Tipu Sultan, History Painting and the Battle for 'Perspective'*

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The military defeat and death of Tipu Sultan in the Fourth Mysore War (1799) paved the way for the establishment of British rule over most parts of India. This event may also be considered a turning point in the history of visual practices in India. The British struggle to defeat this indomitable enemy on the battlefield was re-enacted within the realm of the visual. This essay examines the question of whether colonial rule signalled the arrival of 'perspective' as a compulsory site of viewing in the modern period. Through a comparison of two sets of 'history painting', the essay argues that the decisive defeat of earlier ways of seeing and staking a claim to legitimacy took far longer than the military conquest, leading to the emergence of a Mysore traditional style alongside forms of realism that echoed the split between real (colonial) and de jure (Wodeyar) power in the princely state of Mysore.

'The beginnings of modern Mysore,' said M. Shama Rao (1936: 3), 'may be dated from the fall of Seringapatam on the 4th of May, 1799 to British arms.' The historian's certainty of the date on which modernity makes its debut in Mysore agrees in important ways with the unrestrained exuberance of those British officials who announced the defeat and death of the East India Company's (EIC) most formidable foe in India, Tipu Sultan. The military victory was initially acknowledged for what it was in the many exultant accounts that commemorated the success of British arms—the removal of the one stubborn obstacle to British control of India. Thus, in the frank admission of Colonel Beatson in 1800 who participated in the siege of 1799: 'The fall of this capital placed the whole kingdom of Mysore, with all its resources at the disposal of the British Government, and extinguished the only power in India, which was deemed formidable, or in any wise disposed to second the dangerous views of the French' (Beatson 1800: 139). The ideological refashioning of this military and political triumph as the inaugural moment of

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Indian *modernity* took slightly longer, a full blown version emerging from the pen of Colonel Mark Wilks in his magisterial and influential history of Mysore:

> Thus terminated a dynasty composed only of two sovereigns, the first of whom had risen from obscurity to imperial power, and the last educated as a Prince, had fallen in the defence of a hereditary crown; resembling in some of the circumstances of its close, the fate of the Roman capital of the Eastern Empire, substituting, like that catastrophe, in place of the fallen dynasty, not only the power of a new Sovereign, but the influence of a new race, yet exhibiting the marked contrast of kindling, not quenching in its fall, the lights of science and civilization (Wilks 1810: Vol. III, p. 451).[1]

The siege of Srirangapatna and Tipu's death in this British account exactly paralleled the grand narrative of eastern Roman decline and defeat at the hands of the Turks in 1453, as it had recently been recounted by Edward Gibbon. Clearly, though, the British were loath to carry the historical parallel forward to cast themselves as the harbingers of medieval 'darkness'. Indeed, after this military victory, historical representation itself became one of the earliest terrains on which the 'light of science and civilization' was cast, and was posthumously brought to bear on the very powers that had resisted the territorial ambitions of the EIC. The transition to modernity was predicated on the ability of the newly conquered subjects to adopt as their own modes of remembering and commemorating the past that were forged in England (Guha 1988: 12). In the prodigious efforts of British officials to exorcise the ghosts of Tipu Sultan and celebrate their eventual triumph over an implacable enemy, however, one may also detect the desire to enthrone as authentic and absolute their perspective on Mysore history. By this, their conquest would appear as a virtuous restoration of a Hindu monarch, whose reign had been rudely interrupted by Mysore's Muslim rulers, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.[2] The effort of remaining in control of, and eventually transforming, the representational practices of the overthrown regime was also occasioned by the very success

[1] The writings of this period showed obvious acquaintance with and even references to the monumental work of Edward Gibbon. Monsieur De La Tour (MMDLT) said: 'Many of the circumstances attending the death of Tippoo Sultaun and the fall of Seringapatam bear a strong resemblance to the fate of Paleaologus the last of the Greek emperors, and the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, AD 1453; vide Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chap 68' (MMDLT 1855). Gibbon first published his book in 1784, two years after the death of Hyder Ali. Gibbon's account of the defeat of Constantine Paleaologus, the last Greek emperor of the east, by the Turks under Muhammad II in the siege of Constantinople bore striking parallels to the 'Siege of Seringapatam'. Gibbon describes Constantine's search for a Christian hand to slay him, 'The prudent despair of Constantine cast away the purple [robe] amidst the tumult he fell by an unknown hand and his body was buried under a mountain of the slain' (1998: 1052).

[2] James Mill unhesitatingly declared of the reinstalled Wodeyar prince who was rescued from oblivion to sit on the Mysore throne, 'The Raja was a species of screen put up to hide, at once from Indian and from European eyes, the actual aggrandizement which the British territory had achieved' (Mill, History of British India, vol. vi, p. 116 as cited in Hasan 1971).

with which this indigenous power had adopted and deployed many techniques of 'modernity' to its advantage.[3] The repetitive, and widely circulated, representations of Tipu's defeat and death in writing and in pictures were therefore crucial registers on which the battle for legitimacy was fought, a legitimacy that had been eroded among the British public in the late eighteenth century as much as it had to be established before Indian eyes. These images soon began to replace indigenous representational practices as the truthful reflection of the Indian past. Not for nothing did the iconography of the title cartouche to James Rennel's *Hindoostan* or his first map include, with the Brahmins handing over their *sastra*s, the instruments of British triumph over India: 'artistic (palette), cartographic (the dividers) and architectural (ziggurat at rear) elements' (Edney 1997: 13).

What occurs in the wake of Tipu's defeat, I would like to argue, are not just the enormous political and institutional transformations that signalled the onset of colonial rule in most parts of India, and with which most modern Indian historians are well acquainted, but the qualified triumph of a new scopic regime, one that was ocular-centric and reconstituted the perceptual field in ways that privileged vision. The retinal image was the most mechanical and least mediated, and the eye the least subjective or sensuous of the senses, and as Martin Jay (1992) reminds us, the 'ubiquity of vision', especially when aided by instruments such as the telescope and the microscope, was among the hallmarks of the modern era. The camera obscura aided the production of the objective ground of visual truth, upholding the fiction of realism, and, says Jonathan Crary (1999: 38), after its appearance in the 1500s, the camera obscura assumed 'pre-eminent importance in delimiting and defining the relations between observer and world', to become the 'compulsory site from which vision can be conceived or represented'.

The task of controlling the memory and representations of the Hyder and Tipu regimes was, therefore, no mere reflection of the attempt to gain political and economic control over what was clearly turbulent terrain,[4] but constituted another vital register on which the triumph was staged. The taking of Srirangapatna ranked in imperial iconography along with the Battle of Plassey as the founding moment of British rule: the Madras Government House, built in 1802 by Lord Clive, governor from 1798 to 1803, boasted of two huge pediments that 'were decorated with trophies of two conquests that laid the foundations of the Raj; the siege of Seringapatnam (1799) over the northern entrance, the battle of Plassey (1757) over the southern' (Metcalf 1989: 10–11).

However, I use the term 'triumph of perspective' rather than 'debut' or 'inaugural moment' only advisedly, since perspectivalism in its narrower sense of pertaining to a new visual culture, and also in its broader sense of connoting an abstract, quantitatively conceptualized rational history, was neither free of contradictions

[3] See, for instance, Sen (1977). Also Hasan (1971).

[4] Kate Brittlebank has shown that the taking of Srirangapatna was by itself no guarantee of the control of Mysore territory. Rebellions broke out in various parts of Mysore, and had to be brought under control before the British could establish their supremacy over the newly conquered territory. See Brittlebank (2001: 144–45).

nor passively accepted. The triumph of perspective was, therefore, neither as decisive nor as final as the military triumph. It is this moment of flux that I wish to trace here, when several elements of the new scopic regime were known, and even experimented with, but within different modes of power, so that perspectivalism could achieve its hegemony only well after the establishment of British rule.

Thus, the argument is divided into three parts. In the first I will consider the architectural and pictorial space of Dariya Daulat Bagh, Tipu's summer palace in Srirangapatna, as a site that actively deploys evolving notions of legitimacy.[5] In this architectural-artistic setting, the Hyderi army's victory over the British during the 1780 Battle of Polilur became a crucial, but by no means, singular element. The early British opprobrium of these large murals on the walls of Dariya Daulat has largely focused on battle painting, and has had enduring consequences for the way in which they have been discussed ever since. How might we reinterpret these works within the context of the attempts of a restless warrior-monarch, not only to extend or protect his dominions but also to arrive at a new definition of kingship?

The second section will consider some of the ways in which the establishment of the 'objective' ground of (visual) truth, namely, the 'point of view' in historical writing and the singular point of vision (or vanishing point) in pictorial space began to challenge indigenous modes of representation, as well as to claim the affections and pride of a sceptical British public. The conventions of objectivity and perspective were no doubt fraught with internal contradictions and with challenges to its normative claims from many of its practitioners. British history paintings, for instance, sometimes undid the colonial historiographical project by subordinating their narratives to the greater cause of producing 'affect' rather than 'truth'. In particular, I compare British representations of Tipu's setbacks, first in 1791–92 and then his defeat and death in 1799.

In conclusion, I will turn briefly to the transformations within the field of vision following the defeat of Tipu. When the conventions of perspective begin to gain ground, I suggest, not least because of the military and political successes of the British in India, representational practices came to be split decisively between a revived 'Mysore (decorative) tradition' and new forms of realism later crystallizing around the photograph. Crucial aspects of knowledge about the newly subjugated people and the control of territory relied on the use of drawing and mapping techniques that together represented a new scopic regime. Shifting regimes of representation in the period between 1780 and 1850 may, thus, indeed be taken as an

[5] Kate Brittlebank has departed from the polarized readings of Tipu Sultan as, on the one hand, India's first Secular-Modern monarch, or on the other as the tyrannical enemy of the Hindus, Christians and even the Kannada language. Tipu's search for legitimacy, says Brittlebank, as a Muslim monarch at the helm of a predominantly Hindu people, drove him to evolve a symbolic regime that was eclectic in the extreme drawing on both Hindu and Islamic notions of power that were current in eighteenth-century India. While justly contesting earlier interpretations of Tipu's reign, however, Brittlebank reduces the wide range of experiments that were undertaken by Tipu to mere signs of a quest for symbolic power. See Brittlebank (1995: 104–5).

index of shifting power relations in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century. Mysore, though not in a linear or progressive fashion. Such a reconsideration of the visual practices of this period, therefore, will contribute to the 'reperiodization of the modern' in Indian history.

I

In September 1780, at a site about 6 miles north-west of Kanchipuram, the British army suffered what was described by Sir Thomas Munro as the severest blow that the English ever sustained in India until then (Gleig 1830: 25, as cited in Hasan 1971: 15; also see Buddle et al. 1999: 15). A British force of about 3,800 troops, including a few hundred Europeans,[6] and led by Colonel Baillie found itself surrounded on all sides by the troops of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. Expecting reinforcements from Colonel Hector Munro at Madras, but aided only by a small force of 1,000 under Colonel Fletcher, the British contingent fought a short but fierce battle in which two tumbrels of ammunition exploded from shots fired by French and Indian troops directed by Commander Lallee. The British yielded to the onslaught of the combined troops of Tipu Sultan and Hyder Ali, close to a 100,000 troops, in which Fletcher was killed and Baillie and Baird wounded and taken prisoner along with 200 other Europeans. Tipu Sultan's army meanwhile went on to take Arcot and Ambur by 1781, and won fine victories against Colonel Braithwaite near Thanjavur. Despite Hyder Ali's defeat by Eyre Coote in the battle of Porto Novo that year, and his own setbacks at Wandiwasi, Tipu might have strongly countered the British forces had he not been forced to join the siege of Malabar and eventually withdraw altogether on hearing of Hyder Ali's sudden death in 1782.

The victory of the Hyderi army at Polilur in 1780 was described by Tipu's court poets thus: 'The Flash of his [Tipu's] sabre struck the army of Bailey like lightning, it caused Munro to shed tears, resembling the drops distilled from spring clouds' (Kukpatrick 1811: 392). This was cited by William Kirkpatrick, the official translator of Tipu's letters, as an example of an 'encomiastic ode ... utterly destitute of every kind of poetical merit'. Here was an instance of how 'the history of the loser becomes mere literature in the eyes of the victor' and emptied of its value as memory (Rao et al. 2001: 256).[7] Baillie himself is purported to have tried to rob the victory of its shine by saying to Hyder Ali that 'your son will inform you that you owe your victory to our disaster rather than to our defeat' (Cannon 1852, as cited in Buddle et al. 1999: 16).

In the aftermath of Tipu's defeat, indigenous representations of the clash between the British and Tipu were too important to leave alone. British troops entering the

[6] The estimates of the force vary greatly in each historical source. These details are taken from Hasan (1971: 13–15).

