	Beginning of Sept. 1817 to 2 nd Nov. 1818 ⁵⁸⁷	The rising in this year was put down by the local authorities in about a week	The attempt was made in August, and the prisoners were tried in Nov.	The rebellion did not take place, the conspirators being arrested before the completion of their plan	I this case also no rising appears to have taken place	29 th July to 10 th Oct. was the duration of martial law, but the rebellion was really over in a week or ten days from its commencement – viz., by the end of the first week of August
Number of troops employed	The greatest number of troops in the Kandyan provinces at any time was 6,130	...	The prisoners were taken by a small detachment	...	...	The number of troops in the interior provinces on 14 th Aug. was 1,527
Troops killed	According to the Returns and including those who died of their wounds, 94	---	---	---	---	None killed and one wounded according to the official returns, but the newspapers mentioned two killed. ⁵⁸⁸
Troops died in Hospital	According to the returns which are not very regular, 428	...	...	...	...	Troops were healthy in general
Punishment of Rebels – Executed	28	2	5	The prisoners were acquitted		18 Court-Martial,
Punishment of Rebels – Banished or transported	25	13	8	The prisoners were acquitted	The man who endeavoured to excite the insurrection was sentenced to imprisonment for fourteen years with hard labour	17 Supreme Court and 28 Court Martial, 45 Total.

⁵⁸⁷ Martial law was continued in some of the provinces till 3rd Jan. 1821, but the insurrection was virtually ended by the capture of the principal chiefs concerned in it and of the holy relic, on November 2, 1818.

⁵⁸⁸ Major Forbes states in his "Eleven Years in Ceylon," that the total loss on our side was estimated at 1000 and that of the natives at 10,000

Otherwise punished, (imprisonment, lash, etc.)	8	14	...	Prisoners acquitted	...	66 Court Martial
Expense	£ 177,675 10s. ⁵⁸⁹	No expense incurred apparently on these intermediate occasions	No expense incurred apparently on these intermediate occasions	No expense incurred apparently on these intermediate occasions	No expense incurred apparently on these intermediate occasions	Probably under £ 50,000; this is conjectural however, the whole to be paid by the colony.

⁵⁸⁹ This is the sum at which the Governor, Sir R. Brownrigg, estimated the expense.

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