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Indian Interpreters in the Making of Colonial Historiography: New Light on Mark Wilks's Historical Sketches of the South of India *(1810–1817)**

> …in this country [England] we do not write on half margin with black writers at our elbow.
>
> Mark Wilks to William Kirkpatrick, 4 November 1809[1]

On 4 May 1799, Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore, died defending his fort at Seringapatnam (Srirangapatinam) against British forces. Tipu's defeat, concluding the fourth and last Anglo-Mysore War, ended decades of expansionist wars which he and his father, Hyder Ali, had waged with French help. The British victory consolidated the English East India Company's transformation from trading venture to ruler of a territorial empire. In the aftermath, the Company promoted the study of India's languages, history and religion in order to understand the lands it now governed. The case of Bengal is the best known, with Calcutta the sphere of activity of such celebrated Orientalists as Sir William Jones. But the conquest of Mysore also stimulated antiquarian studies, and many participants authored works bringing South India to the attention of the British public. One of them, Mark Wilks (1759–1831), wrote the enormously influential three-volume *Historical Sketches of the South of India* (1810–1817), an early history that became the standard work throughout the nineteenth century. It was important, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has noted, 'not only for its own sake, but for its having been regurgitated and reproduced time and again with minor variations'.[2] Wilks inspired such disparate minds as the poet Robert Southey, in his Indian epic *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), and Karl Marx, on the Asiatic mode of production in *Capital*

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1. British Library [hereafter BL], Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections [hereafter APAC], MS Eur. F228/21, fo. 3v.

2. S. Subrahmanyam, 'Warfare and State Finance in Wodeyar Mysore, 1724–25: A Missionary Perspective', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, xxvi (1989), pp. 203–33, at 206; Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India, in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore; From the Origin of the Hindoo Government of that State, to the Extinction of the Mohammedan Dynasty in 1799. Founded Chiefly on Indian Authorities Collected by the Author While Officiating for Several Years as Political Resident at the Court of Mysoor* (3 vols., London, 1810–17).

(1853).[3] Widely referenced as a prominent achievement of early colonial historiography, *Historical Sketches* is still used as a source for the Anglo-Mysore wars. This significant achievement, however, was not the product of Wilks's single authorship, but depended on the crucial assistance of Indian interpreters. The discoveries and publications of colonial officer-scholars such as Wilks became possible only through negotiation with knowledge networks in India, accessed through intermediaries including interpreters, language teachers (*munshis*), scribes and copyists, court officers or register-keepers (*sheristadars*), intelligence agents (*harkaras*), Brahmin jurists (*pandits*), and other indigenous brokers. India and Indians were not merely inert objects of western study, but living traditions and people in dynamic interaction with colonial powers.

Debate over the construction of colonial knowledge has shifted from emphasising European dominance through 'cultural technologies of rule' to highlighting the intellectual contributions of native intermediaries.[4] The colonial historiography of South India was, in fact, the joint creation of British colonial officers and their interpreters, the product of cross-cultural intellectual partnerships. This article extends previous arguments by introducing new sources to the discussion of South Indian historiography. In 2016, while examining some Persian manuscripts at All Souls College, Oxford, I discovered that they belonged to a much larger archive that was Mark Wilks's personal library, mainly comprising sources he used to write *Historical Sketches*, including Persian manuscripts, English translations of documents in manuscript, and printed books. This archive throws a flood of new light on Wilks's working methods, his dependence on Indian interpreters, and how he distilled into manageable size the massive collection of his friend Colin Mackenzie, the surveyor of Mysore.

Mackenzie's collection was first brought to scholarly attention by Bernard Cohn and Nicholas Dirks.[5] Mackenzie's interest in Indian history went beyond his official duties as surveyor, and he organised a massive antiquarian project. Assembling a staff of learned Indians, he amassed an enormous collection of manuscripts, transcriptions of inscriptions, and drawings of coins, sculptures and archaeological remains. He never published from this archive; but his friend Mark

3. Robert Southey, *The Poetical Works*, VII: *The Curse of Kehama* (4th edn., London, 1818), pp. 150–51; Karl Marx, *Capital*, I: *A Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Friedrich Engels, tr. S. Moore and E. Aveling (New York, 1906), p. 393; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, tr. R. Dixon et al. (50 vols., New York, 1975–2004), xxxix. 344, xl. 110 (Marx's letter of 24 Mar. 1857 mentions Wilks).

4. N.B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), p. 9.

5. B.S. Cohn, 'The Transformation of Objects into Artifacts, Antiquities and Art in Nineteenth Century India', in his *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); and N.B. Dirks, 'Guiltless Spoliation: Picturesque Beauty, Colonial Knowledge, and Colin Mackenzie's Survey of India', in C. Asher and T. Metcalf, eds., *Perceptions of South India's Visual Past* (New Delhi, 1994).

Wilks did. Building on previous studies of colonial knowledge-construction in South India by Thomas Trautmann, Philip Wagoner, Rama Mantena and others, in this article I examine Wilks's library for further evidence of the uses of such a colonial archive in early British historiography of South India, and reveal his work as synthesising the British antiquarian collecting efforts in South India that had been spearheaded by Mackenzie. Wilks's archive also allows us to elucidate in considerably more detail the process by which colonial knowledge emerged from intercultural interactions. Wilks was fundamentally reliant on the intellectual labour of three Kavali brothers who were Indian interpreters in Mackenzie's employ, Borayya, Lakshmayya and Ramaswami. He incorporated information gathered and translated by the Kavalis, especially Lakshmayya, who was instrumental in helping him establish a chronology for his history. I argue that the detailed historical timeline they created together was the foundation, a kind of first draft, for *Historical Sketches*. They put it together by comparing and weighing different pieces of evidence against each other, using not only inscriptions from land grants but also genealogical accounts. Making liberal use of Lakshmayya's work, Wilks even published extracts from these accounts. Wilks's archive thus corroborates and deepens recent scholarship on the indebtedness of British colonial historiography to native interpreters and native scholarly traditions.

I

Edward Said's immensely influential *Orientalism* (1978) argued that Western scholarship on the East was an imperialist tool. Using Michel Foucault's notion of the pervasiveness of the knowledge/power conjunction, Said contended that Western representations of otherness distorted the East into colonial fantasies, with orientalist binaries of self/other underpinning European military conquest and domination. Later, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said struck a more conciliatory tone in seeing the possibility for an East–West reconciliation. However, in exploring the 'pattern of relationships between the modern metropolitan west and its overseas territories', he still emphasised Western cultural and political domination.[6] Over the decades, Said has been criticised, even by admirers, for his reification of binary differences that turn non-Western peoples into silent subalterns, passive victims of history.[7] But his explosive argument about Middle Eastern orientalism has also inspired work on other parts of the world.

Like Said, though independently of him, Bernard Cohn's pioneering work on India showed how imperial structures produced

6. E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), p. xi.

7. A. Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the World of Edward Said', *Economic and Political Weekly*, xxvii, no. 30 (1992), pp. PE98–116; D.M. Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle, WA, 2012).

colonial knowledge. India became known and knowable through the documentation, classifications, categorisations and other codifications of the colonial state, leading to the emergence of colonial disciplines of anthropology, historical linguistics and comparative religion.[8] With regard to the British study of Indian languages, Cohn argued that '[t]he conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge'. The textualisation of knowledge 'began the establishment of discursive formation, defined an epistemological space, created a discourse (Orientalism), and had the effect of converting Indian forms of knowledge into European objects'. Such an 'invasion of [the] epistemological space' of Indian scholars and bureaucrats turned them and their knowledge 'into instruments of colonial rule'.[9] Administrative structures such as the census and the survey exercised colonial hegemony over the people and transformed traditional societies. Following Cohn, Nicholas Dirks has emphasised the instrumentality of cultural technologies of rule. His seminal study of the Pudukkottai kingdom argues that colonialism undermined and hollowed out indigenous authority to render the 'little kings' of South India 'at worst rebels and at best landlords'; in consequence, 'the Indian state was deconstructed and the nature of Indian society misconstrued'.[10] For Dirks, colonialism's 'violence and domination' depended on archives such as the Mackenzie Collection: 'Colonial conquest was about the production of an archive of (and for) rule. This was not an archive that was imagined as the basis for a national history, for it was only designed to reap the rewards and to tell tales of imperial interest'.[11] Cohn's and Dirks's analyses remain foundational, but their emphasis on imperial domination allows little room for the active role of indigenous subjects.

In response, other scholars have challenged the Foucauldian/Saidean knowledge/power thesis by reinserting the native into the equation. They highlight the partnership and collaborative work of British and natives, and point to the heterogeneous nature of colonial knowledge and the two-way transfer of information. They stress European entanglement with native knowledge systems to create hybrid, rather than monolithic, forms. Eugene Irschick has offered dialogue as a model for knowledge construction, where different voices, including

8. B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1987); id. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, examining 'investigative modalities' (p. 5) ranging from historiographic to enumerative to surveillance. Other Foucauldian analyses of Orientalism in India include C.A. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia, PA, 1993), and K. Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India, 1600–1800* (Delhi, 1995).

9. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, pp. 16, 21.

10. N.B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 8.

11. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 315, 107–8. On the Mackenzie Collection, see N.B. Dirks, *Autobiography of an Archive: A Scholar's Passage to India* (New York, 2015), pp. 27–69.

native ones, contributed—though such dialogue became less tenable as power relations tilted in favour of the British Empire.[12] Similarly, C.A. Bayly found a multiplicity of voices at work in British information-gathering, which employed an existing network of Indian spies, newswriters, couriers, linguists and other learned natives. Colonial knowledge came out of their mutual, though not always friendly, engagement. Rather than hegemony, Bayly stressed the European colonisers' fear and paranoia, their panic and fragility. Arguing against a Foucauldian knowledge/power construction that sidelines Indians, he asserted that '[o]ur understanding of "colonial discourse" must reflect the pervasiveness of Indian agency, of the Indian intellectual challenge, and of Indian cultural vitality'.[13] Indian agency is discernible in a wide range of fields. Early modern European botanical texts, for example, were 'profoundly indigenous', deriving from 'compilations of Middle Eastern and South Asian ethnobotany, organized on essentially non-European precepts' by Malayali Ezhava (a Sudra caste) plant collectors and doctors. Likewise with archaeology, an area in which the colonial government's 'quest for accurate, authoritative knowledge would be crucially hinged on Indian assistance'.[14] The exchange model firmly re-centres the native in the production of scientific knowledge.

In the case of South India, Thomas Trautmann's studies of what he has dubbed the Madras School of Orientalism are exemplary. Identifying this intellectual formation in Madras as an important counterpoint to oriental scholarship produced in Bengal, he has uncovered its two interacting components: first, Mackenzie's collection, amassed with the help of Indian staff in order to recover South India's history; secondly, the College of Fort St George, founded by Francis Whyte Ellis to train civil servants in languages, taught by Indian scholars.[15] Although the relationship with the Bengal colonial administrators in the north was one of emulation (replicating such Calcutta institutions as the learned society, the college for languages and courts administering Indian law), discoveries from Madras, including Ellis's discovery of the separate Dravidian linguistic family, would challenge the assumptions

12. E.F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795–1895* (Berkeley, CA, 1994); id., 'Conversations in Tarangambadi: Caring for the Self in Early Eighteenth Century South India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, xxiii (2003), pp. 3–20.

