The period 1815 to 1819 was tumultuous in the history of Sri Lanka as its politics swung between opposite poles. The British accomplished what the Portuguese and Dutch had not achieved: the final subjugation of the kingdom of Kandy, marked by the deposition of the island’s last king and his deportation to India together with his relatives. Buddha’s Tooth Relic – the critical signifier of the right to rule – was appropriated by the British. Even the royal throne was sent to London. Two years after these indisputable marks of the advance of European colonization there occurred an extensive rebellion against foreign rule, which spread across the Kandyan territories. The rebellion picked up on the loss of the kingly line; the Tooth Relic was secretly stolen for the rebel cause and a pretender was enthroned. The British could contemplate the possibility of losing Kandy. This was a quick about-turn in politics. The twists and turns were accompanied at every point by the use of violence, the practice of plunder and burning was widespread, and famine was one result of these years.

These four years have not attracted sustained study as a stand-alone subject since P. E. Pieris’ monumental and narrative Sinhalé and the Patriots, 1815–1818, which appeared two years after Ceylon’s independence. For Pieris, the agenda was to honour the ‘men and women and children who died for an ideal of a Community... as Patriots’. Yet the nation was not founded so easily in resistance to colonialism. In 1815 to 1819, kingdom and nation, indigeneity and cosmopolitanism were repositioned and rebalanced, in accelerated fashion, in the various localities of the Kandyan periphery and ruling centres. They were redefined with respect to the memory of kingship and around the rise of the British. Such a non-teleological view of the ‘end’ of early modernity is essential in understanding the present Sri Lankan nation and its rich and violent contradictoriness.
It is a historiographical cliché that the 1817–18 rebellion was ‘a real turning-point in the history of Sri Lanka’. One of the burdens of this chapter is to return to the archive, beyond Pieris or even Vimalananda, the latter of whom published a set of primary sources from this period, to focus on the question of how early modern kingly and local conceptions of cosmopolitanism and indigeneity were restructured and absorbed by the arrival of the modern colonial state. It is easy – especially following the important, ambitiously comparative and anthropologically inflected work of Alan Strathern – to see the parallels across time in the ‘grammar of rebellion’. Yet the impulse of this chapter and Islanded is slightly different. The thrust of the argument comes from its engagement with a virulent debate in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century South Asian historiography, connected with how the British came to conquer South Asia, through a reliance on ‘military-fiscalism’, indigenous financiers and landowners, knowledge-brokers and ‘subsidiary alliance’ with princely states, followed by direct annexation at times. In dismissing the dichotomy of continuity versus change, this chapter is challenging the terms of this specific literature. Such a dismissal does not deny the existence of either of these features, but insists on a more complex picture of reassembly. Past precedent and new innovation both featured. The British sought to connect themselves to the extant indigenous, even while recrafting it over and over again. This early nineteenth-century sense of the indigenous encompassed Kandyan tradition and also included Dutch and Portuguese practice, and descendants of both these colonizers who were sometimes termed ‘native’. Simultaneously, the British innovated with modes of state-making, surveillance, administrative and legislative reform and bureaucracy. It was the combination of these two contradictory impulses and the momentum with which they were pursued – on an island – that helps explain the violence of this moment.

In work elsewhere, I have utilized analytical terms that highlight that this reassembly was dynamic and yet incomplete: ‘islanding’, ‘partitioning’, ‘recycling’ and ‘movement’. Its power and legacy for the twentieth century lay in these features. To stress long-term continuities over the early modern centuries is valuable. Such a view needs to contend with how the early modern ends in Lanka and what the links are between the early modern and the twentieth century, especially given later conceptions of territory, belonging and nationhood. In the account that follows, the entanglement of cosmopolitanism and indigeneity around the monarch or within specific locales in Kandy had a legacy for the period that follows. This counts as transition from the early modern, but not a dividing line, not a singular transition from one form to another, or a simple continuation of established patterns. In other words, the British had a lasting effect in ushering in late modernity, but the coming of that modernity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a rollercoaster, where the benchmarks of assessment cannot be taken for granted. Those benchmarks and their memory were redefined in the process. The early British islanding of Lanka narrowed prior pathways and was at an unprecedented scale; it was bequeathed unfinished to later colonial racialists and even later Lankan nationalists.
One further issue with following a narrative of continuity or change in discussing the British advent lies in how such explanations fall inevitably into colonial discourses that were circulating in the early nineteenth century. Take governor Robert Brownrigg, who went to war with Kandy in 1815 and crushed the ensuing rebellion. Towards the end of the period, he wrote that his troops were fatigued with warfare; the ‘Constitution and Physical Powers’ of both fighting European and ‘natives’ were exhausted. It was in this context that he envisaged the loss of Kandy: it would weaken ‘the Force among the Nations of the Indian Continent of that Opinion of the invincible power of the British arms’.9 Using the ascendant language of rule of the British imperial meridian in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Brownrigg noted the need for ‘the effectual maintenance of the Sovereignty of the United Kingdom, over the whole Island’. The eighteenth-century political unification of Britain on the one hand and the island on the other are brought together as processes that witness sovereignty exercised over the natural territory of the whole of these islands, taken as singular political units.10

Brownrigg also took the view that the Sinhalese were aware of the momentous changes: rebellion was an expected response. In Úva, for instance, in the context of plunder and war, Brownrigg noted the ‘abuses which it was not possible entirely to prevent’ inflicted by his troops, and the need to appease the inhabitants of the ‘new order of things’; and to deal with the ‘fear of innovation upon established customs, powers and emoluments and that large part of confusion which necessarily takes place in great and sudden changes in publick affairs’.11

As the rebellion proceeded, further provinces fell: it spread from Úva and Vellasça to Dumbara, Hēvahāta, the Seven Kōraḷēs and other Kandyan territories. As this occurred, there appeared a diametrically opposite account of this moment. Instead of it being characterized by Brownrigg as one of revolutionary or ‘great and sudden’ change, it was said to be a continuation of the timeless past. Brownrigg wrote to London:

A greater facility also is afforded to factions and intriguing spirits, to raise disturbances in this Country at present, from Commotions having at all times been frequent in it. The little knowledge we have of Kandyan History, displays a continuation of rebellion on the part of the subjects and cruelties on the part of the Kings. That the former might be often the effect as well as the cause of the latter may be easily conceived, but the consequence on the minds of the Inhabitants has been that the moment any person of sufficient influence, to give them a command to revolt against the established Government directs it, they hide their Property and Families in the Woods, take up Arms with which every Man is provided, ostensibly for the defence of the Crops against Wild Beasts, being either Muskets or Bows and Arrows (more frequently the latter) and abandoning their dwellings follow their Leaders through the Country, hiding in Caves or
any other Places of concealment when closely pressed. The Manufacture of Gunpowder is general and of very ancient practise throughout the Country.¹²