[7] The Battle of Polilur was long remembered in Kannada *lavanies* (ballads), though as the *Lallee–Baillie yuddha.* See Rao (1936: 111).

town of Srirangapatna following the capture of the fort in 1799 were dazzled by the wealth to which as victors they had unrestrained access, and predictably looting and mayhem followed until it was brought under control a few days later (Moienuddin 2000: 24–40).[8] Only later did forays into Tipu's palace reveal the restless and imaginative monarch. There was a substantial library consisting of nearly 2,000 volumes, in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu and Hindavi, dealing with a very wide range of topics (Hasan 1971: 380). There were, moreover, many texts that were either authored or commissioned by him ranging from his letters, religious injunctions and translations into Persian of Kannada texts, autobiographies, orders, military manuals, and records of his dreams. There was, too, the pictorial celebration of the early Mysore triumphs on the walls of Daulat palace at Srirangapatna.[9]

Representations of battle in certain stylized forms have been known in south India since at least the tenth century in the form of 'hero stones' or *virakallu* (Settar and Sontheimer 1982). Since the battle of Talikota, battle paintings have also accompanied the accounts of victory: the Deccani *Tarif-i-Husain-Shah* is a vivid portrayal of an important turning point in south Indian history, the battle of Rakshasatangadi between Adil Shah and Ramaraya in 1565, in which the Bahmani sultan triumphed (Narasimhan 1998: 112–13).[10] These representations deployed a variety of devices to emphasize the valour of the victors. As Jennifer Howes (2003: 94) points out in her discussion of the battle between Ramnad's Muthu Vijaya Raghunatha Setupati and the Maratha king Sarfoji in 1720, which was soon after memorialized in a painting on the walls of Ramalinga Vilasam at Ramnad, this could include a depiction of the warriors using bows and arrows to evoke memories of an epic fight.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (under the sultanates of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda) powerful schools of miniature painting also began to develop. They drew from Mughal and Persianate styles, as well as Vijayanagar wall painting conventions, developing distinctive elements that characterized the Deccani school of painting. But even well before the eighteenth century other uses of

[8] According to an eyewitness account, 'The carnage on this occasion is greatly to be lamented, though it was much less than might have been expected in a large city entered by storm . . . . [M]any of our soldiers, both natives and Europeans, without much ceremony, possessed themselves in a few hours after entering the town, of very valuable effects in gold and jewels; the houses of the chief sirdars, as well as of the merchants and shroffs, (or bankers) being completely pillaged' (*Narrative Sketches* 1800: 74–75).

[9] Mark Wilks (1810: Vol. I, p. xiii) disparaged the intellectual efforts of the sultan, especially when recounting Tipu's alleged order that the books of the Wodeyar Palace be burned as fuel in 1784. However, Wilks himself notes elsewhere that Tipu authorized the Persian translation of the genealogy of the Mysore kings. Compare: 'A Persian manuscript entitled *An Historical Account of the ancient Rajas of Mysoor* was found in 1799 in the palace at Seringapatam; it purports to have been translated in 1798, at the command of the Sultaun, by Assud Anwar, and Gholam Hussein, with the assistance of Pootia Pundit, from two books in the Canara Language'(ibid.: ix).

[10] Narasimhan's (1998: 110ff) is the only work that discusses Karnataka's mural traditions at some length. See also Kramrisch (1983: 141).

pictorial space began filtering in and became one of many options for local Indian artists. The Hyderabad school of painting under the Asaf Jahis in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, for instance, drew from the earlier Qutb Shahi traditions and Mughal styles to produce a significant body of work belonging to the Deccani school, though it never reached the heights of its predecessors (Mittal 1963). Following the conquest of the Deccan by the Mughals, these schools were fragmented and found patrons in smaller principalities located at Kurnool, Cuddapah and Shorapur.

The authorship of the murals at Srirangapatna is shrouded in some obscurity since the history of its commission is unavailable to us.[11] Indeed, the palace and its murals had 'many lives' after the defeat of Tipu Sultan, so what the visitors to Dariya Daulat see today has been at least partially altered over the past two centuries, a point to which we shall return later. What follows is, therefore, based on readings of the extant work, drawing both on interpretations of palace mural traditions in south India and on Deccani/Mughal painting, as well as on the work of cultural historians who are attempting to rethink notions of south Indian kingship that were being forged in the eighteenth century by Tipu Sultan, among others.

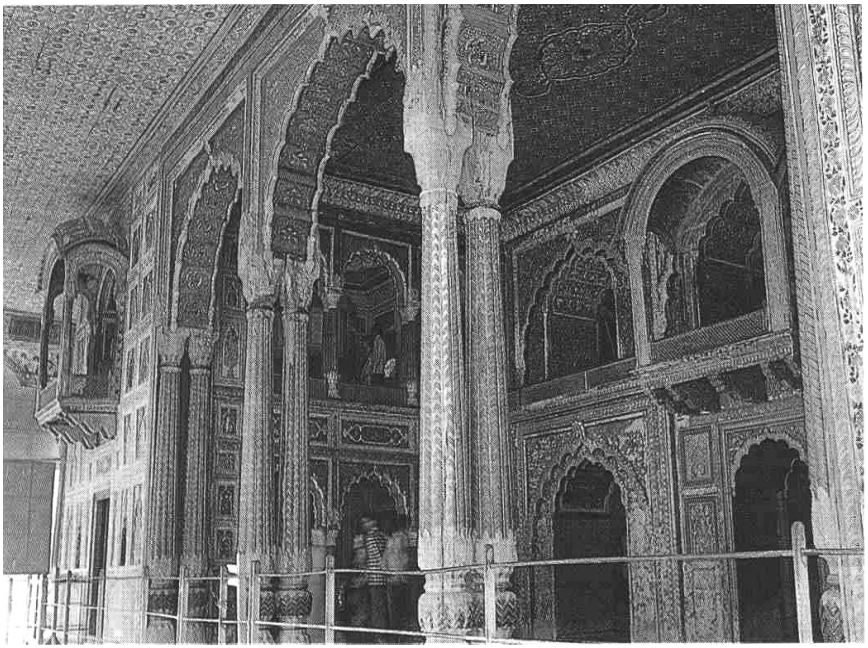
Soon after the end of the Second Anglo-Mysore War and the signing of the Treaty of Mangalore in 1784, the Dariya Daulat was built on the banks of the Cauvery in Srirangapatna (see Figure 1).[12] In *Haider Nama,* written shortly after the death of Hyder Ali in 1782, the author refers more than once to the landing of Hyder's troops at the Mahanavami *mantapa* of Srirangapatna; this might have formed the site of the new palace (Haider Nama 1966–67: 95).[13] The Dariya Daulat, set in a landscaped garden, was one of three palaces on the island capital of Mysore. The main palace, called the Lal Mahal, was to the north-west within the fort and was the chief residence of Tipu Sultan. It was a relatively undistinguished building,

[11] Shivarama Karanth in his *Karnataka Painting* (1973) compared three sets of Indian murals in his work and ranked the Dariya Daulat murals next only to those at a Jain *Mutt* at Sravanabelagola, which he admired for its 'purely native' style. Those at the Dariya Daulat and at the Narasimha temple at Sibi, Tumkur district (done in the early nineteenth century) represented the work of artists who were succumbing to the attractions, without the necessary degree of control, of Western art practices. He missed at Srirangapatna the immensely moving figuration of 'pain, fear, despair and agony' characteristic of Michelangelo's mural of the *Last Judgment* on the Sistine Chapel, and lamented 'the indiscriminate use of Prussian Blue in these paintings'. He criticized the 'lack of harmony between shapes and colours', and reserved his praise only for the 'carefully done likenesses of Tipu's steed and clothing', as well as the Western style 'modelling of human figures' on the western wall (ibid.: 85). Arguing that the Srirangapatna murals reflected the political turbulence of the eighteenth century, Karanth concluded that Tipu's defeat signaled not just a loss of freedom but a retreat of 'native styles which we find in Sravanabelagola and Sibi' (ibid.: 87).

[12] Although it has been claimed that it was so named to commemorate his victory extending to the seas, 'Dariya' here may simply refer to the Cauvery river.

[13] He, however, speaks of the establishment of the two gardens (Lal Bagh and Dariya Daulat), and the building of two palaces on these sites though the completion of the latter was definitely after Hyder's death. Constance Parsons (1931: 98) claims, though without citing her sources, that the Dariya Daulat was built on the site of the Mahanavami Mantapa, from which the Mysore kings were seen during the Dasara celebrations. Guides on site at the Dariya Daulat today also make this claim.

Figure 1
View of Dariya Daulat, South Wing **(Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna; picture courtesy M. Moienuddin)**



especially from the outside, meriting no more than a dismissal from Buchanan for its 'mean appearance'. Situated opposite the Water Gate of the fort and between two temples, the Lal Mahal was so named for the red walls of its pillared audience hall, which were decorated with the Tipu's principal motif, the '*babri*' stripe and inscribed with Quranic verses. The British officers were quartered in this palace after the defeat of Tipu Sultan, and the palace was 'being busily demolished' in 1841 while it was in the charge of the 'rajah' of Mysore, when it was decided that the structure would be pulled down.[14]

Adjoining the gumbaz or mausoleum of Hyder at the south-eastern end of the island was the modest but lavishly decorated structure in the Lal Bagh, a garden planted by Hyder Ali. This was described as richly covered with paintings, and was an occasional resort of both Hyder and his son. This palace was used by Cornwallis in 1791 during the siege of Srirangapatna, and the British troops thought nothing of felling the cypress garden for their blockades. The palace itself fell to ruin and its wooden pillars were used in the construction of a church in Ootacamund in the late 1820s.

[14] Commissioner of Mysore to Secretary, Government of India, Political Department, 25 August 1841, National Archives of India (hereafter NAI).

The Dariya Daulat is thus the only extant palace of Tipu Sultan in Srirangapatna today. Its construction was completed in 1784 in the first heady years of Tipu's reign. It is an oblong building, mounted on a high basement and surrounded by deep verandahs, and built of wood, brick and mortar. The upper floor has canopied balconies that overlook a spacious audience hall below (Rice 1894: 36). Set in the midst of an elegantly landscaped garden, on the north of which wide granite steps lead to the river, the Dariya Daulat became a favourite retreat of Tipu Sultan: 'He lived in turns,' said Ramachandra Rao 'Punganuri', an employee of Tipu's court, 'in the fort [of Srirangapatna] and in this garden' (Brown 1842: II, para 51; III, para 18). The palace itself, as well as the one in Bangalore, which is very similar in appearance, seems to have imitated the style of the palace of the Mughal governor, Dilvar Khan at Sira, Tumkur district.

The most striking feature of the building, which is otherwise quite modestly sized, is the lavish decorations that cover every inch of the walls. The outer walls are covered with portraits and other figural compositions, while the inner walls are richly patterned using floral and leafy decorations embellished with rich gilding. The south-facing building has on its outer western wall four panels depicting the warrior heroes preparing for and engaging in combat. One of the panels of the western wall commemorates the disastrous defeat of the British at Polilur. Roughly 30 feet by 16 feet in size, the mural is among the largest in India.[15] On the eastern wall are depicted a series of portraits, occasionally of rulers with whom Tipu may have held court or even wished to conquer. Other portraits are of scenes from everyday life, ranging from portrayals of noblewomen to men in more contemplative moments, or even to those engaged in chores such as the maintenance and exercise of animals.

The work was executed by a group of local artists attached to the court who were clearly struggling with new vocabularies of artistic expression, and experimenting with styles and forms that they had reason to encounter, if perhaps only in reproduction.[16] Itinerant artists from the flourishing schools in Cuddapah, Arcot and Hyderabad may have offered some of their skills to the new ruler following the assumption of power by Tipu Sultan. However, no other extant commissioned works on paper exist, except for an album of paintings of Indian sufi saints commissioned by Tipu in 1795.[17]

The murals drew on vernacular traditions that may not have a written record and they did not possess the refinement and skills that would have captivated the

[15] The size of the mural is 31'10" by 16'9".

[16] Although we are well aware that there were many French artisans who were employed by Tipu, for example, cannon-makers, watchmakers and metalworkers, there is no evidence that they included fine artists. See Jean Marie Lafont (2000). Of course, it also likely that fine art work was not the monopoly of the trained artist, and that many artisans tried their hand at painting.

[17] The album, which consisted largely of portraits of renowned Indian sufis, was prefaced by two paintings, one of the human body and its parts, and one of a horse and rider composed of women. The work, currently in the British Library, appears to have been commissioned in 1796, though there is no information on the artists. I thank M. Moienuddin for sharing his copy of this manuscript with me.

British viewer. It, therefore, need not surprise us that the murals of the Dariya Daulat, when they did come to British attention after 1799, were ridiculed as 'caricature'. It is striking that Francis Buchanan chose to say little about the painting itself, although he was enamoured, like several other British commentators, of the technique of gilding used by the artists. Only indirectly did he refer to the murals' 'lack of perspective' when he included a commissioned picture of the local artists of a Brahmin couple: he considered the sample self-explanatory (Buchanan 1807 [1988]: 73–74).

Nearly all the British writers who focused more or less entirely on the battle scene were openly dismissive of the work, not for its distortion of the facts of events, that were well-known, but for its disregard of perspective. Thus, Mark Wilks dismissed the paintings in a terse line: of 'Derya Daulaat Baug' he said, 'The walls are covered with rude paintings of his military exploits, and particularly the defeat of Colonel Baillie in 1780' (1810: vol. I, 416). Colonel Walter Campbell in 1833 wrote a detailed description of the painting, and was authoritatively cited throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth:

> The subject of the painting is supposed to be the faithful representation of one of Tippoo's victories over the British troops. It exhibits a glorious contempt for anything like perspective or proportion; but what it lacks in correct drawing is amply made amends for by variety and brilliancy of colouring. Pink elephants, yellow men, and sky blue horses, with yellow feet and scarlet tails, are jumbled together in glorious confusion (Cited in Parsons 1931: 111).