13. C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 314.

14. R. Grove, 'Indigenous Knowledge and the Significance of South-West India for Portuguese and Dutch Constructions of Tropical Nature', *Modern Asian Studies*, xxx (1996), pp. 121–43, at 126; T. Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York, 2004), p. 86. See also K. Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (Basingstoke, 2007); S. Schaffer, L. Robert, K. Raj and J. Delbourgo, eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820* (Sagamore Beach, MA, 2009); and H.J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT, 2008).

15. T.R. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* (Berkeley, CA, 2006); id., ed., *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India* (New Delhi, 2009).

of the Bengal school. Wilks participated in the Madras School's study of South Indian history, language, literature, religion and law, and had strong connections to both Mackenzie and Ellis. Trautmann's analysis of Wilks's use of Ellis's work on land tenure highlights their interactions: 'during his time in Madras Wilks made extensive use of the Mackenzie Collection and its Indian assistants', and his researches in this archive supported a joint critique with Ellis of Thomas Munro's 'false doctrine of Oriental Despotism'.[16] Trautmann's book on Ellis's discovery of Dravidian shows how indispensable was the aid of Ellis's *sheristadar*, or head of staff, at the Collectorate of Madras, Sankaraiah (Bomakonti Shankara Shastri). Colonial knowledge developed out of a synthesis of British and Indian forms: Sankaraiah, using 'the tools of Indian grammatical analysis', provided a novel interpretation of Telugu as a 'mixture' of Sanskrit and Tamil, and Ellis's view on South Indian languages proved 'virtually indistinguishable from that of Sankaraiah'.[17] This important insight has been further elaborated by Bhavani Raman, who argues that Ellis's *Treatise of Mirasi Rights* (1818), which Mark Wilks used, was collaboratively authored with Sankaraiah.[18] As Trautmann notes, European attitudes towards India were not always negative; in fact, a kind of 'Indomania' among European Orientalists made this East–West synthesis possible.[19]

The Indian interpreters employed by Mackenzie have garnered serious attention from scholars, which has advanced our understanding of knowledge exchanges in the Madras School. Phillip Wagoner's important essay tracing through the archive one of Mackenzie's interpreters, Narrain Row Brahmin, shows how Mackenzie's project turned the study of epigraphy into a standard method for historical enquiry. Other studies focus attention on the Kavalis: Lisa Mitchell considers Ramaswami's publications to be important early attempts 'to articulate a Deccan regional identity'; Rama Sundari Mantena has uncovered the brothers' central role in structuring and directing Mackenzie's archival project.[20] Venkata Raghotham has suggested that Wilks relied on Persian intermediaries such as Purnaiah (Krishnacharya

16. Trautmann, 'Riot over *Ryotwar*', in id., ed., *Madras School of Orientalism*, pp. 310–32, at 324, 326.

17. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, pp. 179, 184; see also id., 'Hullaballoo about Telugu', *South Asia Research*, xix (1999), pp. 53–70.

18. B. Raman, 'Recovering Attestation Practices from the Footnotes of a Colonial History: The *Treatise on Mirasi Rights* Revisited', in C. Talbot, ed., *Knowing India: Colonial and Modern Constructions of the Past: Essays in Honor of Thomas R. Trautmann* (New Delhi, 2011), pp. 137–70.

19. T.R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 62–98; for a strenuous critique of Said, see pp. 1–27.

20. P.B. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xlv (2003), pp. 783–814; L. Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, and Politics in South India: The Making of a Mother Tongue* (Bloomington, IN, 2009), p. 66; ead., 'Literary Production at the Edge of Empire: The Crisis of Patronage in Southern India under Colonial Rule', in S. Agha and E. Kolsky, eds., *Fringes of Empire* (New Delhi, 2009), pp. 236–56; R.S. Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780–1880* (New York, 2012), pp. 87–121.

Purniya), the *diwan* (prime minister) of Mysore.[21] This productive approach, which Wagoner calls 'collaborationist'—in opposition to the Saidean 'postcolonialist' approach—has been further nuanced by scholars critiquing colonial power relations and pointing to a 'regime of differentiation' that ultimately excluded Indians.[22] Nonetheless, the focus on British–Indian partnerships has uncovered a rich history of native interpreters. Building on the work of these scholars, I now turn to the Kavalis' relationship with Wilks, whom Ragotham calls 'curiously neglected'.[23] Focusing in particular on Wilks's partnership with Kavali Venkata Lakshmayya, I examine this less-studied aspect of the Mackenzie circle in order to elucidate the dynamics of cross-cultural intellectual partnership in the writing of colonial historiography.

II

Born on the Isle of Man, the younger son of a second marriage, Mark Wilks was first intended for holy orders and was given a grammar school education.[24] In 1781 he obtained a cadetship in the East India Company, and in 1782 a commission in the Madras army. He gained his Indian experience in the south, in Mysore, rather than in Bengal, and served in various capacities in the army. As deputy secretary, he accompanied Lieutenant Barry Close's 1787 diplomatic mission to Tipu Sultan, and became acquainted with Purnaiah, the sultan's senior advisor. During the campaigns against Tipu Sultan, he was brigade major and aide-de-camp to Colonel James Stuart from 1790 to 1792. Wilks was on furlough for health reasons from 1795 to 1799, during the Fourth Anglo-Mysore war, and on his return became secretary to the governor, Edward, second Baron Clive. He served as Resident of Mysore from 1803 to 1808, when ill health forced him to leave India. After recuperating in England, Wilks was appointed governor of St Helena from 1813 to 1818; this phase of his career is best known for his famous and involuntary guest, Napoleon Bonaparte.

The first volume of *Historical Sketches* appeared during the period of Wilks's second convalescence in England. His Madras contacts supplied much of the material for his history. He remained in close contact not only with Ellis and Mackenzie but also with many of the officers who played key roles in the Anglo-Mysore wars. In Madras he had collected

21. V. Raghotham, 'Soldier, Diplomat, Historian: Mark Wilks and the Representations of Empire in the Early Nineteenth Century', *International Journal of South Asian Studies*, ii (2009), pp. 1–13.

22. B. Raman, *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India* (Chicago, IL, 2012), p. 8; P. Chakrabarti, *Materials and Medicine: Trade, Conquest, and Therapeutics in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 2010).

23. Raghotham, 'Soldier, Diplomat, Historian', p. 1.

24. For Wilks's biography, see E.I. Carlyle, 'Mark Wilks', rev. R.T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; L.B. Thrower, *From Mann to Mysore: The Indian Careers of Col. Mark Wilks FRS and Lt. General Sir Mark Cubbon* (Douglas, 2006).

Persian manuscripts for his library and had Mackenzie's assistants' help in securing and translating indigenous sources.

Among Mackenzie's assistants, as we have seen, were the Kavali brothers from Andhra Pradesh: Borayya, Lakshmayya and Ramaswami. Mackenzie employed five brothers in total, two of whom worked as Lakshmayya's assistants, but, according to Rama Mantena, on whose account I rely, he was aware only of four.[25] Borayya was Mackenzie's primary interpreter from 1796, accompanying him on the 1798 campaign against Tipu Sultan, collecting accounts on their travels, and present at the storming of Seringapatam. Borayya did not only translate, contends Mantena, but also 'drew up outlines of plans for historical inquiries that would lead to a more comprehensive history of the Carnatic'.[26] At his death in 1803, he was replaced by Lakshmayya, who contributed substantially to Mackenzie's historical researches. After Mackenzie's death in 1821, the colonial government denied him the appointment to catalogue Mackenzie's papers, though he was the fittest person for the job. They appointed instead an Englishman, Horace Hayman Wilson, secretary of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, who knew no South Indian languages. Nonetheless, Lakshmayya tried to continue Mackenzie's work and received support from the Royal Asiatic Society to set up a native literary society.[27] 'Lakshmayya, in fact', writes Mantena, 'was the true successor to Mackenzie and his archival project . . . [with] antiquarian sensibilities' closely matching Mackenzie's own.[28] Ramaswami, though less well regarded by Mackenzie, perhaps because he was more independent than his older siblings, was nonetheless included in the latter's will.[29] He eventually published his own books, which incorporated extracts from the Mackenzie archive, to establish himself as an author writing for a collective audience rather than for a patron.[30]

The Kavalis' careers were shaped by shifting historical conditions for the group to which they belonged, Niyogi Brahmins. A secular class

25. Mantena, *Origins of Modern Historiography*, pp. 95, 87–121; an earlier version was published as 'The Kavali Brothers: Intellectual Life in Early Colonial Madras', in Trautmann, ed., *Madras School of Orientalism*, pp. 126–50.

26. Mantena, *Origins of Modern Historiography*, p. 99.

27. Ibid., pp. 106–10.

28. Ibid., p. 110.

29. Mackenzie left 'one tenth part of my Estate … to my valued Servant C: V: Lechmyah and his brother Ramaswamy as some compensation for the useful services of the said Lechmyah and of his late Brother C: Boria whose family they provide for', adding that 'I desire that my Brother, Sister, and friends recollecting the value I had for these persons will by no means attempt to lessen or defeat my intentions in this respect which I wish them to consider sacred and inviolable': BL, IOR/L/AG/34/29/33, fo. 249.

30. On his extracts from the archive, see P.B. Wagoner, 'From Manuscript to Archive to Print: The Mackenzie Collection and Later Telugu Literary Historiography', in Trautmann, ed., *Madras School of Orientalism*, pp. 183–205, at 190–92. On his authorship, see Mantena, *Origins of Modern Historiography*, pp. 110–19; and Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, and Politics*, pp. 60–67, and on his use of the archive, 65–6, 230 n. 76. On his mapping, see L. Mitchell, 'Knowing the Deccan: Enquiries, Points, and Poets in the Construction of Knowledge and Power in Early Nineteenth-Century Southern India', in Trautmann, ed., *Madras School of Orientalism*, pp. 151–82.

distinct from religious Brahmins—a split in existence as early as the twelfth century CE—the Niyogis performed administrative or clerical services as ministers, residents, bureaucrats, or even village accountants.[31] Phillip Wagoner has investigated the social context of the Niyogis, who in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries were well established in political and even military service. Although salaried employment put them lower on the ritual hierarchy, it gave them economic and social advantages: 'their willingness to serve as social and economic intermediaries' between village and court meant that they 'came to embody an unusual constellation of linguistic skills and attitudes towards language'. While preferring southern vernaculars to Sanskrit, they 'cultivated skills of literacy in a succession of cosmopolitan administrative languages, from Marathi and Hindustani to Persian and eventually English'.[32] More broadly, the Niyogis belonged to a culture of literacy, taking shape from the early sixteenth century, known as *karanam*: 'a newly emerging middle-range group of graphically literate communities, who used writing as a medium not merely for preservation or recording but also for communication'. This culture's 'graphic literacy', privileging prose over verse, emerged out of an increasingly polyglot environment, requiring skill in multiple languages and scripts.[33]

Like previous rulers, the British found the Niyogis' multilingualism useful. Wagoner notes that Niyogi Brahmins dominated the Arcot court's revenue administration and Madras was 'a major repository of Niyogi talent' suitable for the demands of Mackenzie's collecting and surveying project.[34] In the transition to the colonial period, they shifted to employment with the East India Company and later the British Empire. David Washbrook has pointed to the growing influence of 'members of the commercial, scribal and gentry classes', who in the eighteenth century were 'particularly drawn to the English East India Company (and the private interests of its merchants), which they served as brokers, bankers and agents; and later, as *zamindars* in both meanings of the term—as revenue collectors and holders of privileged land rights'.[35]

The British conquest was highly dependent on this class of literate mediators. The Kavalis' contributions to Mackenzie's project came out of their traditional speciality as chancery scribes, reading, translating and composing diplomatic letters involving multiple languages, scripts

31. Talbot, *Precolonial India*, pp. 57–8; Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', pp. 795–7.

32. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', p. 796.