In keeping with the claims marshalled in Islanded, what follows traces the rapidly changeable politics, ideology and state-making of this period around the themes of indigeneity and cosmopolitanism. Kandy was not a closed kingdom that was easily transformed by British takeover. Nor was British colonialism strong enough or confident enough to project its ideologies of sovereignty, governance and statehood, without reference to Kandyan norms (and indeed to past colonial practice). These years saw many people seeking to adopt the mantle of kingship: including Britons, ex-monks, Kandyan chiefs and supposed ‘strangers’ parading as Malabars. At the same time, a view of the nation was circulating in this period and it was turning increasingly ethnicized: such a discourse again was a compound result of the colonial as well as the indigenous, evident in both palm-leaf texts as well as the colonial archive. It has been described as associational and popular and it was a ratcheting up of ethnicization evident in prior centuries.¹³ By the 1830s, as it became tied up with a bureaucratizing state, the nation came to overtake, if not wipe out, the memory of the kingdom. Now, British laws and regimes of paperwork dictated who the strangers and indigenes were, evident most potently in pronouncements about migrants. In these ways the shift from a king to a British governor is a story of the repeatedly changing relative placements of indigeneity and cosmopolitanism. The momentum of these changes together with their links to the past counted as a slow and less than total end to the early modern. This means that the beginning of modern Sri Lanka cannot be dated precisely to 1833, the supposed date of implementation of the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms.¹⁴

This chapter uses indigeneity and cosmopolitanism as an interlinked pair.¹⁵ The fall of Kandy, the conduct of war, violence and plunder and then rebellion and the consolidation of a new British state can be approached as events that define and redefine the meanings of and links between indigeneity and cosmopolitanism. At the core of the idea of the Kandyan king was a notion of political Sinhalaness that was ethnicized. Yet it could not work without the services and symbolic capital connected to foreigners, such as Muslim doctors or Malabar traders, and even Malabar kings. The court and the body of the king may then be seen as a galactic field, where elements are drawn to the centre through the force of ritual, service or tribute.¹⁶ This is why artefacts – such as the Tooth Relic or the golden sword of the king – were vital elements and even agents in determining the course of this story; for they linked the provinces to the centre in acts of adoration and obeisance. This notion of the kingdom was thus indigenous and cosmopolitan at the same time and lasted well into the period of British rule. Such a complex is also evident at the local level in Kandyan territories, for instance in the organization of villages in areas that witnessed rebellion. Yet such local and monarchic cosmopolitanism, resting around a sense of Sinhalaness, was resituated more than once by the British advance. In the new state, indigenes and
'strangers’ were separated out as belonging in different places as legal advisers and bureaucrats specified new boundaries, for instance between the island and mainland. Later, free trade imperialism dictated the redefinition of the indigene yet again.

In other words, the Kandyan state or its people cannot be classed as a chronologically static terrain of otherness to the cosmopolitan colonial. Nor can the British advance be taken as a straightforward given in its invention of the indigenous. Rather the challenge of working on this short period is to tease apart the violent tussle over concepts that ensued on all sides, and to contextualize this in relation to the changing composition of the people in the Kandyan territories as fighters, traders, religious men and pilgrims felt the severity of invasion. By implication too, it is not the role of every historian to jump across centuries. Focusing on four years allows a deeper engagement with primary materials, and with the multiple dimensions, involving the imperial state as much as extra-colonial agents; the undoubted invasion of the British imperial state as much as its powerfully uneven borrowings, alliances and effects.

***

Cosmopolitanism and indigeneity were being repositioned not only at court but in the local provinces of the Kandyan territories, in areas where there were separate villages of predominantly Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim residents, and the discussion therefore begins at ground level to trace this tussle over concepts in such villages.

Some revealing observations, which are in manuscript and so understudied, come from travelling officers and representatives of the British government, in provinces taken by the British in 1815. Major Henry Hardy travelled out of Kandy on 8 May 1815, a couple of months after the kingdom’s fall, and reached Badulla, journeying at first on the banks of the Mahaväli river and noting the features of the country and its agricultural potential. He called Úva ‘the Garden of Ceylon’, and on the way from Passara to Attila collected a specimen of the bark and root of a cinnamon tree, which had ‘attained an extraordinary growth’. Yet in contrast to the abundant signs of natural life, he noted that every village on the route to Kataragama was ‘entirely deserted’ because they had been plundered of ‘every thing they possessed, as well by our profligate coolies as by our disorderly Native troops’. His account strikes an uneasy balance between, on the one hand, an aestheticized description of the natural scenery and its potential for commercial improvement and, on the other, an unusually frank catalogue of crimes of war. This unique combination arose because the commentary was intended simply for the eyes of the governing elite: in fact Hardy would become Governor Brownrigg’s aide de camp, a trusted confidential advisor, and he would be critical in the suppression of the rebellion of 1817–18.

At Attila, the complaints of the villagers regarding plunder were directed against Malay soldiers who had quartered there: the villagers had ‘been left with their Lives and nothing more’. In responding to these complaints, Hardy stressed...
the benevolence and justice of the British government. He alleged that the plunder had been undertaken by an unrepresentative minority. In Kataragama, which became a critical site for the rebellion that followed, Hardy noted that the scene was one of ‘desolation’ and depopulation. The temple only contained ‘one inferior sort of Priest, an ignorant ill clothed creature & a more venerable looking Bramin’. The ‘wealth of the Temple’ had been taken by a British detachment and many of the houses had been ‘unroofed for firewood’. Indeed, a series of temples were plundered in the aftermath of the signing of the treaty ceding the kingdom to the British.20

After an annotation in the manuscript, ‘From Boettle, 7th June’, is an account of how the principal inhabitants of the Buttala met Hardy and Simon Sawers. Sawers took up the office of revenue commissioner in Kandy in 1816 and later became judicial commissioner in Kandy, and was now travelling with Hardy. The Buttala inhabitants met the party with tom toms, and there were soon 400 of them. There were many women who ‘came to stare at [them] from a distance’.21 Hardy wrote: ‘The men came about us with the utmost confidence; they tell me that no act of oppression has been committed of late by our Soldiers’. Critically, in considering this observation, Hardy noted that Buttala had a ‘great part’ of Malabar residents (‘Malabar’ being a period term for the community who were later called Tamil), who had connections to Batticaloa on the coast, indicating perhaps an interest in trade. Hardy praised these people as ‘frank and well disposed’. Revealingly, given the events of the rebellion to follow, which was led by Kāppiṭipola, the Disāva of Ûva, ‘they [the Malabars] labour under severe impositions from the Dessave of Ouva, who they tell me is now going about the Country laying contributions among them’.

