

MEDIUM, MOBILITIES AND MAKERS:  
THE COMMISSIONING OF A TRANSCONTINENTAL MONUMENT BY THE “LUNATIC”  
HEIR OF SARDHANA

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

ANKITA SRIVASTAVA




VISUAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND AESTHETICS  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI – 110067  
INDIA

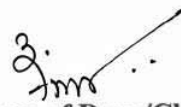
**RECOMMENDATION FORM FOR EVALUATION BY THE EXAMINER/S**

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation/thesis titled  
Medium, Mobilities and Makers: The Commissioning of a Transcontinental Monument.....  
by the 'Lunatic' Heir of Sardhana.....submitted by  
Mr/Ms. Ankita Srivastava.....in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for award of degree of M.Phil/~~M.Tech~~/Ph.D of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi,  
has not been previously submitted in part or in full for any other degree of this university  
or any other university/institution.

We recommend this thesis/dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation for  
the award of the degree of M.Phil/~~M.Tech~~/Ph.D.

  
Signature of Supervisor

  
Signature of Dean/Chairperson

Date: 31 Dec 2021

Date: 31.12.2021

*Dedicated to the memory  
of my grandfather Dr. Arun Kumar Sinha  
To all that has been lost  
but never forgotten*

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Makers</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Mobilities</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Medium</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Appendix: Images</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>160</b>

## Acknowledgement

Writing a dissertation was not a breezy task. On top of that, going through a world-changing global pandemic did not make it any easier. This work could not have seen the light of day if it weren't for the several persons in my life who supported, encouraged, and facilitated my writing.

I want to acknowledge the love and labor of my parents who took care of me since I was born, but especially so in the past couple of years as I struggled with balancing academic work and my health; my brother who has become a dear friend in the last three years. I want to thank Ankit, my namesake, my best friend, and the keeper of my childhood, for seeing strength in me when I didn't. I hope you find happiness wherever you are.

I live for laughter, kindness, and love, the most of which I get from my dearest friends Manvi, Nidhi, Somya, Sheenu, Kriti, Pankhuri. They are the light of my life. I have been lucky to find the most beautiful friends in classmates, my fellow researchers and comrades: Tanushree, Cindy, Divvyaa, Aishwarya, Bibi and Shramona.

I hope my friends know how much their encouragement and affection means to me. I would be nowhere without it. I have also learnt so much from my older friends, Geeta and Vivan. I thank them for their warmth, good food and thought-provoking conversations. Homecooked meals have nourished my soul. Hi Rucha, I miss you! I also want to acknowledge how much I miss my dog, Flubber, whom I grew up with. He was the best dog I could ask for.

I am thankful to my senior researchers, who have never shied away from helping whenever I've approached them with questions or requests. I am lucky to be part of a student community that cares about each other, and is not afraid to raise their voice in the face of injustice.

During the course of my research, I also attempted to learn a couple of new languages. Even though I'm still a beginner, I had excellent teachers who taught me with ease and in turn helped me greatly with my research. I want to thank Paola, Roberta and Nico for their Italian lessons. Grazie mille, a tutti! I want to thank Meera, my friend who took out the time to teach me basic French, and I hope we shall resume soon.

In writing this dissertation, I carried out fieldwork and archival research at Sardhana, Delhi State Archives and the National Archives. I was lucky to find the most congenial, helpful staff at all these places. Further, our fantastic staff at the School of Arts and Aesthetics: Harsh, Savita, Diwan Ram Sir, the late Gulam Sir, and others have always been helpful to each student. I want to thank members of the faculty at SAA for their attention to detail and zest for teaching. Without the inputs from Kavita Ma'am, Shukla Ma'am, Naman Sir, this dissertation could not have addressed the relevant questions that it attempts to do so.

Most of all, I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof Parul Dave Mukherji, who was a calming influence over a very difficult time. Her inputs and comments opened my eyes to new avenues in art historical research that I had not thought of before. Thank you everyone, for all that you did for me. It meant the world, and I will never be able to put down in words the gratitude and relief I felt when I wrote this.

I want to acknowledge one last thing to make it feel real: *I did it.*

## Abstract

This dissertation examines a Neoclassical monument made by the Italian sculptor Adamo Tadolini in 1839–42. It was commissioned in Rome by the mixed-race heir from Sardhana, David Dyce Sombre, to commemorate his late benefactress, Begum Samru. It employs three strategies to put forward an object biography for the monument under study: the socio-political intent of its Makers (Patrons and Artists), the Mobilities that facilitated its transportation from Rome to Sardhana, and the materiality of the Medium which refers to earlier forms of the Begum's patronage and presents an intentional re-racialized or de-racialized form of the body. The dissertation examines the inter-generational patronage strategies of Begum Samru and her heir, Dyce Sombre. By outlining the strategic intent behind their commissions of art and architecture, it also examines the commemorative effect of the monument, especially in the legal disputes around the patron's alleged 'lunacy'. The dissertation explores how an ecosystem of sculpture studios in Rome was engaged in international commissions, of which Adamo Tadolini's sculpture studio was a key player. Finally, the dissertation looks at the iconology used in the monument and the socio-cultural ramifications of the material of its making — White Carrara Marble. Tadolini's sculpted renditions of South Asian bodies and bas reliefs with miniature paintings done by artists in Delhi and Sardhana as a reference present an interesting case of how multiple worlds intersect within one object, as the object reciprocally intersects multiple worlds.

## Introduction

A hair's width prior to the 1857 mutiny, a shipment arrived in 1848 at Sardhana, the humble principality in the North Doab that had witnessed the death of its most formidable ruler twelve years prior: Joanna Nobilis or as she was better known, the Begum Samru of Sardhana. Born in around 1750, she was a courtesan in Delhi until the age of about fifteen, when a German-Austrian mercenary, 33 years her senior made her his concubine or Begum. In 1830, she had formally adopted the great-grandchildren of her deceased husband, the mercenary Walter Reinhardt "Samru" Sombre by his first wife, known as *Barri Bibi*.

Sardhana was annexed by the East India Company, leaving her heir apparent, David Dyce Sombre with an enviable allowance and access to her built property, but no rights over the land of Sardhana. He traveled to London where he married Mary Anne Jervis in 1840, and became the first Anglo-Indian Member of Parliament from Sudbury in July 1841 but was later deposed in April 1842.

Dyce Sombre was certified insane by his wife and kept under restraint, with the support and consent of the rest of his family. In 1843, he escaped to Paris. From then on, he traveled across Europe collecting testimonials to his sanity from doctors and lawyers. Before he could present himself again in a court in London to plead, he died of a septic foot on 1st July, 1851 (Fisher, 2010).

A little before his extended time in London, in 1838, David Dyce Sombre reached Rome where he sought the sculptor Adamo Tadolini, the protege of Antonio Canova. He commissioned a grand monument in marble to memorialize his benefactress, the Begum. Completed in 1842, it consists of eleven life-size figures, five historical people and six (plus two) allegorical figures. In 1848, it was transported from Rome to Sardhana via London and Calcutta. The Begum of Sardhana sits atop of it on a marble throne, while the people close to her are positioned underneath on four



sides of her pedestal. The realm of allegory is at the bottom along with friezes that have relief renderings of specific events that were commemorated in paintings during the Begum's reign. The entire marble object is the subject of this dissertation.

Several biographies exist on the Begum Samru of Sardhana, who was an enigmatic and influential figure in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century politics in the North Indian Doab. For Dyce Sombre there exists one exhaustive biographical work by Michael Herbert Fisher. The tumultuous life of Dyce Sombre was known to the English public from the media coverage of the court case for the Sombre family property suit<sup>1</sup>, and the court case of his lunacy which made him the subject of a lot of scrutiny, ridicule and even sympathy.

A prolific diary-keeper, Dyce Sombre left India after the Begum died. He was educated by various European tutors in Sardhana. There is enough evidence to suppose that he was exposed to enlightenment ideas and had some form of cultural education, as is evident from his diaries<sup>2</sup>. He was also moving in similar circles as wealthy European mercenaries and officers in the region, especially in Delhi, Oudh and very briefly, Calcutta. After the death of Begum Samru, he also toured in Southeast Asia and traveled to China by sea.

In his travels across Europe, he undertook The Grand Tour<sup>3</sup>, informed by a *European* cultural and intellectual education as well as a certain social capital. Neoclassicism was gaining popularity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and Rome and Paris were amongst the popular art destinations. The tour was a class signifier and that too, a European and white one. It

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary Anne Dyce Sombre, *Dyce Sombre Against Troup, Solaroli (intervening), and Prinsep and the Hon. East India Company (also intervening) in the Goods of David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre, Esq., Deceased, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury*, 2 vols, London: Seyfand, 1852; 1853: D4 *Dyce Sombre VS Prinsep*. Ref: C 15/21/D4, PRO

<sup>2</sup> His original 'Diary', 'Private Memorandum' and 'Pocket Book of 1846' are housed in The UK National Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Moneyed young men in Europe would undertake the Grand Tours in order to visit and appreciate the centres of art and culture that emerged in especially Paris and Rome amongst other places.

had its preoccupation with re-reviving the Classical ideals that had been appropriated in order to fit the zeitgeist of the nineteenth century.

Those who undertook the Grand Tour made several commissions of art, especially in the city of Rome for its realistic sculptures in white marble. Many published their memoirs as a new genre of travel-writing during the eighteenth century. Recently, other non-published sources have also been looked at in order to see the outreach of the Grand Tour beyond European aristocrats.

Rome was considerably multicultural and had an entire colony of expatriate artists and was one of the favoured destinations for the cultural ritual of the Grand Tour which facilitated the existence and sustenance of the studio system.

Sculpture was grand and public, as well as high art (Haskell and Penny, 1981). Dyce Sombre specifically chose one of the most popular (and arguably one of the most expensive) studios for his commission, while also meeting with cardinals in Rome in order to hold a memorial mass for his deceased benefactress. He was an educated and multicultural individual, able to move somewhat freely by manoeuvring his way into London society through his marriage to Mary Anne Jervis, a member of the nobility.

Scholars working on Begum Samru's patronage and biography have mentioned this monument in their writings, with Alka Hingorani (2002/3) and Mrinalini Rajagopalan (2018) taking a more in-depth view. However, they tend to focus on certain key elements of the monument rather than looking at it as one whole object. It also gets restricted in its current physical environment, when in reality, it is a crucial point in the history of Neoclassical sculpture as a cross-continental imperialist venture.

Hingorani (2002/3) looks only at the figure of the Begum, while Rajagopalan (2018) focuses on the bas relief panels that recreate paintings done under the Begum's patronage. Fisher

(2010), Lall (1997) and Keay (2013) also mention the exchange and installation of the memorial based on Dyce Sombre's diaries, letters and private papers

In any case, these works which directly speak of the monument do not foreground it as an object of art-historical inquiry. They inadvertently exclude an in-depth analysis of the commemorative monument as either an extension of the Begum's legacy, or an aberration that fits more with the colonial milieu of marble commemorative sculptures.

It is the material, its mobility and questions of meaning beyond representation that, if answered will provide a deeper understanding of the multiple worlds and their interstices within which the object and its agents reside. The object traveled across legal systems, continental geographies and changing visual vocabularies of authority until its installation in 1848. It traverses multiple interstices of commerce, material, race and artistic design.

As an object, it is overlooked in the larger milieu of marble commemorative monuments of the British Raj, especially in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (Groseclose, 1995). It is the location of the presidencies that scholars have foregrounded for the study of European sculptures in India. While they also point to cities like Bangalore, kingdoms of Oudh or Tanjore, their study of commemorative sculpture is limited to the large coastal cities of abundant European political influence.

Works on military and political history show that mercenary Europeans were favoured in almost every army in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (A. Zaidi, 2011). Thus, study of art historical objects cannot be limited to the presidencies, the porously defined 'Company School' and patronage of the Residents. While Polier, Claude Martin, James Skinner amongst others come to mind as military officials turning patrons, there were also several artists in India at the time like Johann Zoffany, EB Havell, the Daniells, Charles Doyly etc.

With regards to the European scene of the Grand Tour, the eighteenth century saw a proliferation of travel writing, that was often published by European aristocrats to propound their intellectual prowess, connoisseurship and of course, immense wealth. One may speculate that it could be a way for many ‘new-moneyed’ persons to get acculturated into gentile society, or a way in which the older Lords aimed to maintain the status quo as regards to their own gentility.

Newer scholarship such as that of Jeremy Black (1985, 2003)<sup>4</sup> reveals that many of the rising middle classes, women and lowly aristocrats were also undertaking the Grand Tour and providing a customer base for popular kitsch, prints etc.

Mrinalini Rajagopalan (2018) in her article on Begum Samru’s architecture concludes her reading of the object with a failure of the similar cosmopolitan gestures of Dyce Sombre as compared to his benefactress, on account of his lunacy and death.

The object itself seems to take on the same ‘written-off’ brunt or ‘obsolescence’ as its patron. One misses the nebulous, ephemeral points of connection between people that would produce such a monument. The object, amongst possible others is a possible site to lay bare those complications and in-betweenness that the European society attempted to strictly regulate in the nineteenth century.

Thus, the study of an object that sits in Sardhana, a small town near Meerut, UP further tells us about the pervasive idea of a changing aesthetic in the region. It was surely influenced by the Anglo-Indian patron, his travels, and his diverse education that was ultimately facilitated by the converted Begum. Fisher’s (2006) book, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* speaks of the traveller-settlers from India to England (and Europe) and how they form a part of socio-cultural fabric of European cities as well as their home

---

<sup>4</sup> Black, Jeremy. *The British and the Grand Tour*. London: Croom Helm, 1985; *France and the Grand Tour*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003; *Italy and the Grand Tour*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

countries/regions. But, looking at objects moving between the two continents in light of colonialism and its enterprise also have to do with a change or claim in aesthetic taste.

It is Dyce Sombre's conscious commissioning in Rome and the choice and negotiation of design that is the most interesting and yet, the most overlooked element in the recorded career of this object. A careful iconological reading of the monument provides another dimension to the legacy of the Begum, and to the strategic intent of Dyce Sombre.

For example, the realm of the female is that of un-mortality, the heavenly and the allegorical. On the apex, sits the begum differentiated by an urn of dark Sienna marble under her throne. She is further up as well as in heavenly abode, looking ahead in triumph with a scroll in her hand. In the middle register as well as the three bas-relief panels at the bottom, we see the mortals — all men.

This monument is one of the commemorative Christian monuments in India and is one of the trans-continental commissions made in nineteenth century Rome. However, its conception, movement and career from a commodity to a deified object within a place of worship after being constantly in tension between Rome's classical allegory and Sardhana's local memory is a trajectory worth exploring in order to find out more about interconnected histories but also to complicate monolithic ideas of history that in turn, shape art history.

The design was probably chosen by Dyce Sombre, or could have been more influenced by the sculptor's previous work, that of Count Demidoff, in St Petersburg—in fact Tadolini laments that he wasn't able to include *Vecchio* in the Demidoff memorial but was able to include it in the grand monument to 'Princess Somb(r)e' (Tadolini, 1900). The spaces occupied by this cusp of an object is the site where I see potential discourse on the kinds of exchange that take place in a 'proto-globalized' (Bayly, 2004 and Hopkins, 2003) and colonising world.

My aim was to undertake an iconological study of the object in order to better understand its time. That study will be supported by object-person biographies. This approach is foregrounded in the ‘material turn’ in art history wherein inanimate objects or artefacts are seen as irreplaceable sources for historical inquiry and a key tool to providing insights into the lives of the persons/agents related to it (Ajmar, 2018).

By the juxtaposition of object biographies with written biographies of the people involved, complexities arrive even at the very surface level of the object. The white Carrara marble tableau has traveled from a studio in Rome, Italy to the small town of Sardhana in present-day Uttar Pradesh. The patron of this sculptural tableau was declared a lunatic and was unceremoniously forced onto a frantic path of refuting that charge, which culminated in his untimely death at the age of 42.

The object of study gives insight to an aesthetic taste that is instrumental to laying claim to a white racial identity, intellectual superiority, and an aspiration to further ‘Italianise’ or rather, Neo-Classicise the family legacy<sup>5</sup> within the local landscape of Sardhana, as well as Europeanise Dyce Sombre’s identity in the city of London. As his benefactress, Begum Samru was already engaged in Neoclassical building, designed by her Vicenza-born architect, Anton Reghelini (b.1784–d.after 1867). However, Dyce Sombre completed this legacy by engaging in the intellectual essence of the Neoclassical — that of recreating in art, a great historical past. This past was considered to be Greek and Roman, and was tied with notions of European and white cultural supremacy.

---

<sup>5</sup> As his Begum favours her architectural legacy to be completely Neoclassical, designed by her Vicenza-born architect/military commander, Anthony Reghelini (1784- at least after 1852), as has been sourced via archives and works on her life and legacy by Lall (1997), Hingorani (2003), Keay (2014), Rajagopalan (2018)

This aspiration comes in the light of the colonial enterprise gaining strong ground in India while justifying its authority with “presumed qualities of enduring difference” of which race, gender and society were very important (Metcalf, 1995).

This dissertation explores the ‘transcultural’ dimension of the object by using the object biography approach. This approach—for which I turn to scholars like Kopytoff, Davies Appadurai—works with the idea that objects exercise certain agency not as mere manifestations of intentional human production and use, but as agents exercising power that is attributed to them by the processes of use and consumption. Appadurai mentions that politics is the link between exchange and value of commodities (Appadurai, 1986), and that they have a social life to them. It is the politics of race and Dyce Sombre’s Anglo-Indian identity that for me is the link between the exchange of the object and the value that is added to it.

Of course, the material (white marble) then, becomes very important. It is embedded in issues of racial politics with its allegories and physiognomic renderings. The order of placement of figures, and its correlation of visual and political hierarchies also comes through in the monument. A careful iconographical study of some of the symbolic figures as the representations of the Begum in allegories of the Madonna reveals a gendered lens that the patron ultimately ascribes his benefactress to, while certainly adhering to strictly European imagery.

The studio drawing for this monument that are currently available are different in their representations of Indian figures, whether brought by Dyce Sombre or made in Tadolini’s studio. The 11 life-size figures, 3 reliefs and other trunk-elements are to be read within ‘the economy of the Neoclassical style of the Canova school of Rome’ (Turner, 1996), as well as in contrast to other, maybe similar commissions—either commissions from Rome to outside Europe, or marble funerary monuments in India of the same time period (Cotou, 2006 and Groseclose, 1995).

By identifying transculturality in the object, it immediately becomes an entity which warrants historical readings of multiple places and processes. It is through the reading of ‘colonial counterflows’ and subtle aspirations to social power, through biographies, autobiographies, and hagiographies, that we may arrive at one face of its intent and conditions of creation.

The sculptor’s autobiography gives differing details on the design and execution, while also giving details of the precedents before this monument, all of which has not been mentioned by Dyce Sombre in his diaries. In the case of Dyce Sombre’s monument, the claim to whiteness that comes with the monument’s commission while being meant for Sardhana has a specific ideological currency of legitimacy of rule/authority.

In order to flesh out my study outside of the monument’s material, I looked at biographical material available in the form of archives, published memoirs, court proceedings, journalistic articles in journals of jurisprudence and medicine. Some of the historical details have been covered in Fisher’s 2010 book as well as articles on the Solaroli strand of the family. In the context of Rome’s export-based studio system the focus shifts to Tadolini’s studio for which I drew upon his autobiography and historical studies done on his studio (Pisano, 2000).

Furthermore, visiting the town of Sardhana helped me understand how these European allegories get translated into the space of Sardhana, and how the object gets tethered to its environment.

The chapters focus on the microcosm of the marble tableau, while actively situating it within the 19th century macros between and of South Asia and Western Europe.

The first chapter on ‘Makers’ historicizes the personalities and their trajectories with the help of archival material and various secondary sources. It keeps in mind that the ‘maker’ is not just the sculptor but also the patron.



This section looks extensively at the Begum's patronage of Neoclassical architecture and commemorative painting, along with the material and monumental culture contemporary of the period. This section will also take into account the kind of education and acculturative practices that fashion an aesthetic sensibility within Dyce Sombre which is duplicitous in his European aspirations and Persianate realities in Sardhana.

This chapter outlines his intention with regards to the commemorative sculpture. It will outline the ways in which the commission and design speaks to the aspirations of belonging to a 'superior race'—an aspiration that is pronounced in the written records and letters of the Begum, and subsequently, that of Dyce Sombre.

The momentousness of the sculpture being commissioned in Rome on the third death anniversary of the Begum is part of that long-standing aspiration. It will also contrast claims of the patron and the sculptor, who unlike the Begum and her architect are closer to being customer and seller, thus making their relationship more impersonal and distant. While the patron has very specific ideas about the visual hierarchies of the monument, there are clear precedents in the sculptor's earlier work that provide the current placement of figures.

Also, the sculptor adds elements of his own volition that leads to certain asymmetries in iconography of the Begum, making the realm of allegory seem like patchwork, interfering with what may have been a specific idea for commemoration. Politics of design can be further brought out by reading biographies of the patron and artist together while verifying their claims with other archival material.

The first chapter also deals with the question of illness and legality. The court case around Dyce Sombre's alleged lunacy is important to understand the urgency of his racial aspirations,

especially when his projected identity is denied to him. Further, his ‘lunacy’ is heavily influenced by his identity as a non-white body of “Asiatic” or “Oriental” mind.

The second chapter ‘Mobilities’ uses a two-pronged approach to look at ‘counterflows’—those of people like David Sombre to Britain and that of the monument from Rome to Sardhana, while actively situating them within a dynamic world—a world experiencing some form of globalisation.

This section contrasts the two kinds of cosmopolitan cities—Sardhana and Rome. While one is nestled within the Indian Doab as a city of refuge, as a space of “unconditional hospitality” (Derrida, 2001) to European mercenary soldiers of Catholic faith, the other is an important religious and cultural centre attracting all kinds of people from the world—tourists, princes, aristocrats, artists etc.

This section situates the mercenary patronage in the Doab in contrast to the thriving marble sculpture studios, artist colonies and English society within the city of Rome. Both these entities have differing degrees of transcontinental movement within them. Rome’s studios are already shipping commissions in and outside Europe, especially to Britain (Marshall and Russell, 2011) but also to the Americas— North and Latin.

Tadolini was an established sculptor, already in demand across continents when he was commissioned to build sculptures in marble by Dyce Sombre, an heir with no consistent political power, a dubious background by European standards and a lot of money to spend.

This section drew upon the literature written on Adamo Tadolini, his teacher Antonio Canova, and their studio in Rome which has now turned into a caffè. This section explores the processes of history wherein the relationship between artists and clients was significantly

modified. In Italy, it saw the creation of the figure of the customer along with that of the patron and thus had a say in the way artwork was also carried out and shipped.

As a further complication, it tries to look at another cross-continental Art Network of the 19th century and what the transcultural art object means for the global ambit of Neoclassicism. In its commission and installation by an Anglo-Indian, the monument complicates the association of whiteness and European superiority while aspiring to those very ideals.

Finally, the third chapter 'Mediums' focuses on the monument and its material, its iconography and meaning, while discussing significance and reception. It looks at the transculturality of the object and the traces, or the erasure of traces of a native legacy within the monument.

This chapter is where I delve into the matter and form of the medium, while studying the significance of the iconography involved. I see how they work together as an expression of commemoration. This involves identifying the various allegorical figures as well as contrasting the drawings and sculptures of the Indian historical figures.

One sees how the change in those physiognomies walks a thin line between assimilation and idealization. This section exhaustively analyses the memorial from top to bottom, describing and exploring the various references it makes individually by the 11 (+2) figures, 3 bas reliefs and the trunk of the sculpture, as well as how it fits into an already built legacy as an object.

The sculpture also draws heavily upon the various paintings commissioned by the Begum and is careful about the stylized portraiture of each historic individual. In the transmediation from gouache/ oil painting to white Carrara marble the European notions of higher art can be fished out of the object. Such an intervention seems to employ previous, familiar images into newer codes of visual culture, an aspect that this section will explore.

There is a desire to commemorate the patron as a true devotee, closest to the Begum due to his placement right below her and connected to her via his own gaze. The chapter also explores how the white marble — with a dash of Sienna Yellow — adds intrinsic meaning to the sculpture. In the final section I draw parallels and differences from the built legacy of the Begum in terms of intent and function.

The function of this monument is seemingly architectural, in the form of a cenotaph. The Begum and later, Dyce Sombre were both interred under the monument. This section looks at contemporaneous debates on the nature of high art and the place of sculpture in those debates. It places the monument as part of an unwrought project that now remains as a singular point of breakage from the rest of its surroundings, even the one that currently houses it. Reghelini's building is a church, a museum, a tomb. Tadolini's monument is an object of reverence within it.

There are signs of a European claim to modernity in the visual culture of 19th century India apart from what travels to the geographically cosmopolitan port cities. Race and Neoclassicism are both deeply embedded in discourses of the time and can be seen in objects traveling farther from Europe, one of which is the commemorative monument in Sardhana. It consists of multiple elements and multiple meanings but it provides a very important case study in the larger significance of mercenaries (and missionaries) in encoding aesthetic taste in North India at the cusp of the Mutiny and beyond.

## Chapter 1: Makers

### A Study of Inter-Generational Patronage Strategies

#### Introduction

This chapter establishes the basis of the biographical approach to the study of the specific sculptural object. It focuses on the historical human actors surrounding the drama of the object's life. The text raises questions that arise from studying the lives of persons around the object. It is necessary since the motivations behind its commission are influenced by the style, time-period, and location of creation. The history of travel for the patrons, artists and the work of art also forms a crucial element, when placed in the specific early 19<sup>th</sup>-century milieu.

This essay provides a person-to-object orientation to the text, and engages with the 'person-as-object' and 'object-as-person' narrative that history and art history can produce within biographies. A thing-ness of a person and a personhood of a thing are of considerable interest. Can a person be seen as an object of history? And the object, a momentous, fleeting point be seen as an event? Long histories such as those of humankind and the history of the world often reorient our perspectives for us to see the present macro as the new micro. The category of 'person' provides to be, but a small unit of a collection of molecular events — or a collector/possessor of objects — thus becoming a micro-unit of human or civilizational history.

In writing the object-biography of the marble *tableau* (Fig. 1) made in the memory of Begum Samru<sup>6</sup>, one must take several strategic detours before arriving at an assemblage of conclusions on patronage strategies and motivations, and what made them manifest in art.

---

<sup>6</sup> While many sources—archival or literary—refer to multiple versions of her name such as Sumru, Sumroo, Samroo, Samrao, Sombre, Sombe, etc., for the sake of homogeneity I will refer to the historical person as 'Begum Samru' and will mention sources when quoting other spellings. For historical details of her life, I have mainly used Julia Keay's 2013 book *Farzana: The Tempestuous Life and Times of Begum Sumru*; John Lall's 1997 book *Begum Samru: Fading Portrait in a Gilded Frame*, and Nicholas Shreeve's extensively researched 1996 book *Dark Legacy* for their detailed use of archival sources; in addition to articles and books quoted otherwise.

Firstly, ‘Makers’ refers specifically to individuals and their immediate milieus that are associated with the marble tableau, or the monument. By analyzing the patronage of the subject-object of memorialization—The Begum of Sardhana, the chapter reconstructs her attitude towards painting and architecture. Also, it provides an overview of her patronage, situating it in the late eighteenth-century / early nineteenth-century in the North Indian doab. Significant elements of study include her architectural complex in the principality of Sardhana, paintings of and about her, and her favoured architect, Antonio Reghelini, an Italian mercenary of Vicenza.

The relation between the patron of the tableau, the Begum’s heir, David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre and the Italian sculptor, Adamo Tadolini (Canova’s protégé), is also a dynamic riddled with complexities: an infamous and wealthy Eurasian aristocrat from the Indian doab commissioning an elaborate funerary monument from a white sculptor of Neoclassical art in Rome. In discussing these people and their lives which intersected in a manner to produce objects of fine art, one sees patronage as sites of social interaction and political strategy. The resultant objects become pivotal for the study of these processes. While Begum Samru’s patronage can be seen as a kind of ‘strategic cosmopolitanism’ (Rajagopalan, 2018), this chapter takes on the task of exploring this idea of cosmopolitanism within the trans-continental collaboration between client David Dyce Sombre and studio-sculptor, Adamo Tadolini.

We must consider that the Indian subcontinent at this time was undergoing a moment of significant change. The British settled themselves in Calcutta and were expanding into the Doab. Near Sardhana, Meerut was a prominent British cantonment. The Mughals of Delhi were living in impoverished conditions, at the mercy of various wellwishers who maintained them through gifts of money. It was their ceremonial authority over courtly culture in India that these wellwishers were able to exploit. Begum Samru, the *Farzand-i-Aziz* of the Mughal court helped the old,

impoverished ruler numerous times and was rewarded—sometimes with grand titles and sometimes, with pieces of land. Her *kothi* in Chandni Chowk was built on a gift of land on what used to be the garden of Jahanara, Shah Jahan’s eldest daughter and Aurangzeb’s older sister. The cultural life in Delhi had diffused and transformed into a pastiche of yesteryear nostalgic ideals and contemporary realities of impoverishment and violent loss.