33. V. Narayana Rao, D. Shulman and S. Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600–1800* (New York, 2003), pp. 19–20.

34. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', p. 796.

35. Washbrook, 'From Comparative Sociology to Global History: Britain and India in the Pre-History of Modernity', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, xl (1997), pp. 410–43, at 435; for this transition in North India, see C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, 1983); P.J. Marshall, *Bengal, the British Bridgehead: Eastern Indian, 1740–1828* (Cambridge, 1987); L. Subramanian, *Indigenous Credit and Imperial Expansion: Bombay, Surat and the West Coast* (Delhi, 1995).

and calendars (Hindu, Islamic and Christian). Wagoner's portrait of Narrain Row gives a detailed picture of how Niyogis put these skills to use. Having mastered a wide range of languages, from Telugu, Marathi, Kannada and Tamil to Sanskrit, Hindustani, Persian and English, they could collect and translate historical texts and land grants in various languages and scripts. They were experienced at working in a bureaucracy; in a convergence of pre-colonial and colonial structures, their position in the British colonial government replicated that in the Arcot court, their former employer. Wagoner argues that this convergence entailed significant agreement on the Mackenzie project's theoretical foundations, that knowledge meant 'generation of "statistical" information' to be produced through the field survey, and that 'investigation of the past' was central: consequently, 'both Mackenzie and his Niyogis ascribed a high evidentiary value to donative inscriptions', which 'documented … the right to collect revenue'.[36] Working closely with one of Mackenzie's Niyogis, Lakshmayya, Mark Wilks exhibited the same attitude. Of importance here is Wagoner's point that the Niyogi approach to language differed from that of traditional Brahmins: their multilingualism primed them to think of language 'in comparative terms', and their administrative experience in an environment where documents could be forged helped them to develop a 'heightened critical sense for the historically contingent and time-bound aspects of language and writing'.[37] This set of skills and attitudes were crucial for Wilks's historical project.

III

Dispersed over two continents—one part of the archive is at the British Library, the other in Madras—the Mackenzie Collection's sprawling immensity has long daunted scholars. The collection's first bibliographer, Horace Hayman Wilson, later Oxford's first Boden Professor of Sanskrit, doubted its worth. Describing its 'composition' as 'very miscellaneous', he suggested that 'its value with respect to Indian history and statistics remains to be ascertained'. Wilson also identified the linguistic challenge: 'verification of its results … cannot be successfully attempted by any single individual, as a familiarity with fourteen languages and sixteen characters can scarcely be expected, from any one person'.[38] Wilson's impatience is palpable in a letter answering a query about missing items from the collection. He noted that he had 'devoted a Considerable portion of [his] leisure for six years to

36. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', p. 799.
37. Ibid., pp. 799–800.
38. Horace Hayman Wilson, *Mackenzie Collection: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts and Other Articles Illustrative of the Literature, History, Statistics and Antiquities of the South of India; Collected by the Late Lieut.-Col. Colin Mackenzie, Surveyor General of India* (Calcutta, 1828), p. xvii.

the dry and troublesome tasks of examining and arranging the Articles of the Collection', though his 'exertions … were wholly gratuitous', and he demanded the satisfaction of knowing his 'labours had been honored'.[39] The assessment of one of the first modern scholars to re-examine the collection, Nicholas Dirks, is equally gloomy. Calling it a 'history of silence', he writes that 'the texts, the fabulous myths, confused chronicles, and chaotic epistles from his collectors, with all that they tell us about the collisions of context and meaning, power and knowledge, have gathered far more dust than ink'.[40]

However, more recent reconsiderations of the Mackenzie Collection, including those of Wagoner, Trautmann and others discussed above, argue against this view of useless disorder. Taking this line of argument further, I suggest that Mark Wilks's archive can help make better sense of the Mackenzie Collection. Dirks has noted that '[c]olonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it'.[41] The conquest of Mysore was also a conquest of its books, the British confiscating Tipu Sultan's library.[42] Wilks's library was formed out of conquest and helped produce its narrative. Wilks collected Persian works from Tipu's library and sampled Mackenzie's vast collection, sifting through a large body of materials to marshal them into narrative order. He did so with the help of the Kavalis, especially Lakshmayya, who gave crucial assistance in making an Indian chronology. The texts the interpreters collected, translated and authored were incorporated into *Historical Sketches*.

Wilks's archive is selective, comprising mainly his sources for *Historical Sketches*. As that work covers the period from Mysore's early history to the late eighteenth-century British campaigns, these sources range from ancient Indian texts, which he read in translation, to works in Persian written from the perspective of Mysore's defeated Muslim rulers, along with British state papers and war accounts published by his British contemporaries. The presence of books formerly owned by Wilks in the Bodleian shows that his actual collection would have been larger, as does an 1810 handlist of his library.[43] It is very likely that his bequest to All Souls College of his working library for *Historical Sketches* was intended to form a coherent archive for the British conquest of South India.

The bequest to All Souls College was made by Wilks's daughter Lady Laura Buchan, possibly through the mediation of the diplomat

39. BL, IOR/F/4/1374/54872, 'Explanation of Horace Hayman Wilson regarding certain items which were not included in the Mackenzie Collection sent home in 1828, November 1830–January 1833'.

40. N.B. Dirks, 'Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive', in Breckenridge and Van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 279–313, at 310, 309.

41. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p. 9.

42. Charles Stewart, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan of Mysore: To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of Hyder Aly Khan, and his Son Tippoo Sultan* (Cambridge, 1809).

43. Oxford, All Souls College, MS 356, 'Inventory of books of M. Wilks of Kirby, 1810'.

Charles Augustus Murray (1806–1895), fellow at All Souls from 1827 to 1851 and a Manxman like Wilks. It was perhaps intended to honour All Souls's reputation as a home for both academics and influential architects of public policy. In Wilks, we get both: his public life fuelled his scholarship and his scholarship shaped public policy. The archive's wealth of materials reveals Wilks's developing thoughts on a number of important topics that were intensely debated in England at the time: the British view of displaced Muslim rulers as foreign invaders; the question of land tenure and Thomas Munro's institution of the *ryotwari* system of taxation favouring the individual cultivator rather than multi-village lords; the question of the status of the 'village republic' (a term which Munro coined and Karl Marx took up in *Capital*): that is, whether there was private property or if the land was wholly owned by the king following the doctrine of 'oriental despotism'; and the role of Jains in the history of early South India. But this depended on the assistance—and collaborative research—of Indian intellectuals. All these topics rested on the foundation of historical chronology, and native interpreters were crucial participants in the fundamental task of establishing a chronology for British writing of India's history.

The thirty-five manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and English, housed in the Codrington Library at All Souls, display considerable thematic coherence, substantially comprising the list of eleven sources and groups of sources described in the Preface to *Historical Sketches*.[44] Each one of these items, with only two exceptions, corresponds to specific manuscripts in the All Souls collection. I list the manuscripts in the table below, matched to short descriptions from Wilks's Preface (the order is Wilks's, while the manuscript short titles come from the Codrington's handlist of Additional Manuscripts):

1.	'An historical memoir' prepared by 'Poornia' and 'Butcherow'	MS 389: Poornia, History of Mysore
2.	'A Persian manuscript, entitled An Historical Account of the ancient Rajas of Mysoor, was found in 1799 in the palace at Seringapatam' (Wilks did not own the Persian manuscript itself, but had Mackenzie's translations from Kannada); 'The succession of the kings of Mysoor … by Nuggur Pootia Pundit'	MS 358, Historical tracts relating to the Madras Presidency, item 1: Translations of two Canarese MSS. regarding the genealogy of the Rajah's of Mysore; item 15: Leyden's translation of the Persian of Nuggur Pootia's book; MS 359: Hindoo Tracts—including on pp. 309–52, 'Historical account of the succession & Acquisitions of the Mysoor Family to 1712 A.D. Nugger Pootia'
3.	'Two manuscripts … of the ancient Dulwoys of Mysoor'	MS 358, item 16: Historical account of the Dalways of Mysore

44. Wilks, *Historical Sketches*, vol. i, pp. x–xx.

4.	'A great variety of smaller manuscripts and memoirs in different languages … characters of Hyder Ali and Tippoo Sultaun, from the pen of my valuable friend Seyed Hussein, Persian secretary to the Raja of Mysoor'	MS 359: Hindoo Tracts; MS 387: Meer Hussain Ali Kermauni, Nishaun e Hyderi (a history of Hyder Ali and Tippoo Sultaun)
5.	'The extensive and valuable collection of grants … on stone or copper … in the possession of … Colin Mackenzie' ('The manuscript of Pootia … belongs to this collection')	MS 358 contains a selection from the epigraphical corpus. For Pootia's manuscript (MS 359), see above, (2)
6.	Francis Ellis's note	Not identified
7.	'Notes and extracts from the records of the Government of Fort St. George'	MS 361: Transcripts from Madras correspondence relating to the wars with Haidar Ali, 1767–84; MS 362: Transcripts from general correspondence of the Madras Presidency, 1771–98; MS 363: Question's put to the Judges on the judicial system of India, 1801, with their replies; MS 364: Extracts from reports and minutes regarding Indian land-law, 1789–1807
8.	'Two military memoirs compiled in the Persian language under my own direction, by Abbas Ali … Over one of these presided Budder u Zeman Khan … The other meeting was directed for a time by Lutf Ali Beg…'	MS 385: Narrative of Budra Zeman Khan; MS 386: Narrative of Jahan Kahan
9.	'A history of Coorg, written by the present Raja'	MS 391: History of Veer Rajander Wadeer, Rajah of Coorug
10.	'Desultory memoranda, containing the results of repeated personal intercourse with every surviving individual … employed under the late dynasty … and written memoirs from the most intelligent of them'	Not identified
11.	'*Sultaun u Towareekh* or the *King of Histories* … dictated by Tippoo Sultaun himself … composed by Zein-ul-ab-u-Deen Shusteree'	MS 388: Sultaun u Touareekh