Lewin Bowring (1871: 56) referred to the 'grotesque frescoes of the battles between [Tipu] and Col. Baillie' which he called a 'mimic fight' (see Malleson 1876). Edmund Bull referred in 1927 (pp. 30–31) to 'a certain flaring bombast in keeping with Tippoo's character [that] pervades the whole execution of this quaint design', while Constance Parsons (1931: 113) referred to the 'childish glee' with which Baillie's defeat was portrayed. The well-worn critique of the picture's lack of perspective continued well into the 1930s (Rao 1930: vol. v, 819), while Shivarama Karanth's (1973: 85) disappointment was unconcealed when he compared the murals to those by two European greats, Tintoretto and Michelangelo. Even the most detailed recent analysis of the work by an art historian has drawn heavily, and uncritically, on colonial descriptions of the complex (Shekhar 1995).

The many 'lives' enjoyed by the Dariya Daulat from the time of its execution reflects shifts in power within Srirangapatna itself, and less often transformations in the name of 'preservation'.[18] The changes made to the mural to symbolize the fluctuating loyalties of the nizam, to which I shall return later, was most certainly

[18] On the many levels at which some Indian images have circulated, and with varying connotations of sacral or temporal power, see Davis (1999).

a later addition (in 1791). There is evidence that the palace murals were restored by Colonel Arthur Wellesley who occupied the palace as commissioner of Srirangapatna from 1799 to 1801 (Malleson 1876: Appendix, 7). In 1820 the original painting of the Battle of Polilur was committed to paper by an Indian artist and sent to England; it is today possibly the only extant version of the original. The murals were further refurbished in the mid-nineteenth century in fulfilment of Dalhousie's minute of 1854 (Browning 1871: 56). In that year the visiting governor-general, appalled by the disrepair into which the palace had fallen, insisted that it be preserved, but not in memory of Tipu. Rather, this 'purely Eastern Residence' deserved attention because of the glorious career of its later occupant, Arthur Wellesley:

> In all respects this structure is one full of interest, but it is most especially worthy of our reverential awe as the material object, which more than anything now remaining in India, most immediately and most vividly brings before us of this day the memory of that great man, with the early period of whose glorious career the East India company must ever be proud to connect the history of its rule (Malleson 1876: Appendix).

The fate of Srirangapatna's other palaces—decay and demolition—was thus averted by the memory of one for whom Srirangapatna was only the springboard to greater and more spectacular victories at Waterloo, Arthur Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington. 'It should,' Dalhousie's minute continued, '[be] upheld nearly as possible in the condition in which it was left by Colonel Wellesley [and its paintings restored] by the aid of persons still living who remember them in their completeness.' Further restorations took three years from 1884 to 1887.[19]

The Dariya Daulat appears to have turned into a pilgrimage centre for British visitors anxious to retrace Wellesley's victorious steps, and even boasted of a tea-room for tired guests to rest themselves. A flight of steps to the river was constructed in the late nineteenth century (Basappa 1897: 23). In 1916 Mirza Ismail, then the *huzur* secretary to Mysore's Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, succeeded in getting five painters from the Mysore Palace to 'repaint' the battle scenes facing the west at Dariya Daulat.[20] More transformations, especially of the eastern wall, occurred sometime in the nineteenth century, and it is likely that many of the elements noted by Lord Valentia, who claimed that the eastern wall was full of unflattering portrayals of the British and other enemies of Tipu, were painted over at this time (Campbell 1919: esp. 28). The museum was established in 1959.

These changes apart, the murals were often defaced. Soon after 1799, Mir Sadiq, Tipu's chief *diwan*, in charge of the revenue and finance departments, who was popularly associated with the treachery that led to the British success during the siege, suffered posthumous ignominy when his face was disfigured wherever it

[19] Administration Report of the Public Works Department, Mysore Province, 1887–88.

[20] File no. 21 of 1916, Sl. no. 190, Maramath Painting Works at Dariya Daulat, Srirangapatna, Mysore Divisional Archives, Karnataka State Archives (KSA).

appeared on the mural.[21] Similarly, the portrait of Purnaiah, who served as Tipu's chief *mir miran* but stayed on to serve the British, was on the eastern wall. Legend has it that the portrait of Purnaiah, which was also defaced by the locals, was replaced in the early part of the twentieth century, at the instance of the then Mysore *Diwan* P.N. Krishnamurthi, a descendent of Purnaiah, with a portrait of Krishna Raja Wodeyar III.

It need not surprise us that the battle scene alone aroused most interest and even anxiety among British observers at the time and right up to the present day.[22] Fewer scholars have attempted a fuller understanding of these paintings, and none at all have attempted an interpretation that sees the palace and its paintings as a text of power, visually asserting a notion of kingship and authority that was yet to be fully fashioned. The timing of its establishment is of some value here, for the idioms of kingship that Tipu borrowed from the other south Indian dynastic traditions were clearly not as useful after 1792 when stronger appeal was made to Islam. The battle panel, therefore, cannot be extracted from the larger whole of which it was a part, for what is represented on the walls of the Dariya Daulat is the universe that Tipu aspired to command. In other words, the setting and the paintings serve as an allegory of power, within which the *representation of history* (the battle painting) forms only a very small part.

Mark Zebrowski (1983: 7–8) speaks of the escapist mood of the Deccani courts, 'where the Sultauns took more interest in leisure and the arts than in government or conquest'. He also notes the Deccani obsession with princely portraits compared with hunts, court ceremonials or rituals (as in the Rajasthani miniatures) or historical events (as in the Mughal paintings); the portraits themselves become sterile with political stability (ibid.: 10). It is clear that the representational practices at the Dariya Daulat drew on an amplified grammar of power in Hindu south India, though with some differences.

To begin with the placement of the themes of the walls of the palace, Jennifer Howes suggests in her discussion of Ramalinga Vilasam, the audience hall of the Ramnad palace, that the outer walls of the palace in the southern Indian eighteenth-century context correspond to 'the exterior realm of the kingdom'. Other scenes, of kingly intimacy, for instance, that adorn the inner walls, rather than suggesting a strict disjuncture between inner/outer or public/private, or even secular/religious, must be taken as 'expressing the many facets of south Indian kingship as it existed before the colonial period' (Howes 2003: 111). In the case of the Dariya Daulat one may detect, following Howes, a similar physical and conceptual distinction that is made between the inner and outer walls, as well as between the western and the eastern walls. The outer walls display the public world of the conquering

[21] A recent reappraisal of the deeply entrenched popular knowledge of Mir Sadiq's treachery is in Brittlebank (2003a).

[22] Most recently, see Colley (2002: 269–307).

hero, and it is striking that neither Hyder nor Tipu is portrayed in any other position than at war. Eastern and western walls reflect another difference. The display and celebration of valour on the battlefield adorns the western walls. The eastern wall portrays *darbar* scenes, which are once more divided into two sections. One side (right) consists of portraits of those whom Tipu encountered, wished to encounter or even conquer; the other (left) consists of scenes from everyday life.

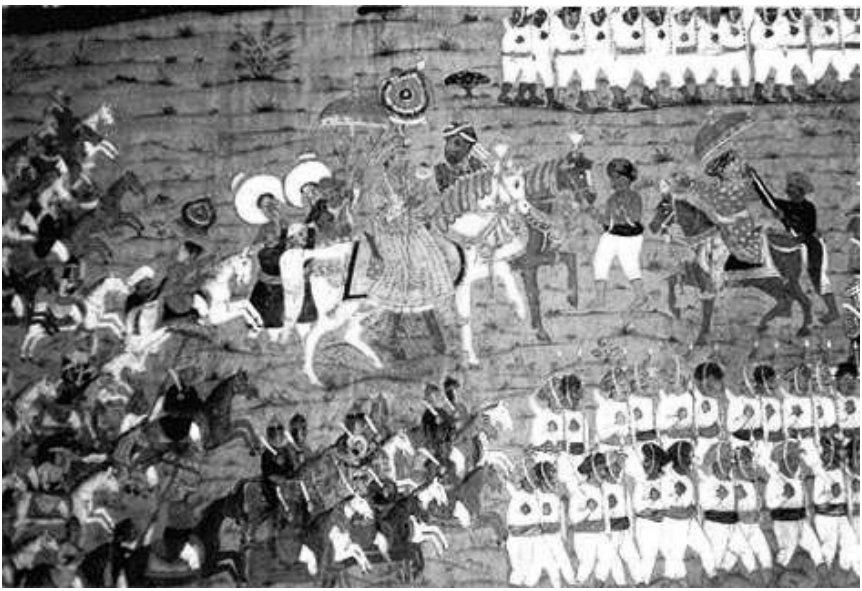
The placement of the paintings reveals certain structural similarities with the placement of paintings in other south Indian palaces of the time, which construct an ambulatory, rather than fixed, mode of spectation. The battle scene is encountered as one turns the corner from the south entrance, filling the lower right hand corner of the western wall. Above it is placed the portrayal of the nizam preparing for battle. As one proceeds along the western wall the two panels depicting the war processions of Hyder and Tipu appear. The southern and northern walls are profusely decorated with thin foliage and floral decorations. The eastern wall consists of two sets of portraits, where, unlike the battleground setting of the western wall, the settings are largely urban, and are architecturally framed. The western and eastern walls are pierced by entrances over which hangs a *jharoka* or audience balcony. The southern and northern walls have recessed bays with *jharoka*s on either side, and support a floor overlooking the main audience room.

Taken together, the murals and the architecture of the palace produce an enhanced setting for a viewing (*darshan*) of the king as well as a record of his past exploits. The site itself acquired a symbolic status that the British were amply aware of. Arthur Wellesley recognized too well the importance of occupying the palace to assert the legitimacy of the new British rulers in 1799 (Brittlebank 2003b). A fresh reading of the murals of Srirangapatna will be possible if the palace is taken as a representation of the real and imagined cosmos of Tipu Sultan.

In the left-hand top panel of the western wall, pointing south, Hyder Ali is shown as a powerful presence on his favourite elephant, Poon Ganj. He is in a superior howdah, and is preceded on horseback by Mir Sadiq, the head of the revenue and finance department, the most important officer of Hyder and Tipu's government, who offers his greetings. The lower panel, also pointing south, shows Tipu in procession, dressed in rich blue brocade and mounted on a white horse that is decorated in style; he is accompanied by his commander-in-chief Kamruddin Khan (Figure 2). He is preceded once more by Mir Sadiq, and followed by Ghulam Ali Khan of the ordnance and garrison department. He is also flanked by a guard of French soldiers, behind who is Count Lallee waving a sword on a brown horse.

The top right panel, pointing north, depicts the war procession of Nizam Ali Khan (1761–1803). The nizam is on a white charger followed by two rows of six elephants each whose howdahs are empty. Below this, and in some senses the focal point of the whole wall, is the famous turning point of the Battle of Polilur, in the year 1780 when Colonel Baillie's ammunition tumbrels explode, sowing confusion and disorder among the British troops. Hyder is once more placed above

Figure 2
***War Procession of Tipu Sultan*. Detail of mural on the Western wall, Dariya Daulat (Summer) Palace, c. 1784 (Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna; picture courtesy M. Moienuddin)**



Tipu Sultan, and both are on elephants, moving towards the centre of action, along with their separate armies (Figure 3). Mir Sadiq now appears with Tipu, while Sayid Gaffur, formerly of the EIC's service and now in Tipu's army, a trusted commander, is seen in a clearing in the middle of the picture, accompanied by his standard bearer.

The main part of the action is to the centre of this panel, which shows Colonel Baillie seated in his palanquin, within a square of red coats, obviously distressed by the loss of the tumbrel (in the upper left-hand corner), which has scattered his troops in confusion (Figure 4). The British troops, dressed in red coats and white trousers, hatted and well shod, are everywhere shown as dominated in the encounter with the Hyderi army. Baillie is seen biting the back of his hand in consternation, while the Colonels Baird and Fletcher are seen on horseback at the bottom right of the picture.

