COLONIAL NARRATIVES AND THE *KANDHAS*: WRITING LIFE AND WRITING HISTORY IN THE VICTORIAN EMPIRE

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Abstract

The East India Company led a reformist campaign in the middle decades of the nineteenth-century to eradicate the periodical practice of human sacrifice as a fertility rite among certain sections of the Kandha community in the hill tracts of Odisha. The campaign produced a large body of narratives in a variety of genres. The paper offers a reading of two life narratives, which were part of this corpus. These narratives chronicle the careers of two prominent Scottish bureaucrats who led the civilizing campaigns among the Kandhas. Part of a larger project which studies the formation of an imperial-global public for Odisha in the nineteenth-century, the paper reads these life narratives not so much as to revisit the colonial history of the Kandhas. Rather it aims to provide a description of some of the features of the imperial-global public who wrote about and discussed the affairs of the Kandhas with great ardor. It makes two sets of arguments. Both are concerned with Victorian historical and literary preoccupation with the recent past, with living memory. Contemporary history and regional novel, scholars have noted, were two of the genres in which the Victorians engaged with the recent past. The paper brings the colonial life narratives into a dialogue with these genres, and shows what they contributed to the Victorian discursive preoccupation with the recent past.

Keywords: Kandha, Meriah Agency, Colonial Odisha, Imperial-Global, Victorian Life Writing, Provincial Novel, Contemporary History, Memory, East India Company

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Introduction

In the year 1835, the East India Company decided to annex Ghumsur, a small kingdom in the hill tracts of Odisha. The story of Ghumsur was not much different from other petty kingdoms of India. The Hindu royal house had trouble paying its revenue. The Company increasingly interfered in the internal affairs of the state to ensure regular payment, gradually got fed up and decided to annex the state. While annexing the state, the British came to know of its tribal inhabitants, the Kandhas. Some segments of the tribal community periodically practiced human sacrifice so as to propitiate the earth-goddess. Restoration of fertility and general well-being were the dominant themes related to the practice. Appropriately horrified, the colonial government instituted a campaign to suppress the performance of this 'unspeakable rite' and civilize the savages. The Meriah Agency—the campaign derived its name from the victims of human sacrifice known as *meriah*—was formally instituted in 1845 and was officially abolished in late 1861.[1]

The Agency years were a turbulent time for the inhabitants of Ghumsur and the neighboring region. Scholars in the field of social and historical anthropology have studied British relationship with Odia Hindu royal houses and the Kandhas in the period. Available scholarship furnishes two broad arguments, and both are immensely valuable. First, the Hindu rajah had a fairly limited sovereign authority over the Kandhas. His rule acquired legitimacy in the eyes of the Kandha subjects only when he patronized their customs.[2] The British had an ambivalent response to the relationship. They expected the rajahs to exercise absolute sovereignty over the Kandha subjects and bring the ritual practice to a summary conclusion. At the same time they bemoaned the rajah's lack of actual control over the subjects.[3] In any case, they thought that establishment of British authority in the region was a necessary precondition to the success of the civilizing mission.[4] Their intervention brought in fundamental alterations in local political relationships. In the short run, it led to wide and long resistance to colonial rule in the region.[5] In the long run, it strengthened the hold of Hindu rajahs overs the Kandhas. Rajahs now sought legitimacy from the British and not the Kandhas.[6] Second, at a discursive level, British administrative policy sought to establish authority without resorting to violence. However, the intervention was often intensely violent on the ground. In order to suppress the savage Kandha practice of killing human beings, the enlightened colonial state authorized the murder of human beings

in legitimate forms: public hangings, capital punishments etc. It has been rightly argued that colonialism in the hill tracts of Odisha "legitimized its violence by dwelling on the violence of those it colonized."[7]

The present paper learns from these arguments. Having said that it has a different orientation. It is part of a larger project that studies the formation of an imperial-global public for Odisha in the nineteenth-century.[8] British campaigns in the hill tracts produced a large body of literature on the region and its inhabitants. First, learned journals in colony as well metropole, *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, *The Calcutta Review*, and *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, provided platforms for public debates and discussions. They brought out elaborate ethnographical studies, geographical and geological surveys, and reports on the progress of the campaigns etc.[9] The colonial state and its various divisions regularly compiled and published official histories. Historians of colonial administration also devoted attention to the subject.[10] Private individuals wrote travelogues, memoirs and novels.[11] On its part, the Odia ecumene also responded to the advent of colonial rule.[12] It produced war poetry, which reflected on the local conflicts between the Odia royal houses and the British.[13] It also produced historical genealogies of the local royal houses. Parts of such genealogies were translated and published in English.[14] In other words, an imperial-global public emerged in the middle decades of the nineteenth-century, which wrote, read and discussed about the hill tracts of Odisha and its inhabitants with considerable ardor.