Nearby, Awadh had already been subsumed under the British foothold after the battle of Buxar in 1764<sup>7</sup>. It saw various Europeans<sup>8</sup> bringing about curious changes in not just the political but also cultural landscape. David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre (b. 1808 – d. 1851) was growing up in this heterogeneously populated region and inhabiting a multicultural, multiplicitous, multiracial society. It organized itself according to various forms of power that were defined by race, gender, political factions, and military might, along with their several permutations and combinations.

The region is part of a pre-1857 Indian subcontinent, where the East India Company or ‘*Company Bahadur*’ was a formidable player in what was still a diverse geopolitical entity. The codes of racial difference existed at all stages. Still, they were not as strictly instituted by bureaucratic and legal means as they were done so in post-1857 India which came under British Colonial rule Proper, as the Indian “Empire”.

Sardhana was a thousand miles away from Calcutta, deep in the Doab where Mughal-esque courtly culture was still upheld, and *race* was an attribute that could be intersected with *class* or with an inherited aristocratic lineage for mixed-race Anglo-Indians (then called “East Indians” or mixed). Calcutta was different and challenging for the Begum’s heir, and even more so was London and the rest of Europe. David Dyce Sombre, the Begum’s heir, found himself embroiled

---

<sup>7</sup> However, the final annexation of Oudh state happened in 1856 with Wajid Ali Shah as the outgoing, deposed *Nawab* of the Oudh dynasty.

<sup>8</sup> Some notable mentions are like Antoine Polier, Benoît de Boigne, Claude Martin, Jean Baptiste Ventura, George Thomas

in several uncomfortable situations in Calcutta and London, often of his own doing and yet was able to leave behind an enduring, resolute, grand object that is almost as dissonant as the events of his own life.

Begum Samru had commissioned different artists, artisans and merchants to build her a collection of paintings, buildings, and objects. But this chapter—while discussing them too—will also speculate on the significance of her chief Architect, Antonio Reghelini (an Italian mercenary of Vicenza). As for Dyce Sombre, it is Adamo Tadolini (an Italian like Reghelini, but based in Rome) who is the point of reference for this chapter.

Adamo Tadolini and the unnamed people of his studio are the immediate *Makers* of the marble *tableau*. It is the interface of *his* design, *his* making, and *his* biases that are immediately legible in the form of the sculptural *tableau*. However, before coming to Tadolini by himself, Dyce Sombre, Begum Samru, and Antonio Reghelini will be reference points of a conversation about Neoclassicism in the early nineteenth-century milieu of Europe and North-India.

### **Begum Samru: A Brief Historical Background**

Begum Samru of Sardhana remains an enigmatic figure of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of Indian history. Her life provides for many, a dramatic rags-to-riches story of emerging from the *kothis* of *Chawri Bazaar* to become a formidable power-broker, and the peculiarity of a native<sup>9</sup> Catholic ruler in the chaotic milieu of the latter half of the eighteenth-century. It was a time when the subcontinent was infested with European travellers, adventurers, and delinquents—all looking to find an enviable fortune and a life of spontaneity.

---

<sup>9</sup> I use the word ‘native’ to denote that Begum Samru was *of the subcontinent*, however, she made several claims of an identity that was ‘un-native’. Her letters often mentioned that she was one with the British by ‘race’. *Race* here is not an inherited, eugenic category for the Begum and might or might not have meant pedigree. It might be a one-ness of religion or political/militaristic power. It might also be a discrepancy of translation, whether written by her scribes or dictated by her.



Many adventurer mercenaries settled down and rose to prominence as military men in the various armies of the multiple warring princes of North India. The Begum lived during the temporal intersections of such multiracial chaos wherein there were individual mercenaries and their mixed-race offspring on the one hand.

At the same time, on the other, a more substantial threat loomed, stealthily taking over the subcontinent, and establishing itself as an Empire. The East India Company and its various officials were vital witnesses to the Begum's life, and it is through their archived records that much has been written and wondered about the life and times of Begum Samru<sup>10</sup>.

The Begum was born around 1750 to the concubine Zeldah of a petty nobleman of Kutana (near Meerut), Latafat Khan (Keay, 2013)<sup>11</sup>. Any record of her origins remains unsubstantiated. However, she did enter one of the *nautch* houses of *Chawri Bazaar* when she was eleven or twelve years old, after her father's death (in 1756) and her mother's subsequent banishment from his house in Kutana by the senior wife and Khan's elder son.

Around the age of fourteen or fifteen, she caught the eye of an Austrian mercenary, Walter Reinhardt 'Sombre'—infamous as the 'Butcher of Patna'<sup>12</sup> and known to continually shift allegiances. She became either his second wife or his concubine. Upon his death in 1778, she

---

<sup>10</sup> Histories and fiction based on the life of Begum Samru are numerous, but the most important historical texts include those written by Brijendranath Bannerjee (1925)—the first instance of a historical and archival work done by a historian, also includes a foreword by Jadunath Sarkar—Mahendra Narain Sharma (1985), John Lall (1997), Brijraj Singh (1997), and Julia Keay (2013). Her patronage has also been researched by Aditya Behl (2002), Alka Hingorani (2002/03), Alisa Eimen (2014) and Mrinalini Rajagopalan (2018, ongoing).

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Shreeve mentions the father as Latif Ali Khan and mother as *Zealdah*, while John Lall (1997) calls the father Asad Khan. He is considered by most to be of Arabian or Afghan descent.

<sup>12</sup>This nickname was earned after Sombre undertook the killing of several British officers in Patna while under the employ of a rival faction; See Julia Keay (2013), *Farzana*, 43–61. Many British sources of the time, including *Bengal Past and Present* and letters which refer to the *Butcher*, even using this connection to deprive the old Begum's issue of the Badshahpur-Jharsa *pergunnah* in 1836. See: 'Regarding the suit of Begum Samrao', 1836, F-9 to F-14. Farmāns, Delhi State Archives, New Delhi, India

inherited his principality of Sardhana—a small cluster of villages near the East India Company’s cantonment town, Meerut by the decree of the then Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam.

Walter Reinhardt ‘Sombre’ was already married to a Muslim woman, referred to as *Barri Bibi*, although she is said to have been mentally invalid. He had a son from this union, Zafaryab Khan or Aloysius Balthazar ‘Sombre’, who became a bitter rival of the Begum Samru in the late eighteenth century, and became a figurehead during a mutiny of her forces. She was on the run with her French husband, Le Vassoult who killed himself when he thought they were captured. And in a star-crossed manner of a lover, Farzana stabbed herself but survived (Keay, 2013: 43–94).

By this time, she had experience in battle strategy and political manoeuvre. She had proved herself to be a favourite of the scion of the albeit-declining Mughal empire, earning titles such as *Zeb-un-Nissa* (Jewel among Women), *Farzand-i-Aziz* (Most Beloved Daughter), and *Umdat-al-Arakin* (Pillar of the State). She offered her military services to the Emperor’s rescue several times. She gained favour in title and land, with the *jagir* of Sardhana bestowed upon her after her husband, despite him having a son from a previous marriage.

‘Farzana’ came to be known as Begum Samru. She retained this title as she underwent conversion to Catholicism in 1782 —four years after Reinhardt’s death — changing her name to Joanna Nobilis. She retained the title ‘Begum Samru’ even after her brief marriage to the Frenchman, Le Vassoult<sup>13</sup>. Even the growing power of the time, the East India Company,

---

<sup>13</sup> Her marriage to Le Vassoult ended tragically in death, injury and indignity. They were running away in the face of a mutiny that brew in the Begum’s forces due to their dislike of the Frenchman. The Begum was caught and brought back to Sardhana, where she was chained to a cannon in an open field while factions in her court had placed the Reinhardt’s son, Zafaryab Khan on the throne. George Thomas, an ex-officer of her army came back to Sardhana and restored her to power by dismantling the rebellion and making sure that Zafaryab was returned to Delhi and Sardhana’s troops swore their allegiance to the Begum once again. See: Julia Keay (2013), *Farzana*, 198–236

addressed her as ‘Her Highness, Begum Samru of Sardhana’. She had 6,000 or so dependents and roughly 20,000 subjects on her land.

She proved to be very charitable towards several churches in Meerut, Calcutta, Bombay and also made significant donations directly to the Pope and the Vatican. Her magnanimity proved beneficial to her heir, especially when he ventured out of England into France and especially, Rome (Shreeve, 1996). Even the Pope’s antechamber in his own Quirinal Palace possessed a painting commissioned by the Begum of a church she built in 1822 in Sardhana (Murray, 1867: 237).

She sought ‘blessings’ of the Pope for it to be deemed a Basilica, and he not only granted them to her but sent priests from the Vatican to the sleepy backwaters of Sardhana, India. Not available in public view, and without any description, one can only speculate that the painting must have been of a structure thoroughly well-versed in the idiom preferred in Rome—that of the Neoclassical.

However, its physical location in North India, under the patronage of a powerful, wealthy *native* convert, symbolically provided an extensive reach to Catholicism. The Pope must have been eager to encourage the only Catholic ruler in India at the time. Thus, Begum Samru entered into this arrangement with Catholicism, where it provided her with a window to Western Europe.

In return, she offered to it the claim of having an illustrious devotee in the land increasingly being dominated by the British Anglicans, in a vindication of its missionary project. Significant donations to the Church played an important role in providing the Samrus of Sardhana with some respect and fame abroad. It was a manoeuvre of cosmopolitanism by the Begum, who tapped into the international missionary network to wager for her issue, a future with the West. However, her

newfound Catholic zeal often mixed with her knowledge and understanding of courtly culture in North India.

The Begum also attempted on several occasions to curry favour with the British. By supplying her armies in their campaigns, trying to establish familial relations with the Europeans, rescuing their officers from the Sikhs, and by offering them lavish hospitality at her palace in Sardhana (Fisher, 2004: 105), the Begum hoped to ensure her position and legacy. While the East India Company seized her principality upon her death in 1836, she was able to ensure, in her lifetime, her power, wealth<sup>14</sup>, and authority because of her expert strategy and foresight.

Later in her life, she began commissioning art from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and commenced on a building project. Either by understanding that it was imperative to leave behind some form of the material history of her time, or for diplomatic gifts or for aesthetic pleasure itself, Begum Samru began this task in the early nineteenth century, after she reached the age of sixty.

Her architecture is particularly of interest because of its public nature and the co-opting of Neoclassical forms in the Indian Doab. A patron's art and architecture present themselves as markers of things more significant than themselves. They present as extensions of a person's outlook and for this closeness with the identity of its patron, they are often targets.

### **The Begum's Patronage: A Study of Select Paintings**

While Begum Samru's material legacy is vast and scattered across two continents, they also include a manuscript that she commissioned as a personal and political history of herself. Written by the *munshi* Lala Gokul Chand who was well-versed in the courtly tradition, the *masnavi*

---

<sup>14</sup> The Begum's annual income probably ranged from Rs 600,000 to Rs 1,600,000, depending on agricultural produce and spoils of war. In the current scenario, her annual income would have been between five to sixteen million pounds a year (or Rs 370 million to Rs 1.2 billion), See Michael Fisher (2010), *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian and Chancery Lunatic*, London: C. Hurst & Co:17

was titled *Zib-ut Tavarikh* (or *The Ornament of Histories*)<sup>15</sup>. The Persian manuscript is housed in the British Museum<sup>16</sup> and was originally owned by David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre when he arrived in Europe in 1838 (Behl, 2002: 100). Nicholas Shreeve translated this manuscript into English in 1994 (Shreeve, 1994). John Lall considers Gokul Chand's "long poem" to be "so stilted that not one syllable of poetic feeling can be found in its 814 lines" (Lall, 1997: 126)<sup>17</sup>.

This 69-folio copy had Dyce Sombre's signature on the flyleaf and praised Zeb-un Nissa at the height of her power and reputation. In Gokul Chand's design, the manuscript was completed by two scribes, one for the portion before the flyleaf (added in 1824), and insertion by a later scribe which covered the 1825 march to Bharatpur (fols. 56b–64b), which was also commemorated in painting and the marble *tableau*). The exordium of this copy was dedicated to Mary and the virgin birth, and praises of the old Mughal king, Shah Alam, were followed by praises of Begum Samru.

This codex does not record the death or final years of the Begum. It is easy to assume the reason for this absence that the Begum and her *munshi* were far too busy negotiating with the British over her inheritance and sovereignty. It could also be that the initial copy was made *for* someone just to be taken to Europe, and any mention of frailty, old age, sickness was avoided to keep the constructed 'image' of the resolute Begum intact. Gokul Chand mentions two other biographies —not traceable— that he wrote for Walter Reinhardt 'Sombre' that were supposedly very famous in England and that his unknown readers wanted more (Behl, 2002: 112).

---

<sup>15</sup> "a Persian masnavi or verse narrative of her life entitled *Zib-ut-Tavarikh*. The tide, which means "The Ornament of Histories", is a poetic play on her name: Zeb-un-Nissa, "the ornament of women". The text, a brief panegyric account of her life, was written originally at Sardhana in 1822 by Lala Gokul Chand, her loyal and trusted khas-munshi or chief secretary. Rather than viewing her life as an instance of decline or political ruthlessness, her interactions and negotiations need to be seen as part of the distinctively mixed culture that she helped to create in North India

<sup>16</sup> Lala Gokul Chand, *Zib-ut Tavarikh*, British Museum, Ms. Add. 25.830; See: Aditya Behl (2002), 'Articulating a Life,': 100

<sup>17</sup> John Lall (1997), *Begam Samru: Fading Portrait in a Gilded Frame*, Delhi: Roli Books: 126

Aditya Behl brought to light another handwritten and *illustrated* copy of *Zib-ut Tavarikh* held in the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic Persian Research Institute at Tonk, Rajasthan (Behl, 2002). This set of 123 folios was completed by Manik Chand and contained 77 miniature paintings preceded by an illuminated frontispiece (*sar-i lauh*). The focus remains more on Dyce Sombre's copy since it was the textual basis for Adamo Tadolini to understand the requirements of the memorial. Nevertheless, it is essential to note the Tonk manuscript for its re-invention of the *masnavi* genre and poetic convention to suit the fancies of targeted readers — in this case, the English *sahibs*.

The Tonk manuscript is also poetically superior, with Manik Chand's finessing of Gokul Chand's awkward lines. He incorporates the lure of the English travelogue, the fascination with the picturesque, which is “not simply dependent on aesthetic distance” from the “romantic sublime,” but can function within an “Indian textual logic” of *biography* as a *(hi)story* (Behl, 2002: 119).

In the exordium and later parts of the Tonk manuscript, Manik Chand incorporates a confluence of prophets and sites revered by the Indian people. Prophets revered by both Christians and Muslims were referenced. The illustration of Jesus was similar in physiognomy to *sadhus* and *yogis* in “Company” paintings (Fig. 2). European iconography was frequently mixed with Indian motifs. It is also updated and praises the Mughal Emperor Akbar Shah II instead of Shah Alam like the Dyce Sombre codex.

Manik Chand's manuscript is also metatextual in some aspects. In one instance, it portrays an image of Lord Combermere receiving a copy of the earlier copy of *The Ornament of Histories* from the Begum Samru (Fig. 3), sometime after the march to Bharatpur where they made their acquaintance (Behl, 2002: 117).

The Begum wears a red shawl and looks a lot like her surviving portraits, complete with the straw of her *huqqa* and the pointed shoes resting on a cushioned footrest. Her smoothly aged features are a simple mimicry of the many portraits that remained in Sardhana at the time. This self-reference to the life of the book presents a history of the text, wherein it travelled to Europe via many hands (including Lord Combermere), although the travelling text was of Lala Gokul Chand. A self-proclaimed disciple, it could be his illustrated way of paying homage to the original version of this book and a travelling aspiration of his own designed biography.

It employed a mix of elements from multiple genres and became a travelling pastiche. The images in the codex are visibly of low quality and were made by unnamed artists of the Sardhana school. The images are hastily executed to resemble “Company” paintings, but their subjects are portrayed with enough accuracy to evoke familiarity, in what Behl calls a “rough-and-ready realism” (Behl, 2002: 119).

Manik Chand is also the only known biographer to include a portrait of the young Zeb-un-Nissa. Since it was compiled in 1850, it would have been impossible to portray her young likeness accurately. Through guesswork and stylized convention, the artist managed to portray the Begum’s younger self seated like what could have been derived from the studio photographic convention (Fig. 4) (Behl, 2002: 107).

The young lady is dressed in a white, flowing Anarkali, with a pink dupatta around her head. Her feet, like other portraits of the Begum, rest on a cushioned footrest. The *huqqa*, Begum’s pictorial symbol of royalty and power, is missing from the portrait. The missing *huqqa* is the missing symbol of authority but shows the Begum as a promising, young beauty who would have caught the eye of her Austrian mercenary husband.

The portrait follows European convention wherein the woman is seated in a three-quartered profile on an armchair, with one of her hands resting on a table, on top of which is a vase full of flowers. The floor is patterned, and on the right-hand side, there is a glimpse of a marble balustrade in the background. The European stylization of the table's visible trunk is unlike any element from the portraits of the Begum during her lifetime. It betrays a pictorial convention seen in Anglo-Indian pictures that must have been available to the local artists at Sardhana by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The head of the Mughal atelier under Shah Alam II and Akbar Shah II, Khairullah, was known for his precise artistic skills and the ability to place carefully painted subjects in contrast to simpler backgrounds and settings. His first known portrait was of Shah Alam (Fig 5b), but he also spent some time painting at the Maratha courts of Daulat Rao Scindia. He painted a single portrait study of Begum Samru (Fig 5a) in the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century, a testament to the position of Begum Samru at the Mughal court<sup>18</sup>.

According to Linda Leach, his style adapted to different tastes as he also produced more vibrant, busy and influenced by European watercolours and those artists who worked in Colonel Skinner's atelier (Leach, 1995). It is interesting to note the difference in the ornamentation of the painting of the emperor and yet the similar positioning of the two subjects painted.

The painting of Shah Alam centrally places the Emperor on the Peacock throne on top of a pavilion, with orchards behind and a courtier interacting with the emperor while standing at a lower station. The pavilion itself is patterned with gold floral motifs framed within a gold trellis pattern. In contrast, the portrait of Begum Samru is a watered-down version of the same (Fig 5a).

---

<sup>18</sup>Mr. Anil Relia and others from the Archer Gallery were most helpful in providing me with the image. In an email dated 22.10.2019, Mr. Relia told me that apart from his late brother having bought the painting a few years ago, he did not know much else about its provenance. It is part of the collection series, *The Indian Portrait*, as the tenth volume, titled *Visions of a Bygone Era, 1590–1890*.



While this painting shows exemplary expertise and minimalist aesthetic of the artist, one can also note the somewhat stylized physiognomy of the subject. The usage of white and light pink colours of the dress and the flushed paleness of the older woman's skin, devoid of sharp wrinkles, is a study in flattery and Mughal convention.

One can assume that the artist and his atelier is conspicuously aware of the importance the subject holds: the same is signified by her titles *Farzand-i Aziz* (beloved Daughter of the Emperor), *Zeb-un Nissa* (Jewel among women), *Umdat-al Arakin* (Pillar of the State). The image has an element of smooth realism; the soft lines and the translucent, feminine quality of the portrait are unlike the images made by the commission of the Begum herself. Those were marked by a true-to-life rendition of her aged features and a resolute, stable posture in a chair.

In her posture of being seated like an idealized lady of the Mughal harem, this portrait is very different from her favoured artists like Jiwan Ram or the Delhi artist Muhammad A'zam. In this combination of the artistic imagination and delicate brushwork of the Mughal artist, we see a glimpse of the craft of rendering idealized female bodies. With a feminine undertone of her physical form with a flowy, translucent, soft cloth, we still see an attempt to portray the face with a stoicism more suitable to the Begum's stature.

The plain washed blue skyline above the Begum is also conspicuously empty of any ornamentation, as is visible in the painting of the Emperor (Fig 5b). The only use of bright colour is seen on the brightly patterned yellow carpet and striped green cushions that serve as a bright frame within the plain setting of the painting. The Begum is off-set from the bright furnishings but holds a central position and aesthetic unity with the rest of the painting. The pavilion is not completely patterned or carpeted. While it strongly resembles the pavilion of the Emperor's painting structurally, we notice the difference in the *jaali* or the latticework of the railings in the

background. The artist signs his name under the portrait of the Begum and places her face and torso in the plain blue half of the image. The face also appears slightly more prominent for the body, unlike the portraits commissioned by the Begum.

The paintings and portraits commissioned by Begum Samru were numerous. Her residence at Sardhana had about 25 portraits of the Begum, which are now housed in the Indian Institute, Oxford (Leach, 1995: 791). The Chester Beatty Collection also holds three portraits and other paintings, which are crowd studies. It was important to note that most of the portraits were done by the Delhi painter, Jiwan Ram. He was trained in European styles of miniature as well as techniques of oil painting.

In 1834, when he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the Mughal emperor Akbar Shah II, he put a shadow under the emperor's nose in European miniature fashion. According to William Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollections*, the Emperor's wives took serious objection to it. While his paintings before the 1820s are not known, Raja Jiwan Ram would have been familiar with the changes in painting in Delhi by the catalytic patronage of the Frasers and James Skinner. His residence in Meerut provided him with a convenient intersection between Mughal Delhi, The English Cantonment and the Sardhana Cosmopolis. His other artistic influences included George Chinnery and Charles D'Oyly (Patna), Robert Home (Lucknow), and even Robert Smith (Delhi), who was good with oil painting techniques (Losty, 2015: 6).

The portraits that he painted of Begum Samru were always of her in old age, wrapped in shawls and holding a *huqqa*, a sign of her authority. Two of the portraits were made in an oval miniature format which was a popular genre in the early nineteenth century, but had also had some Mughal antecedents, like in the reign of Mughal Emperor Jehangir (r. 1605–1627 CE), wherein portraiture received prime importance. One of them, currently housed in the Victoria and Albert

Museum (Fig 6), shows the aged Begum with the typical Kashmiri shawl and *huqqa* in hand and provides a three-dimensionality to the figure. There is a background of heavy curtains with tassels and dark clouds and a hint of foliage. Her placing against symbols of opulence and tempestuous skyline is used to centre the stature of the Begum further. They inscribe a sense of perspective and long-distance to show the extent of the dominion of the Begum.

As discussed by Alka Hingorani and Linda York Leach, a second painting is the Chester Beatty portrait, also attributed to Jiwan Ram (Fig 7), notable for its coarser and less intricate rendering of the Begum's features. Instead of a typical background of drapes and land, the Begum's portrait is painted on a simple dark texture. The oval portrait also bears an inscription, "Best of creation, offspring of beauty, elegance of women, Begum Sahiba". Her beauty is alluded to by many travellers and biographers. However, the Begum herself made sure to follow Muslim custom and not show herself in public without appropriate *purdah*. After she reached her 60s, she started commissioning portraits of herself and styling herself with symbols of power and authority, such as the turban and the *huqqa* (Hingorani, 2002/3: 63 and Leach, 1995: 790–791).

The singular portraits emphasise how the Begum wants to be seen — distinguished, experienced, masculine, authoritative. This aesthetic of authority that she creates for herself is far more pronounced even when she is seen in crowd paintings. The three crowd paintings of note are also inspirations for the *bas relief* panels in her commemorative monument.

The first of her household in her Delhi palace (Fig 8) places her centrally in a semi-circular spiral with various officers and retainers, almost all identified by the artist. She is again seen with her *huqqa*, turban and a footrest upon which her feet are placed. Some of the officers are seated with her, around her, and some are either standing or seated on the floor. Her placement as the lone woman in a dominantly male environment is strategic and yet, subtle. She places herself as the

head of the household, surrounded by subordinates. This painting was to mark the visit of Mughal official visitors to her palace. Since she held her jagir through British dispensation, this painting is not a study in flattery to the Mughal king but rather a representation of her mediation skills and diplomacy. The neoclassical architecture as a backdrop with the swirling crowds of men around her gives her a unique position as a possible interlocutor between the British and any other local powers.

In another crowd study of her military might, the painting by an unknown artist, which marked the march of Begum's armies to Bharatpur (Fig 9), shows her atop an elephant. She is hard to find, but her central placement is not the intent of the painting, which shows, more importantly, the extent and order of the Sardhana brigade. It is filled with files of soldiers, cavalry troops and weapons. The presence of food and water bearers shows the completeness of the venture, which is identified as the march to Bharatpur.

However, the painting itself is a statement of grandiosity. She is only identifiable on a detailed look, under a royal umbrella over the elephant and bearing a soft halo. According to Hingorani, the symmetry in the painting is closer to the Murshidabad style of painting than the Delhi style (Hingorani, 2002/3: 67). This similarity to the Murshidabad style is further corroborated by Leach, who points out the "childlike figural proportions" of the figures painted by the artist, who, while being untutored, was undoubtedly aware of the conventions of Delhi painting. Leach also identifies the Anglo-Indian officer leading the charge in front of the Begum's elephant, her favourite, John Thomas or *Jan Sahib* (Leach, 1995: 795).

Her army's extremely orderly and disciplined representation in painting served to show her stronghold on her jagir through such military might.

The last known crowd study of the Begum Samru is the marking of a spiritually important event. The original is housed in the Governor's Palace in Lucknow, although it is inaccessible. A replica with textual details is placed within the Sardhana basilica (Fig 10). It shows the Begum meekly offering a chalice to the more prominent seated figure of Fr. Adeodatus.

On the left-hand side of this painting are clergy members in robes similar to the archbishop. On the right-hand side are officers from the English East India Company's army and the Begum's army (possibly as witnesses). Here, the Begum's short stature is devoid of any imperial motifs. However, the event is of great significance as it marks the consecration of the basilica of Sardhana. The begum's figure has been severely muted in front of the domineering Fr. Adeodatus and other men around her. Furthermore, one feels suspicious of the quality or even the truthfulness of this replica. The perspectival lines are askew, and the painting itself is heavy with the checkered floor and dark background.

### **The Begum's Architectural Legacy**

Begum Samru's Neoclassical legacy was far more significant in her building projects. Her properties were mainly in Sardhana and Delhi. However, she had a few *kothis* in nearby regions as well<sup>19</sup>. Her chief architect Antonio Reghelini (b. 1784 – after 1852), became an important figure. The Begum's properties before Antonio Reghelini — who entered her service officially in 1816 — are not well-preserved. Until his death in 1807, her old friend, Fr. Gregorio, travelled between Agra and Sardhana to minister the spiritual needs of the Begum. The only two Catholic churches

---

<sup>19</sup> Including Baraut, Barnawa, and Kutana district in Meerut, and the five parganas in Muzaffarnagar, and adjoining three parganas west of Yamuna River. Some of these were conceded and taken as the political situation demanded. Source: Alisa Eimen (2014), "Reading Place through Patronage: Begum Samru's Building Campaign in Early 19th-Century India", in D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., *Woman's Eye, Woman's Hand: Making Art and Architecture in India*, New Delhi: Zubaan Press: 12-40.

in Delhi had been destroyed in 1739 by Nadir Shah's raids, and the Catholic congregation was too small to even have a resident priest despite some attempts to restore them.

It was possible after noticing Reghelini's design skills that the Begum even considered building a grand church in Sardhana. He specialized in erecting "batteries, earthworks, redoubts and other such warlike structures". While he had never designed a church, he rose to the occasion as most churches in India by that time had been the design of military engineers. His references were James Gibbs' Church of St Martin in the Fields and Gibbs' 1782 *Book of Architecture*; Reghelini improvised on Gibbs' style with references to his knowledge of Palladian structures and even North Indian architectural styles. The Church of St Mary (as it was then called) was completed in 1822 but inaugurated in 1829 (Fig 11).

The exterior is marked by a large central dome, next to which is a raised pointed oculus. The dome is flanked on the other side by a smaller dome on both sides. The interesting point is that the Church as a neoclassical structure is different from other neoclassical structures of the time, as very few of them are domed. The dome acts both as a reference to North Indian sensibilities and engenders comparisons with St Peter's Basilica in Rome. However, the domes were possibly influenced by the twin churches of Santa Maria dei Miracoli and Santa Maria in Montesanto in Rome.

The portico was deepened with a big verandah, possibly to give shade from the harsh Indian sun. The sturdy pillars on the verandah side were short and large in diameter, possibly less *classical*, in what Julia Keay identifies as the engineer's folly of Reghelini. The structure was peppered with Italian baroque details and had Indo-Saracenic motifs in the friezes around the central dome. Reghelini also arranged for a painting of 'Our Lady the Madonna del Monte' from Rome, which his brother delivered. It was given place at the altar which was made with Jaipur

Marble into which precious gemstones were laid (Keay, 2013: 281). In the painting of the Begum with the clergy, Reghelini is also placed on the right side as a witness of the event. His role as architect of the Church is acknowledged.

Her other architectural projects with Reghelini as a chief architect included her Delhi Residence (Fig 12) and her final Sardhana residence (Fig 13). The Delhi Palace was built on the Chandni Chowk on the land gifted to the Begum by the Mughal Emperor in return for her service. The south façade of the palace/*kothi* had a seven-bay portico supported by tall Corinthian columns. The portico was accessed by a double-staircase that curved as it went upwards from the carriage porch. The north portico was similar but had twin columns on single square bases and Corinthian capitals. The house itself was raised on a one-storey high plinth that could serve as a storage room for weapons and elevate the house so that it can be seen from a distance (Rajagopalan, 2018: 172).