The composition of the procession paintings as well as the battle scene conform in many ways to the conventions of the Deccan school, as it was developed in Ahmadnagar and Golconda where Hindu and Muslim elements had become inseparable (Kramrisch 1983: 141). Mark Zebrowski (1983: 183) has noted the 'dramatic intensity typical of the Deccan' in his discussion of a seventeenth-century Golconda painting at Leningrad, which pictures a moving crowd with a skill that

Figure 3

***The Battle of Polilur, 1780*. Detail of mural on the Western wall, Dariya Daulat (Summer) Palace, c. 1784. This reproduction is taken from a copy of the original painted by an unknown Indian artist, c. 1820 printed in Anne Buddle with Pauline Rohatgi and Iain Gordon Brown, eds, *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1999). (Original from the Otto Money Collection, UK)**

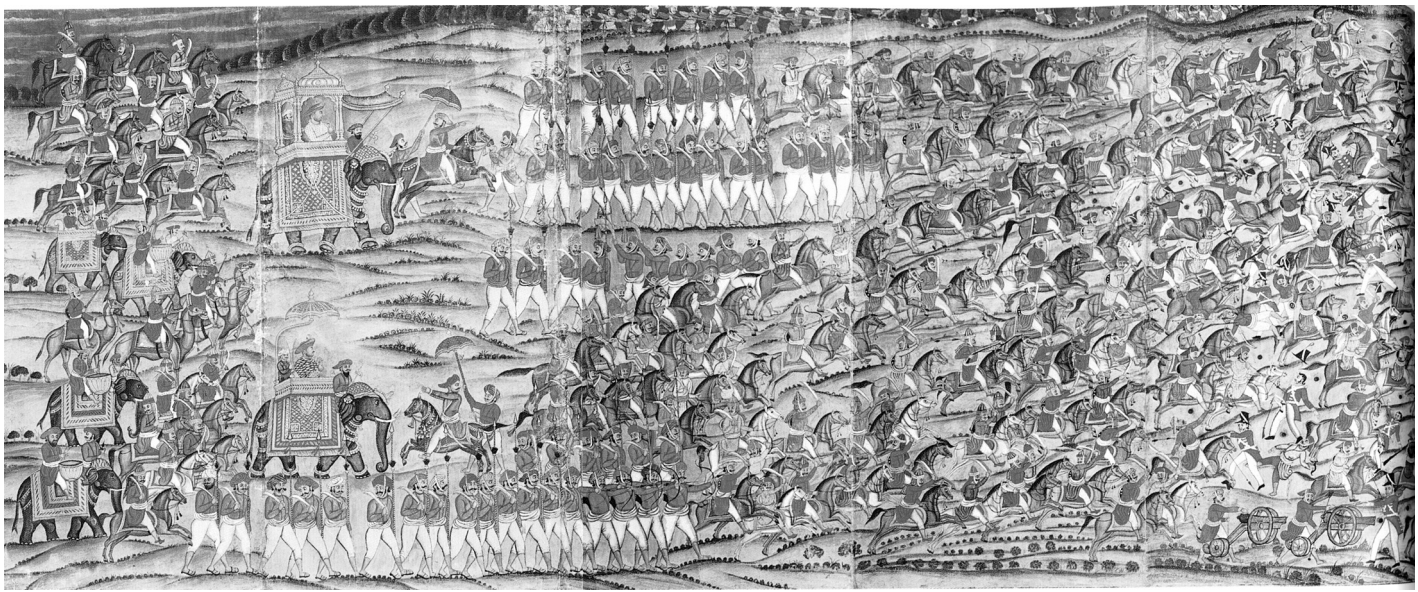
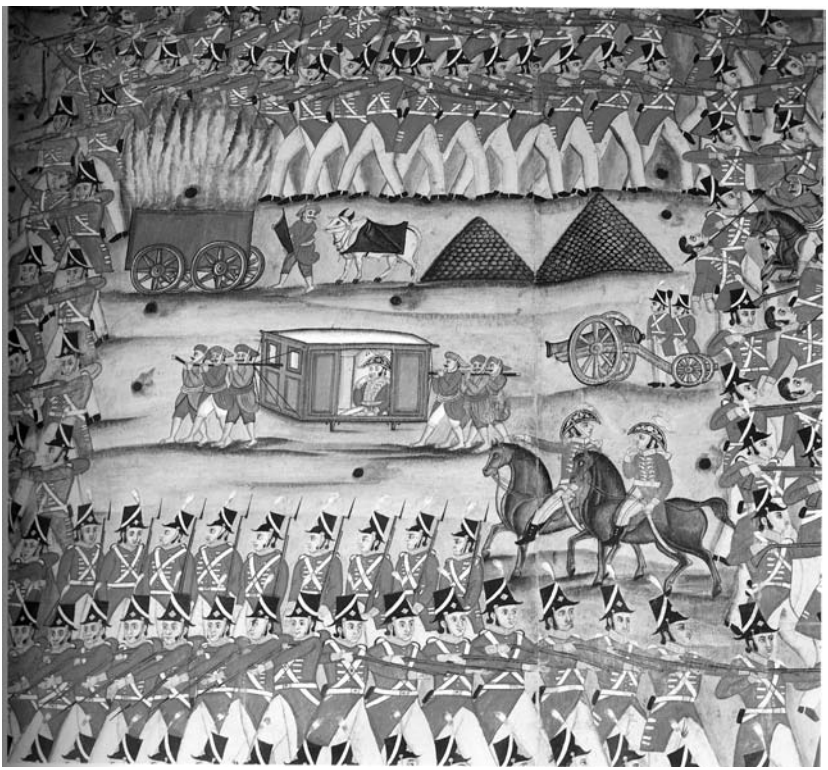


Figure 4
***The Battle of Polilur, 1780*. Detail of mural on the Western wall, Dariya Daulat (Summer) Palace, c. 1784. This reproduction is taken from a copy of the original painted by an unknown Indian artist, c. 1820 printed in Anne Buddle, Pauline Rohatgi and Iain Gordon Brown, eds, *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1999). (Original from the Otto Money Collection, UK)**



was rare among Mughal artists, and reveals a (new) acquaintance with realist architectural settings and the vanishing point perspective. At the Dariya Daulat, however, the panel is one surface, with little recession of the figures at the top or bottom, and is evenly lit. The cavalry is strictly aligned in rows or alternate brown and white to form large patterned surfaces. Naturalism to the extent that it exists at all, is in the tufted ground that appears between the figures, and the horizon is indicated at the very top of each panel, with figures coming over the hills. Indeed, one may even detect an active elimination of the three-dimensional effect in this painting.

Instead, there are definite strategies by which hierarchies are pictorially established. Hyder, Tipu and the nizam are thus shown in the 'strict profile' that Stella

Kramrisch (1983: 141) notes was the characteristic of the Deccani paintings, [23] though the nimbus commonly used to portray the Mughal emperor was absent. Deccani nobility is thus signified by the regal smelling of the flower, even when on the battlefield, and emphasized by the enhanced size of the animals. Tipu's horse is thus four times larger than that of the cavalry. At the same time, he is still in the shadow of his father, who is depicted on an elephant with a superior howdah. There appears to be here, to adapt the words of Ebba Koch who describes late Mughal representational practices, an attempt to idealize the nobility, and avert the possibility of producing an exact likeness. Indeed, 'the standardized and idealized profile representation emphasized that the ruler and those in the state who mattered were above what is human, imperfect and subject to change' (Koch 2001: 138).[24] Yet a certain resemblance to the person is not avoided, in the features, without a fuller explication of character or mood.[25]

If anything, the regal demeanour of the rulers preparing for battle appears to deliberately contradict the logic of action in this mural, as in the depiction of the battle itself. Ghulamohammed Shaikh, while describing the mid-nineteenth century mural at Tambekarwada in Baroda, suggests that the style evolved by the artists can amount to an 'informal realism'. I would like to adapt this to describe the battle painting, where an 'informal realism' lends credence to every detail of this British debacle. 'Detail,' conceded Edmund Bull (1927: 27) who was among the many British critics of the painting, 'is scrupulously observed. The British square with the exploding tumbrels which mainly brought about the disaster is somewhat meticulously depicted.'

It is even tempting to suggest that the early nineteenth-century historian Meer Syed Hussain Kirmani offered a literal rendering of the painted mural in his awe of the telescope as an instrument of enhanced vision. Throughout the account the telescope is acknowledged as crucial in evading or causing defeat. At times, it is

[23] See also Koch (2001: 137), who suggests that Jahangir was depicted in pure profile in contrast with Akbar who was shown in the preferred three-quarters style. Writing of the achievements of the Deccani style, Douglas Barrett (1958: 14) has noted in his discussion of the late sixteenth-century portrait of Burhan Nizam Shah II of Ahmadnagar, the first appearance of the three-quarters portrait in Deccani painting. In the context of the Srirangapatna mural, however, this hierarchy appears to have been re-established.

[24] On the 'peculiarity of [Deccani] portraiture setting figures in profile against a flat background', see Archer and Archer (1955: 76), as cited in Mittal (1963: 45).

[25] On the question of the verisimilitude of Moghul paintings, see Verma (1982–83). It is difficult to suggest, however, that not just likeness and the process of ageing, but character and mood are discernible in the Srirangapatna portraits.

even used as a metaphor for scientific and rational thinking. In his account of the Battle of Polilur, Kirmani says:

> Soon after this, Lalli, the Frenchman, discovering with the telescope of his intellect and science, the position of the army's ammunition, fired a shot from a heavy gun at the Colonel's tumbrels, all of which had been collected at one place. By accident the ammunition blew up, and by the shock of the explosion, the bond of the union of the colonel's force, were broken up (Kirmani 1842: 390).

Lallee is indeed shown surveying the field with an enormous telescope while his footman steadies his horse in readiness. The tumbrels have been set on fire, and consternation writ large on the faces of Baillie, Fletcher and Baird.

The artists chose to portray all the British as clean shaven in contrast to their whiskered French counterparts.[26] Furthermore, though the Indian artist might have been accustomed to portraying his royal subjects in profile, like the artists of the Tambekarvada mural, 'he snatches a frontal or three fourths view of an English face here and there and tries similar tricks elsewhere' (Sheikh 1997: 32). Clearly, the portraiture of the subaltern was more relaxed and permitted the use of the three-quarters profile compared with the visual norms governing the representation of the nobility.

The artists were, moreover, not averse to altering the value of their own work over time, through the later addition of symbols depicting altered relations between the Mysore rulers and the nizam. Thus, the nizam's regality is undone by a symbolic representation of his decision to renege on his 1788 treaty with Tipu and join his forces to the Marathas and the English in 1791. Lampooned in writing as Nazim (by Kirmani in *Nishan-i-Hydari*) and Hujjam Nally Khan (in the *Tarikh-i-Khudadadi*), he is here depicted as 'coming like a bountiful white cow' and departing like a black boar.

The portrayal of scenes on the right of the eastern wall, which included recognizable historical figures such the Peshwa Balaji Rao II, the raja of Tanjore, and Madukere Nayaka of Chitradurga, is far more relaxed, and recklessly combined uncoordinated architectural perspective with the older styles of portraying figures (Figures 5 and 6).

[26] This has been interpreted by Linda Colley (2002: 269) as a visual emasculation of the British. However, British soldiers are portrayed as emphatically clean-shaven in several contemporary British representations. See for instance, Colebrooke (1974).

Figure 5
***Detail from the Mural on the East Wall*, Dariya Daulat, Srirangapatna**
(Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna; picture courtesy M. Moienuddin)

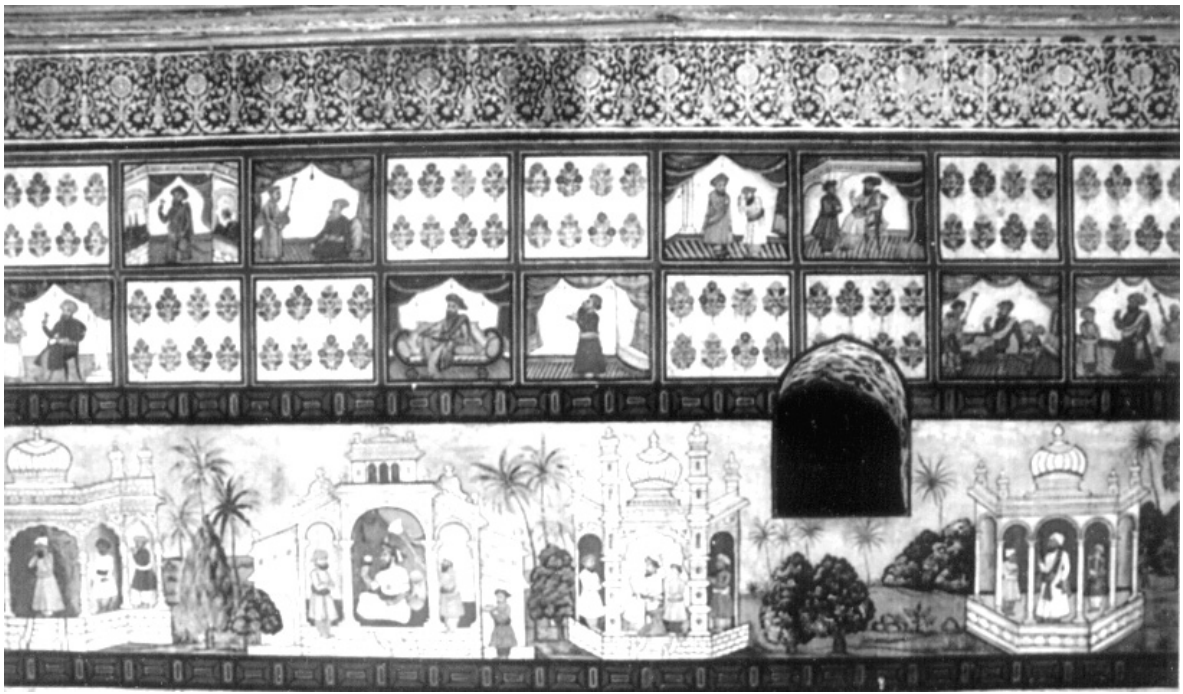
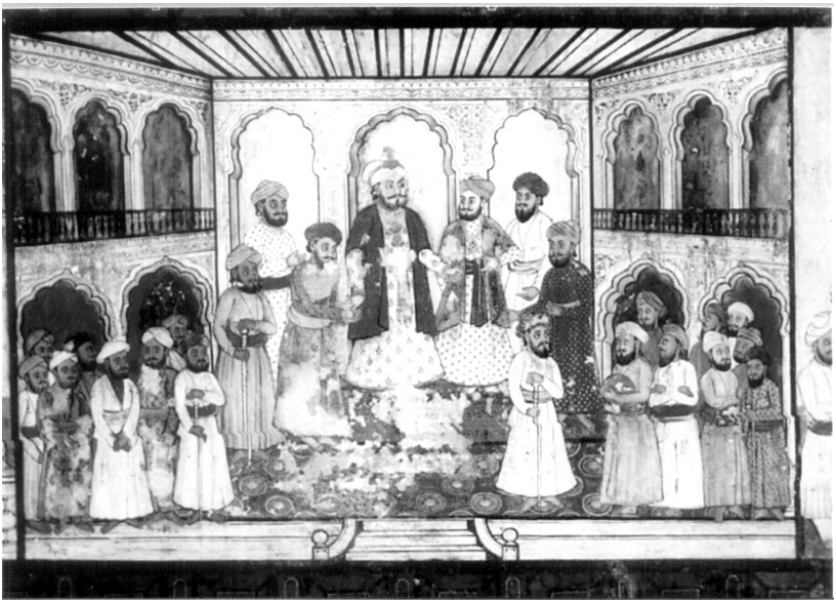


Figure 6
***Detail from the Mural on the East Wall*, Dariya Daulat, Srirangapatna.**
(Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna; picture courtesy M. Moienuddin)



The virtuosity of the artists is displayed in the elaborately patterned turbans and costumes, which are many and varied. Shivarama Karanth (1973: 87) suggested that the work on the eastern wall may represent an 'example of a transitional stage between native and European styles experimented here' and perhaps may even have been executed under the supervision of European artists in the service of Tipu Sultan. It is more than likely that this wall, which consists of individual scenes, was substantially altered in each renovation, and indeed the style of the drapery suggests a strongly Rajasthani influence. Jennifer Howes (2003: 96) suggests that as in Ramnad, the Srirangapatna murals depict kings from neighbouring courts against a light blue background, although white marble pavilions are distinctive.