The present paper has a limited scope. It offers a short reading of two particular Victorian life narratives, which were part of this imperial-global public. Major General John Campbell and Captain S. C. Macpherson led the Meriah Agency for the better parts of their colonial careers.[15] Campbell published an autobiography *A Personal narrative* in London in 1864.[16] The following year, Macpherson's brother brought out a biography of the colonial officer titled *Memorials of service in India*.[17] While Campbell writes the story of his life in the first person singular, W. Macpherson combines autobiographical and third person narrative voices to produce a memoir of his deceased brother. *Memorials of service* guides the reader through a collection of letters written by the deceased colonial bureaucrat and offers editorial observations and judgments. The paper aims to read these Victorian life narratives not so much as to reflect on the Kandhas and their history as such. The aim is rather to delineate some features

of the imperial global public of which they became a part in the course of the century. More specifically, the paper discusses how and what these life narratives contributed to the Victorian literary and historical preoccupation with the recent past, with living memory.

Memory, History and Polemics

A Personal narrative and *Memorials of service* are narratives of memory. They invoke memory on two discrete but interrelated registers—embodied or biographical memory of the individual, memory which is tied to the personal experience of an individual on the one hand, and collective memory, a shared repository of recollections and reflections about the past which a community can draw upon on the other hand—so as to forge for the reader an indelible discursive association between the colonial officers and the political campaigns, the civilizing missions in the hill tracts of Ghumsur.[18]

Let us consider *A Personal narrative* first. The narrative recalls Campbell's personal biographical experience of leading the mission to pacify the region and abolish the rite of sacrifice. "I linger with affectionate remembrance," Campbell writes, "on the many years I lived among the rude tribes, and pitched my tent in their mountain villages."[19] He recalls, for instance, the very last campaign of "supervision" he carried out in the hill tracts and the conversations he had had with the reformed Kandha chiefs. He had "a proclamation in the Khond dialect" read out which prohibited the sacrifice of human beings, and permitted the chiefs to "substitute animals instead."[20] On being "invited freely to express his sentiments," one of the chiefs stated that formerly "we were like beasts in the jungle, doing as our fathers had done." And, presently after the prohibition, "Our fields produce crops as good as formerly, and sickness is not more prevalent."[21] The narrator recalls how the chiefs requested their goddess to vent her wrath for this disruption in the custom, on Campbell and not on them. "Do not be angry with us, O Goddess, for giving you the blood of beasts instead of human blood, but vent your wrath on this gentleman, who is well able to bear it. We are guiltless."[22] Articulation of this embodied memory helps the reader to associate Campbell with the civilizing mission—he is invited to take note of the affectionate nostalgia the narrator feels for the tribes and their hill tracts, and of the manner in which the tribal community holds the narrator responsible for the disruptions in their age-old customs.

A Personal narrative also alludes to collective and cultural memory.

Campbell mentions in his autobiography that some articles of Kandha rituals collected by him—knives and wooden posts—are displayed for public consumption in a metropolitan museum. “The knife and post employed in the sacrifice I have alluded to,” he writes, “are now my property, and have been lent by me to the Indian collection in the Crystal palace, where they may be seen.”[23] Scholarship on the aesthetics and politics of colonial collecting has drawn attention to the fact that such practices enable collectors “to be seen as private persons in public places.”[24] The Kandha sacred objects are displaced from their ritual-context and subsequently commodified. As the owner of this private property, Campbell participates in the metropolitan public exhibition. His autobiography constructs the authoritative way of perceiving the Kandha objects. The collected objects and the ‘accompanying’ body of knowledge constructed by the collector “at once familiarizes and distances”[25] the Kandhas. They make the Kandhas familiar by allusion—an allusion of the part to the whole. The knife and the post stand for entire Kandha culture. However, it is Kandha in a very limited sense. The collected object distances itself from the origin, and in doing so “substitutes classification for use value and thus, for history.”[26] Scholars rightly observe that the collected object, removed from its own history, becomes the vehicle of a host of self-referent significations. It enables the collector to “tour [his] own pasts, and to permit it to be toured by others.”[27] In the process, both the collector and the collected object become a part of the collective memory of imperial-civilizational progress that Crystal Palace became a symbol of. The reader is invited to be a part of this collective memory and learn to read Campbell and the Kandhas in the same sentence.

A similar narrative strategy is also at work in the *Memorials of service.* The Company first employed Macpherson to “undertake a mission of survey and inquiry” in the hill tracts of Ghumsur and the adjacent territory.[28] Macpherson makes sense of his location and occupation in the colony by invoking a figure of collective Scottish memory. In a letter to his brother, he recalls a bygone era of his Scottish past and draws an analogy between himself and George Wade. “I am to negotiate permission to form a road straight through that unknown mountain region to Nagpore,” he writes, “and am further, in the first instance at least, to be my own General Wade.”[29] An officer of the British Army, Wade carried out “a substantial programme of laying out military roads” in the northern parts of Scotland after the Jacobite disturbances of 1715.[30] Available scholarship rightly notes that the “Wade roads were long and straight and visibly superimposed

the politics of the British state over the social organization of the Highlands."[31] Macpherson was engaged in a similar project to superimpose the politics of the British imperial regime over the social and geographical landscape of the hill tracts of Odisha. The Victorian colonial bureaucrat interprets his own work amongst the people of Ghumsur through the "travelling memory" of Wade's eighteenth-century campaigns to construct roads, police, disarm and civilize the Scottish highlanders.[32] In his civilizing rhetoric, the past self thus becomes the present 'other.' Macpherson's invocation of a Scottish past serves a purpose. It enables the Victorian reader to associate him with the Kandhas just as it links General Wade with the Scottish highlanders.[33]