It was after meeting these allegedly friendly Malabars that Hardy thought back to his earlier encounters in Ûva, noted above, writing: ‘There is certainly to be observed a curious cold disposition on the part of the Chingalese [Sinhalese] and somehow they do not appear anxious to have us.’ In an example of the contemporary theory of dramatic change witnessed in these years, he wrote that Ûva was in a ‘state of anarchy’, because the established headmen did not know whether they had the backing of the new English government. These episodes bear the signs of colonial ethnographic categorization, for instance pointing to the hard-pressed Malabars and their suspicion of the Sinhalese chief. Yet, this is a text which is formed in situ, and Hardy’s views are forged through his conversations with local people and as he travelled from village to village and compared episodes. The view of ethnic rivalry which it presents was not wholly or easily a British colonial invention.

Straight after his time in Ûva, Hardy went on to Vellasṣa. This was another province that would become a central node of the later revolt. Hardy wanted to gather bullocks, to be used for the transportation of British supplies, from the Moor inhabitants (‘Moor’ being a term used to refer to the island’s community of Muslims). Here too, like with the Malabars of Ûva, he noted that the Muslims were joyful and ready collaborators and supplied the government’s need and were ‘loud to testify their happiness at being placed under the British Government’.22
Yet again, their complaint was directed against the Sinhala disāva of Vellasṣa and his extortionate regime of taxes. It was alleged that the oppression of the disāva had led to their leaving their homes for the jungles. When the rātarāle, a deputy of the disāva, arrived to speak with Hardy, the British officer made a point of addressing the Muslims while in his company:

I desired them to remember what I had told them before that they were now British Subjects, that no person on Earth, whether British officer or Soldier Dissave or Ratterale should injure them with impunity that I would remain among them some time, to defend them from such oppressions as they have complained of, and that they should be made to feel the advantage of the English Lives which they appeared so desirous to exchange their former slavery for. In return the Ratterale was now the person disconcerted. He was pierced during this harangue by the eyes of every man present.²³

Straight after his time at this and another village that he denoted as inhabited entirely by Moors, Hardy entered a ‘small Chingalese village’. Here he met with the disāva of Vellasṣa and spoke with him about the grievances of the Moor villagers. He noted that the answer he received was a ‘bad one’. The disāva emphasized that the Moors were of a low caste. Hardy noted that the Moors would serve as a wedge with which to break down the oppressive chiefly system. Rather foolishly, given what followed, he also wrote that Vellasṣa was ‘as fine a Country as any in Ceylon’, and that a detachment did not need to be stationed there because there were so many Moors who would be loyal to the British, whatever the circumstances.

Hardy’s diary in Úva and Vellasṣa in 1815 provides a snapshot of the deterioration of ethnic relations and the local cosmopolitanism of the Kandyan provinces, denoted in the arrangement of different villages and the diversity of communities evident across them. Of course there were some long-term tensions in these areas between communities.²⁴ Yet the arrival of British rule recontextualized notions of indigenous affiliation. This was neither continuity nor change but rather continuity and change, the very forceful and violent restitution of a changing history of antecedents. In support of such an argument, one might note the British desire to find collaborators and trading partners, to take over the Kandyan kingdom and to initiate intrusive ‘free trade’. There was also their insistence that ethnicities should be neatly demarcated and plotted on their map of new territories: note Hardy’s view of the friendly ‘Malabars’ and helpful ‘Moors’ in contrast with the cold Sinhalese. Such ethnography may have had an effect on the self-conception of Muslims, Tamil and Sinhala communities and their local governors.²⁵ Another contributor to a worsening of relations at this specific point was the full force of invasion that the British unleashed through this territory. Despite the heterogeneity of the extant population, numerous new types of people entered these territories from 1815 to 1819 as soldiers, ‘coolies’ and interpreters, and their presence and actions set in train new patterns of violence and
distrust between communities. The local cosmopolitanism of the area could not peacefully accommodate this many people.

In 1816 when Governor Brownrigg toured the interior, he found evidence for this, in being greeted by a large crowd of tenants in the vale of Badulla, ‘who claimed protection for themselves, their Families and Premises from the Soldiers and Army Followers’. Brownrigg sought to explain the pattern of plunder: it occurred when British detachments as well as ‘Individual Travellers’ resort to the houses of villagers in order to procure supplies, generating fear on the part of the inhabitants who flee their abodes, allowing them to be plundered by these visitors. Although Brownrigg minimized the aggressive intent of these supposed visitors, his comments reveal that the movement of so many people and the necessity for the supply of people as logistic help at a time of war, were part and parcel of this culture of plunder. It is useful here to remember one recent thesis about the significant militarization of the British imperial meridian – whereby extra-European polities could not keep up, by way of finance and organization, with the ‘garrison state’ the British marshalled by the end of the eighteenth century. This has been borne out too by recent work in Sri Lankan military history.

The manuscript travel journal of Simon Sawers who travelled with Hardy provides further evidence of how plunder was undertaken. For instance, alliances built up between Malay soldiers working for the British and Muslim communities resident in the provinces. In Vellasása, Sawers gave his particular explanation of why the Moor trading community spoke ill of their disāva while being keen on collaborating with the British: having travelled for trade to the maritime provinces governed by the English, they had seen ‘the comparative mildness and Justice of [English] Government’ and entertained ‘more enlarged ideas of independence with a great share of hatred to the old instruments of their oppression’. Directly following this comment, Sawers documented how much of the plunder of 1815 in Vellasása had been undertaken by Malay troops working for the British, who had collaborated with Moor traders:

[T]he people have suffered much in their property by the Company of Malays, that were lately Stationed here and I suspect that their depredations were not confined to Uvah, but were also extended into the Wellasey Country, and that the Tavelam Moors were their informers and conductors, and also participated in the plunder. It even appears that the Singalese acted in this capacity themselves, where they had old quarrels to revenge.

Ethnic and cultural affiliations across the lines of colonial and local play a part here, for instance in explaining the collaboration between Malays and Moors, and yet they do not constitute the whole story. The uncertain politics of these years set the context for other kinds of crimes, beyond plunder, which also pitted communities against each other, while tying together new entrants into the Kandyian territories, who were working for the British and local people. For example, Governor Brownrigg was concerned by the severity of the disāva of Ţva’s response when
a Sinhala woman and her daughter, of some rank, were found within a British military cantonment, where the daughter had ‘lived with one of the Native Malay Officers’. Once taken out of the camp at the demand of the disāva, the mother was said to have had ‘her Leg broken and both her and her daughter much bruised and with other marks of severe treatment, supposed to have been inflicted by the Mother’s own brother’. The headman of Kataragama was also found killed, and this murder apparently arose out of sexual intrigue. Yet another murder that was reported in the same letter involved ‘a party of Traders from the Sea Coast [possibly Malabar or Moor], who were charged with robbing a House of the Village of Passere in the Province of Ouwa and shooting the Owners’ Brother’. These episodes document how the transition to British rule provided a context for crime and punishment that could be directed against traditional elites; at the same time, social relations and forms of intimacy and violence could develop between soldiers and local people.