On the right-hand side of the eastern wall are the more secular scenes, which include scenes of animals being exercised and at least four representations of women (Figures 7 and 8). Here, too, the conventions of painting are more relaxed and there is a spirit of experimentation with a more naturalistic rendering of the figures, even a trace of shadow, a freer use of three-quarters and even full front portraits. Tipu himself was clearly averse to being portrayed in any manner as given to the pleasures of life. This was in striking contrast to his Hyderabad counterpart, Nizam Ali Khan, who commissioned a very large body of work, including several portraits of himself, always in a relaxed and pleasure-seeking mood. Noticeably absent in these works was any portrayal of the nizam at war or at the hunt (Mittal 1963: 44–45).

Figure 7
***Detail from the Mural on the East Wall*, Dariya Daulat, Srirangapatna**
(Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna; picture courtesy M. Moienuddin)

Figure 8
***Detail from the Mural on the East Wall*, Dariya Daulat, Srirangapatna**
(Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna; picture courtesy M. Moienuddin)

Taken together, the palace and its paintings function as an assertion of princely power using idioms that were known and deployed in other south Indian settings, both Hindu and Muslim. Rather than serving as the focal point of either the building or the paintings, then, the representation of the Battle of Polilur is subservient to the overall project of portraying a new power. Princely power is not represented as subject to the vagaries of historical events: here there is more than a hint of multiple time frames. Indeed, we might say that the historiographical intent is undone in most of the panels so that the representations may even be read as *anti-historiographical*. This magnificent output of the Mysore artists simultaneously served artistic and non-artistic or political purposes.

However, if the Tipu of the written word, in his letters and autobiography, in the several injunctions to his officers, and in his abundant collection of treatises on the correct behaviour of the Sunni Muslim,[27] comes across as strictly conforming to the dictates of a proselytizing universal religion, the palace and its representational regime assert a different notion of power and authority. Thus, the aura of piety is artistically achieved in the series of portraits of Muslim nobles at prayer, reading the *Quran*, interspersed with floral designs in two rows that border the tops of the two walls (see Figure 5). The Dariya Daulat thus unhesitatingly combines representations of southern Indian kingship in the eighteenth century, while protecting the image of the sultan as a conformist Muslim.

II

The quick condemnation of this painting as caricature and the simultaneous denigration of Tipu's own writing by the British, whose first glimpse of the mural was in 1799, may have had something to do with the widespread circulation of images depicting British defeat. Thus, Monsieur De La Touche (MMDLT), the French officer who served in Hyder's army and wrote an account of the life of his court and campaigns, said that at the end of the First Anglo-Mysore War in 1769:

> There was fixed to the gate of Fort St George, called the Royal Gate, a design in which was seen Hyder Ali Khan seated under a canopy on a pile of cannon; Mr Dupre and the other ambassador (Boschier) being on their knees before him. Hyder held in his right hand the nose of Mr Dupre, drawn in the form of an elephant's trunk, which he shook for the purpose of making him vomit guineas and pagodas, which were seen issuing from the mouth of this plenipotentiary. In the background appeared Fort St George, and on one of the bastions, the governor and council were drawn on their knees, holding out their hands to

[27] A partial list of unpublished and unexamined manuscripts would include such texts, now housed at the Asiatic Society Library, as *Mujahidi Mujahideen, Jawahidur Quran* (commentary on portions of the Quran), *Majuma* (dealing with prophet's food and drink), *Fathawa-i-Muhammadi* (on Jihad and Kaffirs) and *Zaadul Mujahideen*, in addition to texts on Sunni Islam, marriage rituals, exposition of jurisprudence, etc.

> the Nabob. On one side of the council was a large mastiff growling at Hyder, the letter J.C. (for John Call) being marked on his collar; and behind the mastiff stood a little French dog, busily employed licking his posteriors. This last animal was adorned with a star such as the Chevaliar de Christ, Colonel Call's confidant, wore. At a distance were seen the English camp, and General Smith holding a treaty of peace in his hand and breaking his sword (1855: 246).

Wilks similarly referred to the caricatures that adorned the walls of Srirangapatna, which were hastily whitewashed on the eve of an expected siege in 1791.

> In one it was a tiger seizing a trembling Englishman; in another it was a horseman cutting off two English heads at a blow; in a third it was the nabob, Mahommed Ali, brought in with a rope around his waist, prostrating himself before an Englishman seated on a chair, who placed one foot upon his neck; but the more favourite caricatures are necessarily excluded from decorous narrative (1810: 140).

Above all, the widespread circulation of reports and images of British defeat in Britain and the multiple narratives from British soldiers, some of them former prisoners of Tipu,[28] led to many unsparing cartoons that were as important to counter.[29] James Gillray had Tipu spraying a retreating Cornwallis with urine, when in 1791 the British army was forced to give up the siege of Srirangapatna due to rains. In *The Coming on of the Monsoons or the Retreat from Seringapatam* issued in 1791, Tipu is heard saying, 'Now my Lord I'll tip you for the swamps'.[30]

The fortunes of the British turned in the next year (1792) when Tipu was forced to sign the ignominious Treaty of Seringapatam by which he surrendered half his territory and sent two of his sons as hostages in lieu of his debts to the British. Peter Marshall (1993: 59) notes the transformation of a terse dispatch from Cornwallis to the EIC into a highly embellished account. It led to an explosion of jubilant reports in the British press, and quickened a somewhat sluggish British interest in history painting. Francis Hayman's *Lord Clive Meeting with Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey* was an exception, although, with other isolated examples, it predated Benjamin West's pioneering history paintings on General Wolfe in the Americas (Allen 1990: 31–32). The 1792 treaty in particular became the subject of an entire series of history paintings on India which had got off to a poor start

[28] A very large number of eyewitness accounts were written by British prisoners held in Hyder and Tipu's prisons and were published in the late eighteenth century, forming an important historical source for both writers and history painters. For an analysis of these captivity narratives, see Colley (2002).

[29] On the growing importance of India in the British press between 1790 and 1792, see Marshall (1993: 58).

[30] Another cartoon by Cruikshank entitled *How to Gain a Compleat* [*sic*] *Victory and Say You Got Safe Out of the Enemy's Reach* was also issued in 1791. See McPhee (1998).

with the Battle of Plassey.[31] An 'Impartial Observer' (1792), who wrote admiringly of Tipu Sultan as a man of superior talents and a determined soldier, recorded how quickly the 'definitive treaty signed and sealed by Tippoo and delivered to Lord Cornwallis by one of the sons of the Sultaun, had already become the subject of historical painting; and different artists are concerned in the design'.[32]

As Marshall (1993: 72) suggests, victory amounted to 'a triumph for British humanity as well as for British armies'. Scenes of the surrender of power, rather than battle painting per se, called on the talents and intellectual abilities of the history painter proper. According to an early theorist Jonathan Richardson, the history painter 'must possess all the good qualities requisite to an Historian . . . he must moreover know . . . the Habits, Customs, Buildings and c. of the Age, and Countrey, in which the thing was transacted'. But the genre of history painting was not a mere journalistic record of historic events, and did not even require its practitioners to have a first-hand experience of the place or time. By definition, history painting was the production of affect, through superior aesthetic effort, so that rather like a good poem, it required 'an elevation of genius beyond what pure historical Narration does; the Painter must imagine his figures to Think, Speak, and act, as a Poet should do in a Tragedy or Epick Poem' (Allen 1990: 29).

Verisimilitude or historical accuracy was thus subordinated to the production of affect and the obsessive return to the theme of 'hostages' affirms this. Although based on British eyewitness accounts, these paintings were as suffused with sweet sentimentality as historical inaccuracy, and most appear to have been prompted by the purported eloquence of Ghulam Ali Khan, the Lame Vakeel, while handing over the Princes Muizuddin and Abdul Khaliq to Cornwallis in 1792. Robert Home, the British painter who witnessed the handover of the hostages, said:

> Lord Cornwallis, attended by his staff, and some of the principal officers of the army, met the princes at the door of his large tent as they dismounted from their elephants and after embracing them, led them one in each hand into the tent. When they were seated on each side of his lordship, Gullam Ali, the Vakil, addressed him thus: These children were this morning the sons of the Sultan my master; their situation is now changed and they must look up to your lordship as their father (Archer 1979).

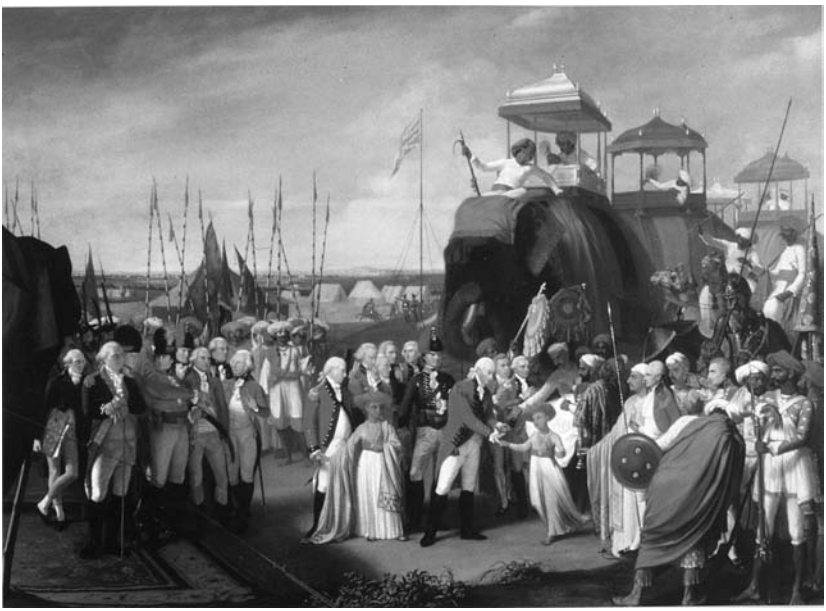
Cornwallis is supposed to have replied, in an anonymous account written around 1800 by an officer of the EIC, that 'he knew what the feelings of a father were, and that they should never want a father under his care' (*Authentic Memoirs of Tippoo Sultan* 1819; also see Willis 1810: Vol. II, 227).

[31] Narayani Gupta (2003) appears to have overlooked this genre of work in her brief summary of the prelude to representations of the mutiny. She, however, argues that the 'Mutiny' heralded the extensive use of photography as an *aide memoir*.

[32] It is likely, as Marshall suggests, that wars (such as those against Mysore), which aimed at territorial expansion rather than the 'preservation of commerce in East India', led to public alarm that had to be swiftly contained (Marshall 1993: 65).

What one has in the representations of this event is a literal illustration of this statement of the paternal qualities of empire, the loving relationship of the colonial masters to their new subjects. But there is also an active imagining of the Orient that accompanies these paintings and an invitation to its possession.[33] In his *Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu Sultan as Hostages* (c. 1783–84), Robert Home started out with an evenly lit, large and dusty plain, a campsite, where the Orient was traced in the massive hulk of the elephants, with the central figures of George Kennaway, Cornwallis, the princes and Ghulam Ali occupying a very small part of the whole tableau (Figure 9). Home inserted himself in the painting, carrying a folder of paintings, in order to emphasize that his narrative bears all the marks of authenticity. A.W. Devis and Home were the only two artists to have actually visited India and, as Pauline Rohatgi (1999) explains, both were keen on including as many portraits of people who participated as were possible.

Figure 9
***Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu Sultan as hostages, Madras* by Robert Home c. 1793–94. This reproduction is taken from Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, 1770–1825 (Karachi/Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979). (Original at the National Army Museum, London)**



Further versions of the same event dramatize it through a variety of techniques, enhancing or reducing figures through the play of light and shade to portray the

[33] Mildred Archer (1979) has identified hostage paintings produced by James Northcote, Edward Bird, George Carter, Robert Smirke, Mather Brown and Henry Singleton, all working in Britain, while Home and Devis alone were actually present in India.

moment of triumph over an implacable foe, reducing the scene to its principal actors, and introducing a generalized landscape of the Orient. In his *Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu Sultan as Hostages* (1796–1805), Devis thus introduced, amidst the whiff of powder and grapeshot, the British flag and a multitude of British onlookers. A generalized architectural landscape of the Orient takes the place of the original campsite in the work of George Carter in his version of the hostage handover (1792). Painted from hearsay, he portrayed only one hostage prince.