This structure, in particular, was important as an embassy for Sardhana's Begum in the vicinity of the Mughal fort, as well as growing English power. The painting by Muhammad A'zam of her with her retainers is set in the south portico of the same *kothi*. The frontal perspective of the Begum gives a sense of a resolute openness and willingness to engage with the viewer of the painting, who is watching from the diegetic location of the Chandni Chowk. The painting on the right-hand side identifies Anton Reghelini seated amongst the retainers as an officer of significance in the Begum's army (Fig 14). He is also the architect of the structure in which the painting is housed.

The last of Reghelini's known grand architectural projects was the final palace of Begum Samru in Sardhana, which was completed in 1834, right before her death in 1836. Reghelini did not stay in this mansion but had his own smaller home, which he shared with his wife. Even after the Begum's death and even the death of Dyce Sombre, Reghelini stayed in Sardhana to make sure

that the principality and Church kept functioning. He died after 1852, but possibly before the 1857 uprising. One of his daughters became a nun at the Church in Agra. His family tombs are still in the cemetery of Sardhana. A portrait of Reghelini (Fig 15), painted by Jiwan Ram, hung in the salon of the new mansion in Sardhana.

The Begum was too old to oversee the constructions herself, and thus, the construction was primarily handled by Reghelini with inputs from the Begum's beloved heir, David Dyce Sombre. The mansion had some features similar to the Delhi *kothi*. It had a double-height portico for most of its main façade. It was raised on a plinth that served as storage space.

On the north side, it had a curved semi-circular façade which made the building look monumental. The staircase had a bell-shaped curve and led to a central salon, flanked by smaller salons. The mansion had a dining hall and several rooms for the Begum, Dyce Sombre, his concubines, sisters, and their husbands. Many of her extended family members, such as Jan Sahib, also stayed with her for long periods. Built towards the end of her life, this mansion served as a legacy of the Begum's cosmopolitanism and a stronghold for her heir, Dyce Sombre, after her demise.

### **David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre: A History**

The unique history of David O. D. Sombre is perhaps the most crucial component of this narrative. It is not the peculiarities in which he was brought up since a multiracial and multicultural ethos was not difficult to imagine in a pre-1857 Indian subcontinent. He was not a product of an imaginary mystical and confused culture that many Orientalists represented as his ticket to innocence in the much-publicized court case around his alleged insanity. For the last eight years of his life, he remained a certified 'lunatic' while continually trying to get the judgment overturned.



In combination with his many physical ailments, his mental illness presents a bizarre linkage with his racial aspirations and the aesthetic taste that must accompany those aspirations.

His insistence on being European and nothing but European, on account of parentage, was accompanied by a vain, egotistical and somewhat obsessive literary attempt at debate and *Refutation* of the charges levied against him. In the course of about 590 pages, he provided testimonies from doctors, psychiatrists, officials and many others who could certify him to be sane.

His case and diagnosis present an opportunity to look at how race, power, class, law, and punishment are decisive in how a “certified lunatic” is seen in society. Then can it be possible that this particular trait of insanity can affect these factors in a reversed manner? Can “certified insanity” (and not eccentricity) modulate aesthetic taste? Must it reflect in one’s preference and perceptions of beauty? Furthermore, how were race, masculinity, class, sanity, and aesthetic taste linked in this particular case of 19<sup>th</sup> century England?

David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre (b. 1808– d. 1851) was born to Colonel George Alexander Dyce—a Scottish officer of probably mixed ancestry—and Julia Anne, the granddaughter of Zafaryab Khan or Louis Balthazar, the son of Walter Reinhardt. He was the surviving son among four children, his siblings being Mary Ann, Georgiana and George (who died in infancy). He was very close to Begum Samru, whom he doted upon and nursed when she was in ill health. He confessed to sobbing at her deathbed and after her death, experiencing profound loss and emotional devastation. Such emotions he very rarely confessed to.

She began transferring her vast property to him in the 1830s, and as a gesture of confidence, he named her as his heir if he should die first. He adopted the name ‘Sombre’ after her. It was only

in England that he quickly married the Honourable Mary Anne Jervis (b. 1812– d. 1893), daughter of Viscount St. Vincent in 1840<sup>20</sup> (See Fig 16a, 16b).

The Viscount had been a slave owner in Jamaica and had an African slave — a Major Jones brought to England to serve as either a footman or valet in his household<sup>21</sup>. He was also experienced in the procedure to declare a person as a ‘Chancery lunatic’ as he had done before to his son and heir, William Jervis (b. 1794–d. 1839) in 1829. Known as a favourite of the older Duke of Wellington, a fantastic singer and socialite, Mary Anne was 27 years of age when she became Mrs Dyce Sombre. After Dyce Sombre died in 1851, she married George Cecil Weld Forester in 1862 and became Lady Forester<sup>22</sup>.

Mary Anne inherited the Begum’s vast fortune and would sometimes be referred to as *Begum* in English circles when she donned the Indo-Persianate costume that her once ‘lunatic’ deceased husband gifted her. To further her mystique, she took part in fashionable séances and claimed to speak to the deceased in such settings. As an elite white woman, her performance of Indo-Persianate culture appeared safely and exotically attractive (Fisher, 2019: 238).

Earlier in Sardhana, Dyce Sombre had two concubines featured prominently in his diaries, Dominga (d. 1838) and Hoosna (d. 1852). He supported them financially on a long-term basis, and they were bound in what could be a slave-master relationship to him. He tried to dispose of them

---

<sup>20</sup> For a complete and exhaustive history of Dyce Sombre’s life, see his biography written by Michael H. Fisher (2010), *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian MP and Chancery Lunatic*, London: C. Hurst & Co. I primarily draw from his work on the life of Dyce Sombre in lieu of the archival material present in the UK national archives, archives at the Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire County, and the British Library.

<sup>21</sup> More information of her father’s slaves and household was given by Mary Anne Jervis in ‘Notes on the Jervis Pedigree by Lady Forester’, copied by William Bowers, 34/17/68, ff 26–27, at the William Salt Library, Stafford, England; as quoted in Michael H. Fisher (2004), *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857*, Delhi: Permanent Black: 323

<sup>22</sup> The only known portrait of her was painted by John Scott when Mary Anne Jervis was 18 years old. Her portrait presents her as a cultured woman, with motifs that emphasize her interest and talent in music. Notice the sheet music she holds in her lap (in Fig 16a, 16b). She is seated at a writing desk with a scroll in her left hand, wearing a white and brown gown with a bejewelled belt and clasps on the sleeves. Her right hand holds her index finger pointing up, while her neck and shoulders are bare.

by bribing men into marrying them. Dominga died soon after her marriage to an abusive priest, Mr Leyding, leaving behind David's young daughter, Penelope, whom David was supposed to take with him to Europe after returning from his tour of China and the South-East Asian countries. However, the young Penelope also passed away before he could send for her.

While the Begum did not acknowledge his concubines, she doted upon his three children (all of whom did not survive infancy), and the entire household would grieve their passing. She nevertheless kept trying to arrange a formal marriage for David Dyce in order to produce official heirs (Fisher, 2010: 104). Hoosna was married to a Sheikh Edoo in 1837, but David continued to have sexual relations with her after. He ended up paying Edoo a hefty compensation of 2000 rupees in gold for the abuse of his marriage contract (Fisher, 2010: 103).

Nevertheless, his goal was to leave behind these women, for they were vessels of a life already lived, a life that he sought to abandon in order to arrive as a true European aristocrat. These women's race and class relations played a role in the impunity that Dyce Sombre enjoyed having sexual access to them. Whether he had feelings for them or the children born does not affect the exploitative nature of these arrangements.

He probably realized after 1838 that Victorian England would look down upon his possession of women as concubines in a *harem*. His self-assuredness and power had to be expressed more suitably to the English and other European codes of high-society morality. Which was concerned with the sanctity of marriage and surprised, fascinated or repulsed by the crude idea of a *harem* as a private or semi-private place to access sexual services at will.

It was clear through historical accounts of archives, memory and culture that the people of England found it difficult to categorize and deal with the many individuals who were “counterflowing” towards the colonizer’s geographies<sup>23</sup>.

More so, individuals who stood on the margins or in-between *Rajah, Munshi, Begum*, and pauper categories were complex bodies. The official attempts at defining Indian identity were inconsistent and contradictory. The racially Anglo-Indian (or Eurasian) body provided a further layer of complexity which tread upon a fine line between notions of European intellectual supremacy and racial prejudice towards anything non-European, even mixed races. Nonetheless, elite Britons called the shots in matters legal and cultural, in a severe imbalance of power within the negotiation over Indian and Anglo-Indian (or Eurasian) identity.

Over the eighteenth century, especially with the popularization of printed diaries and notebooks, Britons extensively published autobiographical works with some well-understood conventions of narrating one’s life history. In the late eighteenth century, when non-white persons, immigrants of South-Asian, African origin also began to convey their autobiographies in this manner<sup>24</sup>.

Another Indian immigrant, Sake Dean Mahomet (b. 1759– d. 1851), well known as the “Shampoo Surgeon”, wrote his autobiography, *Travels of Dean Mahomet, A Native of Patna in*

---

<sup>23</sup> Michael H. Fisher goes into detail about these counterflows, mapping a history of many individuals and groups traveling to Europe as slaves, workers, for other opportunities, and as tourists in an article titled ‘Excluding and Including “Natives of India”: Early-Nineteenth-Century British-Indian Race Relations in Britain’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2007, doi: 10.1215/1089201x-2007-007, © Duke University Press 2007. He derives the bulk of the article from his exhaustive book, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006

<sup>24</sup> Most famous amongst these were Olaudah Equiano (b. 1745– d. 1797) whose anti-slavery narrative in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* London: The Author, 1789. He was a former slave and a prominent activist. Another less well-known example was a Christian-Armenian born in Iran but raised in Calcutta, Emin Joseph Emin (b. 1726– d. 1809), who published in London his autobiography: *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin, An Armenian, Written in English by Himself* London: The Author, 1792. See: Michael H. Fisher (2013), ‘Writing Lives of Indians in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India and Britain’, *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques*, LXVII, 4: 1092.

*Bengal, Through Several Parts of India, While in the Service of The Honorable The East India Company, Written by Himself, In a Series of Letters to a Friend Cork: The Author, 1794.*

Dyce Sombre would become a contemporary of Dean Mahomet in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain during the latter parts of both their lives. He even tried to leave £1000 to the son of Dean Mahomet for his services as a masseur. Dyce Sombre's identity was certainly transcultural. Representing this multifaceted identity even in Sardhana, he kept a personal diary for most of his life. Only a few sections have survived, which span about five-seven years of his life in the National Archives of the U.K.

He briefly studied in Meerut with Reverend Henry Fisher, an Anglican priest. One can assume that he learnt the British conventions of life-writing here under Fisher's tutelage. While he used the printed and bound diaries of English style, he often transgressed rules of chronology and format. He used diaries of different years, mismatched the events and the time, and often wrote in Urdu and his most intimate thoughts in Persian and English.

In 1838, a thirty-year-old Dyce Sombre reached England. He used money and wealth to buy himself a position in gentlemanly society. He claimed to be European due to his parents having European ancestry, but most Britons would not consider him European. Many European, Asian and American journals and papers tagged him as "Black", "Copper-coloured", "Dark", "half-washed Blackamoor", "Indian", "mixed-breed", "Negro", "Orientalist", "Othello", "sable", "Sambo" and "tawny alien". In French, newspapers called him "excessivement brun" and "le prince noir"<sup>25</sup>.

---

<sup>25</sup> E.g. *BOBSON*, 1846, 534–542; *AGRA UKHBAR*, 14 August 1841; *FRIEND OF INDIA*, 2 September 1841; *SATIRIST*, 10 March 1849; *SATURDAY EVENING POST*, 29 September 1860; *NEUMAN*, 1928: 164–165; *LE SIÈCLE*, 21 March 1844; See: Michael H. Fisher (2013), 'Writing Lives of Indians in 19<sup>th</sup> century India and Britain', *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques*, LXVII, 4: 1106

In 1841, Dyce Sombre bribed his way to become an M.P. from Sudbury in the British Parliament, making him the first Asian and second non-white member to hold that office. He repeatedly voted as a Whig-Radical but never won. After investigations provoked by disgruntled opponents, Sudbury as a constituency was disenfranchised, and their elections controverted, making Dyce Sombre lose office. Both Indian nationalist and British multicultural narratives celebrate Dadabhai Naoroji (b. 1825– d. 1917) as the first Indian MP elected in 1892.

### **The Chancery Lunacy Trials**

Dyce Sombre's behaviour became very erratic, where he would challenge men and women to duels at the drop of a hat. He also made wild, violent accusations of adultery on his wife, accusing her of having intercourse with friends, servants, strange men, waiters, and even committing incest with her father. On 30th March 1843, Dr James Clarke supervised his confinement for lunacy in Hanover Lodge, Regent's Park. His sisters and their husbands agreed with his confinement for lunacy. A jury found him to be of 'unsound mind' since 27th October 1842 and condemned him to a loss of control over his property and confinement to the Hanover Lodge. He was allowed to travel under the supervision of nurses and caretakers, and on one trip to Liverpool, he escaped England for Paris. There, he began to compile his account and defence against the charges levied against him.

His very famous lunacy trial also had several stakeholders. He found himself alone facing the court, while his wife, his in-laws, even his sisters and their husbands were all on the other side of the much-publicized trial. He insisted on representing himself and maintained that he was a European, with European blood, manners and education. However, his mixed identity could never be seen as tilting towards a white European in Britain. He had many who sympathized with him and many who abhorred him. Any sympathy that was seen in public stemmed from pity for the

decidedly intellectually inferior ‘Asiatic’ person —the poor fool — who seemed to have lost his mind in Europe trying to mimic European custom while still holding onto his ‘Orientalist’ tradition.

Perhaps one of the few genuinely empathetic views was Dr Thomas Drever, who served as the late Begum Samru’s physician. He insisted that David Dyce Sombre was European in his manners and had a gentlemanly demeanor while staying in Sardhana. Moreover, his coming to Britain ruined his mental faculties and drove him to commit acts that were not characteristic of either a European or Asiatic disposition.

Following the tradition of life-writing in the English style, Dyce Sombre employed Catherin John Henry Montucci, a professor of Industrial Arts and Commerce at the University of Paris, to “ghost-write” and edit his exhaustively documented and meticulously compiled account of his sanity. Titled *Mr. Dyce Sombre’s Refutation of the Charges of Lunacy in the Court of Chancery* and published in 2000 copies, it was sent to many officials and remained in libraries across Europe. In *Refutations*, he presented a *hagiography* of his late benefactress and distanced himself from any Asiatic origin. He consistently disagreed with his lawyers, who presented a legal defence surrounding his Indian origin. He considered himself “not Indian” as his “grandfather was a Scotchman”. His mother had a “German grandfather”, and “her mother was half French, [and] this, therefore, could not be taken either in law or in reality to be the case of a native of India.” (Dyce Sombre, 1849: 19).

The text had insertions from correspondences, affidavits, and many other papers he accumulated during his legal struggles. The compilation proved to be exhaustive but not always helpful to his cause. His footnotes and interjections sometimes contradicted the evidence he presented. Moreover, he often edited and altered some documents. Nevertheless, he did not

compromise an inch on certain things. He claimed that he was European, totally sane, and persecuted unjustly by everyone around him, particularly his wife, his in-laws, and others. He believed that this document would prove his sanity and the conspiracy of his persecutors. Regarding treatment by the British law, he expressed a rather poignant and cryptic view, “*Dead men are never heard; otherwise they would be taken for ghosts; and such is the case with Chancery Lunatics. I am a dead man, according to the existing law.*” (Dyce Sombre, 1849: 244)

His self-expression presented a problem of law, medicine and incarceration that the then Briton system was unwilling and ill-equipped to negotiate with, especially with a nuance that was not present at the time. Interestingly, his sympathizers presented an argument of a racial and cultural difference, which was “evident in his complexion”. He was seen as “having an inaccurate, confused, erroneous or superficial knowledge of European Society [...] [A]ll the eccentricities he had been guilty of were the fruits of his Asiatic education and had no reference to any unsoundness of mind [...] Jealousy of women is an overwhelming passion of the Oriental mind and seems in a high degree to have existed in his, [...] born and bred in countries where incest is common, and treachery habitual.”<sup>26</sup>

Montucci later admitted to writing his understanding of the situation of Dyce Sombre and the treatment of ‘lunatics’ by the law of England. In the passionate conclusion, Dyce Sombre’s voice was used as an appeal to safeguard the cause of personal liberty, as it was “liable to be infringed with the greatest ease on the mere plea of lunacy.” According to him, Dyce Sombre was “*cast out as far as possible from the society of reasonable men, a lunatic among the sane, by the mere dictum of a few men who openly profess to set their wisdom against that of the rest of the world.*” (Dyce Sombre, 1849: 571)

---

<sup>26</sup> *TIMES* (London), 5 March 1849, as quoted in Michael H. Fisher (2013), ‘Writing Lives of Indians in 19<sup>th</sup> century India and Britain’: 1108



Dyce Sombre presented a problematic case that could not be categorized into any other situation than a person having an insecure sense of self regarding his history, identity and masculinity. In his parameters to judge others, he often compared his possessions—whether material or mind. For him, Persian was a crucial parameter with which he compared himself to elite Indians and Britons. Even in Britain, Persian became essential to further the cause of colonization and governance of the Indian subcontinent, where Persian was still favoured as an official language. Dyce Sombre's most intimate thoughts were written in Persian in his diaries, and he even taught his wife, Mary Anne, a few words of Persian when he was courting her.

Back in India, he observed *Padshah* (Emperor) Nasir al-Din Haydar (reign. 1827–37) of Awadh, who wore both European (sometimes women's) clothing and Indo-Persianate garments. He considered Sardhana's Indo-Persianate and Anglicized, Neoclassical architecture and court-culture to be superior to Lucknow's. In January 1837, at the Palladian-style palace of the pensioned Nawab of Bengal, Humayun Jah Mubarak 'Ali Khan Bahadur (r. 1824–38), he still lauded Sardhana's cultural superiority in his diary. For him, his memory of Sardhana and its Begum were ideal standards, to which everything fell short (Fisher, 2019: 234).

One can assume that conflict emerged between memory and ambition, which were both heavily dependent on the time's environmental factors and moral codes. In Sardhana, he witnessed the bending and making of transcultural systems in the aged Begum's manner of rule and careful manoeuvre to build affinity with the East India Company. Her motive was to build a racial connection with him because of her exclusive Catholicism as a native ruler.

Dyce Sombre wanted to further this ambition by becoming a European aristocrat. However, being Briton brought a Pandora's box of racial confusion. Europe, the notorious colonizer continent, may have discussed ideas of enlightenment and might have started moving towards

prototypes of democratic government. However, their seemingly ideological advancement was brought upon by the exploits of colonialism and slavery. Both of these European institutions were dependent on the supremacy of white racial purity and a patriarchal setup that allowed its women to participate in a social life where one could publicly perform their domesticity (like the then reigning Queen Victoria).

A native of Sardhana —especially someone who revered the place and its ruler as much as Dyce Sombre— would have certainly been a fish out of the water as far as his mental faculties were concerned. This confusion manifested in his extreme actions and accusations and the minuscule amount of art that he could commission. However, in his artistic commissions, as is the case with art, they become an interesting case study of transcultural taste. It collides with contested claims of insanity of the time. This contrast of insanity and intellect form becomes important in the study of the *monumental tableau* later on.

There is an absolute certainty that Dyce Sombre was frequently ill. He struggled with obesity, had a habit of excessive drinking, gambling, having intercourse with many sex workers, and was often nursing many venereal diseases. One must also keep in mind that 19th-century psychiatry's arbitrary and often contradictory assessment methods and diagnosis may also have played a part in the official, enduring verdict of his lunacy.

An interesting difference arose when Russian and French psychiatrists, including the distinguished Jean-Pierre Falret (b. 1794–d. 1870), saw him as relatively sane and a “proper gentleman”. Another scholar has argued the possibility of excessive consumption of “betel nuts”, drug toxicity and mercury poisoning as causes for his mysterious mental illness (Pies, Fisher, & Haldipur, 2012: 10–12). He could have been showing symptoms of tertiary syphilis: following his

complaints of impotence, loss of sensation in his extremities and the loss of his ability to concentrate.

Finally, in 1851, while he was waiting for the hearing of the 6<sup>th</sup> reopening of his lunacy case, he passed out before a fire and developed blisters on the soles of his feet. These suppurated, and he was advised to get a festered toe amputated, which he refused vehemently. He made it back to London and, on 1st July 1851, succumbed to the infection at the infirmary at 8 Davies Street, Berkeley Square. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, London.

Before he died, Mary Anne, who got to know about his deteriorating condition, sent him a letter. She wrote with a sense of urgency, “My dearest Friendly ?, I hear you are ill and write to say how much I am concerned, and if I can be of any use or comfort to you, I am ready at any moment to go to you. [My maidservant] Lake and I are waiting close by, so that if you will see us, or either of us, now, please to send a verbal answer by the servant who takes this, and is waiting. Believe me, yr affectionate, M. A. Dyce Sombre.” In return, his last words to her in life were strict instructions to keep her expressions of concern to herself. Further, he added that his advice to her was to take a divorce (Fisher, 2010: 315).

While the judgement on his insanity was never reversed, it was recognized that the East India Company, and later the British government, owed the Begum the value of the arms that were confiscated from Sardhana. In addition to all his fortune, half of Dyce Sombre’s wealth went to Mary Anne Forester, and the other half went to Baron Solaroli and Georgiana Solaroli<sup>27</sup>. Even

---

<sup>27</sup> After Mary Ann Troup and James Troup died shortly after the Dyce Sombre Against Troup, Solaroli ... was settled in ca. 1862; Solaroli received a huge sum of the inheritance. He was personally attacked by Dyce Sombre in his Memoir, and was often treated with most suspicion by Dyce Sombre in his diaries. The baron had come from humble beginnings from Novara, Italy and rose to prominence after military campaigns in India and Cairo. Georgiana, Dyce Sombre’s allegedly illegitimate sister died in the late 1860s as well, as Baroness. They remain the only surviving family from the Walter Reinhardt descendants. For more information on Solaroli family, see Tomaso Vialardi di Sandigliano, ‘Un soldato di ventura alla corte indiana di Sardhana: Paolo Solaroli, novarese’, *Studi Piemontesi*, Vol. 35, Fasc. 2, Dicembre 2006: 333–346

though it was overturned on account of his insanity, his final will mentioned his wishes of being buried in Sardhana. He also wished for his heart to be buried separately, in proximity to the Begum's resting place, over which his commissioned monument by Adamo Tadolini would be placed.

The Sardhana basilica records state that in 1867, his remains were transported to Sardhana, and his wishes were honoured. However, the Kensal Green Cemetery mentions no such disturbance to the grave. His wishes towards the end of his life and illness presented poetic morbidity in demand to transfer his heart to rest with the remains of the Begum. His last symbolic gesture signified exhaustion from trying to be a Briton and an entirely white European. Furthermore, he wished to go back to his home, his ideal and in every way superior Sardhana, in the proximity of H.M., or 'Huzoor Mukbara'(Fisher, 2010: 161).

### **Dyce Sombre's Artistic Commissions**

Some years before he began to spiral downward with the lunacy trials and exacerbated his several illnesses, Dyce Sombre arrived in the European continent. In trying to establish himself as a member of the European gentry, he turned to politics, writing, and aesthetics to fit in. His two surviving artistic commissions in Europe were: the grand Carrara marble funerary *monument* which bore sculptures of himself and the Begum Samru amongst others (See Fig 1), made by the Italian sculptor, Adamo Tadolini; and a portrait of Dyce Sombre, by the Hungarian painter, Károly "Charles" Brocky (b. 1807–d. 1855) in 1841 (Fig 17).

The first and only known portrait in Europe of Dyce Sombre was painted in Sudbury and is housed by the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, U.K. The painter Charles Brocky was born in Temesvár, Hungary. In 1837 AD, the artist Brocky travelled to Paris and Italy to study old master paintings. From Paris, he was invited by a Scottish aristocrat, Hugh Andrew

Johnstone Munro, to London in 1838. Munro introduced him to the influential art dealer Dominic Colnaghi. In 1838, Brocky exhibited both at the Royal Academy and the British Institution. His portraiture became well known during the early 1840s, and after much travelling, he permanently settled in London and went by the names ‘Charles’ instead of his given name, Karoly<sup>28</sup>. Perhaps for this reputation as a talented new foreigner and artist, he caught the eye of David Dyce Sombre, who was still at the margins of privileged London society, trying his best to push through.

The painting made by Charles Brocky (Fig 17) is a portrait typical of the portraiture convention and the style of the artist who was trained in both oil painting and watercolours. It shows the figure of Dyce Sombre in standing three-quarters profile, looking at the viewer with a slight angle to his body. The background is absolutely plain, and more attention has been given to the rendering of the face than the rest of the body. Dyce Sombre’s face is carefully painted with shades of orange and brown used to give colour to the mixed-race subject. His hair is particularly different: shiny, dark in colour and frizzy around the ears. Dyce Sombre wears a waistcoat and coat complete with a lighter undershirt and a tie-like scarf. His visible hand holds the essential accessory: a gold knobbed tasseled walking stick. While Dyce Sombre referred to having absolutely “nothing to wear” in London (Fisher, 2010: 133), in this portrait, he is dressed in true ‘dandy’ fashion. The portrait is an attempt to assimilate in high London society, yet maintain his difference as the famous “Indian” prince, heir to his beloved and rich Begum.

During his travels through the continent, especially during his eventful visit to Italy, he also acquired an image of his coat of arms and motto meaning ‘God Willing’ (like *Insha Allah*) in

---

<sup>28</sup>In 1837, Brocky travelled to Paris and Italy to study old master paintings. In Paris, he met Hugh Andrew Johnstone Munro, a Scottish aristocrat who invited him to London in 1838. There he made acquaintance of the art dealer, Dominic Colnaghi and exhibited at the Royal Academy and British Institution. His portraiture skills became much sought after and attracted many sitters of repute, even Queen Victoria. Source: Morna O’Neil (23 September 2004), ‘Brocky, Charles [formerly *Károly*], 1807–1855’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Accessed Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3476>

Latin, *Favente Numine* (Fig 18). He styled himself as ‘Colonel’ and head of the Begum’s armies. One of the monetary gifts by her to the Vatican had also persuaded Pope Gregory XVI to make Syce Sombre a Knight of the Pontifical Order of Christ<sup>29</sup>.

His knighthood and return to London were followed by his marriage to the honorable Mary Anne Jervis in 1840. Following this, he won the parliamentary seat from Sudbury, which he also lost shortly after due to charges of corruption. It was probably right after winning the parliamentary seat that the painting must have been executed. It is different than the other known portraiture of Dyce Sombre, namely his seated figure in the painting of the Begum and her retainers (Fig 19).

There, his hair is more two-dimensional and solidly coloured (perhaps even painted over to hide the appearance of a wispy hairline?). He is peculiarly dressed in all-black European clothes, in sharp contrast to everyone around him, Europeans and Indians who are dressed in brighter military colours and garb.

His posture is portrayed as closed off, cross-armed manner while he looks away from the centre of the painting (his beloved H.M., the Begum). This representation of Dyce Sombre (as a teenager around 13–17), shows him more interested in conversation with the flamboyant, adventurous John Thomas. His father, seated to the right side of the painting next to the Begum,

George Dyce is still not out of favour with the Begum as he is included in the portrait. But the senior Dyce is shown facing the Begum, dressed in bright blue uniform complete with a dark jacket. Dyce Sombre’s image here is painted almost as a teenager uncomfortable in the social setting of the court. His place as heir is only guessed at by the physical proximity to the Begum,

---

<sup>29</sup> After his arrival at the Vatican, Dyce Sombre also bought for his brother in law, Solaroli, a knighthood in the Order of St Gregario il Grande. Source: Michael Fisher (2010), *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre*: 161

where his knee seems to be overshadowed by the Begum's shawl. In the already crowded painting, Dyce Sombre inches over into being the closest to the Begum.

In his 1839 grand visit to Rome and the Vatican, Dyce Sombre commissioned the grand marble tableau for £4,000 at the studio of Adamo Tadolini (b. 1788 – d. 1868). The marble monument stands in the church where it was installed in 1848 under the supervision of Antonio Reghelini. It took three years to make, and several more to be transported, while Dyce Sombre was embroiled in political and legal matters.

There was also a sketch that Tadolini made as a reference for the mapping and placement of the figures, while also serving as a record of his intercontinental projects (Fig 20a). His representation of Dyce Sombre's figure in the monument is especially interesting (Fig 20b). It is a mirrored sketch of the actual monument, where the placement of the middle tier figures is laterally inverted. Dyce Sombre's sketch is of a younger, leaner, finely dressed young man, with his posture bending at elegant angles and his face looking downwards.

The original monument has a much more romantic depiction, with the sculpture looking up towards the departed Begum in a forlorn manner, however still elegantly postured. Tadolini's sketch possibly served only as a reference or initial design approved by Dyce Sombre. The final sculpture was probably dramatized and imbued with feeling through the creative decision taken by the sculptor.