Some of these materials were obtained by Wilks through his army networks. Shortly before the first volume's publication, he rehearsed a substantial part of the above list in a letter of 4 November 1809 to his army friend William Kirkpatrick.[45] Asking for help with later volumes, he requested 'Tippoo's history written by himself, and Zein ul ab a Deen', explaining that '[m]y copy after carrying down the genealogy to the early youth of Hyder, has a blank. It recommences abruptly with the accession of Tippoo & is continued to 1789, after which ensues another blank—& then a second edition of the genealogy as fabulous as the first'.[46] All Souls MS 388 appears to be the manuscript of *Sultaun* which Wilks refers to as his own copy, as its last page is dated 1789. Its numerous marginal annotations show how extensively Wilks used *Sultaun* to construct the narrative of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan's reigns, especially on their wars of expansion. One note—'Definition of the word Christian'—marks where Wilks extracted a long passage which he published as Tipu 'in his own words'.[47] Kirkpatrick marked the letter where Wilks asked for information, as if indicating points needing reply. However, he did not supply another copy but recommended a different work: Wilks's letter of 12 November 1809 thanks Kirkpatrick for 'unravelling the contents of your collection'. In discussing his method of making 'a loose translation or rather commentary on Poernia's compilation, as [his] ground work', Wilks acknowledges a debt: 'From your account, the Nishan è Hyderi is of a better order'.[48] This other Persian work is found among Wilks's manuscripts with Kirkpatrick's inscription on the flyleaf, 'This Book belongs to the Colonel W. Kirkpatrick'. Wilks, it seems, never returned his book.

Wilks's archive casts further light on his other sources, which have been the subject of scholarly speculation. The survival of English translations of Kannada records concerning ancient Mysore may settle the question of Sanjay Subrahmanyam's 'Kannada manuscripts [that] have disappeared since Wilks's day'.[49] A Persian version of the Kannada History of the Wodeyars, with Wilks's marginalia, confirms Venkata Raghotham's speculation that Wilks 'refers to a History of the Wodeyars which was written in Kannada language that was translated into Persian in 1798 at the behest of Tipu Sultan' as a source he had made use of.[50] There is also a lingering question about a lost memorandum on Indian chronology, prepared with the help of Hyder Ali's 'field munshi' Abbas Ali, that Wilks mentioned in a letter to Kirkpatrick; it was mislaid in his rushed departure from India, but Wilks recalled

45. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/21, fos. 1–4, Mark Wilks to William Kirkpatrick, 4 Nov. 1809.
46. Ibid., fo. 2v.
47. Oxford, All Souls College MS 388, fo. 67; *Historical Sketches*, ii. 528.
48. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/21, fos. 5, 6, Wilks to Kirkpatrick, 4 Nov. 1809.
49. Subrahmanyam, 'Warfare and State Finance', p. 206.
50. Raghotham, 'Soldier, Diplomat, Historian', p. 7.

it sufficiently to describe features of Tipu's calendar.[51] The question of Wilks's methods in chronology may be best answered by a substantial manuscript in his archive, MS 360, which shows him—with the help of Indian interpreters—harmonising various calendars to establish a historical timeline.

IV

By the standards of the day, *Historical Sketches* is meticulously documented. But how did Wilks use his sources? The work's full title asserts that it is 'Founded Chiefly on Indian Authorities Collected by the Author', and Wilks's manuscripts, of which a number are translations by Indian interpreters, supply detailed evidence of how he incorporated them. Orientalist interest in India's ancient history stemmed from the British understanding of their role as restorers of the true Hindu (Wodeyar) government in Mysore, overthrowing Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan's Islamic usurpation. British support of the Wodeyar family's rule required genealogical research. As the new government debated land tenure—whether India had a system of 'oriental despotism', where the king owned all the land, or true private ownership—in order to settle on a system of collecting tax revenue, Wilks's researches also sought to discover who owned the land. Perceptions of the antiquity of Indian practice had a significant impact on the opinions of Wilks and his contemporaries. Two alternatives for land governance were the *zamindari*, already instituted in Bengal, whereby great landowners acted as intermediaries in collecting revenue, and the *ryotwari*, championed by Thomas Munro, with revenue collected directly from the cultivators. Wilks praised the epigraphical record for its utility in re-establishing ancient land tenure: 'If it should be found practicable to trace by a series of authentic documents the history of landed property on the South of India, I imagine that no subject of Superior interests & importance can be presented to the attention of a British Government'.[52] These documents were religious grants recorded in inscriptions, which Wilks called 'documents of a singularly curious texture, they almost always fix the chronology & frequently unfold the genealogy & military history of the donor & his ancestors, with all that is remarkable in their civil institutions or religious reforms'.[53] The fixing of chronology through epigraphy accomplished two closely related British objectives. It aided the writing of India's ancient history and, by determining the proper rulers, helped settle the question of land tenure, something which in turn reinforced the British enthusiasm for history-writing.

51. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/21, fo. 5, Wilks to Kirkpatrick, 12 Nov. 1809.
52. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/39, fo. 60, Wilks to George Buchan, Chief Secretary at Fort St George, 4 Mar. 1807.
53. Ibid., fo. 59v.

Research on the Madras School of Orientalism has shown that epigraphy was a particularly important site of British–Indian collaboration with ramifications even today. Phillip Wagoner has contended that Mackenzie's collecting activity made epigraphy 'the "central pillar" upon which the entire edifice of precolonial Indian history rests'.[54] Wagoner contests Nicholas Dirks's characterisation of the collection as a silent archive, and critiques his and Bernard Cohn's method of random sampling. The Mackenzie Collection's sheer amount of material is daunting, and its chaotic state, including draft accounts with many deletions and ink blots, can be bewildering; Wagoner's systematic tracing of the interpreter Narrain Row through the archive is thus deeply impressive, and he makes a convincing case for the significance of the collection for further research.

Wagoner's biographical account of Narrain Row, along with Rama Mantena's study of the Kavali brothers, provides a valuable sociology of Indian interpreters, especially Niyogi Brahmins, which in turn establishes the context for understanding Wilks's archive. Their research can be carried forward with a book-history approach. Wilks's annotations in the manuscripts produced by Mackenzie's interpreters show traces of his active reading. As Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton argued in their work on Gabriel Harvey, 'scholarly reading … was … goal-orientated' and such reading was thus active in that it was 'intended to *give rise to something else*'.[55] In Wilks's case, that product was a history dependent on epigraphy and an archive of genealogical memoirs, historical accounts, and 'kyfyat' or *kaifiyat* (كيفيت; a Persian term referring to village reports)—a colonial archive collected and assembled by natives. Taking a slice for his private library, Wilks's case offers a nineteenth-century perspective on Mackenzie's collection. Furthermore, examining Wilks's annotations in his archive for an 'outcome of reading' that 'shaped the relationship between text and reader' helps to uncover his relationship with Mackenzie's interpreters.[56] As we have seen, scholars have long recognised the importance of the Kavali brothers, Mackenzie's primary assistants, in the Mysore survey and collection. Wilks's archive shines new light on their relationship with him. Long after his return to England, Wilks received letters from the youngest, Ramaswami, who addressed him as 'My Ever Honored and Worthy Protector'.[57] And, as already noted, Lakshmayya contributed significantly to the foundational construction of Indian historical chronology for *Historical Sketches* and so helped to establish the antiquity of claims to landed property, so central in the debate over land tenure.

54. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', p. 786.

55. L. Jardine and A. Grafton, '"Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', *Past and Present*, no. 129 (1990), pp. 30–78, at 30.

56. Ibid., p. 31.

57. BL, Add. MS 57313, fos. 63–63v, 66–67v, 'Rama Swamey' to Wilks, 13 Nov. 1825 and 9 Aug. 1826.

While acknowledging the help of native interpreters, Wilks did not accord them the credit of being scholars in their own right. In his letter to Kirkpatrick, Wilks apologises for the rambling account of his book: 'I have written a long scrambling and not very connected letter, but in this country we do not write on half margin with black writers at our elbow'.[58] Half margin refers to the practice of writing documents on one half of the page, leaving the other blank for annotations or additions. Contrasting his situation in England with the one he left behind in India, Wilks paints a portrait of white colonial officers at work with dark-skinned assistants at their side. This sketch reproduces the positioning of white and black bodies in Thomas Hickey's painting of Colin Mackenzie (1816), showing him in his scarlet Army officer's coat flanked at his elbow by three Indian assistants—Lakshmayya, the Jain *pandit* Dhurmia, and Kistnaji.[59] Wearing white robes and turbans, the Indians fade into the monochromatic background, just as Wilks's racial typecasting erases the interpreter's individuality. The colonial power relations depicted by Hickey similarly underlie Wilks's relationship with the Kavalis.

V

Historical chronology was foundational to Wilks's history, and to construct chronology Wilks depended on Lakshmayya's linguistic and scholarly skills. But their work arose out of a context of wider interest in chronology as a cornerstone of British antiquarian research. Although Arabic and Persian calendars were familiar to Europeans, in India they encountered an immensity of scale, an antiquity of civilisation, and ideas of cyclical time that challenged their old conceptions. Thomas Trautmann has identified a 'clash of chronologies' in the thinking of early British colonists such as William Jones, who struggled with fitting Indian time into a biblical frame.[60] To understand indigenous sources, Mackenzie and others had to assimilate new time-keeping conventions and compile chronological tables. When sources are so varied—colonial historians had to navigate western, Islamic and Indian calendars—establishing chronology is all the more important for writing history.

Wilks's and Lakshmayya's work on chronology was also part of a *longue durée* historical project. In compiling chronological tables, colonial historians were engaged in the kind of work of synthetic chronology done by scholars from Eusebius in the fourth century to Joseph Justus Scaliger in the sixteenth, and beyond. Trautmann contends that the

58. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/21, fo. 3v, Wilks to Kirkpatrick, 4 Nov. 1809.

59. J. Howes, *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie (1784–1821)* (New Delhi, 2010), pl. 1 facing p. 114, pp. 214–15, 237–8.

60. T. Trautmann, *The Clash of Chronologies: Ancient India in the Modern World* (New Delhi, 2009), pp. 24–52, 172–8; id., 'Indian Time, European Time', in D. Owen Hughes and T. Trautmann, eds., *Time: Histories and Ethnologies* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1995), pp. 167–97.

chronological table was a 'locational technology for time', embedding in its structure the 'concept of historical synchronicity' pioneered by Eusebius, who 'first constructed synchronic tables of national traditions as a grid for universal history'.[61] Sir William Jones, sorting through the Sanskrit Puranas ('Antiquities'), was, argues Trautmann, 'trying to find the place of the Indian tradition in the Eusebian grid for world chronology', as he connected European and Indian histories by the synchronism of Alexander the Great's campaign in north-west India in 325 BCE and the reign of Chandragupta.[62] This Eusebian grid was 'an instrument of wonderful simplicity and effectiveness for the integration of national histories into a grid of world chronology, whereby the horizontal rows gave the synchronic events in the known world for any given year'. [63] That was precisely what Wilks was trying to construct for Indian time.