In the hostage series, Mather Brown's representations were to become the most popular. Brown, an American who had studied with Benjamin West on his arrival in London in 1781, was groomed in the genre of history painting that deliberately shook free of documentary accuracy. In two small oil paintings that he exhibited in 1792, he borrowed from his master, while innovatively drawing parallels between Tipu's fate in south India and the more venal British kings (McPhee 1998: 202–3).[34] *The Departure of the Sons of Tippoo from the Zenana* and *The Delivery of the Definitive Treaty by the Hostage Princes to Lord Cornwallis* attempted to repeat his master's pictorial as well as his astounding commercial success (ibid.: 204). His own version of *Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu Sultan as Hostages* focused attention more closely on the key figures who are taken in fulfilment of this harsh treaty, the sons of Tipu Sultan, accompanied by their appointed guardians, with the somewhat stiffly posed British literally looking down upon the Treaty itself (Figure 10).

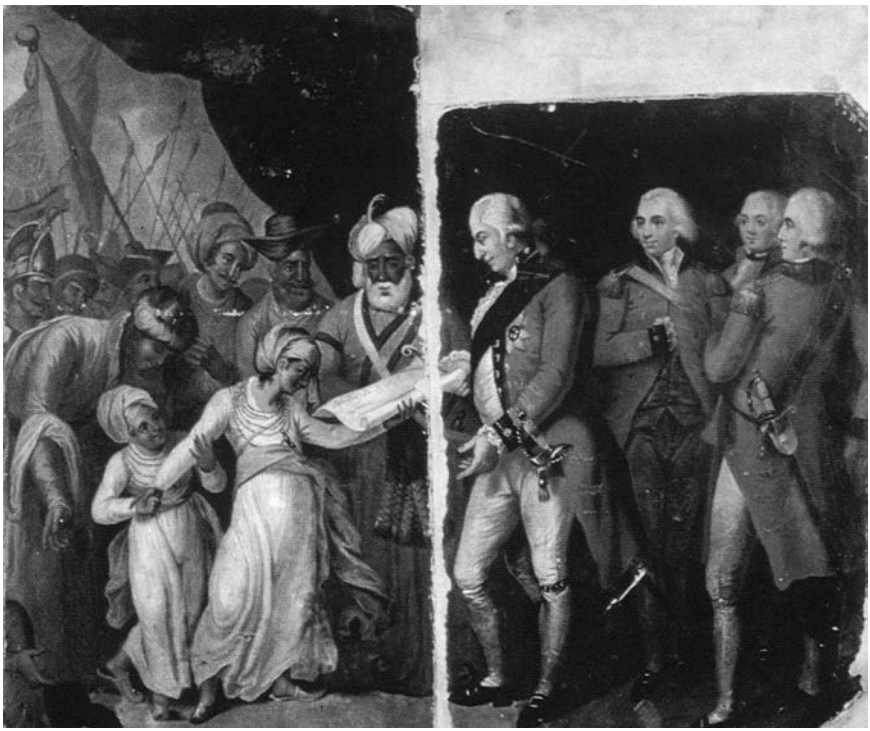
Brown was upbraided for the poor resemblance of the young boys who were dressed in a sweetly effeminized way, and in his next execution, proudly reclaimed authenticity by getting the colours and style of the turbans right (Archer 1979: 423) (Figure 11). However, the Indians were by now receding into the darkness, so that in his more 'accurate' version the eye is strongly focused on the conquerors, Cornwallis himself looking into the distance rather than at the boys with any avuncular interest, while the Indians assume a servile position. Meanwhile, Thomas Stothard took extraordinary liberties with historical narration by further sentimentalizing the scene, fusing, or perhaps confusing, two historical moments, the surrender of the two sons in 1792 and the final moment of Tipu Sultan's death in 1799 (ibid: 427).

In contrast to the attention of the British historian and history painter to the moment of surrender were the unsentimental words of a contemporary historian, Ramachandra Rao 'Punganuri', who recounted the hostage crisis thus:

> After a while the Sultan sent Ghulam Ali Khan and Subrao and Nayac Sauguna and Malval Sri Nivas Rao and the head mace bearer Mohommed Ali and others, to conclude the peace. It was agreed that (three crores and three lacks) of rupees be paid [by the sultan] to the conquerors, and that half the kingdom should be

[34] McPhee suggests not only that these paintings deliberately invoked memories of British villains such as Richard II or Henry VII, but that the female figures were based on a Shakespearean heroine Brown had seen in Boydell's Gallery. (McPhee 1998: 210).

Figure 10
***Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu Sultan as Hostages by* Mather Brown c. 1792. This reproduction is taken from Anne Buddle, Pauline Rohatgi and Iain Gordon Brown, eds, *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1999) (Original at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, UK)**



surrendered. Out of this some one crore must be paid immediately. And two of [Tippoo's] sons must be given in pledge until the residue of the money should be paid. These sons were Khalic Saheb and Moizud Din Saheb: along with whom went persons named Ghulam Ali Khan and Ali Raza and Nayac Singaya who went as their suit.

In the year Paridhavi month Chattra Suddha 5 (8th March 1792) Lord [Corn]wallis received these noble hostages; then he set out with them and proceeded by the road that goes through Madduri Chennapatnam (Brown 1842: Book IV, para 34)

Kirmani went even further by reducing the harsh treaty to an agreement between equals:

And agreeably to the request of the English Commander in Chief, Mazuddin Sultan and Abd-ul-Khalik Sultan, the sons of the Sultan, under the guardianship

Figure 11
***Lord Cornwallis Receiving the Sons of Tipu Sultan as Hostages* by Mather Brown c. 1793.**
(Victoria Memorial, Kolkata)

> of Ghulam Ali Khan and Muhamman Raza Khutib, were appointed ambassadors and sent off to the General and these wise and learned envoys . . . cleared the royal roads of friendship and peace from the dirt and rubbish of suspicion and enmity (1958 [1864]: 104).

Clearly, the attempt of history painters such as Brown was to produce idealized images that rose above simple reportage, to make not just a document, but an example of the historical moment.[35] Benjamin West's *Death of General Wolfe* could have formed the basis for Robert Home's attempt at portraying the *Death of Colonel Moorhouse* (Allen 1990: 36; also Archer 1979: 421) during the siege of Bangalore in 1791. One may note here an attempt to aestheticize death in ways that were quite different from either the historiographical efforts of Kirmani or the carnivalesque scene of death in the Srirangapatna mural.

The extraordinary and even frenzied British production of paintings on this subject has usually been discussed as a sign of 'patriotism' (Rohatgi 1999: 47) or

[35] Partha Mitter's (1994: 199–200) use of the term 'history painting' to refer to the late nineteenth-century works of Ravi Varma amplifies this aspect of the genre.

even jingoism, though history paintings in their original intent attempted to overcome this degenerate style. Sudipta Sen (2002: xxi) similarly takes British concern over visual representations of empire as a further sign of an anxiety over the meaning of sovereignty in the newly conquered territories and in Britain, and confirms the 'value of historical accuracy in the memorialization of the moment of conquest and the British regicidal conscience'. But these descriptions fail to capture the moment of catharsis that was enabled by the paintings. The cathartic element is clearer when we take the paintings of Tipu altogether, particularly those that focused on the finding of his body after the siege of 4 May 1799.[36]

There was active speculation in the early 1790s of Tipu's possible flight from Srirangapatna in the event of a British victory.[37] It was with considerable surprise that the British officers, led by General Baird, learned he was not at the palace; Baird 'severely threatened' the *killedar* and Tipu's family to hand him over, but learned that he had been injured in battle near the gateway on the north face of the fort. Baird proceeded immediately to the place, and found a pile of dead bodies:

> The number was so great, and the place so dark, that it was impossible to distinguish one person from another. The Sultaun's horse which had been shot and his palanquin were first discovered. *As it was a point of the utmost political importance to ascertain the fate of the sultaun* the bodies were taken out and particularly examined in the presence of the killedar who after some time, having pointed out that of the sultaun, it was put into a palanquin and carried to the Palace under the charge of a guard (Beatson 1800: 136; emphasis added).

One may now understand that the production of the series of paintings of this moment was also a political reaffirmation of the death, and a valiant hero in death

[36] The parallels with Gibbon's description of the identification of the slain body of Constantine, so crucial to the victory of the Turks, are once more striking. He says, 'Yet [Muhammad's] mind was not satisfied nor did the victory seem complete till he was informed of the fate of Constantine, whether he had escaped or been made prisoner or had fallen in the battles. Two janizaries claimed the honour and reward of his death, the body under a heap of slain was discovered by the golden eagles embroidered on his shoes; the Greeks acknowledged with tears the head of their late emperor, and after exposing the bloody trophy, Mahomet bestowed on his rival the honours of a decent funeral' (Gibbons 1998: 1057). The first draft of this article was completed in December 2003, when a similar drama was enacted on television screens worldwide: US forces 'dug' the former president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, out of his hiding place and examined him, in the full glare of television cameras to establish his identity.

[37] 'To what region the Sultaun can possibly fly after the fall of his capital,' said a letter from Madras in May 1792, '. . . is a matter of much conjecture among the Quidnuncs of the east. He can find no asylum with the Poligars. While he retains a part of his treasure a force will be at his command, sufficient to secure a temporary retreat among the hills. Some sage politicians send him to Mecca others to Pondicherry' (An Impartial Observer 1792: 39, Appendix).

at that. When the historical narrative is under no such political compulsion, it may omit the dramatization of this find altogether. Thus, Kirmani reports:

> The English officer now after a great search having found the body of the injured and oppressed Sultan it was placed in a palki and left for the night in the treasury and the next morning, the whole of his children, servants and friends, having seen it, for the last time, and established its identity, the General gave leave for its interment, and it was deposited in the earth at Lal Bagh (Kirmani 1958 [1864]: 128).

However, in the hands of the history painters the event took on more than political meaning, and became the major proof of Britain's triumph in India. Singleton painted *The Last Effort and Fall of Tippoo Sultaun* in failing light, with a clearly beleaguered Tipu facing the equivalent of a firing squad [Figure 12]. The pictorial representations of the hostage taking were by this time so much part of the public imagination that it was possible for engravers to make them a reference on the margins of the painting as a chronicle of the British triumph foretold. Between two equally balanced forces, British and Indian, was Tipu's fight to the finish.

Figure 12
***Last Effort and Fall of Tippoo Sultaun*, J. Rogers after Henry Singleton, c. 1802**
This reproduction is taken from Anne Buddle, Pauline Rohatgi and Iain Gordon Brown, eds, *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1999) (Original in a Private Collection, UK).

These pictures and drawings, many of which had a long afterlife because they were immediately engraved, symbolically undid the many humiliations heaped by Tipu Sultan on the British.

One sees that Beatson's dramatic prose forms the basis for another more purposive portrayal of these events, a posthumous reclamation of General Baird's historical role in the 'siege of Seringapatam', an honour that had been unfairly bestowed on Arthur Wellesley. In *General Sir David Baird Discovering the Body of the Sultaun Tippoo*, commissioned by Baird's widow in 1838, David Wilkie deployed his skills as a portrait painter to reclaim honour for Baird:

> He who left the Palace in the morning a powerful imperious Sultaun, full of vast ambitious projects, was brought back a lump of clay, abandoned by the whole world, his kingdom overthrown, his capital taken, and his palace occupied by the very man Maj. General Baird who about 15 years before, had been with other victims of his cruelty and tyranny released from near four years of rigid confinement, in irons, in a prison scarce 300 yards from the spot where the corpse of the Sultan lay (Beatson 1800: ci, Annexure no. xxxiii).

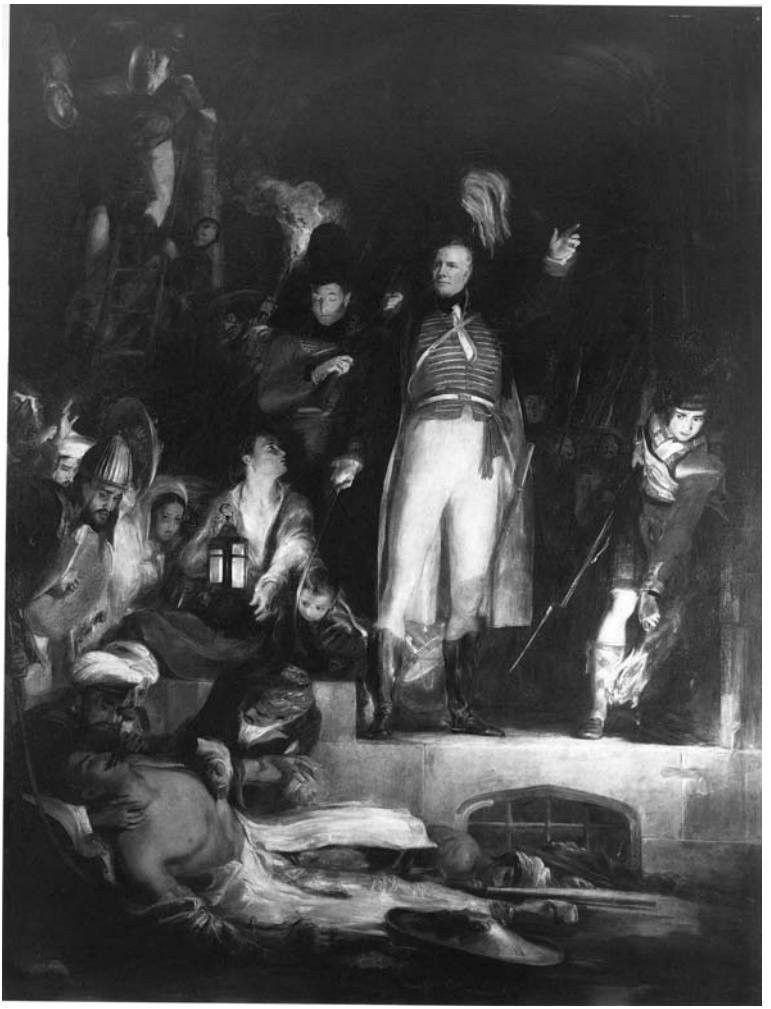
In this painting Baird appears in the manner of one who, not content with the discovery of the slain hero, vicariously participates in it with drawn sword (Figure 13). The viewer is urged to look up at this British hero who is fully illumined by the flare and the lantern, while encountering just below eye level and in relative darkness the body of Tipu Sultan.