Adamo Tadolini (Fig 21) was born in Bologna, and trained at the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1814, he traveled to Rome on a scholarship where he came under the wing of Antonio Canova, the distinguished Neoclassical sculptor of the age. He was considered to be one of the most gifted pupils by his teacher, and this was further confirmed by the fact that Canova purchased a property for the opening of a studio in Rome, where he undertook several collaborations with Tadolini, and

eventually bequeathed to him the entire studio. Tadolini made several sculptures in the Neoclassical style, but his enterprise made sure to reach even the American continents, where statues of his bronze cast of Simone Bolivar were erected in both Peru and Venezuela (Pisano, 2000 and Tadolini, 1900).

### **The Grand Marble Monument**

The marble tableau (Fig 1) was significant as it was one of the very few in the Indian subcontinent done in that style to commemorate a woman, a native and a Catholic ruler. It was installed in Sardhana twelve years after the death of the Begum. Her remains were interred under the monument in a vault.

The aforementioned sketch gives an idea of the structure and placement of the monument, but leaves a plain sketch for the middle structure which bore inscriptions penned by Dyce Sombre in the middle frieze, and *bas relief* panels reproduced from the history of patronage of painting by the Begum. The transformative aspect of the sculptural tableau lies in its reproduction and harnessing of this earlier patronage.

It is an imposing structure, eighteen feet tall, with a life-size figure of the Begum seated at the top, defiantly holding up a scroll<sup>30</sup>. Her usual representations rarely show her without her hand holding the snake of her *huqqa*, a symbol of authority and aristocracy in late Mughal and Company style paintings. The paintings of her without the *huqqa* have been discussed before: the military march and interaction with priests. In the life-size sculpture, the Begum is seated on a throne with her feet resting on a footrest (also a typical motif in her seated portraits).

The lack of a *huqqa* does not interfere with the authoritative intent of this sculpture, even semiotically. The rolled-up scroll is similar in shape to the *huqqa* snake and is softly, but defiantly

---

<sup>30</sup> According to Fr. Keegan's *Sardhana and its Begum*, published in 1879, the scroll is symbolic of the emperor's *firman*, which conferred upon her the *jagir* of Sardhana. Source: John Lall (1997), *Begum Samru*: 179



held up by the Begum. The sculptor, through his understanding of the visual markers associated with the Begum of Sardhana is able to incorporate narrative, history, and the iconography of the figure being commemorated. She is adorned with her usual turban, Kashmiri shawl with embroidery depicted in relief. Her tunic is sculpted with many folds over her *pyjama* and pointed, curved shoes placed on a cushioned footrest, like most of her seated portraiture. Her throne and footrest are placed on top of a sienna-coloured pedestal. The contrast of colour separated the icon of the Begum from the realm of the living (at the time of the monument's construction). The second trunk is surrounded by four historical figures, who are the spiritual pallbearers and inheritors of the Begum's legacy.

The frontal figures were of a forlorn Dyce Sombre, mournfully gazing at the seated Begum, beyond earthly limits. On his right was the forward gazing, Diwan Rae Singh, her Prime Minister. Behind these two frontally placed figures were her cavalry commandant, Inayatullah Khan and the priest of her Basilica or church, Fr. Julius Caesar Scotti. These two figures also look forward.

The cylindrical trunk bears inscriptions in three languages, of which the English one says, "Sacred to the memory of Her Highness Joanna Zeb-ul-nisa, the Begam Sombre, styled the Distinguished of the Nobles and Beloved Daughter of the State, who quitted a transitory Court for an eternal world, revered and lamented by thousands of her devoted subjects, at her palace of Sardhana, on 27th January, 1836, aged ninety years. Her remains are deposited underneath, in this Cathedral built by herself. To her powerful mind, her remarkable talent and the wisdom, justice and moderation with which she governed for a period exceeding half a century, he to whom she was more than a mother is not the person to award the praise, but in grateful respect to her beloved memory in this monument erected by him who humbly trusts she will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (Fig 22)

The bottom tier, where the reproductions of earlier patronage happen, is perhaps interesting not just in the trans-mediality of the panels but also in the generous use of allegorical sculptures placed in a theatrical tableau.

There are three bas relief panels on the three visible sides of the sculpture. These relief panels are direct reproductions of commemorative paintings commissioned by the Begum in her lifetime—depicting the political, spiritual and military achievements of the Begum, and by extension, of Sardhana. Around this bottom, plinth were seven allegorical figures. A young woman with a club, with her foot over a defeated lion, the Angel of Time, a mysterious shrouded figure holding a snake, a melancholy old man, an Abundantia holding a cornucopia, a young child holding up a fruit to the Begum and a breastfeeding mother.

All of these allegorical figures are supposed to depict the attributes of the Begum or her governance. They also serve as symbols of mourning and mortality, especially the Angel of Time, the mournful old man, and the pensive, shrouded figure. The two young women who flank the back of the monument could present two qualities of the Begum's governance—active military protection and matriarchal nurturing of subjects. The child's depiction in proximity to the breastfeeding mother further perpetuates the Begum's supposed sympathy towards women and children. However, they could also have been symbolic memorials of Dyce Sombre's deceased children and concubine. While two of his children died in infancy, he was supposed to take his daughter, Penelope, to Europe in 1838. Not even three years old, the child died aboard the ship on her way to England (Fisher, 2010: 126–127).

Her death was a source of great anguish for him, but he was careful not to have his history of concubines or illegitimate children explicitly out in European gentile society. It is of interest that in the instructional sketch made by Tadolini, Dyce Sombre's statue is placed on the right-hand

side, above the Vecchio (old man), which would have put the breastfeeding woman and the toddler in front of her in the general area behind Dyce Sombre. The Abundantia, with her ever-flowing cornucopia, was a symbol of abundance and symbolic of what Dyce Sombre remembered of Sardhana. The angel of time, the melancholy old man and the shrouded mysterious serpent-holder were generic additions by the sculptor Tadolini. There is some autobiographical evidence of the mournful old man as a recycled image that Tadolini picked out from an earlier design for a monument for Count Demidoff<sup>31</sup>.

He was able to take such artistic liberty since, after 1841, Dyce Sombre's life had taken a turn for the worse: his removal as an M.P. of Sudbury and his deteriorating mental health, following which in a ruling of 1843, he was declared a "lunatic". The monument was often mentioned posthumously in the trial proceedings that covered what would become of his vast estate. Most of it eventually went to his wife, Mary Anne Dyce Sombre (nee Jervis). She later married a George Cecil Forrester, becoming Lady Forrester, one of London's richest women. The monument was mentioned as a defence of Dyce Sombre's mental faculties before the events of 1841–43 when he was declared a lunatic and his care (physical, mental, financial) would have been under his wife.

Anything he wrote after that as a will were not to be accepted as binding, except for when in exile, he had requested the court to release some funds beyond his monthly allowance so that he could pay the final instalments to Tadolini. In a letter written by Mary Anne Jervis, she described the monument and how "well it had come to be", but this letter never reached him. The transportation from 1843–48 was overseen by some East India Company officers and Antonio

---

<sup>31</sup> Tadolini laments that he wasn't able to include Vecchio in the Demidoff memorial but was able to include it in the grand monument to 'Princess Somb(re)'. Source: Tadolini (1900), *Recordi Autobiografici di Adamo Tadolini*

Reghelini, the Begum's architect back in Sardhana. Dyce Sombre's remains would only return to Sardhana to be interred next to the Begum in 1867.

The material of the sculptures was the prized Carrara marble, white in colour. That whiteness is vital to the functions of the tableau within the vocabulary of Neoclassical sculpture. Neoclassical material par excellence reveals the limit of racial difference and erases the presence of "colour" in a cross-racial setting of the tableau. The white marble presents an inability to represent the black or coloured body at the critical level of colour. C.A. Nelson points out that the material was an index of the "white anxiety about proximity to the racial Other" and provided an easy method to "produce a normative racial body as the white body". The chromophobia in the Neoclassical persists not as a way to "disavow white as a colour" (Nelson, 2007: 183), but as a way to produce white —or in other words, colorlessness — as the *only* standard of beauty repeatedly.

## Chapter 2: Mobilities

### Movements across Continents in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century

#### Introduction: The Grand Tour

This chapter is a *mise-en-scène* of the variables associated with the *mobility* of the Neoclassical Monument. The Grand Tour of Europe plays a crucial role in shaping taste and ideology in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most importantly, Rome (in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and Paris (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) became the two important centres of tourist patronage and artistic experimentation. The focus remains on Rome as an *entrepôt* of Neoclassical sculpture for its abundance of studios engaging in marble. Its proximity to the Vatican, thereby giving it prime importance in Catholicism, and its reincarnated connection to the ancient civilization of the Roman Empire — and by extension, the ancient Greeks.

The discussions of travel and mobility take on a historical trajectory in the case of travelling artists in India, particularly of European origin. The mobility of persons and objects has been a global phenomenon across time. Whether displaced, extracted, moved or sent across countries and continents, things in movement have charged biographies that one can unpack with a transcultural lens. When made in Europe, neoclassical sculptural objects have different meanings; meanings are recoded when placed or re-made or ‘finished’ in other continents.

Within the historical context of the Grand Tour and European Artists of Anglo-India, object biography and the transcultural nature of mobile objects help shape the text towards exploring the importance of movement in the *monument's* becoming, travels and installation. It becomes part of the global history of the export of Neoclassical sculpture, complicating the meanings associated with other exports, such as those to North American and Latin American countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Adamo Tadolini's studio, as a part of this international network, was engaged in making copies and original monumental works such as the statues of Simon Bolivar for Lima, Peru and Caracas, Venezuela; and the *Monument to Begum Samru of Sardhana*<sup>32</sup> for Sardhana, India. The discussion over the *monument* takes place in letters, testimonies, and autobiographical texts<sup>33</sup>, as its making and transportation run parallel to the unceremonious expulsion of its patron from political life, his incompatible marriage to an English Viscount's daughter, and subsequent charges of lunacy.

The merits and disadvantages of the Grand Tour were heavily discussed and debated in Britain, and the greatest number of 'Grand Tourists' belonged to the British aristocracy and bourgeois classes. The increase in tourism among the British elite led to the formation of tourist neighbourhoods or colleges in prime cities like Rome and Paris. The usual itinerary of the Grand Tour for a British traveller began with reaching Paris — mostly from Dover to cross to Calais — and covered almost all major Italian cities: Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples. Tourists made flexible itineraries according to personal preference and social visits to nobles residing in these regions.

The factors of war, disease, uprising, fashion, food and weather decided the duration and ways of the Tour. For example, British tourists left Rome for Naples in December. Upon return to Rome in the spring, tourists could then head to Northern Italy. The timely departure would ensure safety from the summer heat and rising risks of malaria. Some tourists from Britain also went to Germany (then the Holy Roman Empire) and used the Dutch port, Helyoetslyus, to begin their

---

<sup>32</sup> Tadolini names the monument as '*il monumento alla principessa Begum Sombe di New Delhi (1838)*', on the sketch/design sheet used as a study for the monument. Sardhana as an imagined location was popular among those who had traveled to, or had read stories from India. For an Italian sculptor of Rome, New Delhi was perhaps more recognizable than Sardhana as an imagined place. See: Claudio L. Pisano (2000) *Lo Studio di Adamo Tadolini*: 57

<sup>33</sup> The bulk of which remain as part of the *Dyce Sombre Papers* at the Staffordshire Archives, UK.

journeys during Anglo-French tensions. The Baltic and Mediterranean regions did not see as many tourists (Black, 1985: 3–4).

The Grand Tourists sought a cultural experience. Italian painting was of great value since itinerant and transferable cultural experiences of French cuisine and Italian opera were often sampled in London (Black, 1985: 147). However, the static nature of art and architecture attracted British tourists responsible for spurring the production of sculpture and painting for exports by their patronage. Paintings on most themes, including religion, were bought by these tourists. Apart from a cultural experience, young British aristocrats had easy access to gambling dens, sex workers and other forms of semi-legal, morally ‘questionable’ entertainment. A rise in cases of venereal disease and perhaps, an imagined fear of increasing signs of Catholicism contributed to sharp criticisms of the Grand Tour.

Other grounds of the attack were to do with cost, time and other dangers. As an opportunity to lead men “astray”, it was attacked by guardians, parents, even tourists themselves (Black, 1985: 160).

Such criticism was often seen in print, in theatre and other public forums. The primary defence of the Grand Tour by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, though not as vigorous, was that it was an educational opportunity and duty of the British aristocrat to make a secular pilgrimage of sorts, to absorb and learn by experience, the cultural legacy of European society, of which they were inheritors. This defence, too, was never as articulate and pronounced. Even then, young aristocrats were almost always sent abroad. Later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Grand Tour also took on an aspect of *leisure* instead of education. Tourists travelled not just to see and hear all there was to see but also to enjoy themselves in beautiful lands away from home. In the

19<sup>th</sup> century, so many English tourists resided in Rome that journals in English began to be published<sup>34</sup>.

Rome became the most important centre for the understanding of art. A thoroughly cosmopolitan city, it became indispensable to the Grand Tour. However, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the focus on Rome was slightly waning due to Napoleon's attack on papal states and the shift of some of Rome's cultural paraphernalia to Paris<sup>35</sup>.

However, it was during Napoleon's time that Antonio Canova, the Neoclassical sculptor found his fame. The adaptability of 18th-century Roman art — with a lack of a nationalist trait — represented a 'European' (predominantly white) identity that allowed Rome to be a so-called 'melting pot' of artistic ideas. The unifying European aesthetic ideal that found its flourishing in Rome was the Neoclassical style, obsessed with historical accuracy. Artists came from all over Europe, even the Americas, to learn the technique of the Neoclassical. They had access to other studios, museums, historical paintings, and the ruins of the Roman and Greek civilisations.

For most Grand Tour studies, the focus has been on finding out empirical data. The preferred sources have also been travel writing, biographies and official records of transport. In his series on the history of the Grand Tour, Jeremy Black lays out the details of the itinerary, stay, activities related to business, leisure, pleasure, religion, and art. Other writings in a recently edited

---

<sup>34</sup> Known as 'The Roman Advertiser', appearing in Rome from 24 October 1846 to 21 April 1849, the weekly was published during the early years of the Italian *Risorgimento*, and was somewhat sympathetic towards the cause of Italian unification. It also provided details of how culturally and socially the foreign residents operated during those tumultuous years. Its publication was possible due to lifting of censorship after Pope Pius IX acceded to the papal high office on 15 June 1846, following Pope Gregory XVI, who had granted David Dyce Sombre a Knighthood of the Pontifical Order of Christ after a generous donation from Begum Samru before her death in the 1820s–30s. Such a publication was a cultural reaction to a noticeable presence of English-speaking residents in Rome and all of Italy, since for a Roman bookseller to print and distribute such a journal would require the promise of profit. In 1847, when press censorship was abolished in Tuscany, a second journal called *The Tuscan Atheneum*, ran in Florence for a terribly short three months. Source: Sybille Pantazzi (Winter, 1980), 'The Roman Advertiser, 1846–1849', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4: 119 (119–124)

<sup>35</sup> Tom Stabile (Spring, 2000), "A World of Spectacle: "Rome in the Eighteenth Century", *The Classical Outlook*, 77(3): 105-107, Online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43938317>



volume by Lisa Colletta recognise the ‘legacy of the Grand Tour in creating a long-lasting fascination’ with the culture of Italy, France, and their landscape (Colletta, 2015). In the late 1990s, Kay Dian Kriz pointed out the lack of methodological novelty in the study of the Grand Tour, usually associated with the contemporary studies of voyages, travel, exchange etc. The following quote illustrates his point succinctly:

*“Lacking a critical theory of the subject and of representation, many Grand Tour studies are unable to analyse systematically the ongoing and often vexed processes of identity formation (both individual and communal) that are effected through the social exchanges, institutional forms, and representational practices involved in this particular form of travel.”* (Kay Dian Kriz, 1997: 88)

The Grand Tour was exclusive, reaffirming the place of the male ruling elite in a socio-cultural hierarchy, allowing only those with a vast fortune to access elite and somewhat cosmopolitan circles of Paris, Rome and Naples. However, it was also a significant moment in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that shaped aesthetic taste and moral standards and helped make new political subjects.

In the introduction to the edited journal, Kriz provocatively asks the reader to interrogate the relation of the Grand Tour with other kinds of travel and its meaning for different communities and individuals. Kriz discusses the work of Chloe Chard, who expertly interrogates the male gaze in the itinerant consumption of ‘art’ and culture during the Grand Tour. Chard can demonstrate via travel accounts that there is a touristic attraction to and fascination with ancient ruins and ‘foreign’ women. Both ruins and the women are subject to a “dual demand for mystery and accessibility” (Kriz, 1997: 88–89)

Dyce Sombre, in his diaries, often recorded the multiple women he sought for sex. His apartment in Paris — where he intermittently lived between 1843 and 1851 — had several works of art, often of extreme sexual themes. They provoked reactions from several of his visitors and even his landlady. Most of them eventually submitted contradictory testimonials either supporting or denying (or both) his claim of sanity at the Chancery Court.

Dyce Sombre was not unique in his collection of erotic art, and there had been both a fascination with the access to sex workers and a long-standing moral debate against the Grand Tour due to this perceived ‘access’ back in Britain. The debate, however, was ‘moral’ and not a measurement of sanity. His commission of the *monument* by Tadolini was cited as the work of a sane, sensitive mind eventually corrupted either by the dissonance experienced in Europe or due to a mysterious illness<sup>36</sup>. Visitors described his private collections in his Paris apartment (as they are currently lost to us) and further used by prosecutors as evidence of a ‘depraved’, ‘Asiatic’ mind where jealousy, obsession with spirits and unrestrained sexual impulses were seen as ‘common.’

The Grand Tour was a highly exclusive elite club of travellers belonging to aristocratic classes. Artists during this period relied heavily on grants and prizes to undertake their voyages on the continent. However, several European artists made their way to the newly established ‘colonies’ simultaneously. European-origin artists in South Asia undertook complete tours of the region in search of the picturesque, acquiring and reproducing the visions of the empire that their parent states were in the process of acquiring. They were welcomed by a community of Anglo-

---

<sup>36</sup> His recorded episodes of impropriety and violent delusions could have been due to excessive alcohol consumption, late stages of syphilis, or as Michael H. Fisher speculates, due to high consumption of betel nuts. It could also have been that the instances of public urination, verbal fights, talk of *djinn*s etc. were general habits of Dyce Sombre, not accepted in English society. The reason for claiming lunacy then, was a notion of non-agreeability of the particular individual and the disruption they cause in the social decorum of the time. A further study of the lunatic asylums (especially Bedlam), can tell us of the selection of who undergoes incarceration. A Foucauldian lens in this matter also points material and architectural function of incarceration of the so-called ‘lunatic’, ‘melancholic’, ‘insane’ individuals as social constructions.

Indians, who had established towns and cities in critical locations on the subcontinent. Artists usually began from one of the Presidencies. They travelled through while producing many paintings, sketches and prints for contractual patrons in the subcontinent or audiences back in Europe.

### **18–19<sup>th</sup>-century Anglo-Indians in Art History**

The category of ‘Anglo-Indian’ in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century referred more to the persons of British and European blood working and living in India. Anglo-Indian, as of yet, did not refer to those with mixed-race heritage. They were inadequately recognised, termed “mixed-breed” or “half-caste”, which relegated them to a space of restrictive liminality, a neither-here-nor-there position. And as the socially constructed categories of caste and race operate, when a person is born into them, they are to remain permanently part of them.

The Anglo-Indians and mixed-race persons of European paternal descent formed a diverse group of people, constantly mixing and experimenting with modes of living and cultural expression. The interaction of multiple artists and travel-writers with the landscape and people in India resulted in numerous paintings of mixed media or style, architecture involving mixed motifs, objects being plundered or exchanged, and many ‘non-native’ but acculturated settlers in both Britain and India.

Mildred Archer has exhaustively charted the career of European artists in Anglo-India: such as Johann Zoffany, Tilly Kettle, Ozias Humphrey etc. She has noted that Anglo-India provided them with “view after view” and a plethora of subjects to paint (Archer, 1979, 1980). Their paintings were full of visual stimuli, and their history paintings (of war between the Indians and the English, such as *The Storming of Seringapatam*) were also highly valued. However, it was notable that even when the reward for European painters was high in Anglo-India, it was not

necessarily a financial lifeboat for mediocre artists. The cities of Anglo-India were few, and the society was only a few thousand strong. Patronage was hard to come by and was limited to either British officials or Indian royals. Meanwhile, the genres of the sublime, the picturesque and the exotic received much attention from the Orientalist gaze of Empire.

Archer also notes that the most appreciable careers were of those young painters who received their training in England and went to India, where they cultivated what Anglo-India had to offer. Notably, they were Tilly Kettle (Faizabad *Dancing Girl*), George Willison (Studies of the Nawab of Arcot's family), John Seton (*Unknown Gentleman with hookah*), Thomas Hickey (*Indian Lady, perhaps Jamdane*), Robert Home, Chinnery and the Daniells (who worked with Aquatints). According to Archer, the decline of the best period of British artistry in Anglo-India had possibly begun with the departure of George Chinnery to Macao in 1825.

Recently, the 2019 Exhibition titled *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company* has attempted to reorient the loosely grouped paintings of the 'Company' school, which were often un-attributed to individuals but rather individuals to styles. The curator and editor of the publication, William Dalrymple, noted that this period was far more racially mixed than the Raj proper, marked by segregation and legal codes of behaviour, in the garb of a civilisational mission (Dalrymple, 2019).

The lack of legality and a socially instructive empire does not mean that racial power dynamics did not exist; it was apparent in the sexual relations between the Europeans and Indian women and the legitimacy and security provided (or withdrawn) to these women and children. Even after such 'provisions', the power lay in the hands of patriarchal heads of family or fathers. The children of such unions were anglicised and rarely un-baptised.

In another essay about the ‘White Mughals’, Dalrymple notes that often, these men were curiosities for Europeans who visited them in their ‘Eastern’ residences. Sir David Ochterlony’s anxieties over the future of his Eurasian daughters and the possible discrimination they would face as children from a ‘native woman’, “in spite of (their fair) complexion”, points to an awareness of *race* as a social construction — that was dependent on place of birth, clothing, customs, gender, religion etc., and not just skin colour (Dalrymple, 2006: 66).

Colourism could have affected the sexual relations between European men and native women. Dalrymple notes the diverse descriptions of William Fraser’s so-called eccentricities: his ‘half-Asiatic ways’, his readiness to go to war, abstinence from pork and beef. A French botanist amongst others described him with lavish praise, calling him pensive, adventurous, humane and most pacific “: . . . To him, the most pleasurable emotion is that aroused by danger: such is the explanation of what people call his madness. . . (otherwise) you would take him as a Quaker.” (Dalrymple, 2006: 70).

According to Natasha Eaton, it took a considerable amount of time and changes in power structures between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries for European painting styles to be accepted by Indian rulers. During the reign of Jahangir, for example, Thomas Roe noted that a European oil painting was not to the Emperor’s liking, and he preferred miniatures as they were closer to the Mughal ways of seeing. This preference for miniatures was seen throughout even as the colonial rule in India proliferated. But with the establishment and thriving of Colonial strongholds like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, European styles of oil painting and kingly portraiture gained some traction in the courts of Arcot, Awadh, Murshidabad etc. In noting the very high prices extracted by colonial painters of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Eaton notes that since the miniaturists were already skilled at

incorporating European styles of painting, it was the “high alterity of the alien medium of oil” that gave them the bargaining position to ask for more money (Eaton, 2000: 300).

Indian artists faced a loss of courtly patronage and were repeatedly dislocated from one court to another. While towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of middle-class Indians, patronage began to shift from courts to the public, it did not happen homogeneously and certainly did not happen overnight. On the other hand, British artists were already forced to enter the market to sell their art to clientele instead of patrons in the eighteenth century. Their careers in India were lucrative, partly due to mythologies around the excessive indulgence of Indian rulers as ‘oriental despots’ and their abilities to demand hefty sums for their services.

Tapati Guha-Thakurta notes that with colonial rule and Western education, a new ‘notion’ of ‘fine arts’ came into the Indian subcontinent. While formal British art education took off from the 1850s, it had solidified itself as an aesthetic form much earlier. The genres of life-size portraiture, picturesque landscapes, Oriental views, antique studies and neoclassical compositions had become elements that defined a new kind of taste. They were separate from the applied arts or the manufactured art. Industrial design was coming into its own in England and the rest of Europe, and the ‘fine arts’ required being defined aesthetically and philosophically (Guha-Thakurta, 1992).

In her study of the historiography of 18th-century art history in India, Natasha Eaton discussed various viewpoints around the ‘Imperial’ turn in art history, which studies the imperialist impulses and processes of colonialism behind the art of the time. To some degree, colonialism and the hand of the East India Company is inextricable from the story of Begum Samru’s monument as well. As Eaton points out, there have been recent approaches where it is the agency of art objects that foreground imperialism as a defining feature of how they came to be, how they were put in circulation, and even where they have ended up in the present day (Eaton, 2012: 16). Objects

become the carrier and tangible evidence of a legacy of colonial and imperialist enterprise that is not just a relic of history. The continued, inherited, skin-deep evidence of both the violence of colonialism and the heterogeneous nature of ‘European’ art styles are white-washed because of their import from other parts of the world<sup>37</sup>.

By exporting such art objects to other parts of the world — especially the Neoclassical monument in this case — these art objects (especially architecture, grand sculptures, and even paintings) become emblems of the hegemonic public display of imperialism. As part of public spaces in erstwhile colonies or as possessions in museums in former coloniser nations, they perform specific functions. These functions are silent and maybe even insidious. More than becoming emblems of a past criminal system, they hark back to the ‘glory days’ of the powerful empire. At once, they are both reminders of trauma and deposits of nostalgia.

The labour, ideology and material transport networks involved in their making and installation are essential sources of exhuming the imperialist impetus that cannot be removed from the history of European colonial art, of Neoclassicism and by far, the rest of Eurocentric art history. An argument made by Christopher Pinney further interrogates the Europeanness of European artistic enterprise of the time when the art and culture of other spaces have been a “shadowy presence” throughout its history, and when British art itself is hybridised and creolised where the visual imaginaries of exotic places like Turkey or ancient Rome always find their way into art (Pinney, 2003).

---

<sup>37</sup> Natasha Eaton mentions how scholars like Bernard Porter actually do not consider the Anglo-Indians before 1870s to behave in an imperial fashion. Rather, the execution of monuments, paintings, etc was propaganda in the time of economic and political crisis in Britain. Eaton notes that Porter’s argument is purely quantitative, and is heavily dependent on how many artworks and monuments ‘looking’ imperial. See Natasha Eaton (2012), “Enchanted Traps”: 26

Natasha Eaton further notes how new scholarship has, in part, alluded to the East India Company's role as Patron. While earlier the EIC was dismissed as thrifty, its directors were eager to invest in expensive representations of its most successful military personnel. Full marble statues of Watson and Robert Clive adorned Westminster Abbey. There was some interest in cosmopolitan possibilities of Hindu sculptures, which (or plaster casts of which) along with other archaeological remains, were shipped to Britain by the officials of the EIC. However, the large-scale commissions of memorial monuments of public nature to colonial men and women exported the visuality of the empire to the spaces of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (Eaton, 2012: 21).

She notes the obsessive production of the *Picturesque* in many of the artists' work on and in India. She notes it as a way of preserving what the empire erases in the 'colony'. As a genre, it also gave way to amateur artists like Fanny Parkes to participate in the visual reproduction of the colonised land and its people. It also provided a way out of the 'fundamental colonial condition of boredom', and sketching tours distracted from the active reconfiguration of the lands by opium and indigo planters (Eaton, 2012: 25).

The churches of the presidencies and their cemeteries became public reminders of the artistic imperialism of Neoclassicism. What happens then, if such a monument in the Neoclassical style is imported from Rome, in memory of an Indian Catholic convert — born a Muslim — *Begum* of North India? The stereotypes of Orientalist fantasies around her courtesan past notwithstanding, how is a public monument to be seen? There may be nothing peculiar or even revolutionary in the readings of the *Begum's* monument, especially after her diverse representations in paintings that have been mentioned in the previous chapter. However, by the value of sheer representation or the mere existence of such an object, amongst many other aberrations, Neoclassicism's history is problematised and globalised beyond the vestiges of colonial administration.



Artists such as Johann Zoffany (Figure 1), William Hodges, Tilly Kettle et al., belonged to wealthy families, participated in the Grand Tour in Europe, and were members of the prestigious Society of Artists or the Royal Academy. The EIC provided them with permission to travel to the presidencies after recommendation letters from leading public figures and security bonds of enormous sums of money when successful painters of the time only earned a fraction of those amounts yearly. In India, they travelled and worked beyond the Presidencies, at the Indian courts of Arcot, Faizabad, Pune and Lucknow, and went on exhaustive tours of the subcontinent for sketching tours (Eaton, 2012: 22).

The question of ethics in the colonisation of the empire was also brought up, with many feeling sympathies for the colonised India's 'gentoos', especially during the impeachment trials of Warren Hastings. The Romantic poet/artist William Blake was highly critical of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the President of the Academy, for a 'chauvinistic endorsement of empire'. According to Blake, the empire ruined creativity and enslaved artists. In his view, the Academy structurally mimicked French and Italian art institutions and naively 'worshipped the despotism of ancient Greece and Rome'. The Academy and all its artists to him felt like mere pawns in a war that would never be able to produce *art* (Eaton, 2012: 28).