Macpherson's biographer is deeply invested in helping the Victorian public to forge such an association. In a prefatorial statement, he entreats the reader to remember the contributions of the colonial bureaucrat. "These Memorials tell," the first sentence reads, "of a barbarous race won over from dark and cruel rites" through the "benevolence, the sagacity, and the firmness of an officer whose name is almost unknown to the British public."[34] The writer commemorates a deceased brother through the act of writing. He introduces a rather unknown name to the British public because it was the earnest desire of the deceased that "good men should think well of him."[35] And, the good men learn to read the transformations in Kandha society as the work of a single man, Macpherson.

The narratives mobilize diverse forms of memory to fight a polemical battle in the imperial-global public sphere: to whom should go the credit of pacifying and civilizing the Kandhas? The war began in the colony. A series of essays first appeared in the *Calcutta Review*, which showered approbation on Macpherson and his work in Ghumsur. A miffed Campbell brought out an anonymous pamphlet, which contested the claims of the *Calcutta Review*.[36] After his retirement, Campbell moved to England, and first published *A Personal Narrative* for private circulation among family and friends. Shortly after the publication however, anonymous reviews of the work appeared in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* and London *Spectator*. Macpherson's brother found these reviews objectionable, and initiated correspondence with Campbell. A little later, he published his entire correspondence with Campbell in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*. In response, Campbell chose to make his autobiography available to the general reading public. And, shortly there after, Macpherson's brother brought out the *Memorials of Service*.[37]

The polemical controversy revolved around a central question.

As Campbell puts it in a letter to the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, "This bitter controversy was simply a personal matter between Major Macpherson and myself as to whom belonged the chief merit of the suppression of human sacrifice…If…Macpherson had refrained from attempting to exalt his own reputation at the expense of mine, and if he had confined himself to the vindication of his own policy without nullifying my past and present measures, I would have remained silent…"[38] Macpherson's biographer objected that Campbell endorsed an older allegation that the Kandha uprisings of 1846-1848 erupted in response to the inhuman measures of pacification adopted by Macpherson. He writes, "It would have been, therefore, unnecessary to dwell upon these events, but for the conduct of General Campbell, who thought fit, in the year succeeding that of Major Macpherson's death, to reproduce these accusations and to assert their truth…"[39] Particularly since a subsequent inquiry by the colonial government had exonerated Macpherson from the charges, the biographer finds "their gratuitous revival" by Campbell to speak "of a feeling which is rare indeed among British officers."[40] Mobilization of memory in these narratives needs to be situated in this polemical context. Here, the purpose of recalling the past and writing a life is not only to declare who the 'subject' is, but also to vindicate a life, counter false reports, and redress past injuries through writing.[41]

These Victorian narratives of memory take on a function that is traditionally associated with history—they seek to educate the public. In the course of educating the public, the colonial bureaucrat pits memory against history. Campbell's autobiography describing his life among the Kandhas contests J.W. Kaye's history of the Meriah Agency. Kaye's *The Administration of the East India Company: A history of Indian Progress*[42] sought to educate public opinion in favor of the Company during the renewal of its charter in 1853. The Company had lost its commercial privileges in 1833 and to many its continuance seemed anomalous. Kaye defended it on the grounds that the Company had become an immensely efficient administrative body operating on the liberal principles of moral reformation. As a historian he believed in the idea of progress as the guiding law of human history and wanted to show how the Company's bureaucratic rule in India fitted into this universal pattern.[43] Following the Carlylean dictum that "history is the essence of innumerable biographies,"[44] Kaye, though not "insensible of the value of statistics," focusses on "representing men in action" so as to lend the past a "living interest" and thereby draw the attention of the metropolitan "reading public" which is "less

instructed than it should be on Indian subjects."[45] His long chapter on the Meriah Agency is effectively a laudatory record of the life and actions of one man—Macpherson. The sketch opens with the bureaucrat's arrival in the Ghumsur highlands as a surveyor of roads during the wars of 1836-37. Being "naturally a man of thoughtful and enquiring nature, and of an energetic benevolence of the best kind," Macpherson masters "the whole subject of the religious social life of the strange people who [have] awakened…a kindly interest in him."[46] Entrusted with the "Mission," he determines to brave "the extreme unhealthiness of the climate" and overcome "the seemingly insuperable mistrust of the people."[47] Sickness "assail[s] him; his life [is] threatened, but he [does] not turn aside from his purpose."[48] Slowly but steadily the tribe is civilized and firmly set on the universal path of progress.