David Wilkie's portrait of Baird in his moment of glory importantly illustrates the many devices that were deployed in buttressing the truth claims of perspectivalism. Many, including the Duke of Wellington in 1838, are supposed to have praised Wilkie's portrait for its extraordinary fidelity to the original setting and to Baird himself. However, the artist's commission was to lionize Baird, and undo his humiliation at the hands of Tipu Sultan, who was once his captor. Depicting two different points of the Srirangapatna fort and two different moments in history within the two-dimensional space of a single painting called for an imaginative deployment of symbols. It took the form of a grating that recalled the light source of the dungeon to which he was confined after 1780 along with other European prisoners.[38]

Not all the concerns of this period were exhausted by the series of works that were intended to produce 'affect'. After the storming of Srirangapatna, history painting assumed a pedagogical, or more properly informational, role through a careful reconstruction of the momentous siege. Robert Ker Porter's panorama called *The Storming of Seringapatam* was of epic proportions, and not for nothing

[38] The most important reading of this painting is by Rohatgi (1999: 49). See also, however, Teltscher (1985: 253–55).

Figure 13
***General Sir David Baird discovering the body of the Sultaun Tippoo Saib*. Mezzotint engraving after a painting by David Wilkie, 1838. This reproduction is taken from Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture, 1770–1825* (Karachi/Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979) (India Office Library and Records).**



was it called the Great Historical Picture when it was first displayed at the exhibition room of the Lyceum on the Strand in 1800. It was done on 'a scale of magnitude hitherto unattempted in this country' a work 120 by 21 feet, occupying 2550 square feet and arranged on curved screens (*Narrative Sketches* 1800) (Figure 14). The urgency with which Ker Porter painted this work (completed in the space of six weeks) clearly spoke of the need to provide visual props in the time before the

Figure 14
The Storming of Seringapatam **Stipple engraving, left hand portion, (1803) after a panorama by Robert Ker Porter, 1801. (Dariya Daulat Museum, Srirangapatna)**

photograph for the British people to participate (become eyewitnesses them-selves) in the act of storming the impregnable fort of Srirangapatna. The urgency may also have been prompted, to follow Stephen Oettermann, by the fact that 'panorama painting in London around 1800 had become a potentially lucrative but highly competitive business' (Oettermann 1997: 125). But the painting was unintelligible without the explanatory booklet, which in turn was pieced together from 'authentic materials', namely, various eyewitness reports and government documents, and had formed the basis for Ker Porter's effort (ibid.).[39]

Here, too, the principal group of those storming the fort is led by General Baird, and particular attention is paid to the symbolic flag planting on the fort by the ill-fated Sergeant Graham. But the artist also took care to position the enemy, Tipu Sultan, who 'stands near an open veranda, directly above the gateway in which he afterwards fell, and appears reconnoitering the attack, in concert with a French officer, General Chapuy, who is stationed on the battlement, a little further to the left'.

[39] The advertisement for the book said: 'The materials from which these sketches have been produced were collected to assist the design and regulate the execution of an extensive Historical Painting, which the artist has recently submitted to the public eye, on a scale of magnitude hitherto unattempted in this country—*Storming of Seringapatam* painted by R.K. Porter.' On the fate of the painting see Archer (1979: 428).

As many as twenty life-size portraits of British officers were included in this painting, which energetically featured the triumph of British military organization and technology (and the ubiquitous 'glass' or telescope was not forgotten). It was offered to the EIC, which refused to purchase it, and then was destroyed in a fire, though not before it was engraved by John Vendramini in versions that were widely circulated throughout Britain and India. Designed for an ambulatory viewer in its original version, in its flattened reprint it came ironically close to resembling the multiple time sequences of the Srirangapatna mural, without forsaking its claim to certain elements of perspectival realism.

Ker Porter, though not the originator of the English battle panorama, was easily it's most celebrated popularizer, and went on to produce several large-scale battle paintings, including one of Napoleon's siege of Acre in Egypt, where British forces, trapped by the French, were liberated in the decisive battle of 7 May 1799 (ibid.: 116).[40] Ker Porter achieved popularity among a fee-paying London public, who repeatedly visited the Lyceum, for his 'accurate portraits of the main participants' and his 'objectivity' as the British press put it, though liberties may have been taken with the representation of Srirangapatna (ibid.: 115).

Wilkie's large painting came as the last in a series of paintings on the Tipu theme for a number of reasons: the genre of history painting itself had clearly degenerated particularly with the emergence of photography.[41] Furthermore, Edouard Manet's 1868 rendering of *The Execution of Maximilian*, which by its deliberate reference to Goya's *The Shootings of July 3, 1808*, with nothing of its anguish, negated the genre in the most decisive fashion. Manet's indifference to the general rules for the achievement of perspective, his inversion of the traditional iconographies of the crucifixion, and above all the achievement of a painterly effect that subsists between two historical codes, the informational/journalistic versus the traditional/experiential were signs of the tectonic shifts within Western European representational practices.[42] Moreover, the sharp political break in colonial India occasioned by the rebellion of 1857 produced a new set of concerns regarding the continuance of empire rather than its founding moments. On the pictorial level, as Pratul Chandra Gupta pointed out in an early consideration of the power of images, the portrayal of people for the purpose of establishing identity—in this case, the dreaded mutiny leader Nana Saheb, and building up state intelligence records led to the search for 'authenticity'. [43] The fate of Ker Porter's representation of the *Storming of Seringapatam* is instructive, since it is the single most used

[40] Ker Porter's portrayal of the campaigns against Napoleon gained him the offer of a job as court painter in the court of the Russian tsar.

[41] On the emergence of genre (history) painters in an entirely different setting, and its structure of meanings, as history and as comment, see the paintings by Tshibumba Kanda Matulu in Fabian (1996).

[42] See Neil Larsen's (1990: 32–48) excellent discussion of the achievements of this painting alongside his critique of its place in art history.

[43] It is a search in which Pratul Chandra Gupta the author of *Alekho Darshan* (Showing of pictures) (1990) himself participates. I am grateful to Gautam Bhadra for this reference and for the translation.

image of Tipu's period in museums, textbooks and myriad popular productions, shorn of its non-artistic achievements. In important ways, the new scopic regime had triumphed over indigenous representational practices.

III

Exhibits within the Bangalore and Dariya Daulat palaces today prominently display prints from the Vendramini engraving of Ker Porter's panorama. A large collection of the engravings of 'views' of the conquered territory, as well as the forts of Mysore and Malabar, the keystones of Tipu's resistance, are included in the display at the Dariya Daulat to provide a visual rendering of those historic moments.[44] Along with the engraving of Henry Singleton's extremely fanciful 1800 rendering of *The Body of Tipu Sultan Recognized by his Family* (Archer 1979: 431–33) and his *The Last Effort and Fall of Tippoo Sultaun* (c. 1800), as well as the fine pencil portraits of Tipu's sons and some courtiers executed by Thomas Hickey between 1801 and 1805, these images have for long circulated as the memory of the momentous defeat of Tipu Sultan.[45] At Srirangapatna the murals may draw appreciation from the visiting public for their aesthetic qualities, but it is the British representations that lay claim to the historical truth.

Did the rule of perspective, after 1799 then, become the 'compulsory site from which vision [could] be conceived or represented' (Crary 1999: 38)? British military and political power was quick to establish itself on a number of registers, though the conditions under which these conventions arose and flourished in Britain did not obtain in India. The possessive version of perspective is outlined by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* (1972: 109), particularly as a mode of representation that achieves its supremacy when the bourgeoisie is on the ascendant in Europe. This understanding of the rise of perspective is less useful in making sense of the visual cultures of eighteenth-century India. Instead, Martin Jay's qualification of perspective as consisting of multiple rather than singular modes of seeing is of greater explanatory value. Several conventions formed part of the scopic regime that ultimately triumphed through the agencies of colonial rule. For colonialism drew equally on another important mode of understanding, reducing, controlling

[44] At least three artists were engaged after 1791 in drawing landscapes of the conquered territory. The most well-known of these were Home (1808), Hunter (1804) and Colebrooke (1794). In addition, Alexander Beatson (1800) also attempted the kinds of landscapes that would stand in for the detailed cartography that was to follow. *A Collection of Views in the Mysore Country* by A. Allen and engraved by J. Wells (1794) forms the bulk of the views of the forts that are on display at the Dariya Daulat today.

[45] The current display at the Dariya Daulat equally lionizes Tipu Sultan and Arthur Wellesley in an uncritical post-independence retention of colonial awe and reverence for the Duke of Wellington's later military achievements.

and visually mastering a vast and unknown territory, the art of cartography. Kirmani noted the importance of cartographic knowledge to the enterprise of the British army:

> Colonel Read the Darogha of the intelligence department, who was appointed to the command of Ambur Garh, notwithstanding the severe restrictions in the Balaghuat where without passes from the heads of districts a man was not permitted to go from one town to another, he, Colonel Read, obtained maps of the whole of the country by sending clever spies and able munshis at great expense (1958 [1864]: 82–83).

As opposed to historical works and paintings that were engaged in the task of *narration*, cartography was concerned with the task of *description*. Narration and description, the twin bases of the new scopic regime, drew from diametrically opposed notions of visuality even when they were aided by mechanical tools for the enhancement of vision. Svetlana Alpers, though in quite a different context, drew the distinction between two modes of seeing within the conventions of perspective itself, or rather representing what is seen. In one perspective establishes that 'I see the world', while the other kind of perspective asserts 'the World is being seen', which represents a journey outside the possessive self.[46] The former privileges the corporealized eye, for which the camera obscura was the tool par excellence, while the latter privileges a view from nowhere, perhaps even a God's-eye view. The certainties of description were not 'contaminated' by the interpretative pitfalls of narration, even when it was by an eyewitness. Thus, in the words of the first superintendent of the British Royal Military College, 'everything which is put down in writing of necessity takes on some colour from the opinion of the writer. *A sketch map allows no opinion*' (Edney 1997: 55; emphasis added). Yet one knows, following Mathew Edney's systematic study of colonial cartography, 'maps are constructs that combine numerous observations into an image of space *without perspective*, although they are then viewed by the individual in lieu of the world' (ibid.: 72; emphasis added).

Therefore, the insistence with which British encounters with the battle mural at the Dariya Daulat emphasized its purported 'lack of perspective' must be understood in the context not of its failures, but in terms of *the very success with which it participated in historical truthtelling*. This, despite the use of a language and idiom that invoked a completely different set of rules and sensibilities. The Indian artist, K.G. Subramanyam reminds us:

> . . . more often than not thinks in terms of fashioning a visual equivalent to what is seen, not expressing visual truth . . . . So he has no traumatic obsession

[46] See, for instance, the discussion in Sennett (1992: 156–57).

> with whether he is conforming to it or deviating from it, as realism does not hold for him any absolute value; nor does he have any use for the concept of pure abstraction as contra distinct from it. But when modern western artists came into contact with the arts of non-modern cultures they had to make a special effort to rationalize these to themselves (1987: 78).

Nevertheless, what was achieved in the panel on the Battle of Polilur was what can be described as an 'informal realism' that did not need the techniques of perspective to make its claim to truth.

On the other hand, British history painting, as one has seen, despite the formal adherence to the laws of perspective, often constructed a narrative that departed from the historical truth in many ways, using other techniques and devices for the ends of producing affect. The history was not simply there, available as a transparent resource for pictorial representation. History painters actively intervened to produce historical narratives themselves, more or less at the same time that usable historical narratives of the Mysore sultans were being produced. And the act of narration called on artists to develop and deploy a wide range of visual tools and devices within the economy of the painting. Formal rules alone could not substitute for historical veracity. By the late nineteenth century, moreover, there was widespread recognition that the rules of perspective were a convention for achieving a visual effect, a mere syntax that could, and indeed was, overthrown by the syntax of modernism. Modernism's indifference to, and active repudiation of, the laws of perspective, decisively delinked retinal correspondence between picture making and the real.