In developing this argument about the compound result of British and local engagement, it is useful to attend to how the specific strategies of violence used by the British inspired the counter-techniques of the local inhabitants. Violence became cyclical and imitative. Towards the end of the rebellion, there was an account of the discovery of the head of an interpreter, who had served the British, ‘upon a stake’, ‘and near it a Body hanging on a tree’, taken to be the remains of the same man. This interpreter had worked for Mr Wilson, whose death at the hands of rebels was one of the first episodes of the rebellion. Wilson’s head, in turn, it was alleged, had been given to the pretender to the throne who called for rebellion. It is worth noting that execution was used by the British as a punishment in these years, and especially in the context of the rebellion. With the interpreter’s human remains, an ola was found wrapped in white cloth containing a proclamation from the rebellious leader calling for the death of every white man:

Major MacDonald now thought an example of severity should be shown. The Houses all around were therefore burnt, and all the Property found, Cattle, Grain &c &c was either carried off or destroyed. The terrible sight appeared to dismay the Natives, they ceased to shout or skirmish at a distance, and only ventured upon the skirts of the Plain to gaze in silence upon the Flames which consumed their habitations. They seemed panic struck at the rapidity and undaunted courage with which our Troops had advanced upon them.

The scorched-earth techniques utilized by the British through the course of these years were also at times matched by the local people. For instance, there was the case of one man who was ‘ scorched by a near relation on suspicion of theft’. ‘He had lost the use of one Hand and was otherwise much injured and disfigured.’ Without noting any contradiction or connection to British use of fire, Brownrigg wrote that this was a crime that needed prompt and public investigation; he attempted to organize for the case to be tried in Kandy, while he was in the capital
on tour.\textsuperscript{35} Despite British attempts to stress their civility and to trumpet their difference by resort to colonial laws, in fact the violence of this moment was supercharged by the fact that it was undertaken on all sides, and in rather symmetrical fashion.

British ideology, ethnography and practical tactics were becoming entangled with local patterns of life and organization; local cosmopolitanism was being rebalanced into a culture of ethnic competition and differentiation, which in turn was as changeable as the British colonial state. The relation between cosmopolitanism and ethnicization was extant prior to this period of course — and yet because of how the British fell into past patterns, while launching an intensive project of surveillance and state-making, the pace of continuity and change gathered momentum in these years.

***

Moving on from local cosmopolitanism’s fortunes in these years, it is important to stress that monarchic cosmopolitanism, consistent with Buddhist kingship and the last kings of Kandy, was also alive and well and at the heart of the rebellion of 1817–18. This kingly cosmopolitanism was remoulded and misunderstood by the British advance, in a similar way to how local cosmopolitanism fared in this period.

In 1816, Brownrigg had information of a plot to overthrow the English government, from Eknāligoda Nilame, a loyal disāva. Eknāligoda Nilame received an invitation from two Buddhist monks to join the plot.\textsuperscript{36} According to him, invitations were issued to mudaliyārs, the headmen working under the British regime in the maritime provinces, and also to Malay troops via a muhandiram, one of another class of titled officers, to join the intended rebellion. The mudaliyārs of Colombo were said to have promised to send on for the rebel cause a ‘number of Thieves and rogues’.\textsuperscript{37} Eknāligoda Nilame reported his discussion with the priests in these terms:

\begin{quote}
I asked the Priests, suppose you succeed in driving the English out, what will you do for a King – They answered we have already provided for that – That the late King’s Son in Law; Mootal Samy Brother in Law, and a third, own Brother to Mootalsamy were now Prisoners in Slave Island at Colombo, that the Malays in their Interest would insure their escape. That a certain Day in the month would be fixed on, and be known through out when matters should burst out.
\end{quote}

These relations of the ex-king, termed ‘Malabar prisoners’ in the translation, would thus combine with their Malay rescuers, Buddhist priests, lowland native heads and Kandyan chiefs to recreate a kingly and cosmopolitan polity.\textsuperscript{38} Kandy would be struck and only its resident, John D’Oyly, would be spared for the information he possessed on the location of the king’s treasure. The plot included elaborate instruction on the route through which the Malabars needed to march into Úva, and also how the Malays were to use the pretext of a Muslim feast in
order to undertake this resistance. Although this was a plot orchestrated around a notion of kingship, with Buddhist priests as prime movers, it could encompass other communities around it, just as the Kandyan kings had done in the past.

Enrolled with this ideal of resistance were older transregional relations. For instance, at the very moment when Brownrigg reported the information gleaned from Eknāligōḍa Nilame, he wrote that a party of seven priests had departed to Ava in northern Burma with a long-term resident on the island, originating in Ava. He also noted that a delegation from Ava had made their way to Kandy without permission and without being much noticed and that he suspected devious motives. In addition D’Oyly discovered a plot at this moment to obtain a prince from Siam. The idea of the Buddhist kingdom of Kandy as one that was set within a Buddhist ecumene stretching to Southeast Asia was a historic notion, which evidently returned to the scene even as the Kandyan line was evacuated. This prospect of kingly cosmopolitanism also reached out to Malay soldiers and even ‘Black troops’ or African-descent troops working for the British, in order to incorporate them into the progress of rebellion. The kingly cosmopolitanism of this moment was thus able to rekindle longstanding traditions of association in addition to being responsive to the conditions of war and migration that marked the circumstances of British advance.

Regardless of this project of restoration, when the rebellion of 1817–18 formally began, Muslims and Malay troops mostly remained loyal to the British. In July 1818, it was reported, in keeping with Hardy’s views above, that Muslim traders in Vellașa had provided critical support in conveying supplies. In the same province, in the same period, a rebel leader was captured by Malay men under a native lieutenant, despite strenuous efforts and promises made by the rebels to try and effect a change of sides on the part of the Malays in question. These Malay soldiers and rebels ‘marched together’ for some miles until the native lieutenant gave ‘the preconcerted signal to his men for seizing the rebel chief, which was instantly effected’. Despite the overwhelming number of rebels present on this occasion, the Malays killed thirty-three of them with bayonets and wounded several, while others dispersed or fled. Other rebels were also captured by Moormen and Malays towards the end of the rebellion. Yet, as always in the history of these four years, an interpretation of ethnic separation along the lines of the Sinhalese on one side and the British and their loyal supporters, the local minorities, on the other side, does not tell the whole story. For Eknāligōḍa Nilame’s intelligence involved a Malay muhandiram who had agreed to organize support for the intended rebellion of 1816. This man had fled Kandy after its chief minister Pilima Talauvè had been executed by the king. In 1815 he had helped the British invade Kandy; now in 1816 he had offered his support to the rebels. He was one of the last king’s fighters. Brownrigg decided to banish him from the island and ‘to send him to Batavia, the Native place of his Family’. Although he was placed on a ship at Galle, he managed to escape at Ambalangoḍa further up the coast, but was recaptured and placed under military guard at Galle awaiting the next means of deportation to the East Indies, together with his two grown
sons and other family. It is pertinent here to note that the kings of Kandy utilized other foreign fighters, including men from Ava and Tanjore.46

This fragment of a life history is also revealing for how the British intervened in the notion of cosmopolitan kingship, and in the life of a man who had been at the heart of the late kingdom, with a product of the Age of Revolutions: the idea of the nation and its citizens. Increasingly in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, during which Ceylon was taken for fear of its fall to the French, across the Indian Ocean the ideas of nationality and citizenship were circulating, set against arbitrary power and in some contexts kingship and imperialism. It was for this reason that the Malay muhandiram belonged in Batavia, his native place.47 Although minorities could be employed effectively to support colonial expansion, in the end the British believed in a narrow idea of national indigeneity, as will be evident below.