Wilks constructed Indian chronology with Lakshmayya's help, both in interpreting the evidence and in making the table. Several parts of his archive reveal Lakshmayya actively constructing chronology: first, the footnotes clarifying translations of the land grants that Wilks so highly praised as historical evidence; secondly, a particularly significant manuscript, MS 360, of several hundred folio pages collating the results of chronological reconstruction in the form of a historical abstract recording key events by the year—in other words, a chronological table; and finally, genealogical accounts from which Wilks borrowed narrative details for his history.

The first kind of evidence of the interpreter's hand is the collection of land grants. Called *sunnud* or *sanad* (سند) in the manuscripts, a term no longer used, these are translations of land charters recording deeds of gift that established proprietorship and were the basic building blocks of chronology. Wilks extolled their worth in his Preface and described his use of them in his letter to Kirkpatrick of 4 November 1809: 'The whole mass of Mackenzie's collections for the more antient periods to which with his own active aid & that of the old Jain [Dhurmia] & the rest of his establishment I devoted a long period of pretty intense study'.[64] Mackenzie's staff helped him understand the charters and assimilate them into his scholarship. Of the 'whole mass', Wilks, perhaps with the help of Mackenzie's 'establishment', compiled a small selection for his archive, catalogued as MS 358, as representative examples or ones he found particularly pertinent for writing on the 'more antient periods'.

61. Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, p. 9; id., 'Indian Time', p. 183; see also id., *Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship* (Berkeley, CA, 1987), pp. 206–9.

62. Trautmann, *Clash of Chronologies*, pp. 43–4.

63. Ibid., pp. 173–4.

64. BL, APAC MS Eur F228/21, fo. 1v, Wilks to Kirkpatrick, 4 Nov. 1809. For an index of Mackenzie's collection of translated grants, see BL, APAC Mack General 18.

MS 358's translations bear the marks of a careful interpreter. The first charter, 'The Grant of Gana Putty-Dava-Rajah, an Ancient King of Warungul, to Gopa rauze amanah his Prime Minister', is 'procured by C: Lutchman at Velloor & translated by him December 23^{d} 1802'.[65] Lakshmayya records information such as the original character or script and language (either Marathi or Kannada), the year of the grant in the three different calendars (Indian, western, and Islamic), and even the dates when the original was sent and returned. He supplies extensive annotations glossing Indian terms, and, aiming for precision, he offers alternative translations, for instance, when a king is described as one '[w]ho by the moonlike beams of his renown illuminates/whitens all the quarters of the conquered World'. Not content with two translations within the text, Lakshmayya retranslates in a footnote: 'literally—who has in his possession all the points of the world, made white by the reflected Beams of the moon of his renown'.[66] The attempt at literal translation of what originally was metaphorical compels him to double translations. But while sometimes Lakshmayya translates things twice over, at other times he strives for accuracy by retaining many of the original terms, especially long strings of names, so that some passages seem hardly translated at all. No wonder Wilks needed help interpreting the documents.

The scattered annotations, additions or corrections in Wilks's hand only emphasise that the interpreter performed much of the work. *Sanad* No. 1 confers eight rights, given first in Sanskrit and followed by a translation. Wilks retranslated them to generalise these categories, as the following examples show. The first two rights, with their Sanskrit names—'Niddhee: Treasure or rich ore in the Earth' and 'Neetchipah: Money hid in the Earth'—are retranslated as 'Unburied treasure' and 'Buried treasure' to produce related categories. The last two—'Siddha: Corns & fruits that are ripe' and 'Saadhya: Corn & fruits growing or expected to be ripe'—are retranslated as 'what already exists to assay' and 'what is the expectation from one's own act'.[67] The retranslations shift categories from the specific to the broad and general. But the lack of logical relations between the categories suggests Wilks's struggle to comprehend the documents.

Translation is itself interpretation. Despite Wilks's praise for it, the epigraphical record was not transparent. Difficulties in translating and determining chronology are evident in *sanad* No. 15, 'Translation of the Copy of a Sassanum of Timmana Dan Naik Copied from a Copper Plate'. Opaque even to the translator, original titles are left

65. All Souls College, MS 358, item 4, fo. 7 (No. 1). *Sanads* are numbered in pencil in Wilks's hand but not bound in order. I identify Lakshmayya's hand by comparing the texts with handwriting in signed reports for Mackenzie.

66. Ibid., fo. 4 (No. 6).

67. Ibid., fo. 9 (No. 1).

in transliteration, accompanied by translations in parentheses. The text is clogged with unfamiliar terms. Even the grant's date requires interpretation: while the year of the Indian cycle can be converted into a western year, the passage's meaning eluded the interpreter. The phrase 'under [the] star of Pooshamee' is left untranslated, but a lengthy footnote by Lakshmayya offers two alternative readings of the string of titles and royal names:

> Either here is to be understood 'In the reign of' Prouda Pratauba Naraputty probably the same Prouda Dava rayel whose reign commences about this time & continues 21 years according to the Guspurty account—or the whole title is applied to the Granter Timmana Dan Naik who appears to have been viceroy of the Country about the Cauvery see No: 71 Insc.)
>
> It appears by the M.S. very lately found at Keekary that Timmana Dan Naik had erected the fort of Seringapatam about this very time A:S: 1377. when he is said to have acceded to the Government of this Country [blank] this concurrence of two different authorities seems to be very satisfactory.[68]

Names and titles are difficult to distinguish, for names have meaning: '*Prouda- Pratauba Timmana Veera Naraputty* (the Hero—the King of Men—of greatest Valor:)' can be the name of one king or part of the title of another.[69] Lakshmayya offers both possibilities. The date does not always resolve ambiguity: the dates of both the reign of 'Prouda Dava Rayel' (Prauda Deva Raya) and the rule as viceroy of 'Timmana Dan Naik' (Timmanna Nayaka) are consonant with the evidence. Both rulers are attested by other authorities. The interpreter compared and collated different records and manuscript accounts, looking for concurrence and convergence. His footnote's concluding assertion summarises his method. In *Historical Sketches*, Wilks accepts the conclusion that Timmana 'laid the foundation of the fort' of Seringapatam by including the information in a footnote (vol. i, p. 41).

Lakshmayya's method of collation was to look for concurrence to establish an authoritative historical chronology. While the manuscripts attest to the use of land grants to corroborate genealogical accounts or to supply missing information, they also reveal the reverse: Lakshmayya used genealogical records to authenticate the grants in a two-way process. Wilks was dismissive of Indian historical narrative, writing to George Buchan, Chief Secretary at Fort St George, in a letter of 4 April 1807 that '[t]he department of History in this Country is so deformed by fable & anachronism, that it may be considered as an absolute blank in Indian literature'. He made an exception only for land grants, adding that Mackenzie's 'collection of corresponding manuscripts … can only be trusted in so far as they are confirmed by these authentic documents'.[70] But if Wilks considered one type of

68. Ibid., fo. 10v (No. 15).
69. Ibid.
70. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/39, fo. 59v.

documents subordinate to the other, the interpreter's working process suggests that the hierarchy was not so rigidly fixed. *Sanads* from Wilks's archive show Lakhmayya authenticating them by reference to the genealogical accounts that Wilks considered unreliable. Lakshmayya's footnotes and annotations clearly refer to his use of narrative accounts. He thus confirms the dating of *sanad* No. 6, 'Translation of a Canara Sunnud of Sumbajee Rajah … in the Bangalore District':

> The Mysore Kekaree & Serah Accounts agree in placing the first invasion of the Beejapoor Forces under Ranad-Oola Cawn between 1559 & 1560 of Salleerhan.[71]

The use of genealogical accounts to bolster the grant's authority reverses the roles of the two types of documents.

Piecing together different types of evidence to produce a more complete whole, Lakshmayya compares and weighs them to resolve inconsistencies. He is attentive to possible confusions and confounding contradictions that need clarification. Both grants and narratives are his building blocks for establishing historical chronology. His care in constructing chronology is evident, for example, in MS 358, item 11, 'Historical Chronological Account of the Sovereigns who have ruled the Kingdom of Kikairee or Nuggur'—a chronological king-list with accompanying narrative. Columns to the right record the duration of each dynasty ('Years') and dates in Indian calendars—'Calee or Yudishtor', referring to an Indian calendar used in the Deccan, which Wilks also called 'Calee Yoog', and, in subsequent pages, 'AS', the abbreviation for a second Deccan calendar, the 'Salivahan', as Wilks called it, or Shalivahana Sáka.[72] The dates require interpretation as the king-list is given in Hindu calendrical names and cycle years. In his footnotes, Lakshmayya identified the king and dynasty in order to begin constructing a chronology, comparing one account with another and with previous scholarship: footnote 2 notes that 'this List differs not only from that in the Asiatic Res[earches]: Vol. II page but in the Pennaconda MS as to Years 200 in place of 360', while footnote 3 notes, 'From the Number of Years & of Rajahs this appears to be the Maurya Dynasty of the Pennaconda Chronological MS & of the As[iatic]: Res[earches]: Vol: II Page 139'.[73] Another footnote in MS 358, item 12, 'A Literal Translation (from the Canarese) Of a small Canara

71. All Souls College, MS 358, item 4, fo. 4 (No. 6).

72. Ibid., item 11, fo. 2; for Wilks's note on the 'two modes of reckoning, viz. the Cali-Yoog, and Salivahan' in the Deccan, see *Historical Sketches*, i. 491. For Indian calendars, see R. Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Other Indo-Aryan Languages* (New York, 1998), pp. 176–98. The miscellany contains other hands: MS 358, item 7, 'Historical Memoirs of Trepetty', is 'translated from a Tellinga MS' and 'Communicated by Sankariah 1803'—that is, Ellis's *sheristadar*.

73. All Souls College, MS 358, item 11, fo. 2; the references to *Asiatic Researches* are to William Jones's article, 'On the Chronology of the Hindus', *Asiatic Researches: or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia*, ii (Calcutta and London, 1790), pp. 111–46.

Manuscript on Cadjans preserved at Keekairee', show Lakshmayya converting the dates to the Christian calendar:

> This Year answers to AD 922—the date however requires to be confirmed & I suspect Rāmānj-Acharee is one or two Centuries latter, but this as well as the Era of Vistnoo Vardana will be ascertained by the Inscriptions at Belloor &c. At Halla Beed one Inscription of Vistnoo Vurdanas is dated 1055 AS.[74]

Rough notes in Wilks's hand on the verso of the title page of item 11 show how he assimilated Lakshmayya's work to calculate differences between these calendars: as an exercise Wilks used the date of when 'Hyder subdued Bednore', for which the year is available for all three calendars, the Christian, the 'Calee Yoog' and 'Saleevahan', the latter two dates taken from the last page of the narrative; his other notes on the same page compare 'the difference between the Braminical & Jein Chronology'.[75]

The native interpreter thus had to study the documents. Translation work included comparing between calendars. Many documents in Wilks's archive mark columns in the margins for entering the dates from various calendars, western, Islamic and Indian. Although some are left blank, perhaps to be filled out later, in this one, the right-hand columns on the recto side give regnal years. As Lakshmayya's notes show, neither genealogical accounts nor land grants were comprehensible or usable without interpretation and exegesis. Wilks's intense study of them depended on native scholarship. His dependence was no more evident than in the large manuscript of historical chronology Lakshmayya assembled in MS 360.