The recent work of many scholars such as Rosie Lewellyn-Jones, Maya Jasanoff, Penelope Treadwell, amongst others<sup>38</sup>, have further studied pockets of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to uncover the interactions of migrating poets and artists from the Mughal capital, with colonial painters like Zoffany at the cultural centre of Lucknow. Their patrons were also Europeans with mixed political loyalties—Antoine de Polier (b. 1741–d. 1795), Claude Martin (b. 1735–d. 1800) and John

---

<sup>38</sup> Holly Shaffer's 2021 book *Grafted Arts: The Marathas and the British in Western India, 1760–1820*, focuses on how Maratha military rulers and East India Company officials used art and paintings in the realm of diplomacy, generating devotion, waging war etc.

Wombwell (Accountant for the EIC at Lucknow, b. 1755–1795). They experimented with visual identity markers that made these men sometimes look ‘almost’ Indian<sup>39</sup>. Perhaps the difficulties in the classifications of many later 18th-century Indian paintings are also due to their multi-tiered anonymity. Their dates, authorship, locations were not given any importance as they were merely collectables and souvenirs. However, the recent focus on them through the study of networks reorients the critical gaze back at the Empire. The potentialities of circulation, travel, reconfigurations, production of hybridity, contradictions could all provide indications to *what* images and objects across time and place can *hold*. Even the collections and sketches by women artists and travellers, such as Fanny Parkes, became a way for others to visualise and, by extension, take pride in the Empire's existence. Other painters and travellers set up cultural epicentres within India. The Indian born Sir Charles D'Oyly (b. 1781–d. 1845) was an amateur artist operating from Calcutta, Dhaka and Patna in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Mixed race families that existed in 18<sup>th</sup>-century India were controversial and contributed to the ideas of the moral degeneration of the Anglo-Indian *nabobs*. However, the generalisation of the Anglo-Indian residents as both cruel exploiters of the Indian masses—of which they were at least complicit, or directly involved in varying degrees—or debauched and corrupt individuals taking on “Eastern” practices of the much-exoticised *harem* was sometimes exemplified and countered by art. One painting, in particular, is *The Palmer Family* (Fig. 2), the authorship of which was contested heavily over the 20<sup>th</sup> century—with the British Museum attributing it to Zoffany and the Italian painter Francesco Renaldi—before finally being attributed to Arthur

---

<sup>39</sup> Especially in the case of Mihr Chand's painting of Colonel Polier's enjoyment of a dancer's performance. Chand paints the European in full white and flowing Indian garb, complete with a *huqqa* and seated on a sofa. His skin and facial hair are subtly painted lighter than other persons in the painting. Painting: *Colonel Polier's Nautch*, by Mihr Chand. Oudh, Lucknow or Faizabad; ca. 1780; Page: H. 28.7 cm., W. 39.1 cm.; Miniature: H. 18.9 cm., W. 28.1 cm

William Devis (b.1762–d.1822). On the British Library website, it still remains attributed to Zoffany (Greig, 2008).

The painting humanizes the subject to the degree that is invisible in Zoffany's portraits which, while remaining elegant and sensitive, are also patronizing of its non-white subjects. While Devis makes sure to hold the Englishman at the pinnacle of the portrait, his image is of the loving patriarch who looks adoringly at his Muslim wife, Begum Faiz Baksh of Delhi, flanked by other members of the family and possibly, nannies or *ayahs*. The two young children, William and Mary, stand in close proximity to their mother while the baby Hastings is in her lap.

The loosely painted background focuses the eye on individual portraiture. The frontal gaze of Begum Faiz Baksh is a statement of her legitimate position in the family. The painting is possibly from 1785, after the baptism of baby Hastings in Calcutta. Charles Greig notes that the “relaxed elegance of the figures, the sensitivity with which they have each been painted, the intimacy of the scene, subdued palettes, and the poses of the subsidiary figures are all characteristics of Devis.” (Greig, 2008: 20–21)

One can think of artistic gazes as lying between the categories of dehumanization, wit, objective representations, sympathy and curiosities. In the case of Devis and the Palmers, the artist's gaze and the patron's expectations work synergistically to humanise and intimately appreciate the human interactions during the late eighteenth century. However, it does not take away the fact that power, patriarchy and race are immovable from even the most sensitive portrayals of the Anglo-Indian mixed-race family.

The patriarch, the white man, is positioned geometrically at the centre. His benevolent but authoritative gaze orients the viewer to look at the aesthetically beautiful and light-skinned features of his Begum. The children are Anglicised, baptised, and named English names after the father's

*side*. The painting betrays no Muslim or Mughal custom in bringing up the children as if to soothe the anxieties of the English society in India and back in Europe. The darker-skinned women blend with the darker backgrounds, and only the young mother's sister is painted with brightened skin.

Interestingly, the British officer marries a Mughal royal, as it serves the only possible occasion in which an Indian mother and her children are legitimised as 'family'. It is evident of a social aspect of race, where the women in the painting are racially different from the man, even inferior. But between these women, there is another visually stark difference of their class and their colour. It decides who is given the stage to be looked at and to look back at the viewer. It provides the light-skinned royal mother of English children to invite the mostly English audience to look at her and accept her into their fold as an equal because of her social status as a princess and the superior of the other women (possibly of lower caste and class status) in the painting.

Griselda Pollock studies how psychosocial symbols construct and perpetuate a hierarchy of imperialism (Pollock, 2003). She discusses a side-lining of the Indian *other* in the cockfight painting (Fig. 3) of Johann Zoffany. Through colour, dynamism and crowd study, the artist has imbued a learnt difference between the English and Indian men.

Zoffany subtly presents the 'other' with visual codes alluding to an infantilised incompetence, in contrast with the relentless dynamism of the English. The witty painter paints himself into the painting (which was made for Warren Hastings). He is seen at the edge of the scene, almost uninterested in the deep play of cockfighting in a coding competition of masculinities. In the other notable painting he made at Oudh, the trio of Antoine Polier, Claude Martin, and John Wombwell (Figure 4), he paints himself with the three, at work on his canvas, painting barely clothed men, possibly *sadhus* or ascetics next to a huge banyan tree.

While his portraiture is very skilled, and his constructions of scenes very calculated, his self-placing within the painting points to a conscious effort of visualising the British Empire and its dominion over the Indian lands and its curiosities. This entire painting is a testimony of Imperial knowledge production. Zoffany was quite skilled at producing visual representations of complete knowledge systems. One such painting *Tribuna of the Uffizi* (Figure 5), is one of his best-known works. Commissioned by Queen Charlotte in 1772–77, it remains at the Windsor Castle today.

### **Neoclassicism and its Mobility in Europe and the Americas**

The appreciation and advent of Neoclassical art happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, during which Europe was undergoing several simultaneous changes. The industrial boom, technological advancement and cultural vibrancy was due to the economic boom and an ever-increasing colonising enterprise. It was also when moral and intellectual superiority was self-ascribed to European society, especially in art, as they attempted to reach the Greek 'beauty' ideal. Winckelmann, one of the proponents of ideal Greek 'beauty', was a German art historian and an influential figure in the Neoclassical movement of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. His *History of Art* (1764) was perhaps the first work of art history that attempted to outline the differences between Greek, Greco-Roman and Roman Art.

Winckelmann's observations and writings are increasingly significant because as a papal antiquarian, his role was to guide many British, German and other Northern European gentlemen on their tour through the ruins of Rome. As a gay man, he was able to run in elite circles in Rome, where he found himself to be more accessible than the repressive city in Prussia, where he grew up in relative poverty. He also had access to an underground network of pubs, brothels and nightly haunts that, according to Whitney Davis, could have had a similar appeal to contemporary queer subcultures around specific bars and nightclubs. Even Winckelmann's appreciation of the Greek

ideals of beauty in the male form was consistent with his self-definition. Davis notes that to get to Rome and experience the freedom he desired, Winckelmann converted to Catholicism and pursued Classical studies (Davis, 2009: 37). In his 1755 text, ‘Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture’, he meditated on the “noble simplicity and quiet grandeur” visible in Greek sculptures — such as the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD Laocoon — of Greek art. As visible in the great specimens of Greek sculpture, ideal forms of beauty were the work of the mind and not simply a study of nature.

An expression of restraint and martyr-like quiet suffering were admirable to Winckelmann, who remarked that the artist must feel the strength of the spirit in himself to be able to “impart” it to the marble. Winckelmann emphasised the importance of expressing intellectual prowess, nobility of the soul, and strength of spirit as qualities distinguished between admirable Greek sculptures and some of the more dynamic sculptures made in his time. For him, the younger, more inexperienced sculptors in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century were making their sculptures with “an error of conception”, which ancient artists called *parenthyrsos*, which he described as a situation where the movements and poses of Greek figures were not marked by wisdom, but by passion and violence (Winckelmann, 2009[1755]: 30).

In the *monument* at Sardhana, the figure carefully drawn with a “noble simplicity” that would find the approval of Winckelmann is that of the patron, David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre. His figure is dressed, as was the convention at the time, while resting his face on his elbow, looking at his dearly departed benefactress with restrained sadness. This funerary sculpture marked the loss of many things — land, family, political and military control etc. — for Dyce Sombre, that were emblematically imbibed in the sculpture of Begum Samru.

While the *monument* at Sardhana remains a rarity in North India, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian sculptures were in high demand west of the Atlantic. Luca Bochicchio charts the history and recent interest in Neoclassical Imports to North and South America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bochicchio, 2012).

Italian sculpture was spread in the Americas in 4 forms: architecture, public monuments, funerary sculpture, and exhibitions. Critical perspectives perhaps began to change in the 1970s due to international collaborative events, such as a conference on Neoclassicism in London in 1971 (Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art or CIHA 1973<sup>40</sup>), the exhibition titled *Metamorphoses in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, a book of the same name published by Harvard University Press in 1975 with Jeanne L. Wasserman as Editor, and the 24<sup>th</sup> Conference of CIHA in 1979.

Italian art historians have provided well-researched scholarship of the various artists and materials of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>41</sup>. Thus, the transcultural nature of Neoclassical sculpture has been studied in some detail. However, that flow of the transcultural is limited to Europe and the North and South Americas. Italian emigration to the Americas, especially Latin Americas in the early 1800s was due to the resonance some felt between struggles for Latin independence and the repression of Italian revolutionary aspirations (Bochicchio, 2012: 71).

The popularity of Italian sculpture was due to its connections with Classical Roman tradition. The import of copies of classic Italian masterpieces did not stop until the early 1900s.

---

<sup>40</sup> Published volume of Conference Proceedings: Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art, ed. 1973, *Neoclassicismo*, Genova: Istituto di Storia dell'Arte dell'Università degli Studi di Genova

<sup>41</sup> Notable examples of such scholarship are: conferences— *Le periferie della memoria* (Torino, 1992); *L'altra Italia – Architettura dell'Ecllettismo ed emigrazione colta nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento* (Jesi, 1998); the ILLA international conference *Il patrimonio culturale nei paesi andini: prospettive a livello regionale e di cooperazione* (Cartagena de Indias, 2005); the exhibition *Risorgimento fra due mondi. Immagini del Risorgimento italiano in America Latina* (Genova, 2005-2006); the ASCE international conference *Lo splendore della scultura nei cimiteri europei* (Verona, 2007). See: Luca Bochicchio (2012): 83. Another notable contribution to this field is the 2013 exhibition titled *Roma Fuori di Roma: L'esportazione dell'arte moderna da Pio VI all'Unità (1775-1870)*

Inversely, American visitors in Rome were compelled to commission or buy a piece of art in what can be described as a lure or contagion. Often Italian sculptors would move to the Americas to realise a particular project, staying for long periods. Sometimes, the artist would send a draft of his final work from their studio, which would be ‘finished’ by carvers already living in the Americas (usually Italian). The well-used channel between Italian harbours sent such finished and half-finished works across the Atlantic and onto the Pacific coasts (Bochicchio, 2012: 73).

Even as early as 1770, there was a considerable amount of marble shipping between ports of Toscano (Livorno and Forte Dei Marmi) and Baltimore for use as components of buildings more often than in artistic use.

Italy was the first supplier of marble building materials like blocks and slabs and marble and alabaster objects to Argentina. Italian bronze also played a significant role as a part of the exchange, especially as artwork. In the export of Bronze artworks, it was second only to France in all of Europe. Non-artistic export of Bronze from Italy was pretty lower than France, Germany or the United States.<sup>42</sup>

Canadian visitors also reached Rome in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Quebec. Among them were Catholic bishops, writers, scholars of history, and artists. Like Dyce Sombre, they were drawn to Rome out of the similar religious culture that the city shared with Quebec: Catholicism. Similar to Sardhana, and on a much larger scale, the first diffusion of Italian sculpture in eastern Canada was in the Canadian Catholic Church, which as an institution was able to mediate a significant transfer of commissions that decorated and furnished the churches, cathedrals and other built entities.

The work of Maria Elizia Borges deals with the correlation between trading routes and the diffusion of Italian sculpture, focusing on the province of Ribeirão Preto, 300 kilometres north of

---

<sup>42</sup> An example of an early artistic use is the statue of Benjamin Franklin made in 1789 by Francesco Lazzarini from Carrara. Source: Luca Bochicchio (2012), ‘Transported Art’: 74



São Paulo, Brazil. It was easier for Italian marble (artworks and otherwise) to travel the distance from ports to the new cities of a prospering Brazilian aristocracy because of the roads and railway network laid in place after the proliferation of plantations.

Italian workshops sprang up in these new agricultural and commercial epicentres such as Campinas, Amparo, Piracicaba etc. Marble came from Carrara, and sculptures were used for civil and funerary monuments. Between 1840 and 1940, the urban spaces, private buildings and graves at the Colón cemetery of La Habana, Cuba, were decorated by Italian *marmolerías*<sup>43</sup>. For many Italian business people trading in artefacts, having a studio in Carrara, Italy, was seen as a marker of good work. They had the connections to import statues and “masterpiece” copies from Carrara and could contract famous sculptors of the time for commissions for public or private viewing (Bochicchio, 2012: 75).

Adamo Tadolini, the sculptor of the Sardhana *monument*, won an international competition in 1853 and made a bronze equestrian statue of Simon Bolívar, one of the leaders of Latin American independence. The runner-up created the marble pedestal on which the bronze statue was positioned. It was the first equestrian statue in South America and now sits in Lima, Peru (Fig. 6). The themes depicted in Neoclassical monuments made for the Americas were more to do with Classical Roman traditions.

When erecting statues of significant historical and contemporary figures, Latin American countries enthusiastically commissioned the aristocratic personalities of Europe. For example, the first posthumously made monument of Giuseppe Mazzini, influential in the Italian Risorgimento, was erected in Buenos Aires. It was created by Giulio Monteverde in 1876 and inaugurated in Argentina in 1878 (Fig. 7).

---

<sup>43</sup> *Marmolería* means a marble mason’s workshop in Spanish.

The American continents celebrated two Italian figures considerably in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: Giuseppe Garibaldi and Christopher Columbus. The several statues commissioned of them was perhaps a way of showing “approval” to a Western development of these regions. Columbus was associated with symbols of individual success, exploration, Christianity, science etc. It is worthy of notice how the meanings of the exact historical figures change with time as political discourse changes.

With the rise of Black Lives Matter protests across the Americas in 2020, one saw the statues of Columbus as a specific target of politically charged desecration (Fig. 8). Here, the placards and poured over red paint symbolically recognised the genocidal erasure and violent imposition of Europe’s imperialist aspirations. Columbus is often seen as the figure who ushered in an era of several European traders and eventually colonial armed forces, which executed a genocidal take over from the indigenous Native American tribes and peoples. The history of Neoclassical decoration is also the history of a violent erasure and imposition of an American “culture” that is palatable to a “Western” imagination.

In North America, Jane Stanford commissioned Antonio Bernieri to build a copy of a statue depicting the Angel of Grief<sup>44</sup> in 1901 at Carrara (Fig. 9). It was loaded from the port of Genoa onto a steamship to New Orleans, from where it reached Palo Alto. The iconographic model of the Angel of Grief was replicated in Colma, Chico, Hayward, Oakland, New Orleans, Columbus, Houston, Scottsville, New York, and St. Louis (Bochicchio, 2012: 80). 19<sup>th</sup>-century funerary sculpture increasingly consisted of progressive secularisation of symbols. Thus, while being associated with Christian iconographic tradition, the angel of grief was also emblematic of

---

<sup>44</sup> The original ‘The Angel of Grief Weeping Over the Dismantled Altar of Life’ was made by the American sculptor in Rome, William Wetmore Story, for his deceased wife, Emelyn Story in 1894.

experience and feeling. The iconography of funerary sculpture became more unrecognisable and unfamiliar.

The Neoclassical was not simply a period of the revival of Classical ideas and art. It was also a pedagogical exercise for many. In Britain, the distinction between Neoclassical and Antiquarian politics of displaying classical objects was not airtight. In Wolfgang Ernst's text on the Museological Imagination and Historical Discourse in Neoclassical Britain, he discusses the private house-museum of Sir John Soane.

The arrangement of his museum dome creates a visual narrative of what Ernst compares to Johann Zoffany's painting of Charles Townley in His Library. With a close juxtaposition of several paintings and objects, the comparisons are also drawn to the famous Uffizi Tribuna painting made by Zoffany (Fig. 5) (Ernst, 1993: 484). Beyond the *Kunstkammer*-like arrangement, these paintings and the Sloanemuseum were a statement of knowledge about a critical, civilisational past. Acquiring the traces and reproductions of this past was a mark of refinement.

In Britain, the act of commissioning was also seen as a way of encouraging new artists by commissioning art in Rome or sponsoring British sculptors and artists to go and hone their craft in the studios of Rome. While many factors caused the voracious acquisition of Neoclassical sculpture in the homes and public spaces of Britain's elite, the need for national status symbols after the end of Napoleonic Wars in 1815, and the first exhibition of the Elgin Marbles at Burlington House, Piccadilly in the same year encouraged the artists of Britain to pursue the naturalistic within the antique ideal.

As the most celebrated living artist in Europe, Antonio Canova played a significant role in spurring the popularity of commissioning marble surfaces. Canova's statue of *Napoleon as Mars*

*the Peacemaker* (Fig. 10) was installed at Apsley House, Hyde Park Corner in 1817 by the Duke of Wellington.

Such public and semi-public (in the form of private sculpture gardens) commissions of sculpture invigorated Neoclassical sculpture, which barely twenty-thirty years ago “suffered” an inconsistent supply of patronage, unsteady income, and commissions that were abandoned halfway by patrons. Thomas Banks’s entire career spanned the period where patronage of sculpture went from eccentricity and hesitation to confidence and vision. Julius Bryant notes that many sculptors in Rome “suffered nervous breakdowns” due to their British patrons and fickle-mindedness.

In 1774, J.T Sergel, a sculptor commissioned to carve a “Rage of Achilles” in marble, was left in the lurch due to disagreements in pricing. His work remained unrealised, and he slipped into a “debilitating depression” (Bryant, 2015: 68–69). Several sculptors suffered from confused and fickle patronage at the time, including John Deare, Gavin Hamilton, Thomas Jenkins, and even the celebrated Antonio Canova. A reason for such confusion was the British attitude towards antiques. The authenticity of an antique and its provenance were not qualities found in modern sculpture but was valued as traits for collectors in Britain.

It was Joseph Nollekens who helped to popularise modern sculpture in Britain, before Antonio Canova. Apart from its advantage of completeness over the antique, Nollekens encouraged to change the way of looking at sculpture. *Taste* shifted to becoming a more aesthetic appreciation of surface and soft, shiny Greek fleshiness as seen in the statues of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Attica sculptor Praxiteles. Winckelmann’s *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764) was a key text in developing such taste. In the 1770s, the dealer in Rome, Thomas Jenkins, also contributed to creating a more aesthetic response to sculpture from those visitors who wished to commission during their Grand Tours.

The support for modern ideal sculpture increased in the last two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century but had a history of pioneering, eccentric patrons whose “eccentricity” came from not settling bills in total and not collecting commissions. Even after institutional patronage in London was sought via prizes, competitions and stipends, neither young sculptors nor new patrons recognized the costs involved in the making and final delivery of sculpture. Alongside this difficult market of “artificial” sculpture, dealers could secure very high prices for “antiques”. It closed gaps between the antique and the new, modern sculpture that helped invigorate patronage. Patrons had to *refine* themselves from being gentlemen of taste to paying *customers*. They had to learn a new form of looking, which involved the present, living artist (Bryant, 2015: 75)

New shifts in the demography of artists in Rome also took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. American artists found patronage to go and settle in Rome for their training in sculpture as well. This included women artists like Harriet Hosmer and Edmonia Lewis, a Black woman of African and Native American descent. Her ‘Death of Cleopatra’ (Fig 11) is perhaps the most famous sculpture of her oeuvre. She travelled back in 1876 to exhibit it at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, alongside William Wetmore Story’s own ‘Cleopatra’, who designed the earlier discussed ‘Angel of Grief’.

Edmonia Lewis is one of the first sculptors working in the Neoclassical style to show racialized features in her figures. The uniformity in facial *aquilinity* was taken as being part of the ‘Greek’ ideal’. Her works of Native Americans, like the ‘Old Arrow Maker’ (1872) was resistant to rendering ‘Greek’ features on Native American faces. However, her renditions of Hagar and Cleopatra did not feature distinct African features. Perhaps it was an internalization of aesthetic prejudice and moral codes of the time, which equated the racialized white, able-bodied ideal as the true standard of beauty, thus, erasing the possibility of racialized body. African American features

in sculpture began to appear in the context of freed slaves, like ‘Freedman’ (1863) by John Quincy Adams and ‘Memorial to Abraham Lincoln’ (1876) by Thomas Ball Freedman (Woods, 2009).

### **Object Biography**

Object Biography and its contextualisation in the history of colonialism and Neoclassicism presents a few dangers: One ends up focusing on the ideologies, the political processes of colonisation and *includes* the object within that historical framework. If the sole focus of the mobility of the object is to say something about colonisation, the study of the object becomes evasive. The system and structures around the thing become an *alibi* for the thing itself. Every ‘object’ in this context often tells us the same facts of colonisation. What is *unique* of this object remains an elusive knowledge. The other danger is to start from the object and focus on its various aspects — like one writes the story of a person’s life lived — a method that I followed for a considerable period of time before realizing that the most I was able to do were to compare objects closely related (whether in time or physical or stylistic proximity) and situate them in contexts of Colonialism and Neoclassicism.

In her essay on print cultures in Calcutta during the late eighteenth century, Eaton notes how the print culture sustained itself on meagre means with a lot of borrowing and gambling. Her exploration of object studies and the Actor-Network theory reached a poignant conclusion about the “potency and uncertainty” of objects —things. Things resist “total translation” and defy “absolute mutability in recontextualisation”. Their “thingness” is rarely revealed to humans because they possess multitudes, complexity and ambivalence. This, of course, is not to render them as “subalterns . . . that need representation” but as active agents of transformation: They “transform networks into labyrinths.” (Eaton, 2014: 179).

When one is presented with the Sardhana monument, a sculptural tableau, there is also a comparison of what is placed where and why. The individual elements are designed in such a way that they form one coherent *monument*. The intentionality in their placement — by the sculptor, the patron, and the ones who installed it in Sardhana depends on the final arrangement. It differs from the single drawing made by Tadolini that is available to us. Such a difference can put into view a “geography of doubt”<sup>45</sup> about the design, intentionality and placement of the discrete components of the monument.

Drawing from the arguments of Jody Joy in her ‘Reinvigorating Object Biography’, it is within these doubts, or rather, multitudes of an object’s final placement that can reveal the relation between the object, persons and other variables. Here, the biographical approach to studying the *monument* as an object can benefit us to look beyond intentionality and perhaps spill into interpersonal and intertextual reception of the individual elements and the whole. They do not have to take on the personality of any person involved — Begum Samru (*subject of remembrance*), David Dyce Sombre (*patron, secondary subject*), Adamo Tadolini (*sculptor/artist*), Antonio Reghelini (*installer, facilitator*) etc.

Objects can reveal information about the ‘chronological and geographical assemblages’ (Joy, 2009) in which the persons and objects lived and in which they are constantly transformed through their interactions. Further, there are contexts other than the exchange that can produce object biography. Time can change their context and meaning. According to Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, objects accumulate biographies (Gosden and Marshall, 1999: 174).

---

<sup>45</sup> Phrase borrowed from the observations after an X-Ray of a painting in Ewa Lajer-Burcharth (2005), ‘The Object as Subject’, in Stephen Melville, ed. *The Lure of the Object*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Dalton, MA: Studley Press: 159

Arjun Appadurai notes that things in motion can help understand social contexts. His discussion on commodities being a phase and not a type of thing can help us understand the potential of movement beyond the market and exchange value. The stage of being a commodity in the life of a thing is equally important because it can point to a transcultural network of ‘producers, distributors, and consumers’.

Even commodities in smaller communities are transformed according to the ‘tastes, markets, and ideologies’ of larger economies (Appadurai, 1986). When the *monument* arrives in Sardhana, what influence does it have? It plays a role in creating tourist art, which has been seen in the form of semi-fictional literature, the Tonk manuscript discussed in Chapter 1, contemporary pamphlets being made for the Church and its visitors, and other paraphernalia. There are also later paintings (Fig 12) and printed photographs, in the Church’s atriums.

The most interesting is the parallel rows of sculptural tableaux (Fig 13) made recently to flank the entryway from the main gate to the side entrance of the Church. Right before the entrance, there is a sculpture of Jesus with open arms. The several sculptural tableaux (scenes from the life of Jesus and other instances from the Bible) have been commissioned by various societies and Catholic groups. They serve as a reproduction (all in white plastered stone) of the aesthetic vocabulary that has been transformed by the original *monument* that sits inside the Church’s main hall. The *monument* has had an influential “career” — to use Igor Kopytoff’s term — and whether ideal or not, there are biographical possibilities inherent in it. The *monument* is culturally redefined as an object of deferred veneration for the Begum and for the Church she built (Kopytoff, 1986).

Bernard Cohn, in an essay from 1992, brought out the Empire’s especially political relationship with objects that moved from India to Britain, in which their assigned values were according to the British narrative of political expansion. While India-manufactured ‘utilitarian’



products such as cloth, textile, ivory boxes, etc., formed a large part of what was transacted, other objects like precious stones, jewellery, paintings, furniture, and even weaponry could be seen as ‘collectables’ and items of decorative value. Cohn further points to the European construction of India in a manner that it could become ‘known’ to Europeans in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While the accounts of European travellers in India noted Indian religions as pagan, their reaction to the people ranged between disgust and abhorrence to exotic fetishisation and speculations about a great civilisation that had declined since long. It was seen as a “living fossil bed of European past, a museum”, upon which European visions of history could be imposed (Cohn, 2015: 23).

The extensive surveys were undertaken in South India after the defeat of Tipu Sultan by Colonel Colin Mackenzie, Francis Buchanan and Benjamin Heyne to codify and write a history of South India. Mackenzie later became the Surveyor General of India and shifted office to Calcutta<sup>46</sup>.

Cohn, through the work of James Fergusson on the Amaravati sculptures, shows how the British position towards the Indian people was that they had a “double lack of history” since they lacked documents, dateable records, chronicles and other material, and needed the British to provide them with a history. The double lack was that the Indians had not ‘progressed’ and were a static, degenerating civilisation until the British had come to civilise and develop the land and its people.

Even to criticism by an Indian scholar, Fergusson fell back onto how Indians were not capable of acquiring the “great truths of scientific knowledge” and had a talent for “memorising a vast number of facts”. He further related it to a “patriotic need” amongst the Indians to attack and refute the words of the English as foreigners, even testifying this “tendency” as a legitimate reason why Europeans heavily criticised the Ilbert Bill. Since it would have allowed Europeans to be

---

<sup>46</sup> After his death in 1821, the charge fell on to HH Wilson, who was responsible for the establishment of the Antiquarian department.

judged by Indian judges, many opposed it. Fergusson noted that it was impossible for an Indian to judge a European with impartiality and give him justice, as one of his own countrymen would (Cohn, 2015: 36).

There were many collectors of Indian made paintings and objects. Popular themes painted were occupations, dresses etc. Notable collectors included Charles Townly, Richard Payne Knight, and Charles “Hindoo” Stuart. Upon his death in 1830, his collections were shipped to London, where they exchanged hands until they finally reached the British Museum. The most ‘valuable’ objects from India were displayed in museums and were open to the public or given to the royal family as tribute. They were essential in value because they were spoils of war and charged with the military prowess of the English forces in India. These objects of high importance were from Tipu Sultan’s palace, which was looted in 1899.

Even the paintings around the theme of the fall of Seringapatam had become famous. Other memorabilia included ammunition, swords, cannons that were collected after the Maratha wars from Rangoon. In 1853, the spoils from the Sikh rulers’ defeat: the golden throne of Ranjit Singh and the *Koh-i-Noor* were all given pride of place inside the East India Museum. The British systematically made sure to rob the stronger kingdoms of their utilitarian objects of power such as weaponry: guns and swords.