***

British interaction with Āhāḷēpola, the chief minister of Kandy, who fled to British territories, is a good test case of how kingly cosmopolitanism is interlinked with a conception of indigeneity. In the early stages of the rebellion, the British could not imagine that Āhāḷēpola, the Disāva of Sabaragamuwa, would join the rebel cause: how could a man who wished to be king become subservient to a ‘Malabar’ pretender, from the race that had treated his family so cruelly? In accord with this view, the British circulated the account of how Āhāḷēpola’s family was brutally murdered by the last king of Kandy. Yet this simple line of ethnicized and nationalized explanation did not last long as the British grew suspicious of the actions of Āhāḷēpola and charged him as a rebel, even though they had no precise information of his role in the rebellion.48

Moving beyond the colonial archive to the corpus of palm-leaf texts, it is possible to plot the attitudes of those connected with Āhāḷēpola around the taking of Kandy and the rebellion that followed. Two palm-leaf ballads in the genre of hatan kavi or war poems that emerged in this window of time were the Vadiga Hatana and the Āhāḷēpola Hatana, written in honour of Āhāḷēpola and arising in all probability from within his circle of admirers. The Vadiga Hatana begins as a panegyric of Āhāḷēpola, describing him as yuvarāja or second king.49 It is thought that it may have been sung when he held court, beyond the purview of the British, as a king in waiting.50 The ballads appear to have had successive additions, possibly in the context of the tumult of events that overtook these years. Criticism of the last king and praise of the English for getting rid of him gives way to critique of the English. Both the Tamils (demala or vadiga) who had dominated the court, and the English, personified by ‘Gori’, King George III, are cast as agents of violence and sacrilege against Buddhist and Sinhala sensibility. The ideological flux of these years, however, does not change the adoration of Āhāḷēpola as king.

The Āhāḷēpola Hatana begins by describing how the last king turned on Āhāḷēpola. Āhāḷēpola then received the devotion of the people of Sabaragamuwa: ‘We shall sacrifice even our lives to the name of Āhāḷēpola.’51
Accordingly, he declared war upon the king. Finding himself in the midst of a conflict with Āhālēpola:

That King Vickrama disregarding all humane feelings
Went on killing men like a devil
Causing fear of death to multitudes
Continuing a rampage of executions every day.

The poem then recounts in gruesome detail how the king slayed Āhālēpola’s family:

Placing at once a pestle in the hand of the mother
Told her to pound on the child’s head.
‘Woman, you must do this cruel deed.’
Said the evil king happily, nodding his head.

When Āhālēpola responded by fleeing to the English, the English king, a reference to the governor of the British territories, is said to be attentive: ‘The powerful British becoming angry, declaring war/Surrounded the great city from eight directions.’ There is specific reference to the change of sovereignty; the Sinhala royal throne is evacuated and the English flag is hoisted in the city and George III becomes king of Kandy. Āhālēpola’s disappointment at not being king sets the scene for the rebellion in the last section of the poem:

The English troops, having chased away the enemy
Spreading in ten directions, armed with bows, swords and guns
Setting houses on fire and looting
Went on a rampage, killing uncountable numbers of people.

The inhumanity of the English is comparable to the inhumanity of the last king, in his obsession with his own power. For now, while the rebellion is in progress, numerous people are ‘living in jungles’, ‘not consuming sweet, soft food, but living on roots and leaves’. This may be a reference to the famine that gripped Ūva in the last stages of the rebellion and its aftermath, which according to at least one Briton was a strategy utilized by the colonists to quell the rebellion. The Āhālēpola Hatana ends noting how the rebels, including Āhālēpola, were banished to the island of Mauritius.

The Vadiga Hatana bears out once again how there was an attempt to see Āhālēpola as a worthy and righteous king, set against the treachery of Śri Vickrama Rājasimha, the last king. Vāligala Kavisūndara, under whose name the poem appears, presents a picture of the kingdom taken over by Tamils. This is a vision of spiritual violation and natural pollution, as the king embarks on a programme of renovating his city: ‘The great heal of soil was high as the sacred Bodhi/ At night jackals and dogs roam and defecate on it.’ The king also enjoys the pleasures of women in the shrine room of the Tooth Relic. A red sun, falling stars
and comets and an earthquake announce that all is awry. The poem recounts the battle of 1815, naming the British officers, including Major Hardy. The troops are presented as a motley band of peoples:

Kavisi, Habisi, Bengali, Vadiga [in this period, Tamil] and Dutch Malay, Javanese, Sepoy, Chetti, Muslim and mercenaries,
With English soldiers in large numbers
With [Christian] priests, to attend to the last rites when their time came.

In stressing his kingly role, Āhālēpola is said to act decisively in the battle, deploying his own army. He announces: ‘I will catch the Tamil who destroys the country in eight days.’ He is ‘like Rāma, the hero, entering the city of Rāvana/He entered the city of Senkada [Kandy] by the power of the Buddha’. Meanwhile, he personally orchestrates the capture of the last king. Although there is no direct evidence for this, it is suggestive to keep in mind the British idea of the alienability of the Malabars in interpreting these productions. In the midst of Kandy’s fall, the British took it to be dominated by tyrannical foreigners, and this is precisely the register taken by this poetry in portraying the last king and his relatives.