Over time, however, the early British indictment of the Srirangapatna murals became entrenched, particularly in India. Shivarama Karanth, who compared the mural to two other great murals with which he was acquainted, Tintoretto's work in the Doge's Palace at Venice and Michelangelo's mural at the Sistine chapel, admired the virtuosity of the European work, when he said that 'it is too much to expect such a thing in India, *where the technical problems that faced western artists were hardly dreamt of*. We should be satisfied with a good design or configuration in managing the whole mural' (1973: 85; emphasis added). Karanth went on to point to the indiscriminate and somewhat artless use of Prussian blue as indicative of the needless contamination of styles occasioned by colonialism. In this sense, he inverted the Olympian dismissals of European commentators to speak of a different kind of incompetence. Unlike other critics, however, he did not enter into a discussion of verisimilitude, remaining focused on the skills that had been lost before new ones could be mastered.

However, it is not just in his comparison of styles that Karanth found the Indian mural wanting, but in the modes of spectation that it engendered. The Tintoretto mural, says Karanth, 'is housed in a hall that is long enough to get a clear and full view of the panel in its entirety'. Not so the Srirangapatna mural, which is housed

along a 10-foot wide verandah, with a long-distance view of it further hindered by the existence of sun screens.[47] Karanth has here stumbled on an important distinction between two ways of seeing. The mural called for ways of seeing that were distinct from the spectation induced by the history paintings, which may be summarized by the difference between the 'gaze' and the 'glance'. The European audience was invited to 'gaze' upon and contemplate the history painting, or observe and absorb the information about a particular event. The reception of Ker Porter's panorama by the London public illustrates this point. Landscapes, battle scenes and portraits invited the possessive gaze that Berger and others have so well documented. Indeed, the observer himself or herself was being reconstructed in this period, as Crary informs us, through newer understandings of the eye.

The Srirangapatna mural, however, in its setting and style, invited only the act of glancing, and did not in that sense function as a communication of the same order. The mural did not lapse into a merely decorative function. Its purpose was to present the visitor to the palace with a context within which to have a glimpse of the ruler himself, to view the embodiment of a new princely authority, a victor of many battles who aspired to craft an alternative to the then defunct Mughal monarch. Yet here was one who inserted himself in the conventions of eighteenth-century Hindu monarchs of south India. The mural combined the portrayal of the battle in all its historical particulars, while subordinating it, through its placement within a universe of symbols and representations, to an emerging, and as one has seen, by no means fixed, field of forces. Done at a time when the ultimate victory of the British was unforeseen, it functioned as a celebration of victory but within its architectural setting also communicated power. In this a relaxed use of perspective could and was employed as an option.

Not for long was the use of realism or the convention of perspective only one of many options. And not because of the abject surrender of Indian artists to the conventions of perspective. Rather, there is a further irony to this triumph. It emerged from the split between the purely decorative and the functional. It occurred, moreover, as an important sign of the new and precarious political order that took shape following the defeat of Tipu Sultan.

The extraordinarily large artistic output of the time of the restored Hindu monarch Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, A.D. 1780–1865) is in direct contrast to the paltry productions of the previous forty years. In his own attempt to draw on existing and established idioms of monarchy, Krishnaraja Wodeyar consciously produced himself as a connoisseur of the painting and allied arts, gathered around him a group of artists who invented a powerful style that began to be recognized as a Mysore style of 'traditional' painting. In their book *Traditional Paintings of Karnataka*, S.R. Rao and B.V.K. Sastry (1990: 5) attempt

[47] These were only installed in the twentieth century and the result is a noticeable faded lower portion compared with the rich, dark colours above (*Administration Report of the PWD Mysore State for the years 1920–26,* Bangalore, p. 7).

to organically link the period of Raja Wodeyar (1578–1617) to Krishnaraja Wodeyar III by suggesting 'a continuity of a time-honoured practice based on ancient concepts themes and rules of painting' through the treatment of largely religious and mythological themes. Yet the authors admit that all extant works in the Mysore style belong to the period of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III.[48] There is no doubt that, like his counterpart at the Thanjavur court, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III employed a large set of accomplished painters who drew from both mural and miniature traditions, as well as the new art practices to which they were exposed. His court painters, instrumental in executing more than a thousand portraits of the royal family and important public men, were also engaged from the 1820s in the production of illustrations for an enormous album of pictures entitled *Sritatvanidhi* (Rao 1993). This large (and incomplete) compendium of *ragamala*s and illustrations of gods, goddesses and mythological figures was interspersed with instructions to painters regarding composition, placement and colour, choice or mood.

Moreover, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, like his near-contemporary Nizam Ali Khan of Hyderabad, was not averse to, and even actively encouraged, the drawing of innumerable portraits in formal indoor and outdoor settings (Figure 15).[49] According to S.K. Ramachandra Rao, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III drew much inspiration from the Vijayanagar court. Unlike the Thanjavur school, Mysore artists did not follow the styles set by the Golconda, Deccani and Company schools, choosing in particular to keep out the influences of the Company school while revealing strong influences from the Rajasthani *ragamala* tradition (Rao 1993: 44, 62).

It would be difficult to assert such strict abstinence on the part of the Mysore artists in a period that was clearly not devoid of experiments. There were different styles of portraiture (in realist though not quite naturalist, as well as Mysore styles), experiments with architectural perspective, styles of framing strikingly similar to that at the Dariya Daulat, and the clear imprint of the Company style in the works of the mid-nineteenth-century Chitragar Tippanna (*Opening of the English school in Mysore*) (Figure 16) or the late nineteenth-century Venkatasubbu (*Chamaraja Wodeyar's Pattabhisheka*). At the same time, a profusion of portraits was executed

[48] A full-fledged rethinking of the invention of monarchy in Mysore is yet to be undertaken. It will suffice to mention here that Krishnaraja Wodeyar III attempted to recreate the glories of the Vijayanagar court, particularly in the years of his direct rule (1811–31) and indirect rule (1832–68) through the patronage of a range of plastic and performing artists although his own power, especially after 1831, was severely limited under British paramountcy.

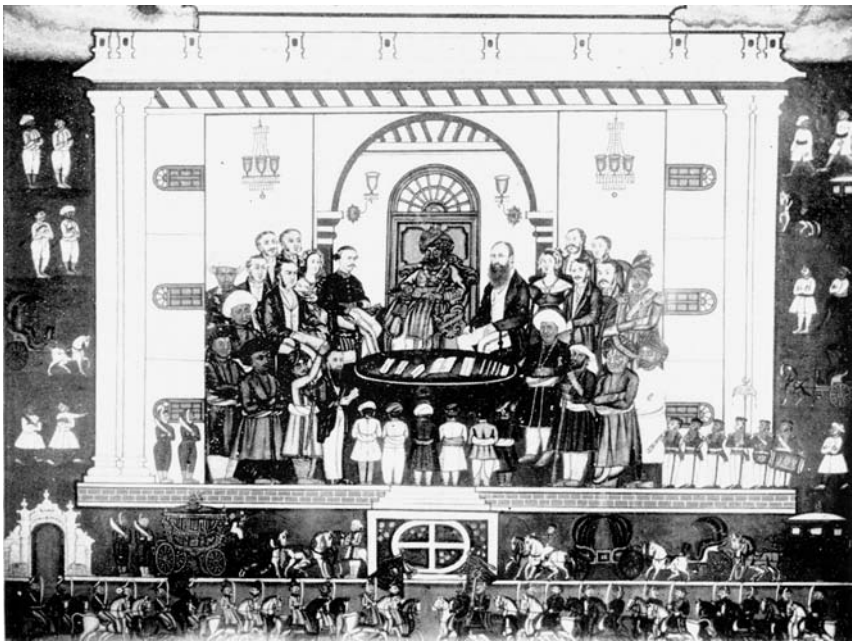
[49] Jagdish Mittal (1963: 44) notes that the prodigious output of the Hyderabad school in Nizam Ali's period testifies to the deliberate emphasis on themes of princely leisure, for example, listening to music, rather than action, whether on the battlefield or during the hunt. See also Zebrowski (1983: 7), which speaks of the escapist mood of the Deccani courts, 'where the Sultauns took more interest in leisure and the arts than in government or conquest' (ibid.: 8). Zebrowski also notes the Deccani obsession with princely partraits compared with hunts, court ceremonials or rituals (as in the Rajasthani miniatures) or historical events (as in the Mughal paintings), the portraits themselves becoming sterile with political stability.

Figure 15
***Krishnaraja Wodeyar III at Prayer*; Mysore style painting; unknown painter and date. This reproduction is taken from S.K. Ramachandra Rao, ed. *Krishnarajawodeyara Sritatwanidhi* (Hampi: Kannada University Prasaranga, 1992).**

in styles ranging from realism (as in the album of portraits commissioned by the maharaja of artists, writers and officials of his court) (Rao 1993: Appendix 1) to the more folkish representations of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III himself (as in the Mysore style portraits currently in the Jaganmohan Palace), and together reveal a period rich with stylistic experimentation though marked by an obsessive return to sterile themes.

Even more striking in this period of diminished autonomy was the retention of genres that had lost their significance as communications of power. It would take me too far afield to discuss in detail the transformations of artistic practices that had been affected, but a brief and telling example will sufficiently make its point. The second floor of the Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore, consists of a hall and two narrow chambers, embellished with wall paintings dating from about 1861 when the palace was built. The principal artist appears to have been Sundarayya (Rao and Sastry 1990: 39). The central hall consists of the Jambusavari procession of Vijayadashami festival with its narrative focus on Krishnaraja Wodeyar III wrapped around three of its walls. On its fourth (west) wall are two sets of portraits divided

Figure 16
***Opening of the English School at Mysore*, c. 1850. This reproduction is taken from Constance Parsons, *Mysore City* (Oxford University Press, 1930).**



equally between Hindu and Muslim monarchs and notables, not all contemporaries of Krishnaraja Wodeyar (and indeed, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan are also included) (Figures 17 and 18).[50] Piercing the west wall is the large *Santanaambuja*, the Lotus Progeny of the Wodeyar clan centrally focused on Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, around whom the Mysore dynasty springs into being, to include such mythical figures as Vasudeva and Krishna. A *kalpa vriksha* of the king surrounded by his descendents adorns the east wall of the adjoining northern room.

Many of the other murals are devoted to portraying Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's leisurely pursuits: he is shown as participating in the Vasanthotsava on the eastern wall of the southern room, for instance, or in several hunting poses (Figure 19). Even when his own portrait does not appear, as in the portrayals of chess strategies, it is his love of the game that is announced. Although there is some consistency to the styles of these portraits, there is no doubt a great deal of playful experimentation as well.

There are more than superficial continuities in the art practices of both the Mysore and Srirangapatna courts, yet it is the distinctions that are more significant.

[50] See for a detailed written description, 'Mural Paintings at the Jaganmohan Palace' (*Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department,* pp. 46–71).

Figure 17
Portrait Paintings on Western Wall, Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore, c. 1860
(Jaganmohan Art Gallery, Photograph: Clare Arni)

Figure 18
Dewan Purnaiya: detail of Portrait Paintings on Western Wall, Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore, c. 1860 **(Jaganmohan Art Gallery, Mysore; photograph: Clare Arni)**

Figure 19
Detail of mural on East Wall at Jaganmohan Palace, Mysore: Krishnaraja Wodeyar on a Tiger Hunt near Kittur c. 1860 **(Jaganmohan Art Gallery, Mysore; photograph: Clare Arni)**

The procession portrait and the portraits of the nobility bear uncanny resemblances to those at the Dariya Daulat in their style and form. Yet (despite their virtuosity) these remain static and somewhat sterile portrayals. In their very mimicry they reveal a moment of transformed power relations, and indeed a claim to a very different kind of legitimacy and power. If the Dariya Daulat Bagh carefully placed its mural on the outer walls, entirely of a piece with the architecture in its grandeur, the Jaganmohan Palace murals are interiorized and relegated to the top most floor, while the (original) structure conformed to the prevailing colonial architectural style. If the triumph over the new aspirants for power in the subcontinent (the Battle of Polilur) actively dominates the walls of the Dariya Daulat, the real colonial masters are massively absent in the Jaganmohan Palace representations, which is obsessively focused on contemporary and past Indian monarchs.

Here, on full display, are the preoccupations of a 'monarch' only too conscious of the precariousness of his claims to the throne, and yet obsessively emphasizing

a royal and 'unbroken' lineage.[51] Here, unlike the Dariya Daulat, the paintings are entirely on the interior of the top most floor of the building, and serve little other than a purely decorative function. Unlike Dariya Daulat it is the very stability of 'indirect rule' and the guaranteed boundedness of the Mysore territory that is on full display. By their very absence in these representations, the British have more than established their power, since they, rather than the people of Mysore, are the addressees of this painting. The absence of 'perspective' that the British found so troubling in the murals of Srirangapatna is of no consequence in cultural productions such as these, which despite, or perhaps because of, their proliferation, signalled that they were an unreliable index of power.

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[51] Krishnaraja Wodeyar III fought a long and protracted 'battle' with the colonial authorities, dating from 1835–36, for the restoration of power, which was 'won' in 1867, when he was permitted to adopt a young relative as his son. He was more than once reminded that the British retained their right of conquest and that he 'did not inherit any patrimony in the soil and ... could not claim a single village' since his title 'to authority rests solely upon the cession made ... by the British government' (*Papers Relating to Mysore,* India Office, 1866; also *The Origin and Termination of the British Administration of Mysore, 1830–31 to 1880–81* A.D., Mysore, 1924).

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