Relegated to the margins in Kaye's history, Campbell resorts to memorial practice. He did feel a sense of injustice. Macpherson's biographer made it a point to write to him that Kaye's *The Administration of the East India Company* "attributed mainly to Major Macpherson's exertions the progress which had been made in the suppression of human sacrifices."[49] In his letter to the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* cited above, Campbell underlined his sense of injustice. "I may observe that," he wrote, "I feel confident the historian whose name is mentioned by Mr. Macpherson will yet be satisfied that he has—unintentionally I doubt not—done me some injustice."[50] Faced with this injustice of history, Campbell invokes memory as a more authentic and satisfying record of the past.

Anthropologists have taken note of the polemical war between Campbell and Macpherson for credit, and have interpreted it in terms of a "conflict over possession of some commodity that can be earned or stolen, a contest for the top place in the history books, or even for credit in God's eyes for sacred work."[51] But in the final analysis, the questions around which their polemics was built, who was more successful in civilizing and pacifying the Kandhas or whose intervention was more benign or oppressive, are dismissed as "not such vital issues" because there was not much to choose between the two from the point of view of the Kandhas.[52] However, I argue that these are precisely vital issues for an assessment of the nature of the imperial-global public in which the Kandhas became a subject of debate and discussion.

The story of Campbell, Macpherson and Kaye needs to be situated in the context of the emergence of contemporary history as a genre in nineteenth-century England.[53] The social status of historiography,

scholars have rightly argued, changed in the course of the century from "a public genre" which "men and women of letters" could try their hands at to a professional genre which trained authors engaged in at the institutional site of university, largely for the benefit of "fellow specialists."[54] With increasing professionalization of the field, academic historians moved away from reflecting on the recent past—the past that was within living memory of the people.[55] Passing authoritative judgments on the recent past involved addressing uncomfortable questions about the historian's privileged access to truth, getting embroiled in controversies. It also meant taking the risk to be proven wrong by unfolding events in the near future.[56] Given this context, the figures who inhabited the margins of the professional field, "individuals who do not fit easily into either the amateur or professional model" devoted their energies to write "contemporary histories."[57] These histories were written "not as academic projects but as eyewitness accounts…as direct interventions in political debates."[58]

As a historian Kaye arguably belonged to this cohort of contemporary historians who inhabited the margins of the emerging professional field and who engaged with the recent past. He edited at least four major periodicals on Indian affairs.[59] He wrote well-received histories of the Anglo-Afghan War and the Sepoy Mutiny.[60] Engagement with the recent past also made him vulnerable to charges, which came with the territory. One reviewer of *The Administration* contested the historian's claim to impartiality. The review compared *The Administration* with his earlier *Afghan War* and argued that unlike the earlier occasion when the author was a historian "pronouncing judgments which were expected to stand for all time," here "Mr. Kaye has written nothing which he will ever have any occasion to repent or retract; but on this occasion he is an advocate and not a historian."[61] Recent assessments of Kaye's historiography also take note of his inclination to be partial towards people he personally admired.[62]

Victorian preoccupation with the recent past was not confined to historiography. Autobiography, biography and the novel were also engaged with the remembered past and often furnished alternative assessments.[63] Campbell's autobiography forwards one such assessment. He invokes memory, both personal embodied as well as collective, to forge a discursive association between himself and the Kandhas, and thereby contest the historian. We will continue our exploration of the Victorian discursive engagement with the recent past in the next section.

Khondistan: Portably Local?

In a very specific sense, *A Personal narrative* and *Memorials of service* are comparable to what literary historians have described as Victorian novels of the just past.[64] Both seek to recreate a local world that has become part of the remembered past. Some of the novels of Walter Scott, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Thomas Hardy and others are situated neither in the present nor in a distant historical period but rather in the "vanishing but still tangible world of the previous generation."[65] Similarly, the colonial narratives recreate a vanishing local life world of the recent past—a life world at Ghumsar that undergoes a radical transformation under the reforming gaze of the colonial bureaucrat.

Let us first delineate two of the ways in which Campbell and Macpherson recreate the local world of the Kandhas. First, there are passages, which furnish a generic description of the locality. This description cannot be reduced to any particular location on the map as such. Campbell invents and confers a name on the locality—Khondistan, literally, the land of the Khonds or Kandhas. "The harassing operations to which I have referred in the preceding chapter first brought us into contact with the wild and warlike inhabitants of the table land of the great chain of hills extending north and south from the Mahanuddy to the Godavery. These mountains are about two hundred miles distant from the sea, and from two to three thousand feet above it. They are almost inaccessible…When once the summit is reached, the change from the low country is very striking. The eye beholds a well-watered and open country of table land, producing luxuriantly rice, oil seeds, turmeric and sometimes large crops of dhall (a kind of pea) and millet."[66] The geographical markers in the passage—the two rivers, the distance and height from the sea, the high and low region contrast, the fertile table land—create a general spatial environment in which the locality is situated. They do not aim to locate a particular place on the map as such. Similar descriptions are also found in Macpherson. For instance, a generic description of villages in the region goes as follows: "The villages are in general beautifully situated, either by a clump of trees, or at the bases of the wooded hills, or on the knolls of the valleys, slightly raised above the level of irrigation. In the southern districts they consist of two rows of houses, slightly curved so as to form a broad street, which is close at each end by a strong wooden barrier gate. In the northern tracts, they are built, like Hindu villages, after no regular plan."[67] The description evokes geography in a generic

manner. It does not aim to refer to a particular village as such. There are occasions of course when Campbell and Macpherson adopt a more loco-descriptive style of narration. However, when it comes to offer a general portrait of the people, they adopt a generic style.