They also enthusiastically endeavoured to acquire sacred texts (such as a “true copy of the *Guru Granth*”) and undertake what Cohn has termed a “conquest of knowledge.” The last in this mode of collection before the formal establishment of the Raj was the memorabilia of the 1857 Mutiny: a dagger from Bahadur Shah Zafar, a child’s shoe from the well of the Cawnpore massacre, a snuffbox with Tantia Tope’s hair and other historically charged objects (Cohn, 2015: 42).

## Transculturality of Objects

Whether “intentionally” infused during their making or by the added dimension of mobility, the transculturality of objects is vital to challenge any geographical containment of art ‘style’. They provide the impetus to engage with different forms that come into being due to mobility. Monica Juneja and Anna Grasskamp point out the challenges of translation of the lives of these objects so the multiplicitous nature of their stories come forward (Grosskamp and Juneja, 2018: 4). The Neoclassical *monument* is an instance in the nineteenth century's more extensive shifting mode, a moment and space intersecting with colonial enterprise, industrialisation, and early forms of consumerism. It is difficult to designate the *monument* as anything singular. It is at once, high art, and tourist art, and commodity. It occupies a state of reverence, or perhaps even decoration within the main church hall.

In its material, the *monument* is a site of “affective intensity”<sup>47</sup>, both in the intentionality of its commission (to remember the Indian benefactress) and in its claim to white-ness by participation in industrialisation, consumerism and colonial enterprise in the form of a distinct aesthetic statement. The *monument* is a migrant assemblage of objects posing as a single object. Within its singularity, there are palimpsestic levels of transcultural relationships between cultures. It can point towards the violence of dismantling, reframing, remounting or even the temporal and systemic violence of marginalisation, colonialism. All of these are integral to reading any transcultural object between coloniser regions and the regions of the colonised.

In 17<sup>th</sup>-century Ceylon, ivory-box makers carved scenes from Christian narratives they remembered from incoming print. The artists of the Mughal atelier under Akbar and Jahangir’s reign expertly copied identical prints from religious texts and any other illustrated paraphernalia

---

<sup>47</sup> Phrase borrowed from Christopher Pinney, quoted in Monica Juneja and Anna Grosskamp (2018), “EurAsian Matters”: 6

brought with the Jesuits to court. Such engagement with alien iconography is forged in the material of both the ivory boxes and the *muqarnas* made in the Mughal atelier. It provides a channel of connection between two very distant locations, accessible only by an aesthetic vocabulary dissimilar to each other. These translations in material give an image of an alien world, unreachable to many. At the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Habsburg court of Vienna, any object that *evoked* a distant place was interchangeably termed as *Indianisch*, *Japanisch*, or *Chinesisch* regardless of their actual provenance.

The material of the transcultural object is the site of imagination interacting with unfamiliarity to produce admiration and project desire onto the object's surface to connect across distance (Grosskamp and Juneja, 2018: 9).

Firstly, the Sardhana *monument* provides such a site to the sculptor, Tadolini, who painstakingly improvises and carves the bottom *bas relief* panels from pre-existing reproductions of the Begum's paintings the receivers and visitors of Sardhana. They witness the form of Neoclassical sculpture and style, replete with a foreign 'style' not yet typical in the backwaters of Delhi. Perhaps like its patron, the monument is Eurasian. It can conveniently occupy and move between imaginative spaces of European style and North-Indian aesthetic vocabulary — both of which are dynamic and ever-interacting.

This dynamism is aligned with the agency of the object. According to Marta Ajmar in her essay, 'Looking INTO the Transcultural Object', this agency is beyond intentional human production and meaningful human use. Objects get 'activated as agents of history (Ajmar, 248).

Their cultural complexity makes us use adjectives such as 'national' within quotations, subject to challenge. The methodology of reading an object as 'transcultural' puts forward the significance of movement in exchange, circulation, connection, travel etc. Such movement is

limited not to the material and matter but the movement and flow of ideas, knowledge and cultural and aesthetic value. These intangible moving entities are actors within any material exchange taking place.

Ajmar suggests that exploring “alternative chronological models”, from the *longue durée* view offered by historians to an *open-time approach* coming up in art history and anthropology, is necessary to understand the cultural complexity embedded in the dynamic geographies of a transcultural object (Ajmar, 2018: 250). So far, the study of the Neoclassical *monument* of Sardhana has been focused disproportionately on its 19<sup>th</sup>-century origins, the history of its patrons and environments of the places of inhabitation and becoming. Perhaps, a focused reading into the object's materiality, literally into the skin of the Carrara marble, and observation into the contemporary experience of the *monument* in the Church environs, especially during religious festivals of Easter and Christmas, can further enrich the study.

Long-term temporal forces working across vast geographies compounded in transcultural artefacts are intrinsic to the disruption and blurring of national, chronological, periodizational definitions (Ajmar, 2018: 250). The *monument* at Sardhana is a symbolically palimpsestic entity, with layers of geographical and stylistic complexity carved into its body. This complexity is decipherable as one looks ‘into’ the object instead of ‘at’ it, especially in global connections (Ajmar, 2018: 252).

The nature of these global connections is also complex. The flow of objects and persons from one place to another is not without inequity of power and not without degrees of violence. Here, the historical context of the material and spaces, which spills into the present day, can prove helpful. The methods of comparison and correlation are not to be directly translated from one space

and time to the other. They do not equate to causation. However, they can provide us with critical, valuable speculation for the understanding of tangentially related issues.

An example of that can be a more recent instance of acculturation, or how Italian concession/occupation has worked in Asia, Maurizio Marinelli has worked on the effects of the Italian concession, *Italienerie* and the fascination for Italy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> cent. Tianjin, China (Marinelli, 2019).

A late entrant into the colonisation in Asia, the kingdom of Italy reinvented the space of the Italian concession on Chinese soil, with their conception of Italian 'beauty'. Such socio-spatial reorganisation led to an Italian style neighbourhood, similar to various towns built in the Fascist period in Italy. It was seen as an experiment in Italy's imperialist ambitions in Asia and became the preferred centre for palatial residences of retired Chinese militaries and politicians.

In 2011, the inauguration of a Florentia village in Tianjin built upon the history of fascination with Italian buildings and art. The space has been transformed into a hypermodern place of conspicuous consumption, with contemporary Italian design and history of the Italian colonial project as aesthetic allures to generate the desire to be more 'modern', 'civilised', 'prosperous' and 'happy'.

The use of aesthetic vocabulary or design that is culturally claimed by ex-colonising regions to demonstrate civilisation and modernity has disproportionately affected the psyche of people from previously colonised nations. This effect is not to do with any moral argument<sup>48</sup> but points towards how modern capitalist systems and hyper-connected societies with their networks of import and export remain affected by 19<sup>th</sup>-century notions of a *civilising* nature of 'Western'

---

<sup>48</sup> A moral argument would be an appeal to "return" to native goods and objects, without a critical engagement with why the "foreign" or "global" commodity is more easily available or aspirational.

design. The vocabulary is now different: “global style”, “luxury”, “superior design”, among other adjectives used in advertising.

### **Tadolini’s Studio**

The method of sculpture-making in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century in Italy involved the carving of sculpture from a single block of marble. After making a drawing, the sculptor identified “measuring points”, mapping out a three-dimensional model in either terracotta, plaster or directly onto the marble block. The sculptor carefully exhumed the sculpture out of the block using a chisel and hammer and marked points of connection. Antonio Canova had achieved great fame during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century for his work in marble. In 1818, he passed on his sculpture studio in Rome to his protégé, Adamo Tadolini (b.1788–d.1863), who continued on the *modus operandi* of his predecessor.

Today, the studio exists as a tourist attraction and café, with plaster casts of anatomical parts and other models still in place. Adamo’s son Scipio Tadolini (1822–97), grandson Giulio Tadolini (1849–1918), and great-grandson Enrico Tadolini (1884–1967) may have made use of these casts, which also included a plaster cast of limbs of a horse. These could have come in use when Enrico Tadolini made the bronze monument to Marshall Sucre, the 2<sup>nd</sup> President of Bolivia for La Paz, Bolivia, in 1926 (Pisano, 2000: 53).

Trained in Bologna under Giuseppe De Maria, Adamo Tadolini arrived in Rome in 1818 on scholarship from the Reale Accademia d’Italia. The same year, he joined the studio of Antonio Canova, where he remained until Canova died in 1822. In his *Recordi Autobiografici*, Tadolini describes himself as a pious man, dedicated to family and work, and wholly devoted to his teacher, Canova. He began his studio on the corner of *Via del Babuino* and *Via dei Greci*, near the studio of Canova, and in an area known as the *Trident*. This area was favoured by artists and clientele

from France, Britain, Spain, North America, Germany and other regions of Europe. It was filled with cafes and meeting points such as the Café Greco on the *Via dei Condotti*. Tadolini gained prominence, with his commissions coming from Europe and even Latin America. His studio was highly praised in the guides relating to tourism and travel in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>49</sup>.

Thus, when he encountered David Dyce Sombre in 1839, Tadolini was a well-established, upcoming maestro of Neoclassical sculpture. It was also the location of his studio in a prominent neighborhood, full of other studios where visitors could visually compare the work of competitive sculptors. A visible stream of sculptural compositions, whether in plaster or finished in marble, whether in parts or complete and ready to be shipped, was decisive as an advertising visual for new commissions by patrons.

The studio was successful because of its ability to produce replicas of many marketable subjects. The subject of Ganymede was of particular interest to Tadolini. Sometimes, he began work in plaster cast without patrons. In 1823, he made the group, ‘Ganymede giving drink to Jupiter in the form of an Eagle’.

This group was sold to the Duke of Devonshire in 1828 and made for Lady Beaumont in 1827. He made five more Ganymede sculptures apart from these, mostly on request from foreign buyers. The studio also made several copies of the sculptures of Canova, such as that of ‘Love and Psyche’.

Copies of several typical themes were very popular. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sculptures of Greek slaves, odalisques etc., were also being made to order. Scipio Tadolini, the son of Adamo, reportedly made 36 copies of ‘Eve after the sin’ and 40 copies of ‘Greek Slave’. Adamo

---

<sup>49</sup> An example of such mentions can be found in *The Artistical Directory, or the Guide to the Studios of the Italiana and Foreign Sculptors Resident in Rome*, Rome, 1856, pp. 21–22; and the *Walks Through the Studii of the sculptors at Rome*, Rome, 1841, where on page 234, the work of Adamo Tadolini is described as having a “pure, and severe manner of ancient art” in his plaster casts.



used the help of artisans, his son, and several students from the sculpture academies of Rome who helped either as models or assistants. In turn, he taught them and let them practice on small pieces of marble in his studio. A student of his, Francis Fabj-Altini (b.1830–d.1906), was regarded highly among his peers and became President of the *Accademia di S. Luca*, where he would receive he would receive instruction from Tadolini. Sadly, any trace of Fabj-Altini's work is not known. Tadolini frequently trained students from the Academy of S. Luca, but there is little known record of the nature of his instruction.

Claudio L. Pisano was able to locate three registers from the studio of Tadolini. They ranged from the years 1848–52, 1853–59 and 1860–66 (Pisano, 2000: 55). The funerary *monument* that he created for Begum Samru by the commission of David Dyce Sombre was commissioned in 1839 and completed in 1842. While its final installation took another six years, any record of its making and packing would be in previous registers which have not survived. The document helped to understand the Studio's operations and provided information on patronage, billing and records of designs and drawings that must have been used to make the sculpture. The registers followed a progressive numbering system. They had names of the statue and descriptive designs reported with verbose detail against the buyer's name.

Every stage of making came with a detailed progress report, and perhaps a copy of it was sent to the buyer. It included expenses of the workers and materials, the starting date of the work, the provenance of the marble, details of the delivery to the client, or details of the sale. This system was taken care of with great precision, primarily when Adamo's son, Scipio Tadolini, worked at the Studio. Perhaps, the Studio's business had increased in such a manner that a centralized organizing system had to be put in place by Scipio.

The registers also showed who, as an artisan, and an assistant, was used and paid more. The names Felice, Salvatore and Pippo, were mentioned several times. While their roles were not precisely defined, except for Felice<sup>50</sup>, they may have been workers employed for the general upkeep of the studio. The wages of Felice and Salvatore did not increase substantially for the first few years of their employment. Pippo was employed to work on the bottom bases of the sculptures. Tadolini's second son, Titus, worked independently and was not as successful as his father or elder brother, Scipio. According to Pisano's analysis of the registers, there may have been as many as thirty collaborators working in the studio with Adamo Tadolini as assistants and pupils.

Many of them left to become independent sculptors after their 'training' under Tadolini was complete. Pisano outlines some of the international work that the studio undertook, including the 1853 Bronze statue to Simon Bolívar in Lima, Peru. Tadolini could have drawn inspiration from the Napoleonic equestrian portrait by Jacques Luis David in 1800 and could have used the plaster models of horse-limbs in the studio to get his model anatomically correct.

Filippo Guaccarini, the runner up of the same competition, was asked to make the marble pedestal on which the Bronze would stand. Tadolini's model was sent to Munich to be cast in bronze at the Müller Laboratory. It was sent to Lima for its inauguration in 1859. The Müllers were a favoured company for clientele in the United States and Latin America. The Caracas government had asked them to produce a copy of the Bolívar statue. In 1874, a replica was inaugurated in the capital city of Venezuela. The twin statues situated in two different countries could be seen as a way to strengthen political and cultural connections between the two cities of Lima and Caracas (Bochicchio, 2012: 77).

---

<sup>50</sup> Felice was meant to rough up the marble for use by the sculptor and sculptor's students and assistants

Thus, it was not new for the Tadolini Studio or any other well-to-do studio to make and send sculptures in marble and bronze to trans-continental destinations. With the establishment of trade routes, rapid industrialization, and the coming of steamships, a network of movement of objects was already in place. While the more significant concentration of Neoclassical sculpture was directed towards the Americas and the rest of Europe, there was another offshoot towards South Asia.

The stakeholders of Colonial Presidencies were patrons of British Neoclassical sculpture to some extent, especially in churches. However, as a one-off instance, the deliberate and carefully planned commission of the monument of Begum Samru taps into a different network of the global ambit of Neoclassicism. It lays claim with a ‘civilisational’ and religious affinity with the demographically multiplicitous, but aesthetically definitive Catholic Rome. The Begum is posthumously a figure of repute on account of her conversion, charitable donations to Rome, and a figure of mystery and intrigue, mixed in with Orientalist imagination<sup>51</sup>.

Adamo Tadolini, in his *Recordi Autobiografici*, described the commissioning of the ‘monument for the Princess Begum Sombe’ intended for the destination of the City of Delhi. “In 1838, a Colonel Dey Sombe [sic], the grandson of the late princess Begum Sombe, lady of a large part of the East Indies, who had left there to come to Italy to order a monument to be erected in memory of his aunt. On his arrival in Rome, after having toured all the sculptors' studios, he stopped at Tadolini's, and after observing the works, he saw the sketch for Count Demidoff and checked it several times to see it in every part. Being in the company of a younger man, he spoke a foreign language with him unknown to the sculptor.

---

<sup>51</sup> Begum Samru was also an inspiration for the Jules Verne novel, *Les Cinq Cents Millions de la Bégum*, Paris, 1879.

His companion said to Tadolini in Italian, ‘What will you take to make a monument based on this idea? With large statues, a good one?’ Surprised by the two strangers, Tadolini quoted a figure of four thousand luigi d’oro<sup>52</sup>. . .” (Tadolini, 1900: 209–210).

To his initial cost, David agreed. He then went on to provide Tadolini with drawings of the Begum, copies of several paintings of the Begum with other persons, a description of what he desired, the eulogy text he composed in three languages: Persian, Latin and English, perhaps modelled himself, or asked to be sculpted in the Neoclassical ideal of the beautiful, noble and grand figure whose refinement came from an effortless restraint in expression of his emotions. The principal sketch that Tadolini finally made is available from the studio, but any other record of it, other than the descriptions in Tadolini’s *Autobiografici*, is not known. A copy of the sketch also hangs in the foyer of the Sardhana Church next to where the *monument* is installed.

### **Conclusion: The Monument in Mobility**

On his Grand Tour in 1839, David Dyce Sombre made it to Rome after visiting several aristocrats in Paris, Venice, Ferrara, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Rome, and other towns and villas in between. Dyce Sombre was received as a Masonic dignitary by the Valetta Lodge of St John and St Paul in Malta. In Rome, Dyce Sombre had an audience with Pope Gregory XVI. He had earlier made Dyce Sombre a Knight of the Pontifical Order of Christ after a generous donation by Begum Samru. Another contribution by Dyce Sombre secured a knighthood in the Order of St Gregario il Grande for Paolo Solaroli, the Italian mercenary in Sardhana. He was brother-in-law to Dyce Sombre and the husband of his sister, Georgiana Dyce (Fisher, 2010: 160–61).

---

<sup>52</sup> Translates to ‘gold of louis’ (plural), a high denomination of currency that began in France. Its usage had waned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France. However, as is seen here, it was still in use in the cosmopolitan artist neighborhood of Rome, and was similar in value to the pound sterling.

When Dyce Sombre arranged a funeral mass for the Begum in Rome three years after her death, his negotiations resulted in the ceremony at the Church of San Carlo al Corso, where the priest Nicholas Patrick Wiseman (of Irish ancestry, Spanish-born) presided over the mass. The news of the funeral mass was published internationally with celebratory overtures in Catholic and Protestant newspapers claiming proof of Romish corruption stemming from rumours of making the Begum a saint<sup>53</sup>.

As for the basic design of the monument, Dyce Sombre thought of himself as the primary designer of the monument, due to his patronage and supplying drawings of existing paintings, and his significant act of “choosing” the idea similar to the Demidoff Memorial, a plaster model of which, lay in the workshop of Tadolini. According to Tadolini’s autobiography, the contract called for eleven statues, three bas-reliefs, the urn of Scipios in sienna yellow and its “architecture” (design), if it followed “sketch”, would be “the height of Roman palms 24 and the width of palms 14”. All statues were required to be of highest quality Carrara marble.

Tadolini mentioned a clause, where if he took more than 3 years to complete the monument, he would be fined a daily amount of 10 (unit of money not mentioned). He even mentioned that Dyce Sombre was involved in the early periods of development and provided him with changes in scale and proportion for the first two statues he made — those of Begum Samru and of “Poverty” (Tadolini, 1900: 211).

In his autobiography, he mentioned how he worked nights to ensure timely delivery. However, he did not hear from Dyce Sombre for the next six years after the monument was completed (in 1842). Tadolini mentions no knowledge of the lunacy trial of his patron, perhaps by

---

<sup>53</sup> American journal, *Catholic Telegraph* (Cincinnati, 24 January 1839) celebrated the occasion, whereas protestant journals did the opposite in Ireland, Scotland, Boston, New York, San Francisco, and even in the village of Bellow Falls. Source: Michael H. Fisher (2010), *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre*: 162

strategic omission to maintain the uncontroversial nobility of his customers. It does not stop him from mentioning defaulters of payment. Even here, he laments not being paid the money for storage, safekeeping and interest of the monument. He mentions the scope of “judicial protest”, but cites the “magnanimous heart of the client and the English government” in the success and completion of the monument. It was common for sculptors not to be compensated for their work, or their commissions abandoned midway in Rome and the rest of Western Europe.

Tadolini was further assured by a “Mr Mackebin”, an official of the East India Company that his work as an artist shall receive due compensation. In support of this claim, Tadolini sent to London several documents: a certificate from Cardinal Mezzofanti, a certificate from Duke Torlonia, a letter from a banker who paid to Tadolini, the four installments according to the original contract of 1838, and the letter by Monsignor Bruti who was a witness to the making of the contract, and who accompanied this dossier to London. After the monument (in multiple packages) reached London, representatives of the British Government opened up two statues of the monument: the one of Begum Samru, and one of the Angel of Time, with its hourglass or “sand-clock” which indicated that the hour was over. Tadolini mentions that up until this point, the statues had arrived in good condition. They were put back in their boxes and sent to the “Indies” (Tadolini, 1900: 213).

From London, the monument must have arrived at the port of Calcutta, from where it was transported by river and bullock-cart to its final resting place of Sardhana. Anton Reghelini oversaw the internment of the monument in the main altar, over the vault where Begum Samru was buried. After 1867, Dyce Sombre’s remains were also interred there, commemorated by an inscribed floor slab which served as gravestone. In charting the movement of the monument from design to paper to the back and forth creation in stone, one sees mobility as a dynamic thing, beyond

mere movement. It encompasses not only transportation, but the mobility of ideas, and of mutation of form due to mobilities. The association of drawings, paintings, logistical movement of objects is important to the making of the monument, the process of which partially happens outside of the sculptor's studio.

'Mobilities' uses a two-pronged approach to look at 'counterflows'—those of people like David Sombre to Britain and that of the monument from Rome to Sardhana, while actively situating them within a dynamic world—a world experiencing some early form of intercontinental mobility preceding globalisation.

## Chapter 3: Medium

### The Materiality of Marble and the Meanings of the Monument

#### Introduction

There lies a multi-layered relationship of the maker with the medium or material. The *medium* (which almost takes on an occultic, clairvoyant quality that reveals phantom traces of all its *makers*) must be unpacked and examined through its materiality, iconology, and study of the racialized body in sculpture.

The final chapter is where the form and material speak back to the reader. The welding together of Neoclassical style and Begum Samru's preferred iconography<sup>54</sup> creates a "hybrid" object, which is almost alien in its current surroundings of Sardhana, a backwater beyond the small town of Meerut, away from Delhi. But it would also sit uneasily within the geographical environs and colonial offshoots of Neoclassical Europe.

The *monument* as a commemorative object reveals its role of commemorating multiple persons, but foremost, a woman's legacy in making the cosmopolitan oasis of Sardhana or its mythology. The contrast between the relief elements of the *monument* and referential media (paintings and sketches) presents a moment of transmediation. In the arguments of hierarchies between art forms, Neoclassical sculpture failed to surpass the preference for painting<sup>55</sup>.

---

<sup>54</sup> Begum Samru's preferred iconography does not develop in a vacuum. While it follows convention of the late Mughal school, and is exemplar of the styles of various artists like Jiwan Ram, Khairullah etc., the meaning of the term "iconography of the Begum" refers to a host of items which are common to the representation of the Begum in self-commissioned paintings. It includes but is not necessarily limited to specific sartorial choices, props like the hookah and footrest as imperial paraphernalia, focus on the lone, desexualized and menopausal woman as authoritarian public figure, the use of Neoclassical architecture as a marker of difference from the local and commonality with a proto-Global network of Christianity (Catholicism) and the contemporary popularity of the Neoclassical in Europe and Americas.

<sup>55</sup> A few sources on this debate have been discussed in this chapter, but they pertain to sources in the English language and English translations of the time. Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Royal Academy was one of the chief proponents of 'painting over sculpture' in the hierarchy of arts. Sculptors expressed their displeasure with the institutional condescension for their art. Apart from lack of aesthetic education of viewers, they blamed it on the 'modern' obsession with "colour".



In the *monument*, decisive paintings commissioned by Begum Samru were reproduced and reconfigured for stone, firmly tethering the foreign *monument* to its current space and the person it commemorates. The sculptural idealization of Begum Samru, David Dyce Sombre, and others differ from the naturalistic turn seen in the painted portraits of the aged Begum done by Jiwan Ram, Muhammad A'zam, etc. Authority and grace within a wrinkled visage — as opposed to beauty and idealization — were an undercurrent iconography of Begum Samru. The decision to only portray her aged self was subtly rebellious of the fascination with Indian women's bodies and attires seen in idealized portraits of women within the Mughal harem. Such portraits of a regally dressed, aged woman in public, alone in the company of men as a ruler, were a novelty and symbolic of a unique life and a particular form of self-fashioning.

The change in physical features and the Neoclassical assimilation of "Indian" bodies align with Neoclassical funerary art aims. The *monument* can be perceived as an extension of Begum Samru's patronage legacy, already taking a Neoclassical turn in her building projects. However, it is more appropriate to see it as a breaking point from the earlier patronage of the "Samru" family. Made in the city of Rome, in a completely different context, it is unable to shed the imperialist and racialized notions that come with early nineteenth-century Neoclassical Sculpture. The racial aspiration comes not just in the monument's colour but also in the idealization of the bodies and the several icons of Neoclassical and Classical allegories. The tableau is also an architectural tower, a cenotaph that charges the church at Sardhana like a tomb. The tableau vivant displays a theatricality in its environs, adjacent to the altar.

This chapter begins by outlining the place of Neoclassical sculpture in a cultural hierarchy of the arts in Europe. With strong ties to antiquarianism, historicity, Neoclassical sculpture was side-lined to a place of obsolescence. As a secondary high art form, sculpture fell below

Neoclassical paint. However, it did not undermine the scale at which sculpture was produced and exhibited. Sculpture was important as an object of posterity, and the two most important materials of this longevity were decidedly bronze and marble.

The importance of marble in the making of sculptures is tied to the Neoclassical's relation to historicity and the uniformity of colour — in its several shades of white. The chapter focuses on several aspects of the monument to Begum Samru and attempts to address the bodily change of South Asian bodies in a European Neoclassical sculptural form. It addresses the trans-mediality or intermediality between referential paintings and Neoclassical bas reliefs. The legacy of the mixed-race patron extends itself in the multi-mediality of the monument and its related drawings, designs, description and auxiliary elements.

### **Attitudes towards Neoclassical Sculpture**

Neoclassicism in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century split into two currents: severe or moralist and pleasant or symbolist. While both drew upon Winckelmann's archaeological and art historical work, the moralistic strand tied itself to the glory of Rome, and the rhythmic, more elegant strand flowed towards the beauty of Athens. The digs at Pompeii and Herculaneum were defining moments of the century and Europe's obsession with the ancient Greeks and Romans (Rheims, 1972: 15). The 19<sup>th</sup>-century debate over the supremacy of painting over sculpture in Britain was affected by the lectures at the Royal Academy, where Sir Joshua Reynolds formalized the theories of sculpture's inferiority. Even in print, sculpture took on a passive role to architecture as a mere adornment of landscaping and architectural complexes. Nevertheless, sculptures were commissioned, produced, and installed in public and semi-public spaces.

According to Angela Dunstan, the hostility towards the art did not fade. An aspect of sculpture that appealed to patrons and art connoisseurs was the star sculptor's touch. Reaching

fetishist fascination with famous sculptors, traces of their fingerprints represented a phantom presence of celebrity (Dunstan, 2014). The authenticity of the sculpture became conflated with visible traces of fingerprints or human touch. With sculptors writing about the process of sculpture-making, making it more transparent, concerns sprang up about how the art of sculpture was slipping away from the artist's hands, mainly because it could be recast and it required multiple people in a 'studio' to be made — or 'manufactured'.

During this time, prototypes of machines threatened to take away the sculptor's touch, leaving only a mechanical art characterized by the lack of human skill and without the charm of human flaw. The writings of sculptors informed the public transparently that sculpture was a product of several workers. Marble blocks were prepared by studio assistants for the sculptor to finally come in with the chisel and give complete form to the sculpture. Bronze sculptures were often crafted in a foundry and not in the studio (Dunstan, 2014: 8). The smoothness and copying became a problem for those who took delight in recognizing the kinks and marks that they ascribed to the sculptor's hands. This requirement of authenticity was especially problematic for female sculptors, whose artistic and physical capabilities were constantly questioned because of the presence of male studio assistants<sup>56</sup>.

Sculptors expressed their discontent with the Royal Academy's denigration of sculpture with writings of their own. Thomas Woolner (b.1825–d.1892) believed that it was a problem of untrained reception. Because of the failure of education by the Academy, the public had forgotten how to "read" sculpture. This failure was despite the fascination and skill for "deciphering"

---

<sup>56</sup> Harriet Hosmer (b. 1830 – d. 1908), the famous American sculptor in Rome, sued *The Art Journal* and *The Queen* for claims that her work, *Zenobia* was made by Italian workmen in Rome. She later withdrew her claims after the printing of several apologies by both *The Queen* in *The Times* & the Parisian *Galignani's Messenger*; and *The Art Journal*. Further work on the *Zenobia* controversy has been done by Deborah Cherry (2000), *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850–1900*, Routledge: London. More work on female sculptors in Britain has been done by Shannon Hunter Hurtado (2012), *Genteel Mavericks: Professional Women Sculptors in Victorian Britain*, Bern: Lang

painting. For Woolner, the culprit was colour — not the lack of it in sculpture, but the excessive fascination it produced for the viewer in painting. Woolner, a pre-Raphaelite, spoke of the fascination with colourful painting with sarcastic statements such as:

*" . . . there is not a single line of true drawing throughout the whole work; let the colour be but bold and harmonious, it is enough; and every objection is silenced by the ecstatic exclamation 'Ah, but what colour!'"*

—Thomas Woolner, *Royal Academy Lectures*, Royal Academy Archive, MS

WOO1–5 (Dunstan, 2014: 3)

The fascination with colour in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was emblematic of a moment in which appreciation was finding its way to accept and eventually appreciate new kinds of painting such as impressionists, symbolists, expressionists etc. In her Belcaro essay 'The Child in the Vatican', the modern obsession with colour was seen as "the aesthetic spirit of the age" by Vernon Lee (pseudonym of Violet Paget, b.1856–d.1935). Here, Lee opines white statues' illegibility, dullness, and vagueness for the 'child', symbolic of the new 'modern' aesthetic subjectivity (Lee, 1881: 20–21).

The poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire (b. 1821–d. 1867) considered sculpture to be encompassed in the shadows of time. Its ancient enchantment was replaced in modern sculpture galleries by the "monotonous whiteness of large dolls" (Savage, 2010: 9–10). Neoclassical sculpture and its white marble and dark bronze requirements were characteristically 'chromophobic'. Even the historical obsession with ancient Greek sculpture — which was often painted over — did not dissuade Neoclassicists from remaining with monochrome — especially white marble — as the preferred way of making.

The decline in public and academic appreciation of sculpture in Britain did not mean that sculptors could not find work. The market for sculpture expanded to Europe and beyond Europe to the Americas and various colonies. Competing sculptors bid for commissions. Colonial commissions came with particular problems such as the impenetrability of networks and lack of opportunities for newcomers, finding reliable agents, and consistently receiving funds to complete and deliver said sculpture to the intended places in the colony. They could not help advertise the sculptor in their local environs even when finished because it was immediately shipped without public exhibition. Sculptors had to find new ways of circulation and preservation, which led to reproductions in different media and scales. In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, photographs, drawings, medallions, and statuettes were used to preserve a constructed model<sup>57</sup>. Tadolini prepared an illustration of the *monument* to Begum Samru (Fig. 1), which was different from the object itself, with places of some figures laterally exchanged and drawn physiognomies following separate European and 'Indian' conventions of illustration.

On the American front, a similar 'obsolescence' of sculpture in academic and gallery spaces has been pointed out by Kirk Savage, for whom sculpture has been "haunted" by a phantom drive of its own belatedness (Savage, 2010: 9). Sculpture struggles to find its place in the modern world. Citing a long intellectual history of the indifference towards it, Savage points to a temporal duality in sculpture. It was both permanent and elusive. The prestige of sculpture came from its material — marble and bronze — both permanent. But this permanent material could not represent the changing modern life, despite the instability of its perception from a single point of view. Its static

---

<sup>57</sup> This need for preservation, advertising, circulation and creating a 'record' has been emphasized in several works such as those of Sarah Burnage (2010), 'Commemorating Cornwallis: Sculpture in India', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 11: 173–94; Jason Edwards (2010), 'From the East India Company to the West Indies and Beyond: The World of British Sculpture, c. 1757–1947', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 11: 147–72; Barbara Groseclose (1995), *British Sculpture and the Company Raj: Church Monuments and Public Statuary in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay to 1858*, Newark: University of Delaware Press; Partha Mitter (1994), *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

three-dimensionality made it "unbearably protean" and created a troubled state in which the 19<sup>th</sup>-century viewer experienced sculpture (Savage, 2010: 10). Thus, there was a problem of temporality in viewing sculptural objects because the act of viewing was endless. Looking at the *monument* to Begum Samru as a *tableau vivant*, with its three-dimensionality and referential theatricality, one has to contend that it is impossible to experience the *monument* in one surficial 'look'. With its back to the wall, it performs the task of both embellishment and perpendicular primacy with the altar.

The disdain for sculpture in writings on aesthetics did not equate to fewer sculptures, even in writings. 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature was filled with descriptions of statuettes on mantelpieces. As interest in studying the materiality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century increased, so did the definition of 'sculpture'. Since sculpture was reincarnated into several media, especially compact and lighter figurines, it is necessary to look at the paraphernalia that was ordered and acquired because of 'sculptural' qualities or because it possessed the aura of the original. John Edwards encourages the scholarly examination of the material culture and these "*objets*" that problematize the focus on great works intended for elite spaces (Edwards, 2009: 202). Angela Dunstan believes that while Edwards makes an important observation about the need to look at material culture, the objects cannot be compounded with 'sculpture' because embellished objects and material artefacts were not recognized as such in the era they were made and possessed (Dunstan, 2014: 5).

There is a difference between sculpture and other applied arts, where excessive reproduction is the norm and not exception or rarity (as in the case of sculpture). During the Victorian era in Britain, touching was banned in galleries and museums. The disciplining of the museum-goer's behaviour made sure to elevate the museum's possessions and displays to a higher position as inviolably precious masterpieces. Illustrative of this difference is the 1862 International

Exhibition, where sculpture was exhibited in the Fine Arts Section, and statuettes and other objects were in the "Industrial" Art section (Dunstan, 2014: 9). The seeming 'industrialization' of the process of sculpture-making was slow. While it produced some anxieties over the 'authenticity' of sculpture as an art, Victorians did not go as far as to assume that sculpture was an industrial product<sup>58</sup>.

In India, the sculptures of Neoclassical Britain (and Europe) were primarily found in Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. The funerary monuments were often associated with newly erected churches. Barbara Groseclose's work on sculpture in Presidency towns until 1858 (Groseclose, 1995) demonstrates how iconography in these monuments was moulded by imperial ideology. Some monuments further advertised the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise by presenting the "riches of the east" as a welcome gift for European traders. Others suggested the Englishmen as the rightful, moralistic and superior rulers on a civilizing mission. Statues also contained images of natives, such as the one in Madras made for Charles Cornwallis by Thomas Banks in 1800.

Images of natives were represented as subjugated and benign, while the Englishmen were presented as paternalistic statesmen. The *monument* to Begum Samru (1848) marks a shift by turning representational convention on its head. With a native ruler at the apex position in a Neoclassical monument, that too a woman, the *monument* challenges the notion of belatedness in natives and the patriarchal and paternal myth of the English colonial rule. It also makes the audience see the adaptability of the cosmopolitan Begum's memorialization. Even in the

---

<sup>58</sup> However, the mechanical inventions in sculpting and printing processes in the nineteenth century had an interesting legacy carried forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bioprinting and the very popular 3-D printing mechanisms today draw from the legacy of printing and sculpting technologies from before. Dunstan traces their genealogy from James Watt's garret in which he stored his sculpting machine and copying press. See: Angela Dunstan (2014), 'Nineteenth-Century Sculpture and the Imprint of Authenticity': 9, 10, 22

posthumous adoption of European art, the icon of Begum Samru manoeuvres her way out of her contemporary convention<sup>59</sup>.

As for Dyce Sombre, the primary patron of this *monument* had a personal utility in its making. It was a memorial for Begum Samru, but it was also his portrait in marble and, after his untimely death in 1851, his shared commemoration with the Begum. The internment of his remains under the *monument* transformed the funerary tableau into a double cenotaph (Fisher, 2010: 316).

It was already a cenotaph for the grave of Begum Samru, whose remains were interred under the monument, either after its installation, or right before. The ostentatious dress of Dyce Sombre with military dress, a cloak and a feathered helmet added grandeur to his individual sculpture. It is also uncharacteristically lean, following the Neoclassical convention of idealization of the body. It also gives a glimpse into the possibility of what Maurice Rheims described as a fear of revealing the "scrawny or pudgy" natural body behind the ideal prince, general or other wealthy sitters. Since sculptors, especially someone as famous as Adamo Tadolini, were well-versed in canons of the ideal naturalistic form, a change of body type was available to patrons to transcend any physical traits or 'flaws' — like costumes (Rheims, 1972: 15) or today's photoshop and photo-morphing technologies. This potential of transcendence, for Rheims, was one of Neoclassical sculpture's negative traits.

The idealization of the body "dehumanized" the subject and affected their sculpture, which was often made to avert its eyes from the viewer (Rheims, 1972: 16)<sup>60</sup>. The *monument* to Begum Samru walks a fine line between veneration and agnostic taste of the Neoclassical era. As a

---

<sup>59</sup> It doesn't change the fact that David Dyce Sombre was the primary patron of the *monument*. The maneuvering that I mention is more to do with memory and perception of the Begum as a ruler (not a matriarch, but equivalent of her male counterparts).

<sup>60</sup>At the same time, Edouard Manet (b. 1832–d. 1888) was painting human subjects who dared to look directly at the onlooker. Examples: *Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe* (1863), *Olympia* (1863), *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882).



funerary monument, it indeed fell into the conventions of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where symbolism (such as the allegorical figures at the bottom tier of the *monument*) substituted a subtle divinity or enigma.

### **Carrara Marble and its Materiality**

In the act of commissioning a timeless monument, David Dyce Sombre made sure of encompassing a short history within the 'eternal' stone. The stone used in making the *monument* to Begum Samru is the famous marble of a small Tuscan village, Carrara. The materiality of stone cannot be hidden in what Kirk Savage calls the "illusion of representation", in the case of painting<sup>61</sup>. The colour and visible features of Carrara marble were described with vivid detail in several sources. It found its fame for being the material with which Michelangelo, the 15<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance sculptor, made his *Pietà* (Fig. 2)<sup>62</sup>.

The use and popularisation of this stone have their history. The famous sculptures of the Parthenon in Athens (the "Elgin marbles" at the British Museum) were made from the marble of Mount Pentelicus in Attica. Another ancient source of marble was in the Isle of Paros. However, southern Italy's Carrara marble was accepted as the best.

In times of the Roman Empire, it was called 'Lunan' marble due to its proximity to the Roman town of Luna. After the waning of the Roman Empire, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the architectural renaissance of Italy reopened the Carrara quarries. Even though only a few openings produced a clear white colour, the quarries gave vast marble blocks (*Scientific American*, 1926: 204–205).

---

<sup>61</sup> Kirk Savage opines how incongruous it was to render the contemporary moment in the "eternity of marble". See: Kirk Savage (Spring 2010), 'The Obsolescence of Sculpture': 10

<sup>62</sup> In his biography, Michelangelo's travels from Rome to Carrara were several — nearly a dozen — and significant. The requirements of Michelangelo's travels might have been due to the lack of appropriate and sizeable material in Rome, since the length of the *Pietà* is comparable to the blocks for the Medici Chapel Allegories. See: Michael Hirst (March, 1985), 'Michelangelo, Carrara, and the Marble for Cardinal's *Pietà*', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 127, No. 984: 154 (pp. 152+154–156+159)

As of 1902, across 80 square miles, 319,887 metric tons of marble were quarried from Carrara. A part of it was exported to America (Thomas, 1904: 331).

The colour of Carrara marble attracted the attention of travellers and geologists. In an 1824 issue of the monthly journal, *The Friend of India*, Gior de Fisica wrote a note on the 'natural changes' and formation of veins and colour in the marble from Carrara. Even though the marble was famed for its 'brilliant whiteness', for the most part, as can also be seen in the marble used in the *monument* to Begum Samru, it possesses a greyish tint. The whiteness is revealed in parts where veins have been formed. There are also spots of oxides and sulphates.

Fisica notes that some of these spots are permanent, made during the metamorphoses of limestone. Some newer spots could be faded by running water over them, as was reported by the workers who termed it a process of "marble cleansing itself". Carrara is also famous for anarchism, after the several revolts by working-class quarry-miners and its marble-cured pig fat (*lardo di Colonnata*), which originated as calorie-rich miner food, and has taken on the status of contemporary gourmet in world cuisine (Gattuso, 2019).

For the workers in Carrara, marble was a quotidian but culturally influential material. For them, it had a living spirit or an *anima*<sup>63</sup>. Fisica concluded that different 'species of marble' varied with time and became 'purer' (Fisica, 1824: 278). Marble from Carrara had a mythology of its own, with its apparent self-cleansing properties, bluish intravenous composition, and an ability to be shaped by sculptors as monoliths or thin slabs.

---

<sup>63</sup> Alison Leitch undertook an ethnographic study of the town of Carrara, interviewing the workers and focusing on the material aspect of the stone. The relationship (violent, laborious, and symbiotic) of the miners and the high art material has been examined through the lens of material studies. See: Leitch, Alison. (2010). Materiality of Marble: Explorations in the Artistic Life of Stone. Thesis Eleven. 103. 65-77. 10.1177/0725513610381375.

### **The Realm of Allegory: Symbolic Figures in the Monument**

The monument to Begum Samru is composed of 12 life-size statues placed strategically at three different levels around a marble trunk (Fig 3). The first or top-level is for the solitary seated statue of Begum Samru, the figure of memorialization (Fig 4). She is separated from the 'realm of the living' or the middle level by a pedestal of sienna marble. The intermediate level consists of a cylindrical trunk with a white marble square slab on top. The three visible sides of the cylindrical trunk possess inscriptions in 3 languages. Persian for the front side, English on the side behind the statue of Dyce Sombre (viewer's left) and Latin for the side adjacent to the Bishop Fr. Julius Caesar Scotti (Viewer's Right) (Fig 5).

The language of the composition is placed in a manner that puts Persian in the frontal view of the monument. Such a decision helps us understand the intended audience of the *monument*. It ties itself to the location of its installation and viewing not just by the statue of the Begum but also through language and script carved into the body of the Italian marble. The other two figures around the trunk, frontally visible and adjacent to Dyce Sombre, is the statue of Diwan Rae Singh, the Prime Minister of Begum Samru. The statue behind that of Dyce Sombre on the left side is that of Inayatullah Khan, the general of Begum's armies at the time of her death (Fig 6).

The bottom level or the 'Realm of Allegory' is composed of 11 life-size statues of allegories placed around a cuboidal marble block, with three bas reliefs carved onto each visible side. Going from left (English inscription side) to the right (Latin inscription side), they are Young Woman with a Club and her foot over a submissive lion, Shrouded Figure holding a snake, Angel of Time holding up an hourglass, Forlorn Old Man or *Vecchio*, *Abundantia* with an ever-flowing *Cornucopia*, Small Child kneeling and offering up a fruit, Breastfeeding Woman with infant (Fig 7).

The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes allegory as "the expression by means of symbolic figures and actions of truth or generalizations about human existence"<sup>64</sup>. While the sculptures of the bottom tier of the *monument* to Begum Samru can be identified as the realm of allegories, they are not separate from the entire monument. The allegories are connected to the apex by the *gaze* and gestural angles of the statues.

Several allegorical figures such as the Angel of Time, The *Vecchio* (Old Man), the Cornucopia, the Breastfeeding mother, and the child connect via upward gaze to the seat of the marble Begum Samru. The gaze is the sentimental element of remembrance and mourning in the tableau. The upward gesture strengthens the memorialization of the departed, frontal, and downward gazes look to the uncertain future. The aberration in this speculation is the young woman with a club and submissive lion, whose role in eulogizing Begum Samru as an able protector is not tied to the wistful expressions of other allegories.

The use of allegories in painting and sculpture was prevalent in the Baroque, Rococo and Neoclassical styles. One of the first consolidated texts that dealt with themes of Allegory was Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, published in 1593. Painters and Sculptors in Italy kept copies of the later editions in their workshops, especially the 1603 edition, which contained woodcut illustrations and added allegorical themes (Stefani, 1990).

In her biographical research on the life of Cesare Ripa, Chiara Stefani was able to find possible influences on the proto-iconologist's work. Through the inventory of the library of Cardinal Antonio Maria Salviati, Stefani lists the works Ripa could have consulted: the *Alciati opera in quattro tomi*, the *Genealogia deorum Gentilium*, the *Lettere del Caro in tre volumi*, the

---

<sup>64</sup>Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Allegory. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allegory>

*Orlando Furioso dell'Ariosto*, and the *Cartarii deis*<sup>65</sup>. Later editions saw the addition of several other themes such as *Prattica* and *Theoria* and others related to antiquarian interests of Ripa, who was corresponding with scholars and enthusiasts in Perugia and Padua.

Iconology does not restrict itself to simply art-historical aspects but extends to the social aspect of an image or icon. The monument shows Begum Samru as an object of veneration. In the apex placement at the top and the church's main altar, the monument alludes to a secular divinity or enigma relating to the person being commemorated. With allegory, the sculptor and patron harness myth to eulogize the subject. And since myth is inadvertently tied to representative tactics of form, art is the vehicle through which a "mythic conception" can be created (Argan and West: 298).

Each element of conception is a repetitive image. The allegorical figures are borrowed from existing sculptures and illustrations and have socially accepted meanings attached. A collage of such symbols with historical sculptures presents a diffused image between two geographical regions, separated not just by land and sea but by all kinds of cultural markers—especially art. Within this diffused logic, iconology presents a way to confront the dissonance between these images.

At first glance, the monument's theme does not escape the viewer. It does not take a thorough knowledge to create meanings from the bottom tier where allegorical figures lie. Devotees, the priests and caretakers of the Sardhana Church have their own understanding of the tableau of figures placed around the central block of the monument. They associate the figures as persons dwelling in the kingdom of heaven. In other cases, the female figures are personifications

---

<sup>65</sup> Source listed as 'The library inventory is in the Salviati Archive, Ramo II, Filza 61, fasc. 27, fols 48v-72r. The citations are from fol. 53v; fol. 60v; fol. 65r; fol.' From Chiara Stefani (1990), 'Cesare Ripa: New Biographical Evidence': 309

of the Begum's different qualities, while the angel, old man, shrouded figure are messengers of death and an ending. Allegorization is a constant, cognitive process of structuring or constituting a representation of ideas that can happen with or without access to detailed knowledge about the history of icons and iconography.

Taking a historicist perspective on the study of the monument, the focus of this study remains on its difference and alterity from the rest of the North Indian doab. However, its similarities to Neoclassical sculpture across the world during the same century presents an alternate view to the history of Neoclassicism, as operating between the liminal spaces of colonial and non-colonial mutations of governance in South Asia. The monument uses South Asian and European bodies to present a tableau.

In a new approach to iconology, Hans Belting uses the triad 'Image, Medium and Body' to illustrate the approach that considers an interpretation of the image via 'non-iconic' determinants of the *medium* and the *body*. The *medium* is the agent by which images are transmitted, and the *body* is the performing or perceiving body on which images depend. He points out that any present iconology must represent the unity and diversion between the image and its medium. Any image cannot be perceived without its media. The visibility of the image rests on its particular mediality, and while physical images are perceived, they cannot be perceived without the physicality of their medium (Belting, 2005: 304).

To remember an image, we disembody them from their medium and re-embody them in our minds. There is a tension between the medium and the transmission of that medium. This tension can either be resolved by the congruence between mediatized image and transmitted image or can be dissimulated by the contradictory perception and presentation of such image. Materiality

is distinctly different from medium then, as it does with matter and form, something Belting considers an 'old distinction' (Belting, 2005: 305).

However, even material and form possess within them an ideology of medium. In the case of white marble used in Neoclassical sculptures, there is a clear preference indicated to identify at the level of colour and texture, a civilizational ideal of the body. Its antecedents lie in Greek sculpture, re-re-inscribed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an "Ideal", fuelled by developments in dated scientific conceptions of race and the ongoing colonial enterprise. Materiality forms an integral component of the idea of the *medium*.

By Belting's definition, our self-perception of our bodies (a sense of being *in* our body) is a precursor to the invention of media. Belting speaks of technology-based media, but it applies to art as well, even sculpture (Belting, 2005: 319). Media — here, sculpture — then becomes a symbolic substitute of the body itself. Then what happens when the body changes from historically 'accurate' form to conform to the Western Ideal, by the active desire and agency of the subject and patron, however conditioned?

The task of the new iconologist, among other things, is to reintroduce the body that the medium has marginalized. A literal marginalization happens by the medium of Neoclassical marble that changes the 'Native' body to fit in with Western convention. This is apparent especially when the earlier iconography of the Begum in paintings shows a distinct preference for a particular type of countenance, frontality and naturalistic ageing features. Keeping the tyranny of the medium in mind, one identifies the realm of allegorical figures from a frontal viewer's left to right as follows:

The first allegorical figure is at the back, close to the back wall. (Fig 8) A young woman in flowing robes rests her raised foot over a subdued lion's head. The rest of the lion's body is

shrouded underneath the woman's robes. She also holds a club, 'resting on the floor' and slanted against her. Her hair is tied at the back, with loose curls collected to frame her face. Her face is angular and aquiline. The tip of her nose is slightly longer than other allegorical figures, similar to the statue of Begum Samru at the top, whose angular nose is preserved from the portraits, to which the sculptor must have had access. The young woman is a formidable figure, a show of strength and confidence. Symbolically, she personifies the military capability and strength of Begum Samru.

The defeated or subdued lion presents a rare instance in Christian art where because of the attributes of "pride" and "fierceness", the lion was perceived as a symbol for the Prince of Darkness. Such an interpretation was supported by the Psalm 91:13, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder. . ." This passage is interpreted as Christ's triumph over the Devil (Fergusson, 1961: 22).

Sometimes, the presence of a lion points to the promise of resurrection. Even rarer then is the young woman's presence with a club triumphantly standing over the lion. Such iconography of the club is associated with the *Madonna del Soccorso* (Mother of Succor), a form of devotion to the Virgin Mother Mary as a protector of children. While other images of the *Madonna del Soccorso* show her as chasing away an ugly devil from frightened children, it was peculiar to the Renaissance period and limited to central Italy (Fergusson, 1961: 95). A warrior woman over a subdued lion could also be the figure of *Clemenza* or Clemency, Mercy (Ripa, [1603] 1755: Tomo Secondo: 1).

The Angel of Time (Fig 9) stands in front of the monument, holding up an hourglass, and like the young woman over the lion, has a club of his own. This club is smooth and embellished and rests against the Angel's body. His large wings are tucked on his back, while his robe leaves



half his chest bare. The Angel of Time is common to memorials or funerary monuments, literally personifying the end of life.

Next to the Angel of Time, in a seated position, close to the bottom tier and flanking the frontal bas-relief, is a shrouded figure holding a snake (Fig 10). Such a figure contributed to the allegory of death and an ending.

Adjacent to the shrouded figure, similarly seated and flanking the frontal bas-relief is a figure of a forlorn Old Man, or *Vecchio* (Fig 11). Tadolini mentions in his autobiography how he wanted to insert this figure in the monument to Count Demidoff but was unable to do so since the contract fell through. Tadolini found the opportunity to sculpt *Vecchio* for this particular monument instead. He interchangeably called it *Vecchio* and *Povérta* in his recollection (Tadolini, 1900: 180–200).

The standing figure on the right of the mourning old man, *Vecchio*, is the allegory of abundance (Fig 11). The sculpture of a young woman holding up tufts of wheat while resting the everflowing *Cornucopia* is a typical addition to monuments of rulers. It signifies the abundance and bounty experienced by the subjects during their rule. In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, different concepts were sometimes presented with multiple sculptures and their combinations. Young women with *cornucopias*, such as the figure of *Pace* (peace), the figure of *Liberalita* (Liberty), and that of *Africa*—a personification of the continent, also possessing a crab, walking with a lion and snakes—all presented with features similar to *Abbondanza* or Abundantia (Ripa, [1603]1766: Tomo Quarto: 25, 164, 333).

The allegory of Abundantia was to portray a sense of stability and a thriving economic and agrarian enterprise. It served as a way to remember the literal 'abundance' during the rule of the eulogized Begum Samru, whose long rule over Sardhana had ended. Abundantia had similar but

ever-expanding meanings through time. In Antiquity, it referred to economic and political wealth. Renaissance period personifications were to do with the individual moral and intellectual quality of richness. In the Baroque period, it extended its focus on middle-class aspirations of wealth accumulation through exploration and conquest (Roberts, 1998: 21).

The two figures at the back, behind Vecchio and Abundantia, are the child holding up a fruit and a woman breastfeeding her infant (Fig 12) while looking up towards Begum's seat. Both figures are upward-looking and personify either the matriarchal nurturing of the Begum's governance or the gratitude (and sorrow) of mothers and orphans dependent upon Begum Samru's charity.

The child's depiction in proximity to the breastfeeding mother further perpetuates the Begum's supposed sympathy towards women and children. However, they could also have been symbolic memorials of Dyce Sombre's deceased children and concubine. While two of his children died in infancy, he was supposed to take his daughter, Penelope, to Europe in 1838. It is of interest that in the instructional sketch made by Tadolini, Dyce Sombre's statue is placed on the right-hand side, above the Vecchio (old man), which would have put the breastfeeding woman and the toddler in the general area behind Dyce Sombre.

The entirety of the sculpture is made through dissonant parts that tie together as a whole, without intermixing of iconographic convention, but by the harnessing of multiple conventions as different parts of a whole. While it may be encouraging to see North Indian miniature styles in Carrara bas-reliefs and Neoclassical allegories used to eulogize a Begum, the monument does not present itself as a triumph of the mixed-race patron over European forms of art. The issue of race and racial erasure runs through the veins of the marble.

### **Race & Colour in Neoclassical Sculptures: Historical Sculptures**

The statue of the Begum (Fig 4) is seated on a chair, gazing forward and holding up a scroll. A scroll or rolled manuscript is associated with St. James the Great in Christian art. They suggest the gifts of an individual writer (Fergusson, 1961: 180). However, to tie itself to the local environment, the rolled scroll is formally similar to the snake of a *huqqa*, an icon of authority among portraits of nobles in the context of miniature painting in the subcontinent. Begum Samru's painted portraits often had her holding the *huqqa* snake. Moreover, in recent memory, the scroll is identified as the *farman* or royal decree of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, who bestowed the *jagir* of Sardhana on Begum Samru.

The Begum's facial features are smooth and more angular in sculpture than the Begum's surviving portraits. The appearance of wrinkles is minimized to accentuate a more bony, skeletal facial structure. Youth in Neoclassical sculpture is associated with a plump visage, while angular faces are associated with older, dignified features. Proficient in sculpting multiple folds of fabric, Tadolini could sartorially match Begum Samru's statue to her painted iconography. She wears a short turban and adorns an embellished shawl over her head and torso. The shawl is decorated with relief work on its borders.

The Begum's jewellery is full of pearls. Her head ornament and her bracelet are sculpted as pearls. Her other hand holds the armrest of her chair while her moccasin-clad feet are placed upon the cushion of a footrest, also a common sight in Begum Samru's commissioned portraits. Apart from her facial features, Tadolini manages to sculpt Samru as closely as possible while maintaining the familiarity and recognizability of the figure of awe. On a slab of white marble, right under her feet, is inscribed in Italian "Adamo Tadolini fece l'anno 1842" (Adamo Tadolini, made in the year 1842).

Chromatic homogeneity in the monument has a single exception in the sienna-coloured pedestal on which Begum Samru's sculpture is enthroned (Fig 13). A coloured rendition of the sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus, the top frontal surface has distinctly rounded volutes at both ends, softening the surface on top of a sharper square base. The top of the base is fringed with rectangular faces of marble, followed by a Doric frieze around the pedestal. The original model of the pedestal was the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC artefact of a sarcophagus in the Vatican Museums. The sarcophagus-like pedestal doubles up as an open palanquin because of its placement under a throne.

At the second level, around a cylindrical middle tier, are four sculptures. From the left background, they are the sculptures of General Inayatullah Khan (Fig 6), David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre (Fig 13), Prime Minister of Begum Samru Diwan Rae Singh, and Fr. Julius Caesar Scotti (Fig 14), the Vicar Apostolic of the Sardhana Church since 12 September 1834. After the Begum's death in 1836, Fr. Caesar returned to Italy, where he died in 1863. His sculpture is shown as a man with a long flowing beard, cloaked, and holding a rosary and breviary in his hands. His gaze is forward-looking, and his frame is tall and well-built under a structured robe. In the instructional sketch by Tadolini, Diwan Rae Singh appears in profile, with folded arms and more voluminous clothing. In the monument, as a man of learning, he holds another scroll and a case on the other hand. Here, the scroll serves to portray the quality of writing.

On the other side, similarly, the statue of Inayatullah Khan is forward gazing and dressed in regal clothing—perhaps designed by Tadolini since the turban is almost Turkic. The sculpture's left hand rests on the handle of his sword while his other hand rests at his side. He wears a ring on one of his fingers, and his cuffs are open. His tunic falls to the knee, underneath which he wears a *churidar* pyjama, followed by pointed shoes. The sculpture is angular, cinched at the *waist* with a sash, which divides the torso and the bottom. Above the sash, the sculpted fabric clings to the

idealized musculature of the General's torso. Below the sash, Tadolini returns to sculpting a flowy, foldable fabric sculpture over long legs.

Dyce Sombre's sculpture (Fig 13) in this *ensemble* is distinct from all others. Dressed regally, as was appropriate for a Knight of the Pontifical Order of Christ, he wears a military jacket over slacks and shoes. His jacket has shoulder pads with tassels and other embellishments. In his right hand, he holds a large decorative helmet. His left elbow rests on the base of the cylindrical tier, over a flowing cloak—perhaps a cape that completes his uniform. His collar covers his neck, and the top of his hair is combed back, with curls resting right behind his ears. His resting elbow supports his face as he angles his gaze upward towards the Begum. The prime minister, the Commandant, and even the priest are generic representations, similar in their features and "looking" ahead, while the sentimental allegories have taken a moment to lament, as is common in funerary monuments for Catholics, where allegories wistfully gaze upward, over the crucified body of Christ. Dyce Sombre places himself in both spheres of duty and despair, by physical placement and by the direction of his gaze.

It proves challenging to pick which component of the design was the original as decided by Dyce Sombre, whether the Begum approved them before her death, and which feature was added by the sculptor, Tadolini. An important function of the monument was to construct an identity of the racial and cultural difference of the patron from the subject of commemoration. By commissioning this memorial, Dyce Sombre memorialized himself as belonging to a European gentility in garb and grace. His sentimental posture, ostentatious military costume and graceful refinement as a sensitive and grateful gentleman were ways to ensure his place in English society. In the homogeneity of white marble lay an opportunity to declare what could not be declared in

painting—his claim of European ancestry that was often denied to him with terms such as "Copper-coloured", "Othello", etc.