VI

All Souls College MS 360, 'Indian Chronological Tables, AD. 907–1806', is what Trautmann calls a 'locational technology' for writing the history of South India. Methodically listing and displaying parallel years of different calendars in a Eusebian grid, it allows for easy comparison between Western, Hindu and Muslim accounts using different timekeeping systems. A thick folio volume of a couple of hundred sheets—some of the paper shows the watermark of Hayes & Wise 1798—MS 360 is ruled into four columns in red ink. The verso side gives the year according to different calendars: the Hindu sixty-year cycle calendar (with a different name for each year); the Christian calendar; the Shalivahana Sáka era (called 'Shauliwaur' in the manuscript) that begins in AD 78, a calendar used in the Deccan states in the south; and the Islamic calendar that begins in AD 622, the *hijrah* year when the Prophet Muhammad migrated to Mecca. The verso page

74. All Souls College, MS 358, item 12, fo. 1, n. 2.
75. Ibid., item 11, fos. 1v, 7v.

is further divided into six rows, with pencilled lines, each devoted to a single year, giving also the Hindu year names; the recto side contains entries on the year's significant events. The first recorded year is AD 907, though there is no entry on the recto side until AD 923; the last is for AD 1787. Unsurprisingly, entries increase with the progress of years, as Europeans, starting with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, became more involved in Indian affairs. This manuscript would have been immensely useful for the bulk of the period covered by *Historical Sketches*. Volume One of Wilks's book ends in 1781, spanning a much longer period than the last two volumes, which deal with the decades of intense British battles with Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan concluding in 1799. For the later volumes, Wilks had ample sources in British accounts; MS 360 would have been most useful for Volume One.

MS 360 supplies a lack in published chronological tables. Wilks had recourse to tables to translate dates from the Islamic system to the western. MS 360 includes one such, a transcription from a work published by the Oxford-trained Orientalist Humphrey Prideaux (1648–1724). 'Prideaux's Account of the Hegira' explains the Islamic lunar calendar—how, 'by intercalating seven months in nineteen years, in the manner as do the Jews, [the Arabs] reduced them to Solary years'.[76] Wilks also owned useful works such as *Tables of the Christian & Mohammedan Aeras* (1790), convenient for looking up dates without needing to resort to calculation: the Bodleian copy bearing his bookplate contains a faded pencilled note calculating the conversion from an Islamic to a Western year.[77] However, these would not have helped him at all with Indian calendars. To bridge that gap, Wilks needed his own tables.

Published tables could not help Wilks with Tipu Sultan's new reformed calendar, which he needed to understand in order to use histories produced by Tipu's court. It is Tipu's calendar he describes in the letter to Kirkpatrick of 12 November 1809, which mentions a memorandum drafted with the aid of Abbas Ali and an unnamed Brahmin astronomer. On 25 November 1809, he laments the loss of this memorandum to Kirkpatrick but reveals how he was able to ascertain Tipu's birthday with an interpreter's help, citing 'a note of a conversation with Butcherow'.[78] Butcherow, or Naib Dewan Bachhe Rao (1744–1804), was assistant to Purnaiah, Mysore's long-serving *diwan* who worked under Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan, the British, and the British-installed king Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. Wilks's

76. All Souls College, MS 360, fo. 180v; Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture, Fully Display'd in the Life of Mahomet* (London, 1697), ch. 9: 'The beginning of the Hegira, and the computation of their year', pp. 76–89.

77. *Tables of the Christian & Mohammedan Aeras, Calculated from the Commencement of the Hejra or, A.D. 622, to A.D. 1900. Part the third* (Calcutta, 1790), copy at Bodleian Library, Oxford, (IND) 98 F 1/11.

78. BL, APAC MS Eur. F228/21, fo. 7, Wilks to Kirkpatrick, 12 Nov. 1809.

Preface to *Historical Sketches* mentions both men as responsible for his first source: 'An historical memoir, prepared at my request, under the direction of Poornia, the present able and distinguished minister of Mysoor, and his intelligent assistant Butcherow' (vol. i, p. ix). Wilks cites Bachhe Rao by name again in *Historical Sketches* on the question of Tipu's date of birth: 'Butcherow repeated to me the Canarese verse, recording his birth' (vol. ii, p. 760). Wilks's letter to Kirkpatrick hints at his working process. It seems he was not capable of establishing precise dates himself but relied on the greater expertise of native interpreters. The notes on Indian calendars in MS 360 seem to be the interpreter's work. The manuscript is careful with citations: information about Hindu names for seasons, years and months comes from an article in *Asiatic Researches.* But notes in the appendices on other aspects of the Indian calendar—Mysorean astronomical calculations, or the table for converting Christian dates to 'the Solar years and months of the Salleevahan & Calleeyoog'[79]—give no reference to published sources.

The text of MS 360 is a set of detailed notes in chronological order. It is written in two hands: one is a neat, professional script which can be identified, by comparing it with signed documents in the British Library, as Lakshmayya's; the other, Wilks's much sloppier handwriting, for which he apologised in the letter to Kirkpatrick. The manuscript seems to have been prepared by the interpreter with later additions by Wilks. Each of the interpreter's entries on the recto side is accompanied by a citation to a source on the right margin. Sources cited are not only inscriptions but also genealogical accounts and published works, including *Asiatic Researches* and translations of Ferishta's (Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Firishta, 1560–1620) Persian history of the Deccan, *Tarikh-i Firishta* (تاریخ فرشته).[80] For example, the 1067 entry notes a grant of land in 'Curneks' (the Carnatic or Karnataka region) to Niyogi Brahmins supported by inscriptional evidence, but further information about the origin of a temple and mercantile village is derived from the 'Hurden' account. Entries refer either to an inscription or to an account. Many cite only one account, including those from Wilks's collection. Sometimes, page numbers for the accounts or the inscription number are left blank to be filled in later.

MS 360 throws new light on Wilks's (or rather his interpreter's) use of the Mackenzie Collection in a manner going beyond the simple use of inscriptions. The chronology is established through a mix of sources: inscriptions, narrative accounts, and a few published works. Many entries make reference to narrative accounts, and many are without any reference to inscriptions. In dating events, the interpreter relied

79. All Souls College, MS 360, fo. 179.

80. *Asiatic Researches* (Calcutta and London, 1788–1836); Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan: From the Death of Akbar, to the complete Settlement of the Empire under Aurungzebe* (London, 1772); Jonathan Scott, *Ferishta's History of the Dekkan, from the first Mahummedan Conquests* (London, 1794).

as heavily on narrative accounts as on inscriptions, despite Wilks's apparent disdain for them. MS 360's importance for writing a history is clear: the detailed chronology makes the historian's task easy.

Wilks's additions to MS 360 show him comparing published accounts against the manuscript and inscriptional evidence. Lakshmayya's notes generally increase as the dates get more recent, and so do Wilks's additions and notes. They are too many to analyse individually, but a couple of examples show Wilks weighing the evidence. One early note in his hand, for AD 845, records information from 'the Kikaree Book' that 'does not agree with the better authority of the inscriptions of Vistnoo Verdana at Beloor'. The 'Kikaree Book' is item 12, 'Translation of a Canarese MS. Cadjans preserved at Keekairee, 1806', in MS 358 (a miscellany including a number of translated historical narratives and memoirs that Mackenzie's staff collected from different parts of South India). Although revealing Wilks's stated preference for inscriptional evidence, the note nonetheless shows him using genealogical accounts. While some notes are verified by inscriptions, others in his hand refer to events for which he cites only narrative accounts. For 1411 AD, Wilks wrote: 'According to the Vellore manuscript this prince [Narsing Raja] built Vellore and Chanderagerry, the former for his occasional residence, and the latter as a place of safe deposit for treasure'. In this case, he used the Vellore manuscript to add to information provided by a different manuscript, the Guppuntic. In a number of places, Wilks used Ferishta to correct information recorded by Lakshmayya, such as dating a conquest to AD 1238. In another instance, he expanded the note to incorporate information from other reading. Underlining two names from the AD 1613 entry, 'Elamawel Cawn' and 'Zooffecar', Wilks cited Jonathan Scott's translation of Ferishta to identify them as the Mughal rulers Zemaun Shah and Zulfiqar Kahn. To identify figures who acquired new names or titles, especially with an inconsistent orthography, and to determine when events happened, Wilks synthesised various sources, assimilating the interpreter's records and incorporating other sources into a single timeline.

This method of considering a range of sources—that is to say, the historical method—is evident not just in Wilks's notes, but also in the interpreter's. Lakshmayya used inscriptions, such as 'grants by a Copper Plate,' to 'establish the date & Genealogy' (entry for AD 1391). At other times he favoured genealogical accounts. Sometimes he recorded conflicting evidence, as in the entry for AD 1265 on the capital of the Vijayanagara empire:

> In this year the city of Bisnagur [Bijainagar or Vijayanagara, the city of victory] was finished by Hurryhur-rayaloo [Harihara Raya] according to my Gutpurtee MS; but by Veedeear=naloo [Vidyarna] according to others; see [my] Bisnagur notices, 7 Inscriptions ___ & the Calasa memoir P. 7.

Several different references are given, to both narrative accounts and inscriptions. While they are mentioned, the inscriptions are not specified, and the narrative account is given priority. The number of citations gives the impression that different sources are equally authoritative, especially when the interpreter did not settle on a particular reading. Other entries, especially later ones, are supported by several sources; more recent historical events, unsurprisingly, have more corroborating evidence.

Lakshmayya also wrote from his own experience in the field, as a footnote for the AD 1265 entry reveals:

> NB. 1805 May—By the information obtained on my journey this month it appears that Booka & Aka Hurry-hur were bretheren & Officers of the Treasury of the dethroned Kings of Tellinga, which clearly explains the Tellinga origin of that celebrated government.