A Personal Narrative and *Memorials of Service* also rely on descriptions of cultural rites to evoke the local world. Scholars have rightly noted how "Victorian anthropology produced a highly impersonal way of writing about tribes such as the Konds, that defined them as 'primitive' in every domain of life. It thus gave out as 'scientific fact' what was essentially a negative stereotype."[68] What I draw attention to is the narrative style of this ethnography. The military-bureaucrat in the hill tracts of Odisha never directly witnessed a sacrifice. His very reforming presence meant that the rite was prohibited—that it had become an event of the past. Alternately, his presence meant that the rite became a hidden and secret performance—that it was no longer performed as openly as it used to be. In either case, the narrative task before the military-bureaucrat was to describe an event as real, which he himself had not seen. In response, the narrator constructs the rite as a pageant that unfolds before the eyes of the reader. The style lends authenticity to a 'past' practice he has never witnessed himself.

This narrative technique is also at work in romantic historiography. The colonialist description of human sacrifice bears a limited comparison with Thomas Carlyle's description of the beheading of Louis Capet in his history of the French revolution. Carlyle's mode of history writing turns the past into a pageant. He writes the history of the revolution as if he were "a witness-survivor" of the apocalyptic event.[69] The historian becomes the "observing eye and oracular voice" and projects the reader "dramatically and prophetically, into the action."[70] That is, the events and historical characters are so vividly portrayed that the reader becomes "coeval with them."[71] The historian as the omniscient narrator, as the "central intelligence," "restores the past to life by erasing its pastness."[72] The immediacy of the action passes for its authenticity.

In Carlyle, the scene of Louis Capet's execution opens with the three votes. The Convention deliberates whether to guillotine or pardon the imprisoned king. The spectacle is not "funereal, sorrowful or even grave" in character.[73] In the galleries "there is refection, drinking of wine and brandy as in open tavern."[74] The ushers behave as if they are at the opera. Ladies rustle around in "laces and tricolor," gallants entertain them with "ices, refreshments and small talk."[75] The debate in this "Hall of Doom" is dominated

by “casuistry and jesuitry,” and by the *hiss* of “tyrannical majority.”[76] The sentence is pronounced. Closely follows the execution. The executioners “seize the hapless Louis: six of them desperate, him singly desperate, struggling there; and bind him to their plank.”[77] The priest reminds a resistant Louis that the Savoir submitted to be bound. Drums drown the man’s dying words: “Frenchmen, I die innocent...”[78] The gathered crowd fiercely celebrates and “There is dipping of handkerchiefs, of pike points in the blood,” selling of locks of the hair, frantic attempts to collect “fractions of the puce coat” worn by the beheaded corpse.[79]

In a comparable manner, Macpherson sees the Kandha rite of human sacrifice as a pageant. An intoxicated crowd of villagers forms the backdrop of the spectacle. The sacrificing priest, the village chief, and the *meriah* are the primary actors. The challenge before the colonial bureaucrat-narrator is to lend authenticity and credibility to a ‘past’ rite he has never witnessed himself. He achieves this by rendering the event into a drama that unfolds in the present tense. The action in the Kond theatre begins “Ten or twelve days before the time appointed for the rite.” The victim is “devoted by cutting off his hair, which until then is kept unshorn.”[80] The priest, *Janni*, inaugurates the festival by addressing the presiding deity: “O Tari Penu! You may have thought that we forgot your commands after sacrificing such a one (naming the last victim), but we forgot you not.”[81] The narrator speaks as if he were a witness to the event. The reader is coeval with the Kond actors. The following days are spent “in the indulgence of every form of wild riot…in drunken feasting and frantic dances, under excitement which the goddess is believed to inspire.”[82] On the appointed hour, the *meriah* is carefully washed, dressed in new garments and led forth from the village in a procession with music and dancing. He is seated at the foot of the sacrificial post, bound back to it by the *Janni*. Crowd gathers to worship him; Kond women contend with each other to “obtain slightest relic of his person; a particle of the turmeric paste with which he is smeared, or a drop of his spittle, being esteemed…of sovereign virtue.”[83] To prevent his escape the *meriah* is kept under heavy sedation. Sometimes the bones of his arms and legs are broken. What follows is an elaborate exchange of dialogues between the *meriah* and the *Janni*. The former argues and pleads for release, the latter presses for the sacrifice. The narrator observes: “the part of the victim…and also the parts of the chief and the priest [are] sustained in a semi dramatic way by the best impersonators of the characters that may be found. The form of words in this long ritual…

is not fixed, but admits of endless variation. I give the fullest one in my possession."[84] For the colonial bureaucrat, the Kond ritual is 'semi-dramatic' and the participants are as if impersonating highly engrossing roles. The 'past' event admits of several variations, the narrator offers the one that is in his 'possession.' A far lesser talent than Carlyle, the colonial bureaucrat sets out to bring the past alive: visual immediacy of the action argues for its authenticity. Before the crowd hacks into him for shreds of flesh, the ritual demands that pieces of sacred flesh are to buried in the fields for improved fertility, the *meriah* curses his antagonist: "My curse be upon the man who, while he did not share in my price, is first at my death…let him be the poorest wretch alive…Now do your will on me."[85]