Turning to British sources, the view that Āhālēpola will not join the rebellion was offered up to those in higher authority several times on the basis of a racial argument too. For instance, in November 1817, Brownrigg wrote to London that although duplicity was very common among the Kandyan elite, Āhālēpola may be counted upon for his loyalty to the British, having confirmed by ‘oath his unshaken fidelity to the British Government’. The governor carried on:

the remembrance of the Cruelties which those most dear to him suffered from the deposed king, the animosity with which His own Rebellion and zealous assistance in the overthrow of the Malabar Royal Race, and His own Pride of sentiment present to my mind good grounds for believing that Eyheylapolle will never consent to undue homage to a Malabar King, or be instrumental in raising one to the Throne.\(^{54}\)

In this belief of ethnic difference, the British sought to manage this man’s expectations. Before the rebellion, Āhālēpola had complained to Brownrigg of his plight and asked for various honours to distinguish him from other chiefs.\(^{55}\) For example, in late 1815, he insisted on being granted the honours of a king, by written document, and equivalent honours to those enjoyed on the part of the late ‘Malabar’ ruler. In response, the British explained the nature of sovereignty to Āhālēpola; two kings could not co-exist in the island. For the ‘assumption of Kingly State was an infringement of the Royal Rights of His Majesty the King of England’. Āhālēpola was adamant that this was not the case and that he could still be king.\(^{56}\) A rumour was also reported that if Āhālēpola was not to receive kingly honours he would retire to his village and ‘raise the country’. In
this context, Brownrigg awaited an overt act of disloyalty to arrest Āhālēpola, even if John D’Oyly had advised that an arrest was unnecessary. In seeking for kingship, Āhālēpola sought to project a sense of his rule as consistent with and incorporative of the rule of the British monarch. For instance, he attended Colombo for the birthday of the British king in 1816, and insisted on being supplied with a portrait of the British monarch that he could wear. The governor advised London that this request was worth meeting, as it would further link the name of Āhālēpola with British interests, thus making it difficult for him to become disloyal:

With all his faults I am disposed to give him the credit of setting a just value on the honour of wearing the Royal Portrait, and as his ambition is deeply interested in preserving his Title to so flattering a decoration, that dangerous and alarming part of his character may thus be made subservient to the great object of attaching him to the British interests.\(^{57}\)

This portrait may be interpreted as part of an exchange between Brownrigg and Āhālēpola, for the chief gave the governor the king’s jewels, which had been brought to him in return for it. If so, was Āhālēpola trying to participate in a new set of symbols of kingship? During the birthday celebrations, he rode a black Arab horse, which had belonged to the late king’s stud, but dismounted it for the ritual of the firing of guns.\(^{58}\)

Despite the similarities in the portrayal of the aspirant king and court, within palm-leaf sources and British colonial documents, there is an important dissonance in the record of the late events of the rebellion, which gestures to the continuing life of monarchic cosmopolitanism and the failure of the British to grasp how it functioned. Although the Āhālēpola-related palm-leaves and British sources seem to separate true indigenes from vile and polluting outsiders, who inflict violence, in fact as the rebellion proceeded a ‘stranger’ became critical to its progress as a pretender. There was an assimilationist tendency – evident also in Āhālēpola’s attempt to incorporate George III within his bid to be king – which did not conform to British expectations of kingly stateishness. One might note how Kāppitipola, the disāva of Ūva and a relation of Āhālēpola’s, organized a ceremony to enthrone a new king, a man he brought out of hiding from Kataragama. The ceremony took place in ‘a large plan called Diabetme in lower Ouwa in which temporary buildings were erected, a solemn ceremony of inauguration took place before a crowd of about 3000 persons, assembled from nearly every part of the Kandyan provinces’. The ceremony thus arranged the provinces symbolically around the new king, and then deployed loyal adherents, who had witnessed the ritual, to all corners of the kingdom, with the instruction to be ‘firm in opposition’.\(^{59}\) In the aftermath, a spike was recorded in the number of attacks mounted on British troops and escorts. In another assembly at Hanguranketha, Kāppitipola exhibited a casket said to contain the Tooth Relic, which ‘he declared had been brought away from the Principal Temple in Kandy by Two Lascoreens
who were on watch over it’, as an indicator of the certain success of the rebel cause. The Lascorins, in British uniform, also appeared alongside the displayed casket. The word that recurred in colonial sources describing the so-called pretender was the word ‘stranger’, denoting both a lack of information and a lack of comprehension of the relationship between ethnicity and kingship. Note the words of Governor Brownrigg:

When I was in Kandy in September last a Report was received that a Stranger of suspicious appearance had appeared in the South East part of Ouva (an unfrequented and wild Country) who occasionally dressed as a Malabar and sometimes as a Budhoo Priest by some of which Class he was accompanied... it was discovered that the Malabar was guarded by 100 armed Vedahs and the Native Headman who was sent to apprehend him was taken prisoner.

He carried on that the chiefs had declared that this ‘stranger was really connected with the Family of the deposed King’, and that he was among the Malabars sent to India, who had returned to the island illegally. It was supposed at first that he was Doraisāmi, but inquiries in Madras revealed that Doraisāmi was still in the mainland. Brownrigg’s theory was this: ‘[I]t is to my mind a probability nearly approaching a certainty that he is a Native Kandyan of good Family who had been much in the Galle and Matura Districts.’ He had declared himself to be of royal stock at Kataragama temple. In fact this pretender was Vilbavē, an ex-monk, who was posing as Doraisāmi in order to claim royal ancestry. Ex-monks recur in the sources for this period: indeed they were among the spies deployed by John D’Oyly in the Kandyan territories in the period. Pilima Talauvē, another chief who was critical to the rebellion, intended to put forward another pretender as king. This second man was discovered to be ‘a Malabar’, ‘who had resided in Poverty and Obscurity at Manar, not connected with the Kandyan Royal Family’. Pilima Talauvē intended to display this ‘phantom king’ at Dambulla vihāra. The dissonance amounts to this: in this project of restoration, non-Sinhaleseness still played a critical role, and this mystified the British and thwarted their policy of ethnic classificationism.

Both Kāppiṭipola and Pilima Talauvē were arrested by Captain Fraser in October 1818; Āhālēpolo was taken captive before this. Soon followed the capture of Madugallē, another rebel leader and a Buddhist priest who had in his possession the Tooth Relic. Yet it was not only the Kandyans who sought to resuscitate ideas of kingliness. In these years and after the rebellion, there was again an attempt on the part of the British to model their government as a replacement for Kandy. For instance, on entering Kandy, Brownrigg watched wild elephants set free in the centre of the city as Śri Vickrama Rājasimha had done in 1810. When leaving the territories for the coast, he sought to take up ‘ancient etiquette’ by having as attendants ‘all the chiefs in Kandy’. Even offerings to Kataragama were made in order to appeal to popular sensibility. This programme is in keeping
with material I have discussed elsewhere on how British governors were enrolled as kings in palm-leaf narratives in the period after the taking of Kandy. **72**

***

Yet the play of concepts evident here – where Britons sought to be like Kandyan kings and where Kandyan elites sought to interact and assimilate themselves alongside and above British kings – still had to come to terms with the problem of strangers. Despite its turn to kingship, the British state of the early nineteenth century, when compared with the Kandyan one, was interested in quite distinct matters of free trade, liberalism, utilitarianism and the patronage of evangelical religion. These were the tools that had allowed it to reign supreme over its rivals in the Indian Ocean terrain and they were increasingly utilized in the Kandyan territories too. To support these ends required a bureaucratic and modernizing state; and the creation of such a state was premised on ‘islanding’, the unification of the whole island as a state set apart from the mainland.