Above the first line is another note written faintly in pencil, possibly in Wilks's hand, stating 'but this supposed to be erroneous'. This account describes Bukka and Harihara coming from the Telugu-speaking east coast to establish the Vijayanagara empire in a Kannada-speaking region. *Historical Sketches* reproduces the interpreter's information, suggesting that this origin 'explains the ascendancy of the Telinga language and nation at this capital of Carnatic' (vol. i, p. 14). Looking for an account of the interpreter's journey in the vast British Library Mackenzie Collection, I located only one such description, of a trip conducted in May 1804, though my searches were not exhaustive. Nonetheless, Lakshmayya's report of that expedition suggests that he might have worked directly under Wilks. The 'report of C. V. Litchmiah to Major C. Mackenzie Esq[r]' dated June 1804 states: 'I was ordered by W. to prepare everything to be ready soon for the Mysoor Journey, which immediately began'.[81] Might 'W.' refer to Wilks? If so, Lakshmayya was Wilks's collaborator from the start, in data collection in the field as well as in data analysis and the construction of chronology in MS 360. This help was crucial. Wilks's entries in MS 360 show that published accounts were far more accessible to him. Wilks depended on the interpreter for evidence from indigenous accounts and inscriptions—evidence of paramount importance for the early periods of his history.

British dependence on native linguistic expertise—and more specifically, on Mackenzie's cadre of Niyogi Brahmins—is further underscored by evidence showing that Lakshmayya learnt Kannada in order to translate texts. Another of Wilks's manuscripts, MS 359, gives a glimpse of this British dependence. A miscellany of 'Hindu Tracts . . . collected 1802', this manuscript contains an account of the Mysore family translated from Kannada by 'C. Lechman Bramin, Interpreter to Captain C: Mackenzie'. This includes an introductory notice in

81. BL, APAC Mack Trans. XII, fo. 53, report of Lakshmayya to Mackenzie, June 1804.

Lakshmayya's hand, but with Mackenzie's authorial voice, describing the discovery of the manuscript, acquired during Tipu Sultan's defeat at Seringapatam:

> The M.S. from which this was translated in the first instance, was found in the Palace and given to me in 1799 by Col[l] W: Kirkpatrick one of the Commissioners for the affairs of Mysore, and Military Secretary to the Governor General—it was compared with two other MSS. apparently duplicates but was not translated until 1803, from the difficulty of finding persons qualified to render it from the Canara language & Character which my Interpreter in the mean [time] studied to enable him to give the following version.[82]

This translation of a Mysorean history appropriated from Tipu Sultan's library is the text whose Kannada original Sanjay Subrahmanyam suggests has disappeared since Wilks's time.[83] While the original remains lost, the translation preserves some form of the text. Mackenzie's note suggests that Kannada manuscripts remained closed books to the British for some years. In *Historical Sketches*, Wilks did not mention Lakshmayya by name but noted that classical Kannada was a language almost extinct, known only to 'two persons now in the employment of Major Mackenzie' (vol. i, p. 12 n.). In his archive, two names are associated with translations from Kannada: one is Lakshmayya, the other Nagara Pootta Pundi, who translated 'Mysoor Aaroosoogalla Poorvauabyoodayagaloo or The Succession of the Kings of Mysore from antient times'; but we know that Ramaswami attributed a knowledge of Kannada to his elder brother Borayya, who first worked for Mackenzie.[84] In the end, it was the interpreters who read or learned to read Kannada who provided translations of texts that Wilks mined for his history.

VII

Although Wilks considered Indian history 'deformed by fable & anachronism' (*Historical Sketches*, vol. i, p. xv), he by no means ignored Indian narrative accounts. As we have already seen, Wilks and Lakshmayya compiled the chronology in MS 360 using evidence from genealogical manuscripts. Wilks's Preface mentions such manuscripts, and indeed lists them before the 'extensive and valuable collection of grants' (vol. i, p. xiv). These include Purnaiah's historical memoir, Tipu Sultan's Persian translations of Kannada books, Lakshmayya's English translation of a 'book in the Canara language … given in 1799 by

82. All Souls College, MS 359, p. 312.

83. Subrahmanyam, 'Warfare and State Finance', p. 206.

84. All Souls College, MS 359, p. 313; Kavali Venkata Ramaswami, *Biographical Sketches of Dekkan Poets: Being Memoirs of the Lives of Several Eminent Bards, Both Ancient and Modern, who have flourished in different Provinces of the Indian Peninsula* (Calcutta, 1829): Boriah (Borayya) 'decyphered the Hala Kanada characters, inscribed on a Tabled found at Dodare' (p. 161).

Colonel W. Kirkpatrick … to … Mackenzie' (vol. i, p. xi)—particularly important to Wilks, who recounted in detail the circumstances of its discovery—manuscripts on the Dalways of Mysore, and, finally, what Wilks described as 'A great variety of smaller manuscripts and memoirs in different languages, and of various degrees of merit' (vol. i, p. xiv). This last group comprises works, Wilks said, 'prepared at my request by the officiating priests … at Colar' or 'from the pen of my valuable friend Seyed Hassein, Persian secretary to the Rajah of Mysoor' (vol. i, p. xiv). Wilks relied heavily on narratives produced by native authors, whether interpreters such as Lakshmayya, priests, or secretaries such as Syed Hussein, who shared Persian accounts out of friendship. For Wilks, any narrative deficiencies could be mitigated by collecting more manuscripts: 'There is no hope that this important defect will ever be supplied, except from an extensive collection of such documents' (vol. i, p. xv). He praised Mackenzie's efforts to gather together 'a stupendous and daily increasing collection of all that is necessary to illustrate the antiquities, the civil, military and religious institutions, and ancient history, of the south of India' (vol. i, p. xv). Although Mackenzie never did 'communicate to the public the result of his extraordinary perseverance' (vol. i, p. xv), Wilks's use of his manuscripts to write *Historical Sketches* ensured that his archive did not remain wholly silent.

Wilks's eagerness to add detail and texture to his history with information gathered from natives can be seen from the use he made of a small note pencilled on the inside cover of MS 360: '*Curri munnul*, black sand on earth the name of a village near Puliccatt, so called from the color of the sand washed by the sea'. Casually jotted down, this was then was worked into a footnote in the published first volume, which adds the authenticating information that this 'is stated by a native of that neighbourhood' (vol. i, p. 8). Even Purnaiah's memoir, Wilks noted, was composed from information obtained from 'the best informed natives of the country who were known to possess family manuscripts or historical pieces' and 'is a compilation framed from a comparison of these authorities' (vol. i, p. x). *Historical Sketches* thus incorporated narratives translated by Indian interpreters from manuscripts of Indian origin.

Wilks's collection of translated histories survives in two manuscript miscellanies, MS 358 and MS 359. MS 358's land grants have been discussed above, but the miscellany contains far more. The first documents listed in the contents are 'Translation[s] of two Canarese manuscripts regarding the genealogy of the Rajas of Mysoor—scarcely intelligible'. The judgment on their intelligibility is Wilks's—the contents list is in his handwriting. But interspersed in the manuscript are various other native histories Wilks found intelligible enough to use. This includes the 'Kicharee Memoir' and 'Callalla memoir's [*sic*]', mentioned as sources in MS 360; the 'History of Mysoor from the Canarese', noted above; and his friend John Leyden's translation

of the *pandit* Pootia's Persian manuscript with Wilks's corrections, singled out in the Preface (item 15 in MS 358). The second miscellany, MS 359, simply titled 'Hindoo Tracts', is a more focused collection. It includes another translation of Pootia's manuscript, as well as a number of historical accounts and sketches of ancient Mysore, Seringapatam and Bijainagar, as well as a collection of *kaifiyat*. Rama Mantena has suggested that in this context these records take on the meaning of 'village accounts'.[85] Bhavani Raman argues that *kaifiyats* 'functioned as "summaries of evidence" publicly attested by the "respectable inhabitants" or notables of the settlement' and the 'Persianate *kaifiyat* probably entered Tamil and Telugu through Niyogi and Maratha Brahmin bureaucrats'.[86] MS 369 may comprise the 'smaller manuscripts and memoirs' (vol. i, p. xiv) mentioned as item 4 in Wilks's Preface.

Wilks incorporated from MSS 358 and 359 into *Historical Sketches* genealogical accounts of Mysorean history taken from Tipu Sultan's palace and translated from Kannada. He not only followed the narrative of these accounts but also used specific details. To analyse his method, we can examine a striking anecdote given in Volume One, Chapter Two, which appeared in two different manuscripts that Wilks considered to be of great significance. The first is the English translation from Kannada of the history of Mysore, and the other an English translation of the Persian version, likewise translated from Kannada 'at the command of the Sultaun [Tipu], by Assud Anwar, and Gholaum Hussein, with the assistance of Pootia Pundit' (vol. i, p. xi). By no means the only manuscripts Wilks used, these are exemplary because of the importance he accorded them.

Wilks was most dependent on Mackenzie's interpreters for the ancient period. Chapter One of *Historical Sketches* gives an overview of Mysore, its geography, religion and languages, and the rise and fall of its kingdoms. Chapter Two delves into pre-Islamic history, recounting the origins of the Wodeyar dynasty, who ruled from 1399, expanding their dominions when Vijayanagara collapsed in 1565. The founding figures, the brothers Vijaya and Kristna, leaving Gujerat in the north, established a new southern kingdom. Upon reaching the Hadana fort, near the town of Mysore, 'they overheard some women of the Jungum sect … bewailing the fate of a young maiden of their tribe who was about to be married to a person of inferior quality' (vol. i, p. 32). The brothers discovered that:

85. Mantena, *Origins of Modern Historiography*, p. 126, citing Charles Philip Brown, *A Dictionary of the Mixed Dialects and Foreign Words used in Telugu: With an Explanation of the Telugu Alphabet* (Madras, 1854).

86. Raman, *Document Raj*, p. 141.

> She was the only daughter of the Wadeyar (or lord of 33 villages), who was afflicted with mental derangement; and in this desolate and unprotected state, the chief of Caroogully, a person of mean cast, had proposed to the family the alternative of immediate war, or the peaceable possession of Hadana by his marriage with the damsel. (vol. i, p. 32)

In Wilks's account, at the marriage feast the brothers sprang a trap for the bridegroom, and, with their hosts' help, slew the guests and conquered Karungali; the 'damsel, full of gratitude, became the willing bride of Vijeya' (vol. i, p. 33) and he became lord of the country. In its basic outline, the origin myth of the Wodeyar ruling house is a story of the rescue of a damsel in distress.

Wilks's version strips away much of the detail in manuscript accounts, several of them found in his archive, to reduce the story to its more plausible details. One of the accounts, 'Mysore Nagur-da Poorbotra, or Account of the Mysore Government' in MS 358, includes details of the brothers' dream vision before the rescue:

> the Goddess Chamoond-Eswaree [Chamundeshwari] appeared to them in their dream like a Maiden of 5 Years of age, & desired them to remain there & that she would bestow upon them the highest affluence & command.[87]

In striving for what he termed 'literal' translation, the interpreter, Lakshmayya, annotated his translation with information about other manuscripts, using the historical method of comparison and corroboration:

> The Bednore Chinna Bundārum M.S: agrees exactly in the names of the brothers, the visit to the Rayeh, the Vision or Dreams of Chamoondee & the Marriage of Saunta Vadeyr's daughter & also the Hadanād Memoir & we may infer from the concurring evidence of these distant unconnected Accounts that the Story had acquired an established credit over all Balla Ghaat.
>
> The Account in Page [blank] however gives Luckana as the Name of the elder brother probably Veejaya was the Title signifying Victorious or a Name assumed from their connection or residence at Veejaya-nagur as it is common to do…[88]

The interpreter noted broad agreement among several manuscripts about the story's general outline, though one gives the elder brother a different name. When Wilks wrote in *Historical Sketches* that 'Such is the account detailed in various manuscripts, and acknowledged, by general tradition, of the origin of the rajahs of Mysoor' (vol. i, p. 33), he did so on the interpreter's authority. However, while including many details, Wilks removed the vision of the goddess, even though it was well supported.