Thus *A Personal Narrative* and *Memorials of Service* mobilize generic descriptions of geography and dramatic delineations of cultural rites so as to evoke the local world of Khondistan that is rapidly vanishing into the recent past. This local world of Khondistan, I argue, was one of the many local worlds of the recent past, which were in circulation among the Victorian public. In a sense, Khondistan could claim a place among Tully Veolan, Treby Magna, and Lowood. However, this claim would be marked by two broad kinds of differences. First, scholars have noted how Victorian novels recreate a memory of local belonging, a sense of being-in-place that works therapeutically to provide a cure for nostalgia, for a disease or pathology of homesickness which emerges in a global world, a world that is on the move, and in circulation.[86] In these novels, realism mobilizes "memory, affect and imagination" to create "a sense of being at home in the abstract space" of the modern imperial nation state.[87] In contrast, Khondistan does not evoke a memory of local belonging that would provide a cure for the disease of homesickness. Rather, it enables Campbell and Macpherson to inhabit the abstract space of the imperial nation state in a manner that goes beyond the language of affective belonging. Khondistan refers to a memory of local ownership. The bureaucrat narrator presents before the imperial-global public his claims to own a local reform project. He comes to inhabit the imperial national space via this public, which comes to be formed around the language of ownership. Second, scholars have noted that novels do not produce the local via loco-descriptive narration—Treby Magna cannot be reduced to a real location on the map. The local is more of an affect.[88] It is true that the local place is imbued with a sense of cultural specificity—"regional customs and communications" are evoked. However, the local is not tied to a particular physical space. It is portable—it is "born mobile."[89] Thus

the novels of Walter Scott portray “intensely localized places that offer native habitation to all who read or hear the story” anywhere in the world.[90] In contrast, though it is produced in and for an imperial global public, Khondistan is portable only in a limited sense. Like the novelist, the colonial narrator evokes a geographical space in a generic manner. He also evokes the cultural specificity of the place. However, he does not produce a localized place that offers native habitation to all who read the narratives. He offers habitation only to those fellow reformers, military personnel and anthropologists who can inhabit Khondistan.

In the final analysis then, if Victorian novels offer one model of recreating a local world of the recent past, colonial narratives such as *A Personal narrative* and *Memorials of service* offer an alternative. The novel places emphasis on an affective language of belonging, and the latter mobilize a langue of ownership. The novel recreates a memory that is portable, and the latter makes available a memory that is portable in a much more limited manner. In their different ways both novel and colonial life narratives seek to inhabit an imperial-national space.

Conclusion

British colonial campaigns to eradicate the practice of human sacrifice in the hill tracts of Ghumsar produced a large body of narratives in various genres. These narratives were in circulation in the colony as well as the metropole, and constituted an imperial-global public. This short paper offers a reading of two life narratives, which were part of this imperial-global public. They chronicle the careers of two prominent colonial bureaucrats who led the British campaigns in the region. The aim of the paper is not so much to revisit the colonial history of the Kandhas—historical anthropologists have reflected on the subject at length. Rather, the aim is to delineate certain features of the imperial-global public in which the narratives participated.

The paper offers two sets of arguments. Both of these are concerned with the Victorian historical and literary preoccupation with the recent past, with living memory. With increasing professionalization of the field, for a variety of reasons, academic historians moved away from reflecting on the recent past—the past that was within the living memory of the people. Those historians who inhabited the margins of this professional academic field took it upon themselves to write histories of the recent past, and participate in ongoing political debates of the day. Historians of the East India

Company and its administration belonged to this latter category. In his life narrative, the colonial bureaucrat mobilizes various forms of memory, personal embodied as well as collective-cultural, so as to underline his deep associations with the Kandhas and the civilizing mission. Mobilization of memory enables the bureaucrats to fight a polemical battle among themselves—to compete for the credit of pacifying and civilizing the Kandhas. Moreover, they pitch memory against history and contest the judgments passed by contemporary historians of the East India Company. Life narratives thus provide an alternative and more satisfying assessment of the remembered past. The bureaucrat invokes memory to address the injustice of history.