Islanding required a rebalancing of cosmopolitanism and indigeneity, so that strangers and outsiders were not allowed in or were watched closely. When Kandy fell, Śri Vickrama Rājasimha and his relatives were taken to South India and to their ‘native countries’ under the East India Company. Elsewhere, I have explained in detail how the repatriation of so-called Malabars from Kandy was orchestrated in connection with an underpinning ideology of the foreignness of the Malabars and Moors of the island. This programme became connected with the dangers associated with strangers, a worry that recurred in the context of the rebellion, where the return of such Malabars was strictly policed, in fear of the emergence of yet further pretenders to the throne. In 1816, all those ‘Malabars’ who had resided in Kandy for one year as at 1 January 1815 and who were taken as prisoners of war were announced to be liable to imprisonment at hard labour if found in the Kandyan territories. **73**

This regulation arose from Brownrigg’s worry that ‘communications are at least occasionally exchanged between persons in Kandy and the Nayaker family’ in South India. **74** In India, the need to watch Kandyan prisoners and movement between the island and India gave rise to directives to magistrates and collectors across South India. **75**

Allegedly clandestine travellers were detected in this period: one named Vengutasāmi, for instance, taken in late 1816, was said to have announced himself as ‘insane but is now well’. **76** In India in 1818, two men and a woman were detained on the way to Ceylon:

They are strangers. Their names are said by themselves to be
1. Rammasawmy Naukin
2. Conareton, his wife
3. Swatheyan

Rāmaswāmi was said to have worked in the court of Kandy and had come to India, together with his wife, on pilgrimage, and now wished to return after performing
a sacred vow. The third person noted above claimed to be a peon who worked for the British in Trincomalee, ‘from whence he states he received a passport, about ten months ago to proceed to Tanjore, on a visit to his relatives’. There followed a detailed ethnographic report of these three, noting the colour of their hair and eyes and identifying marks. Rāmaswāmi for instance had a ‘small pimple on the left cheek’, three scars caused by a weapon on his right arms, three further scars on his right knee and a ‘hairy breast and mark of a cut by a knife on his throat’.\textsuperscript{77}

This was the practical force of indigenism, being worked out within the regime of paper brought about by the newly bureaucratized British colonial state. For Malabars were seen as different to the Sinhalese, both physically and linguistically, and this now mattered in legal terms.\textsuperscript{78}

In Lanka, John D’Oyly apprehended some Malabar travellers in this period and asked for a watch to be kept by British officers for ‘any Malabar strangers of suspicious character’. Just like Rāmaswāmi, there were also pilgrims from India in the island who were apprehended under this regulation. Eleven mendicants were taken in 1816, who because of their ‘appearance and manners’, were said to be ‘exactly the sort of men whom it is the desire of the Government to prevent penetrating into the interior’.\textsuperscript{79} D’Oyly also took ‘a young Malabar Priest of Buddh’; this captive evidently troubled the neat delineations of nationality and belonging and had to be sent to Colombo for further questioning. In June 1819, D’Oyly provided Colombo with further advice, about this or another priest who was also classed in similar terms:

\begin{quote}
As there are no grounds for believing that he is a person of high Rank & as he has given proofs of a peaceable & obedient Disposition, I perceive no objections to acquiescing in his wish to reside at some temple in the maritime Provs, provided it be at a distance from the limits… with some instruction not to wander far without leave for it seems desirable to provide that he shouldn’t pass into the Kandyan country, where his Malabar extraction might possibly give rise to alarming Rumours.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

The arrest of travellers carried through into the 1820s. And the regime of bureaucracy, tied up with certificates and ‘passports’, a term that appears in these sources, was evident for instance at Jaffna, from which people were sent back to India:

\begin{quote}
Persons are very frequently sent here to be removed to the coast [of India], but are immediately on their arrival put into a boat and sent off… the boats employed in taking them are almost always coast boats, passing through. Within the last fortnight no less than 7 persons were forwarded to me to be transported to the continent and were not detained more than 5 minutes after their arrival.\textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

Jumping ahead, by the 1830s the discourse of the stranger was reinvented once again. By this time, strangers were critical agents of free trade and their movements had to be watched and monitored in order to ensure that the colonial
state’s coffers benefited from their activities and that their trade did not bypass the system of duties and bonds that had been set in place. In 1831, a regulation was announced to the effect that ‘All strangers arriving at Colombo either by sea or Land’ had to report immediately to the office of the chief secretary of government; if they did not comply they were liable to be arrested. The relationship between the surveillance of migration and colonial trade was spelt out when Moors and Malabars were allowed to own houses in the fort and petta of Colombo, annuling a Dutch law to the contrary. ‘Foreigners’ were said in this instance to be ‘the most industrious and wealthy of the Inhabitants, the greater part of the trade of the Colony being carried on by them’.82 Allowing such aliens to own houses was thus to the benefit of British goals.

The British colonial state of Ceylon and the notion of the nation that operated within that state as also its economic and legal rationale, intervened in the conception of the polity in Lanka, but not in a final or complete sense. Foreigners, aliens and strangers were cast as distinct from indigenes and this allowed a chain of restitutions of notions of belonging. Cosmopolitanism, of course, carried through the nineteenth century; yet its placement with respect to assertions of indigeneity was reforged as a result of this intervention. Nativeness was not encompassed within or arrayed around waves of migrants and strangers; rather the enumerative and bureaucratic functions of the new state cast belonging in exclusive terms. Indigenes were of one type. This was in keeping with the post-rebellion agenda of remodelling the government of the Kandyan provinces so that ‘a great degree of Political liberty and the fullest security of Property’ would be guaranteed.83 Such liberty depended, it was thought, on indigenes and aliens being demarcated as distinct, so that foreign strangers, such as the Nāyakas, did not rule in Lanka; and it brought in train the added colonial benefit of the delineation of property, land and the law, which allowed the take-off of the plantation system and the expansion of an urban metropolis of ‘free trade’ such as Colombo. The British now commanded the bounds of cosmopolitanism and indigeneity and had the power to keep shifting them.

***

In interrogating cosmopolitanism, this chapter has insisted on treating it together with indigeneity. Without such a pairing it would be impossible to make sense of the terror of these years. A fundamental premise of the argument is that cosmopolitanism is always tied with its opposite and has the ability to mutate in form to support assertions of nativism. All forms of cosmopolitanism – ranging from the local to the royal and indeed the imperially sanctioned, depend on senses of self and other, the familiar and the foreign. Indigeneity feeds off, reacts against and informs cosmopolitanism. The realignment of these two terms was – and continues to be – the work of violence and war, rather than simply the effect of mobility, cultural hybridity and free association. In tracking cosmopolitanism and indigeneity in the period, the present chapter has sought to look from multiple points of view: the local village in as much as the urban centre; the imperial state in as
much as the changing populace of the Kandyan periphery. Such an argument is critical in a literature that can romanticize the cosmopolitan as a precursor of the global self, and that tracks the cosmopolitan in the port rather than the hinterland and without a sense of the states and political forces within which it operates. Simultaneously, this perspective eschews a romantic simplification of the indigenous.