87. All Souls College, MS 358, item 13, fo. 1.
88. Ibid., fo. 1 n.*1

In rejecting the dream vision, Wilks more closely followed another manuscript in his possession. The 'Historical Account of Hadathala' in MS 359 was recounted in 1804 to another interpreter, 'Soobarow' (Subba Rao), who recorded the same details albeit without the vision. However, the would-be king and rescuer in this account is 'Racha Aurasee Navaroo', a king who fled his kingdom when it suffered foreign invasions.[89] Here, the damsel is described as 'a certain Girl of the Wadyar, who was remarkably beautiful' (p. 370); in MS 358, she is simply 'this Virgin' (fo. 7). Neither makes mention of the woman's mental state. Wilks's phrasing, that she was 'afflicted with mental derangement' (vol. i, p. 32), is ambiguous: she either suffered from insanity or was distressed by the forced marriage. Either way, Wilks not only pruned the interpreters' material but also added his own details to what he termed the 'Romantic origin of the Hindoo house of Mysoor' (vol. i, p. 31).

Lakshmayya's translations are more detailed and more copiously annotated, very much in the style of his annotations of *sanads*, especially when compared to Subba Rao's compact report. Lakshmayya's annotations in MS 359 show the same care he demonstrated elsewhere, providing alternative translations, glossing the meanings of names and titles, offering pronunciation guides, explicating obscure phrasing or proverbial sayings, giving cultural context, and even pointing out puns. MS 359 shows the same interest in chronology as MS 360, with explanatory footnotes dwelling on the problems of constructing a rational historical timeline. In one, Lakshmayya noted a contradiction where one account gives 2000 years but another 944, commenting that '[t]he discovery of some regular Chronological account (of which I have some hopes) may tend to clear up obscurity and reduce the whole to a more rational system'.[90] Furthermore, like MS 360, MS 359 shows the pattern of Lakshmayya's initial 'literal' translation with Wilks's corrections and revisions. Such corrections are particularly dense on pages 346–50, containing Lakshmayya's 1803 translation of a Kannada manuscript captured from Seringapatam. Wilks reworked Lakshmayya's translations into more idiomatic English and then incorporated the edited version into his published work.

The interpreter was not a simply a copyist. Lakshmayya generated material that Wilks took for his own. MS 359 provides glimpses of Lakshmayya's active role, showing an interest in literature that suggests a broader cultural curiosity. He referenced legends from the *Mahābhārata*, which he called 'the true History of the Mahabarat' (p. 11), and the fifth-century poet and playwright Kālidāsa. A footnote in Lakshmayya's

89. All Souls College, MS 359, p. 370. On Subba Rao, see Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, and Politics*, pp. 127–9, 133–42, 156–69; and Vennelakhanty Subba Rao, *The Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row (Native of Ongole), Translator and Interpreter of the Late Sudr Court, Madras, from 1815 to 1829, as Written by Himself* (Madras, 1873).

90. All Souls College, MS 359, p. 16.

hand in the first item in MS 359, 'General Sketch of the History of the Southern Divisions of the Peninsula', glosses the translation of a verse attributed to 'Calleedaas' thus: 'This play of words can scarcely be rendered in the spirit of the original'. Offering a story about Kālidāsa hiding in the king's favourite dancer's apartments, Lakshmayya's note concludes with a lesson in literary history: 'The *Sacontala* is but one of Calleedas numerous poetic compositions'. *Śakuntalā* is Kālidāsa's Sanskrit play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, first translated into English by William Jones, whose prologue Goethe liked so much he adapted it for his *Faust*.[91]

Lakshmayya's literary interests were not confined to Indian works. One footnote quotes two lines from the English poet John Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 8: 'Then Rome was poor; & there you might behold / The Palace thatched with straw'.[92] Just as the English became acquainted with the Indian literary canon, Indians acquired knowledge of English literature. The manuscript gives an early hint of what we know about the Kavali brothers' later participation in literary circles. Lakshmayya was the first Indian to be admitted as a member of the Madras Literary Society founded in 1817 (or 1818); his younger brother Ramaswami later joined him as a member.[93] Ramaswami had literary ambitions of his own, authoring, among other works, a volume of biographies of Indian poets that included their elder brother Borayya.[94] This volume, written in English and based on European models, asserts the importance of Indian poetry. Ramaswami thus staked his claim to authorship and literary fame.

VIII

It is hard from this historical distance to infer the nature of Wilks's working relationships with Indians. There are no extant personal communications between Wilks and Lakshmayya, but letters from Ramaswami after Wilks's return to England show an imbalance in the men's emotional investments. As a native interpreter, Ramaswami was bound by relations of dependence. While we do not have Wilks's replies, Ramaswami's letters suggest a concern to retain patronage and to maintain bonds.

Calling Wilks 'My Ever Honored and Worthy Protector', Ramaswami's letter dated 13 November 1825 begins thus: 'With the

91. Ibid., p. 21; *Sacontalá: Of the Fatal Ring; an Indian Drama by Cálidas. Translated from the Original Sanscrit and Prácrit*, tr. William Jones (Calcutta, 1789); Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: eine Tragödie* (Tübingen, 1808).

92. All Souls College, MS 359, p. 322.

93. Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', p. 791.

94. Ramaswami, *Biographical Sketches*. He also published translations, a map and description of Deccan cities, and a cookbook; see Wagoner, 'Precolonial Intellectuals', pp. 791–2; Mantena, *Origins of Modern Historiography*, pp. 110–18; Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, and Politics*, pp. 60–62.

greatest submissions and respect I most humbly beg leave to address these few lines to you'.[95] The courtesy of his greetings is conventional. However, the contents suggest anxiety. Not having heard from Wilks for some time, Ramaswami asked whether Wilks had received his letters dated 20 July and 14 December 1822 'with a Gold Bracelet for Mrs Wilks'.[96] Even at this date, he was supplying Wilks with information, mentioning a ceremony he had described more fully in an earlier letter. The second letter, dated 9 August 1826, sounds less insecure. Having finally received a reply and learning that 'letters had miscarried', Ramaswami summarised the content of previous letters and expressed exasperation and relief about the reasons for Wilks's silence:

> From the above Sir you will see that though at a distance you were still uppermost in my thoughts and that Messrs Arbuthnot & Co are the only persons to be blamed for the apparent silence that has occurred on my part, for previous to Mr G Arbuthnot's departure for Europe he positively told me that he should see you in four months and I therefore sent the Bracelet to him.[97]

He seemed concerned about being blamed for the lost letters and gift, or perhaps about being forgotten. The gift of a gold bangle to celebrate a grandson's birth represented an important friendship.

Assured that Wilks was not deliberately ignoring him, Ramaswami sounded more relaxed and informal in the second letter. He gossiped about various people Wilks used to work with, including Purnaiah, Mysore's *diwan*, and the king himself:

> Poornea's family is now on the decline, Streenevas Moortee his Grandson, being the only surviving male of that ever illustrious family, his Salary of 500 Pagodas is still continued to him by the Rajah, and he retains the Jaghier for the maintenance of all the Widows—His Highness has desired his kindest to you. He says that he often thinks of you, and that his Durbar is yet kept on a Friday, a day which you appropriated to that purpose many years ago.[98]

By these reminders, Ramaswami sought to maintain increasingly fragile bonds. The next paragraph struck a melancholic note:

> I am sorry to inform you that all your old Mysoor friends are either dead or dispersed, and the Court is now filled with new faces, the only remaining person that you may have any recollection of, is Killadar Tippiah, who is at present the Post Master General of this Circar.[99]

But the rest of the letter sounded more optimistic, as Ramaswami recounted with pride the king's pleasure in his building of the bridge at Sevasamoodrum and the accompanying gift-giving ceremonies. Finally, in a postscript, he included news of especial interest to Wilks,

95. BL, Add. MS 57313, fo. 63, Kavali Ventaka Ramaswami to Wilks, 13 Nov. 1825.
96. Ibid.
97. BL, Add. MS 57313, fo. 66, Ramaswami to Wilks, 9 Aug. 1826.
98. BL, Add. MS 57313, fo. 66v, Ramaswami to Wilks, 9 Aug. 1826.
99. Ibid.

pertaining to his nephew and mentee Mark Cubbon. Both letters make mention of Cubbon and might have been retained for that reason. Ramaswami, showing both conventional obsequiousness and affection, clearly valued the friendship.

For his part, Wilks was never as enthusiastic in his acknowledgement of native help as he was with aid from British peers (the Preface to *Historical Sketches* includes a long paragraph on his dependence on F.W. Ellis's work). His letters to William Kirkpatrick occasionally refer to native help. Aside from help with Tipu's calendar that he received from Abbas Ali and a Brahmin astronomer, Wilks mentioned that 'while ill I made a moonshee sit by my bed side & read all that I had collected purporting to be histories of the dynasty [of Hyder Ali]'.[100] In the same letter, he praised Syed Hussein, chief *munshi* of the king of Mysore:

> Seyed Hussein was often imployed in committing to writing the result of investigations on particular points from my finding that he did it infinitely better than any of the others. He is the author of most of the letters from that Durbar since 1799 which you recollect are written with great simplicity and purity. One day in conversation we were discussing the characters of the father & son [Hyder and Tipu], and he hit them off with so much eloquence & point that I required him to commit them to writing which he did.[101]

Syed Hussein was not simply a scribe. He authored letters and produced characterisations of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan that Wilks found so apt he had him write them down, presumably to be used for *Historical Sketches*. In the published work, however, Wilks was rather less effusive about the help of native interpreters.

The extent of Wilks's reliance on native assistance has to be painstakingly excavated from his archive. This article has sought to extend previous insights about the substantial contributions of Mackenzie's Niyogi assistants, and to argue that the interpreters who developed the fields of Indian epigraphy and chronology were also instrumental in constructing the chronology for Wilks's pioneering history of Mysore. With the help of Lakshmayya and others, Wilks extracted from Mackenzie's manuscript collection materials for a historical chronology with which to write South India's history. His sources were as various as India is heterogeneous: books written by his fellow British soldiers, Persian manuscripts from their enemy Tipu Sultan and from British allies, and information collected by Mackenzie's assistants. Wilks's achievement was to weave them into a multi-braided whole, but he could do so only through a profound intellectual partnership with Indian interpreters.

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100. BL, APAC MS Eur F228/21, fo. 6, Wilks to Kirkpatrick, 12 Nov. 1809.
101. Ibid.