If contemporary history was one of the genres in which the Victorians engaged with the recent past, the novel was another. Majors novels of the period sought to recreate a regional or provincial world that was fast disappearing, and becoming a part of the remembered past. They recreated a memory of local belonging, a sense of being in place that provided a cure for a disease of homesickness, a disease that emerged in an increasingly globalized world. This memory of the local was more of an affect—it was not tied to a physical space as such. It became a portable or mobile memory that invited any reader anywhere in the world to become a part of the imagined local community. The colonial life narratives also imagine a local world in the colony whose customary ways were fast disappearing under the reformist gaze of the civilizing bureaucrat. However, unlike the novels, the colonial life narratives do not place emphasis on an affective language of belonging. The local here does not aim to provide any cure. Rather, the life narratives mobilize a language of ownership—the colonial bureaucrat claims ownership over the successes of the reform project. This ownership enables him to inhabit the imperial-national space. This memory of the local is also portable. However, it is portable to a more limited extent. The life narratives invite readers to become a member of the imagined local community of Khondistan, but not as a native but as a reformer or anthropologist.

Notes

1. Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 72, 106. The campaign to abolish sacrifice predated the formation of the Agency—it began right after the Ghumsar wars in 1837. Supervision also continued after the abolition of the Agency.
2. Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 119, 126, 128-129.
3. Ibid., pp. 76-77, 127.
4. Ibid., pp. 72.

5. Ibid., pp. 79, 124.
6. Ibid., pp. 170.
7. Padel, *The Sacrifice of Human Being*, pp. 3-5, 357.
8. I derive my understanding of the 'imperial-global' from Ballantyne and Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global*, pp. 20, 2.
9. Rev. W. Taylor, "On the language, manners, and the rites of the Khoonds or Khoi Jati, of the Goomsoor mountains…" *MJLS* vol. VI, July-December, pp. 17-46, 1837. W.G. Maxwell, "Cursory Notes on Wodhiahghur and the adjacent part of Goomsoor, and on the people of that Country," *MJLS* vol. VII, pp. 134-41, 1838. S.C. Macpherson, "Report on the Gumsur, Duspullah and Boad Zemindaries. Section One. On the Configuration and Superficial characteristics of the country in the plain," *MJLS* vol. VII, pp. 400-12, 1838. Rev. Alexander Duff. "An analysis of Lt. Macpherson's Report on the Khonds of Ganjam and Cuttack, Orissa," *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, October, pp. 567-90. 1842. "Female Infanticide," *Calcutta Review* Vol. II, May-August, pp. 372-448, 1844. "Goomsur; the late war there—the Khonds or Hill Tribes," *Calcutta Review* Vol. VI, Jan-March, pp. 1-85, 1846. "The first series of Government measures for the abolition of human sacrifice among the Khonds," *Calcutta Review* vol. VI, Jul-Sept., pp. 45-108, 1846. "Captain Macpherson and the Khonds of Orissa," *Calcutta Review* vol. VIII, July-Sept, pp. 1-51, 1847. "The Khonds—abolition of Human Sacrifice," *Calcutta Review* vol. X pp. 273-341, 1848. S.C. Macpherson, "An Account of the Religion of the Khonds in Orissa," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* vol. XIII pp. 216-75, 1852. For colonial ethnography on the Kandhas after the 1860s, see Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 252.
10. John William Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company: A History of Indian Progress*, London: Richard Bentley, 1853. *History of the Rise and Progress of the Operations for the Suppression of Human Sacrifice and Female Infanticide in the Hill Tracts of Orissa*, Calcutta: F. Carbery, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1854. G. E. Russell, *Reports on the Disturbances in Purla Kimedy, Vizagapatam and Goomsoor, in 1832-1836*, Madras: St. George Gazette Press, 1856. *A Collection and Precis of Papers about Jeypore*, Madras: Graves, Cookson & Co. 1864. E. Keys ed., *Reports of the Meriah Agents (Ganjam) from 1837 to 1861*, Madras, Government Press, 1885.
11. Rev. W. Brown, "Description of the Khunds or Kundhas," *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, April-July pp. 157-68, and 337-47, 1837. Mrs. F. E. Penny. *Sacrifice.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1910.
12. I derive my understanding of the ecumene from Bayly, *Empire and information*, pp. 182-186.
13. Parida, *Odiya Samar Kavya.*
14. At least two Odia bureaucrats associated with the royal court of Ghumsur produced historical genealogies of the family. Gangadhar Mahapatra composed his *Bhanja Vamsanucharita* in the last years of the eighteenth-century. Suryamani Cyau Pattnaik wrote *Ghumsur Bhanja Vamsavali* in 1828-30. Parts of the first narrative were translated and published in the *MJLS.* See, Patnaik, *Gumusara Bhanja Vamsavali.* Also, Rev. W. Taylor. "Some additional Notes on the Hill Inhabitants of the Goomsoor Mountains, with the translation of a Telugu paper, containing an Historical Narrative of B'honju Family, Feudal Chieftains of Gumsara," *MJLS* vol. VII, pp. 89-103, 1838.
15. John Campbell (1801-1878) came with the British army to annex Ghumsur in 1835. Two years later he was appointed Assistant to the Collector of Ganjam in

1837-1838, and was deputed to suppress sacrifice. In 1841-1842, Campbell was sent to China to fight in the opium wars. He was recalled to join the Meriah Agency in 1847, and remained the Meriah Agent till his retirement in 1854. S.C. Macpherson (1806-1860) was associated with the Ghumsur wars of 1835 as a surveyor. He was appointed as the Assistant to the Agent at Ganjam in 1841-42, and began work to collect information and suppress sacrifice. He was appointed as the Meriah Agent, the head of the Meriah Agency in 1845. He was dismissed from service in 1847. A consequent government inquiry cleared him and his administration of the charges of being inhuman. Macpherson went on to serve during the Mutiny and died in Calcutta of a liver complaint. Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 95, 64, 68, 89, 69, 72, 87, 92.