Violent kings, chiefs and colonists were able to refashion these concepts in order to support their political visions of kingdoms, empires and nations. Such violence was motivated by material objects, such as relics of the Buddha and objects of royalty, and a culture of writing on palm-leaf and paper. Tokens and signifiers of governance were resituated, and even plundered, in the cycle from kingdom to nation, and bureaucracy was key to the eventual triumph of the modern colonial state over its alternatives. Britons, Kandyans, Malabars, Moors, the priests of Ava and Siam, Batavian and Indian fighters and others were able to reassemble these objects and ideologies in order to suit their purposes and were able themselves, sometimes repeatedly, to switch sides. This is what made it possible for all comers to lay claim on the kingdom as well as the state and nation. Yet such reassembly cannot minimize the fact that Kandyan kingship and British statishness were in foundation different in the way they conceived of cosmopolitanism and indigeneity; this is undoubtedly why violence recurred into the nineteenth century and why the 1817–18 rebellion was not the last of the revolts. Although so many sought to rebuild the kingdom and a new state, a twinned and contradictory project like this was bound to fail in reaching fullness.

This chapter has traced the afterlife and fortunes of both local and monarchical cosmopolitanism. In both cases, the advent of the British added a new set of concerns for collaboration, trade and knowledge-gathering. Yet local and monarchical cosmopolitanism, despite at times being patronized or mimicked by the British, were misunderstood and eventually moulded into the form of a modern state. Cosmopolitanism in the Kandyan territories was not simply a practice that radiated out of the court; the local life of villages was bound up with their trade or pilgrimage. Similarly, British colonialism itself was predicated on alliances, for instance, between its Malay troops and local Muslims. The uncertainty and incompleteness of this colonial transition was such that subalterns as well as chiefs and kings were participants in the tussle over concepts. It is important to point to both locales of belonging and political conception – at ground and centre – for otherwise the power of the court and colonialism is exaggerated. Indeed it is striking that Vilbavē, the pretender of 1817–18, came to prominence before having the patronage of a Kandyan chief. Käppīpola took charge of the man only at a later point. Local histories of cosmopolitanism and indigeneity, such as those from Úva and Vellasṣa, or from a province at the peripheries of Kandy such as Nuvarakalāvīya can converge and diverge with the story from the centre in revealing ways. Thinking of the local can also counterbalance and problematize the all-island narrative of kingdoms made into a nation or a nation that has become a kingdom.
The theorization of nineteenth-century rebellion, and the Indian Rebellion of 1856–7 in particular, has been one of the most vigorously debated areas of South Asian scholarship, picking up Marxist and subalternist as well as politico-economic and intellectual historical approaches to the occurrence of rebellion. It is welcome to see signs now that the topic of rebellion is opening up a range of analytical positions within Lankan historiography too. It is the consensus that rebellions in Lanka can be seen as long-running and ‘perpetual’. This follows Kumari Jayawardena’s conception of recurrent rebellion as a response to the ‘hegemonic control’ of elite colonists as well as monks and chiefs; she stresses the power of this politics without primitivizing it. This is in keeping with Ranajit Guha’s subalternism rather than Eric Hobsbawm’s Eurocentric Marxism. Meanwhile, Strathern sees rebellion as indigestion – the inability to domesticate the foreign – and Biedermann as part of a reflection of intra-elite tensions between rival noble factions. While Jayawardena draws a continuum from the Dutch to the British, Strathern moves from the Portuguese to the British. Yet in stressing longevity and continuity, is there a danger of falling into colonial views, especially for the point that Nira Wickramasinghe makes that colonists disseminated conspiracy to justify counter-rebellious offensive? For this chapter, there is value in stressing continuity, and yet the particular circumstances of short periods of time – for their ideology, politics and forms of state-making – are critical too. Rebellion needs to be understood in the round as a process that picks up prior attachments while at the same time setting in sway the new. The violence that was enacted on all sides needs also to be kept securely in view and the increasingly invasive (although not always successful) power of the imperial should not be brushed aside. For Wickramasinghe, the rebellions between 1797 and 1800 were connected with ‘a feeling of being exploited by a rapacious ruler and his representative, the renter’. Accordingly, forms of government and misgovernment matter. The politics of identity and the economy need to be placed together alongside forms of imperialism.

Despite the array of terms and perspectives that come into play in this process of transition to British rule and to a colonial state and nation, it is striking that some concepts cut across and recur in the sources. ‘Stranger’ is a particularly interesting one. Whereas a stranger as king was critical to the coherence, power and standing of the Kandyan kingdom, with the British state the concept of the stranger was politically problematic. By the early nineteenth century and in the context of the Napoleonic wars, strangers had to be watched and repatriated to their places of origin. So the concept history of the stranger, taken here as a period term, denotes a passage from integration into the core to repudiation across borders. Kingship itself recurs in this narrative; yet when a British governor occupied and took upon himself the space and ritual of a king, he nevertheless stood at the head of a centralizing bureaucracy that was answerable to a distant state and monarchy. He wasn’t a king in the Kandyan sense. With respect to another concept, the ‘nation’ was evident in Kandy itself from the early modern period, but that sense of the ‘nation’, which is also a term that recurs in these sources,
was becoming tied up with a newly colonial military-fiscal state, connected to weapons, taxation and plantation in a powerful combination that allowed it to diverge from its predecessors. In this sense, the play of concepts on all sides and the entanglement of the Kandyans and the British in utilizing the languages of kingdoms and nations, and the cosmopolitan and indigenous, nonetheless should not mask differences in kind. Mimicry and entanglement thus hid fundamental and at times small differences, which over the *longue durée* allowed the British moment to count as a slow and painful end to the story of early modern Lanka.

In avoiding the traditional alternatives in the literature on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in South Asia, namely continuity versus change, and adopting a more complex picture of the reassembly of concepts, it is possible to capture the dynamism of these years, without slipping into structural simplicities, so that Kandy is a terrain where rebellion recurs unendingly, or indeed post-colonial exaggerations, where British invasion sees a total rupture. Such a view is critical for Sri Lanka, for 1815–19 is still with us, especially in the context of postwar debates about what counts as a human rights violation and whether in fact the British are the perpetrators of such crimes. Curiously such a debate was afoot a few years ago in Sri Lanka: pitting contemporary events on the island alongside British responses to rebellion. The British monarch’s representative, Prince Charles, and the British prime minister, David Cameron, were in Sri Lanka for a meeting of the heads of state of the Commonwealth in 2013. It was then that the island’s former president Māhinda Rājapaksa gave this veiled critique of ex-colonial preaching: ‘People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.’ Indeed the re-enactment of anti-British rebellion has appeared recently on television screens in Sri Lanka in the form of a Sinhala teledrama on the Derana channel. Rebellion’s role in defining the nation – or perhaps the kingdom – carries on, drawing in long-term precedent.