16. John Campbell, *A Personal narrative of 13 years' service among the wild tribes of Khondistan, for the suppression of human sacrifice*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864.
17. W. Macpherson ed. *Memorials of service in India, from the correspondence of the late Samuel Charters Macpherson, C.B., Political Agent at Gwalior during the Mutiny and formerly employed in the suppression of human sacrifice in Orissa, edited by his brother*. London: John Murray. 1865.
18. For a discussion of these kinds of memory, see, Rigney, "Cultural memory studies," and Kattago, "Introduction: Memory Studies and its Companions."
19. Campbell, *A Personal narrative*, pp. 247.
20. Ibid., pp. 238.
21. Ibidem.
22. Ibid., pp. 238-239.
23. Ibid., pp. 212. The articles were seized during a campaign in early 1852; they were on display in the Crystal palace after the exhibition of 1851.
24. Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting," pp. 209.
25. Susan Stewart, *On Longing*. Quoted in Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting," pp. 210.
26. Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting," pp. 210.
27. Ibidem.
28. Macpherson, *Memorials of Service*, pp. 51.
29. Ibid., pp. 161.
30. Fielding, *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography*, pp. 78.
31. Ibidem.
32. By "travelling memory," Astrid Erll refers to the movement of memory across periods of time and vast expanses of geography. See, Kattago, pp. 6.
33. For another discussion of the reference to Wade, see Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 97.
34. Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 1.
35. Ibidem.
36. *The Khond Agency and the Calcutta Review: Being a reply in refutation of the misrepresentations and distortions of facts, contained in several articles on Khond affairs, published in Nos. IX, XI, XV, and XX of Calcutta Review*. Madras: Messrs. Pharaoh & Co, 1849.
37. For the publication history of these narratives and the correspondence between Campbell and Macpherson, see Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 392-399. Also see, Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 93-94.
38. Campbell's letter is quoted in full in Macpherson. See, Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 399.

39. Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 279.
40. Ibidem.
41. Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography*, pp. 50.
42. John William Kaye, *The Administration.*
43. Singh, *British Historiography*, pp. 87-8.
44. Thomas Carlyle, On History. *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays in Five Volumes*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, vol. ii, pp. 86.
45. Kaye, *The Administration*, preface, vii.
46. Ibid., pp. 495-96.
47. Ibid., pp. 504.
48. Ibidem.
49. Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 397.
50. Ibid., pp. 400.
51. Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 94.
52. Ibid., pp. 96.
53. Kingstone, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past.*
54. Ibid., pp. 16.
55. Ibid., pp. 3.
56. Ibid., pp. 10, 17, 18.
57. Ibid., pp. 18.
58. Ibid., pp. 17.
59. *The Calcutta Review*, *Bengal Hurkaru*, the *Overland Mail* and the *Homeward Mail.* Singh, *British Historiography*, appendix.
60. He wrote eighteen books and twenty-nine articles on India between 1846 and 1867. Singh, *British Historiography*, appendix.
61. The review appeared in *The Athenaeum.* In contrast, *Calcutta Review* praised the work: "He has religiously eschewed all theory, and confined himself to plain historical truth." Singh, *British Historiography*, pp. 110-1.
62. Fairchild, *"Because we were too English:" John Kaye and the 1857 Indian Rebellion*, pp. 43. Fairchild draws upon the works of K. C. Yadav and Douglas M. Peers.
63. Kingstone, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past*, pp. 3.
64 Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation*, 2016.
65. Ibid., pp. 1.
66. Campbell, *A Personal narrative*, pp. 37-38.
67. Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 61.
68. Padel, *Sacrificing People*, pp. 243.
69. Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History*. Intro. John D. Rosenberg, New York: The Modern Library, 2002, xvii. (pp.27).
70. Friedman, *Fabricating History*, pp. 114.
71. Ibidem.
72. Ibidem.
73. Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History*. Intro. John D. Rosenberg, New York: The Modern Library, 2002, pp. 592.
74. Ibidem.
75. Ibidem.
76. Ibid., pp. 591-3.
77. Ibid., pp. 598.
78. Ibidem.
79. Ibid., pp. 598-9.
80. Macpherson, *Memorials of service*, pp. 117.

81. Ibidem.
82. Ibid., pp. 118.
83. Ibidem.
84. Ibid., pp. 120.
85. Ibid., pp. 127.
86. Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation*, pp. 7, 12, 5.
87. Ibid., pp. 12, 21.
88 Ibid., pp. 7, 20.
89. Ibid., pp. 20.
90. Ibidem.

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