For Dyce Sombre then, it was necessary to be represented in a manner that was ideal and dignified. In Neoclassical sculpture, it was rare for racialized bodies to appear as subjects of veneration. Within the colonial logic of trans-Atlantic slavery, black bodies were often shown with chains, shackles, in kneeling and subservient positions. In British sculpture, which had representations of "Indian" people, the sculptures were of subservient or stereotypical bodies, which were brought together in harmony under the paternalistic leadership of the British statesman. Perhaps such an attempt is possible for Dyce Sombre also because of his gender. Sartorially speaking, his dress is ostentatiously European. The sculpture fits within the idiom of Neoclassical memorialization. On the other hand, Begum Samru is immediately recognizable because of her garb — because of her turban, overhead shawl, tunic and *pyjamas*.

It becomes necessary to discuss sculpture at the level of the *body*. This is where medium requires unpacking and unveiling at the level of its visibility. In intentionality of racial and social aspirations, Dyce Sombre, through sculpture, ushered himself into a substitutive process of physically *becoming* a Eurasian aristocrat— as a Knight, Gentleman, or even a non- "oriental" Prince. The process of creating such an identity at the level of the *body* in art is unstable and unfixed. Identity construction is a tedious negotiation in which representation plays a key role. In representation of his *self* in a certain vocabulary of the Neoclassical, Dyce Sombre's *ideal* and *aspirational* identity are made possible for posterity. His Eurasian identity *occurs* in the fiction of the sculpture and the entirety of the monument, as it could not happen in his lifetime.

According to Charmaine A. Nelson, who has worked extensively on the racial, gendered body in 19th-century Neoclassical art, representation does not limit to reproducing a body in the

visual domain according to already existing markers of identification. But representation is a dynamic, ever-evolving process of the visual that must be confronted as part of a body's manifestation. It is a field wherein differentiation happens, signification and symbolic identification are also constituted and maintained. Nelson asks the important question, "What is excluded from the body for the body's boundary to form (Nelson, 2000: 87–88)?"

These exclusions tend to haunt and blur the boundaries, where the body's surface itself is a site symptomatic of this exclusion. The erasure of Begum Samru's wrinkles, leaving behind a gaunt, skeletal face, or the lean and muscular transformation of Dyce Sombre's body is important because of what they do not show.

With clothing, fashion, and posture, identity construction takes place. Begum Samru's face and posture attempt to assimilate her legacy within the Neoclassical, which improvises to create the dress typical to Begum's portraits. Dyce Sombre, on the other hand, is left unrecognizable if compared with any of his surviving portraits. While being a far cry from his portrait in miniature, it is also completely different from his portrait done by Charles Brocky in England, done around the same time. While Brocky pigmented his skin and made his body closer to his descriptions, the sculpture homogenized Dyce Sombre as completely white. His ostentatious clothing did not distract from a lean physique and smooth face. Any sign of illness (such as mental fog, venereal disease, skin conditions that he reported in his private diaries) were absent, as naturalistic portrayal was not the goal of either works of art.

The dissonance between Dyce Sombre's sculpture, paintings, and descriptions further make us aware that the image of Dyce Sombre was a social, political and cultural investment in the construction of his identity that could not be neatly assigned. The entirety of the monument fell in

line with this grand project. Such differences between the 'real' and 'represented' bodies were not uncommon. However, the careful de-representation of a racial identity is the issue.

Dyce Sombre's mixed-race identity did not qualify him to be part of English gentile society. Such exclusion did not depend on how he looked but on the genealogical history of racial and sexual 'transgression' in his family. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several racial terminologies existed to quantify race within a body. Persons with one-eighth black ancestry, one-quarter black ancestry and one-half black ancestry were known as *Octoroon*, *Quadroon* and *Mulatto*. In terms of South Asian racial identity, the naming was slightly different, but both were interchangeable in common parlance, as was seen in several newspaper descriptions of Dyce Sombre during his lunacy trial.

It did not matter even if a person was 'dominantly' of white ancestry. They were automatically rejected from racial identification of whiteness because of a history of sexual transgression across race that their ancestors 'committed'. In cases of several counterflows from the Empire, the father was often of European ancestry. This allowed the mixed-race children education and training in the language and manner of European society. However, it did not take away racial identities that they were inadvertently tied with. Blackness was a pathology corrupting the perceived 'purity' of the white body. The body of the mixed-race individual provided an aesthetically 'representable' body in Neoclassical sculpture, which could be hidden and cloaked in the homogeneity of white marble. However, on a deeper look, the sculpture presented itself as a transgressive site (Nelson, 2000: 92).

Whiteness in sculpture was obsessively reproduced, much to the intellectual detriment of sculpture as an art form. Colour or its lack was a contributing factor to the lowering of sculpture's station, as compared to painting. In Vernon Lee's *The Child in The Vatican* (1888), the child, a metaphor for modern subjectivity, is dismissive of the white sculptures. Sculptures appear dull in



their dirty whiteness and do absolutely nothing in their resolute postures. They see nothing, with their white eyes without pupils. The sculpture is illegible and repetitive (Lee, 1888: 21).

William Gladstone, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century British politician, claimed that the Greeks' perception of colour was that of black and white, this notion strengthened by the 'preference' of strong, loud colour with "uncivilized races". For Gladstone, societal preference for intense colour was a sign that the society was "less evolved". Racial 'science' also perpetuated prejudice by claiming that long-term presumed intermarriage between Jewish people led to more colour blindness among them, much like early humans. Africans and other colonized people were also seen as being stuck in these early stages of evolution, while Western technological and intellectual superiority was proof of their difference. Thus, the disciplinary system of vision, as constituted in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was racialized around the issue of colour (Mirzeoff, 1999: 55)

Even Goethe, the Romantic Poet, explained that 'savage' nations, uneducated people, and children preferred vibrant colours, that animals could get enraged or excited by colours, and that people of refinement avoid vivid colours. Charles Blanc, in 1867, the director of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, noted that drawing was masculine, while colour was the feminine component of art. Further, he also noted that all "Orientalists are . . . infallible colorists", drawing on the view that Middle Eastern, North African, Asian and South-Asian men were effeminate by nature (Mirzeoff, 1999: 56). In the history of race, empire, and art, White is a colour of power. The several meanings associated with white and whiteness were skewed to the West. The whiteness in Greek and Roman sculpture — a lie by omission and erasure of polychrome — was a sign of its purity and high standard. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this notion of purity was associated with racial purity (Mirzeoff, 1999: 58).

Whiteness then became a way to convey intense physical beauty. Oscar Wilde's anti-hero Dorian Gray was compared to a Classical sculpture, that his beauty was so pure that he could be made a Titan or a boy (Mirzeoff, 1999: 59). The consequences of such a racial preference in the perception of beauty and morality has had disastrous consequences in the modern world even after colonialism and the end of slavery — from Nazi ideology to modern-day racial profiling and racial undertones of beauty standards in the world. By the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the whiteness of Greek sculpture was a marker of its aesthetic trait. Those able to appreciate the stark whiteness were seen as progressive, enlightened and contemplative persons of refined taste. But whiteness came with a sense of imperial pride.

White marble's function in sculpture was regulatory. It protected the body from making visible the skin, which was the fundamental means of racial identification. In Neoclassical art, anxiety about colour remained in sculpture. Sculptors of the time were aware of the marble prototypes and 'Classical' sculptures being coloured. The deployment of the natural whiteness of marble was an ideological choice (Nelson, 2000: 89).

The body as sculpture is the site of racial, gendered discursivity. The material and aesthetic process of making sculptures and the availability of constructing an *ideal* body were intertwined with the colonial history of human sciences and medicine. The three-dimensionality of the visual validation of such ideals perpetuated stereotypes of racial difference. The harking back to Greco-Roman sculpture was not just tied to the notion of historical greatness. In fact, the term 'Classical' is not neutral but a historically charged racial term that marginalized blackness as its opposite, making it invisible. The historical validation of whiteness in Neoclassical sculpture has had long-lasting effects on the ideals of 'beauty' as we know them today (Nelson, 2000: 88).

### **Trans/Inter-mediality: The bas-relief panels**

Isolated from auxiliary drawings, the monument to Begum Samru can be seen as an unremarkable object of fine art. However, as a transmediation to stone of earlier paintings and an object in mobility, its study in the context of mobile objects can enrich its art-historical description. In the three bas relief panels in the bottom tier of the monument's central trunk, the three aspects of Begum Samru's rule are memorialized.

On the left side (from the frontal viewer's perspective), the bas relief reproduces the important court scene at the Delhi Palace. The original painting of Begum Samru and her courtiers was painted by Muhammad A'zam, a Delhi based painter, in about 1820. The frontal bas-relief is a reproduction of a painting that marked the occasion of the inauguration of the Sardhana Church. The bas relief on the right side, adjacent to the breastfeeding woman and young toddler, is a reproduction of a painting that showed the military prowess of the Begum and was probably made after her armies marched to Bharatpur in 1826. This is the only panel that does not have Dyce Sombre represented. In the original painting, John Thomas (*Jan Sahib*, a son of George Thomas of Tipperary) is represented with a soft halo, leading the armies ahead of the Begum, who is atop an elephant.

For the bas-reliefs, Dyce Sombre's instructions were that the first had to have nine to ten figures. This one was perhaps the frontal bas-relief (Fig 15). Tadolini was given a drawing that copied a painting where Begum Samru presented a chalice to Father Adeodatus on the day of the inauguration of her church.

Tadolini received drawings from England for the other two bas-reliefs, "in one there were more than forty figures," and each of them required portraiture and sartorial definition (Fig 16). In the third bas-relief, Tadolini was supposed to sculpt the triumph of "52 figures, including eight

horses, five camels, five elephants, and a pair of oxen pulling a cannon" (Fig 17). On Dyce Sombre's insistence, the height of the monument increased from palms 24 to palms 27, and the width went from palms 14 to palms 17. Tadolini mentions that the statues were enlarged proportionately, but an enlargement would require a new statue (Tadolini, 1900: 212).

The manner in which the paintings were sculpted in stone created new images. They were created in the Neoclassical vocabulary, translated from an 'Indian' form of painting. Since Tadolini used several sketches, drawings, re-drawings in the making of these panels, one might consider looking at the panels as a product of *transmediality*. It cannot be seen as mixed media because the final artwork, though virtually tied to its visual predecessor in painting (on gouache), is a singular image in marble.

However, media are intermediaries of the image but also between themselves. The mirror, overlap, quote and/or censor each other. Older forms of media do not disappear but get reconfigured into new roles, such as that of a historical predecessor — a preferred tool harnessed in Neoclassical art, though limited to Greek and Roman historicity (Belting, 2005: 314). *Intermediality* then becomes a potential term to describe the relationship between the source medium (painting) and the resultant medium (bas-relief panels and sculptures).

Increasingly, art historical discourse has made us aware of how current image theories are non-inclusive of 'non-Western' traditions of visual thinking, even though non-western images have a ubiquitous presence in so-called Western culture, whether as objects of collection, curiosity or as source media for modern art (such as African masks in Picasso's paintings). The visual presence of three courtly South Asian paintings within a Neoclassical monument made in Rome by a famed studio sculptor make visible the alternate ubiquity of a 'Western history' that is usually present in funerary monuments.

Such a history is not absent within this particular *tableau* either. The allegorical figures and the sienna sarcophagus of Scipio (the only instance of colour!) are historical and mythical references to a great Greek and Roman past. The bas-reliefs add to the myth and history-obsessed creation but are contextually different. They are instances of a recent past worthy of glorification all the way in the North Indian Doab, courtesy of an old, Catholic convert, *Begum*, who was not born to nobility.

The first, frontal bas relief of the Begum offering a chalice to the Archbishop of Agra (Fig 15), elongates and flattens the original image. The original painting (Fig 18) had a skewed perspective, with the Archbishop seated on a chair kept atop three stairs. The seated figure and the short Begum's height were almost the same. Right behind the Begum in a red coat as a Knight stands Dyce Sombre. The far-right side of the painting had Antonio Reghelini, the architect. The officers standing on the Begum's side are less in the bas-relief, while the number of clergymen remains the same.

While two nameless officers were removed from the bas-relief, Dyce Sombre perhaps made sure that Reghelini was included in the panels, wherever possible. Also centrally emphasized is a standing clergyman, believed to be the newly appointed Apostolic Vicar, Julius Caesar Scotti, between the seated Archbishop and the standing Begum. Their levels are the same, with the stairs gone. Dyce Sombre's relief stands here in elegant posture, towering over the Begum's short stature.

The left bas relief (Fig 16), next to the woman with the club and lion, is a reproduction of the court painting of Begum Samru and her retainers in her Delhi palace (Fig 19). The differences from the original painting are several, most conspicuously the lack of architectural elements that would situate this *darbar* within a decidedly Neoclassical building. Begum Samru is central in the image and is holding a snake of a *huqqa*.

The *huqqa* is situated nearby, and like the original painting, one of her *munshis* is writing of what is an important political event. Dyce Sombre's relief representation is to the right of the Begum as a young boy. Her retainers in the relief are several but far fewer than the original painting, which is a great example of a crowd study in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their placement does not spiral but flanks the two sides of the Begum. The sentries at each edge of the painting are reproduced in relief; so are the two seated Europeans (Reghelini and another unknown person) on the right side.

The third bas relief on the right (Fig 17) uses a repetitive rippling effect to give an illusion of multiplicity along with depth in its depiction of Begum Samru's armies. The original painting (Fig 20) consists of several rows of infantry, cavalry, bullock carts and palanquins. It has multiple elephants, and the Begum is hard to identify in the extremely detailed and crowded painting. It gives a long view of the landscape that the army crosses. In the relief, however, this visual vocabulary of conquest or march over land is missing.

What the bas relief panel does is reduce the number of figures which are shown to mere elements that are borrowed from the original reference. It emphasizes the figure of Begum Samru on a lone elephant. The halos are removed from this rendition. The relief, instead of a bird's eye view of a regiment, glimpses the sight of the army, with the Begum's placement at the top, to emphasize her image and not that of the army. Tadolini attempts to add scale by multiplying heads of horses, cavalymen, and spears with a fading perspective. Such a scale is achieved in the painting by exact repetition of figures painted flat on the surface of the painting.

The relief panels are intermediaries between the monument's local context in Sardhana and its place in the history of grand Neoclassical funerary monuments. Their presence mimics Neoclassical sculpture's preference for historical reminiscing, but it replaces the historicity of

Greek and Roman myths and persons with the historicity of the place of Sardhana, tied to its deceased Begum. Begum Samru then becomes the object of veneration by the charged intermediality of the panels. In these reproductions, Dyce Sombre is also carefully represented in the central locations of the monument and panels.

During an extremely precarious time in his life, as he struggled to assimilate with the European gentry after having lost any rights of governance over Sardhana, he commissioned this tableau as a way to memorialize his benefactress but also to declare an identity for himself. The mixed-race aristocrat aspired to sculpt his image in the homogeneity of white Italian marble but inadvertently hybridized the Neoclassical monument by its intermediality, which brings forward the scope of multi-mediality of image. In a context of multiple persons, objects and cultures, *who* chooses *which medium* and *how* do they make sense of a particular image through multiple media? What does it mean to translate a particular image from one medium to another?

### **Conclusion: Memorials and Memorialization**

Tadolini, in his *Autobiografici*, mentions that he modelled the Begum Samru *monument* after a model (Fig 21) he made for the monument of Count Demidoff, the Russian ambassador who was also a Florentine philanthropist<sup>66</sup>.

Another memorial monument of note was the monument made to Marquis Charles Cornwallis, the Governor-General of Bengal, in 1807–11 by John Charles Felix Rossi (Fig 22). According to Jason Edwards, it bears a "colonial-cosmopolitanism", a trait of British sculpture that was entirely ignored by British art historians, barring a few exceptions such as Mildred Archer and Barbara Groseclose. The Indian allegorical figures of a helpless Hindu woman and a seated ascetic

---

<sup>66</sup> That particular commission was attempted by another Italian sculptor named Lorenzo Bartolini (b. 1777 – d. 1850), which was also left unrealized until the 1870s, two decades after the sculptor's death. See: Maurice Rheims (1972), *19<sup>th</sup> Century Sculpture*: 335

sage were interesting additions, side by side with a statue of a seated Britannia. The statue of Cornwallis was sculpted in contemporaneous uniform, complete with a cloak, and holding a rolled scroll in his right hand. The Brahmin figure on the lower right is portrayed with heroic musculature, much like the Greek ideal, seated with royal ease next to a smaller icon of worship.

Edwards suggested that Rossi's eclectic taste in the sculptures of Phidias, Michelangelo and South Asian sculpture was more characteristic of the British school than the "anachronic conception of the Neoclassical" (Edwards, 2014).

Building upon this dissonance, and citing other works which identified baroque elements in British sculpture, or John Flaxman's 1829 lectures which sought to unravel the Classical from Greek and Roman sculpture to South Asian sculpture, Edwards also warns against creating a "postcolonial exotic" or finding solace in instances of artworks. In the Cornwallis monument, it is perhaps not possible to account for the marginal 'Other' without consoling the mainstream. Thus, the 'Other' is portrayed in a way that is palatable to imperial audiences.

The monument to Begum Samru, because of the political potential of its historicity and the person being commemorated, problematizes the carefully constructed exclusivity of the Neoclassical. If the essence of Neoclassical is to reminisce historical greatness in order to aesthetically attribute a contemporaneous identity, the Begum Samru monument achieves exactly this. Dyce Sombre manages to use the logic of the Neoclassical but replaces the greatness of Greece, Rome, Britannia or even his aspirational European self with the legacy of Begum Samru — a Catholic, a woman, a native ruler of a cosmopolitan oasis in North India.

The monumentality of the marble tableau at once demonstrates the instability of colonial power and shows the permeability of its aesthetics in the larger South Asian political environment. Begum Samru's long-deceased partner, and Dyce Sombre's great grandfather, Walter Reinhardt



"Sombre", was an Austrian mercenary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, infamous as the 'Butcher of Patna', where he was instrumental in the massacre of several British persons in 1763.

Rebecca M. Brown has written on the palimpsestic nature of the Memorial erected on the Patna 1763 massacre site, where the monument is a testimony of the precarious relationship of colonial powers with the colonized. It was re-modelled and inscribed once in 1880 and then again in the 1930s. The transforming monument revealed the changing nature of colonialism. It first commemorated a tragic event, reflecting on a partial presence of the British in Patna. From then on, it proclaimed British military prowess and Indian barbarism as legitimacy to rule the subcontinent. In its final version during the 1930s, the memorial's inscriptional language and monumentality further created an environment of control in the backdrop of the Indian National Movement (Brown, 2006).

What relation does the Begum Samru monument have with colonialism? There is a contextual relationship that is easily apparent. It is in the backdrop of a burgeoning colonial empire that Sardhana becomes an oasis for European mercenaries, and Begum Samru enters into diplomatic negotiations with the East India Company. Dyce Sombre (whose father George Dyce was Scottish) emigrated to England, in order to retrieve from the British Government the estate of Begum Samru and Sardhana. His use of the Neoclassical to commemorate the Begum during his Grand Tour has a conspicuous relation with the colonial and imperialist logic of Western Europe, especially Great Britain. Yet, it is difficult to categorize the tableau as a 'colonial' monument, since in its political statement and intermediality with "Indian" painting, it resists such a categorization.

## Conclusion

The monument to Begum Samru is a marble *tableau* of multiple elements that come together for a specific form of commemoration. In the dissertation, we see the tableau as a “picture-object” (Lisbon, 2013: 77). It creates a dichotomy between the image and the material, from where the distinction between the monument’s makers and its medium emerges.

The image-material dichotomy helps to efface the fundamental temporality within a tableau. The form of several elements coming together in one monument present an opportunity to read into the process of its formation, appearing, and becoming. It pushes the researcher of the tableau to speculate on each placement, each formation, each element to understand the tableau as whole. The *Tableau Vivant* or the living picture were often staged allegories for a royal procession in medieval towns (Lisbon, 2013: 78). The Begum Samru Monument, is much like a tableau vivant, arresting a moment of multitudes in marble. The tableau, with its inherent theatricality, is separate from the collage, it presents a relationship of all the elements together, while recognizing their separateness. The monument also negotiates between what is the same and what is the ‘Other’ (Lisbon, 2013: 84).

The first chapter outlines different strategies of patronage of Begum Samru and Dyce Sombre. In doing so, it addresses different forms of cosmopolitanism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century— in both South Asia and Europe, by the micro-historical approach to Begum Samru and Dyce Sombre’s biographies. In doing so, a detour towards legality and the question of insanity happens. There, one comes across the social construction of *race* and *sanity* as a civilizational category. Within this, the role of patronage of art and architecture is tied to *identity*.

According to Alisa Eimen, “twentieth-century politics of identity increasingly targets works of art and architecture to proclaim or suppress competing identities.” (Eimen, 2014:18). As

targets, they present an opportunity to hurt not only a person but the ideas, principles and wealth of their time and community. There are several examples of this: The desecration of Akbar's mausoleum in Sikandra by Jats in the late seventeenth century (during Aurangzeb's reign 1658 – 1707 AD) was “perceived as a blow to Mughal prestige” (Asher, 1992: 108).

Attack on symbols such as the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992<sup>67</sup> was an attack on the secular aspirations of Indian democracy. Architectural spaces and memorials form an abstract affinity with the person(s) associated with them. The 2020 instances of vandalizing and toppling of statues dedicated to slavers around the Black Lives Matter movement<sup>68</sup> have cemented this idea that a statue or any sculptural memorialization is an extension of a person's identity. It links with their temporality, their place in history and inversely, the place of history in that object.

The hierarchies between painting and sculpture were typical in Neoclassical Europe at the cusp of its imperial legacy and in India at the dawn of a colonial empire. Nevertheless, as one looks deeper, the monument to Begum Samru is anomalous. It is the first moment of sculpture within the Begum's familial legacy and sadly, due to a tragic turn of events, the last. Could it be first in the series of an unwrought project—a proto-patronage that attempted to elevate the already built legacy of non-imperial Neoclassical architectural legacy of Begum Samru?

---

<sup>67</sup> Noorani 2003, Vol. 2, 1–85. The demolition of the Babri mosque and the *Ram Janmabhumi* dispute has gone on for close to two centuries. In 2020, after a judgement from the Supreme Court, the temple construction began in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh with the attendance of the Indian Prime Minister, the state Chief Minister and the head of a militant right-wing Hindutva organization RSS. For a detailed study of the demolition, See A. G. Noorani, ed. (2003), *The Babri Masjid Question 1528–2003: A Matter of National Honour*, Volumes 1 & 2, New Delhi: Tulika Books

<sup>68</sup> The following excerpt is telling of the impact of public sculpture in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement: “*From their earliest inception, in other words, statues were as much conceptual as they were material – less about the individuals they depict than about how we see ourselves. Just how engrained that instinct is – to perceive an aspect of oneself in the image of another – is impossible to measure. Such an impulse may explain why it is so agonisingly difficult to tolerate the persistence of memorials that venerate past masters of pain. Theirs is a suffocating weight.*” Kelly Grovier (12 June 2020), ‘Black Lives Matter Protest: Why are Statues so Powerful?’, BBC Culture, Art History, Online: <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200612-black-lives-matter-protests-why-are-statues-so-powerful>. Accessed: 13 Aug 2020

In his use of the Neoclassical, Dyce Sombre made a conscious attempt to engage with the art style, and think about what it meant to make 'new' the 'Classical', or in a way, remake history so that it served his purpose of assimilation into society and distinction from it.

The monument for Begum Samru is not an aberration but evidence of an expanded history of Neoclassicism itself. While the countenances of the "Indian" persons are only slightly Indianized, the limits of white marble provide to the patron an opportunity to assimilate, literally by the colour of his skin, into European gentile society. His sculpture's garments are decorative of his position in society, and his gesture is humanized and sentimental—a marker of sensitivity. The material of the monument holds a key to its maker's identity. Even as it erases the skin of its patron and subject, the use of sartorial choice in the making and distinction of Dyce Sombre's statue separate him from the tableau's 'native' elements. Even with the direction of his gaze, Dyce Sombre claims a sameness with the allegorical figures— distinctly European and Classical in their physiognomy, posture, and clothing.

The sculptural tableau stands as an object in motion, not just through space and time but also media. The transmediation from painting to bas relief classicizes the Begum's most important painted commissions into European high art's idiom.'

## APPENDIX

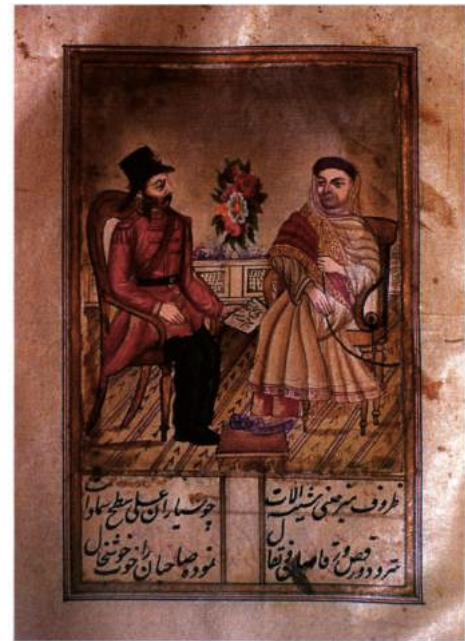
## Images for Chapter 1: Makers



1. Adamo Tadolini, Memorial Monument to Begum Samru, 1839–1842, Sardhana, Photographed 2018



2. Unknown Artist (ca. 1850), Sardhana, 'Jesus Christ', in Manik Chand's Zib-ut Tavarikh, Tonk History Ms. 330, fol. 3; taken from Aditya Behl (2002), 'Articulating a Life, in Words and Pictures': 100



3. Unknown Artist (ca. 1850), Sardhana, 'Lord Combermere receiving a Persian copy of Zib-ut Tavarikh, Tonk History Ms. 330, fol. 111; taken from Aditya Behl (2002), 'Articulating a Life, in Words and Pictures': 117



4. Unknown Artist (ca. 1850), Sardhana, An imagined young likeness of Begum Samru, Tonk History Ms. 330, fol. 16b; taken from Aditya Behl (2002), 'Articulating a Life, in Words and Pictures': 107



5a. Khairullah (signed), Begum Samru, Delhi, 1810–20, Opaque pigments with gold on paper, Image: 22.7 x 14 cm, Folio: 27.5 x 19 cm, © 2019 Anil Relia



5b. Khairullah (attributed), Emperor Shah Alam II (r. 1759–1806) on the Peacock Throne, Delhi, Mughal Empire, 1801, Opaque Watercolour, gold and ink on paper, 34.9 X 23.2 cm, Indian Art Special Purpose Fund (M.77.78), LACMA. Accessed Online: <https://collections.lacma.org/node/238981>



6. Jiwan Ram, Begum Samrū, ca. 1830, Oval miniature portrait, gouache on paper, h 10.5 cm, w 8.5 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, Accessed Online: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O16833/portrait-of-begam-samru-painting-jiwan-ram/>

7. Jiwan Ram (attributed), Begum Samru, ca. 1820–30, Oval Miniature Portrait, gouache on paper, diameter: 8.2 cm, Chester Beatty Library Collection, Dublin, Ireland. Inscription: “Best of creation, offspring of beauty, elegance of women, Begum Sahiba” (Zubdat al-‘arakin farzand i-Jamila Zib al nisa Begum sahiba), Taken from Alka Hingorani (2002/03), ‘Artful Agency’: 55



8. Muhammad A'zam, Begum Samru and her retainers, ca. 1820–25, Gouache on paper, h. 45.6 cm, w 63.2 cm, Chester Beatty Library Collection, Dublin. Accessed Online: [https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/In\\_74\\_7/1/LOG\\_0000/](https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/In_74_7/1/LOG_0000/)





9. Unknown artist, Begum Samru and Her Army, ca. 1805–26, Gouache on Paper, h. 41.5 cm, w 62.5 cm, Chester Beatty Library Collection, Dublin. Accessed Online: [https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/In\\_74\\_6/1/LOG\\_0000/](https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/In_74_6/1/LOG_0000/)



10. Begum Samru with Clerics, ca. 1826, Governor's Palace, Lucknow, India. Photograph of the replica in the Sardhana Basilica. Author's Photograph (2020). Anton Reghelini is painted in the far-right side of the painting, and given a place in the historic moment as the architect



11. Basilica of Our Lady of Graces, Sardhana, built ca. 1822 by the commission of Begum Samru; Architect: Antonio Reghelini. Author's Photograph (2020)



12. Begum Samru's Delhi Mansion, ca. 1815, south and north façade, painted in 1842–44, Metcalf Folio, ©British Library Board, Add.Or.5475, ff.47v–48



13. The Mansion in Sardhana, built ca. 1834, Architect: Antonio Reghelini. Author's Photograph (2020)



14. Detail from Muhammad A'zam's painting of Begum Samrū and her household, ca. 1820–25. Seated in a red jacket is Anton Reghelini, the architect of the Delhi House in which the scene of this painting is set.



15. Antonio Reghelini, By Raja Jivan Ram, Sardhana, 1835. Oil on canvas. 76 by 63.5 cm. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, LP645.



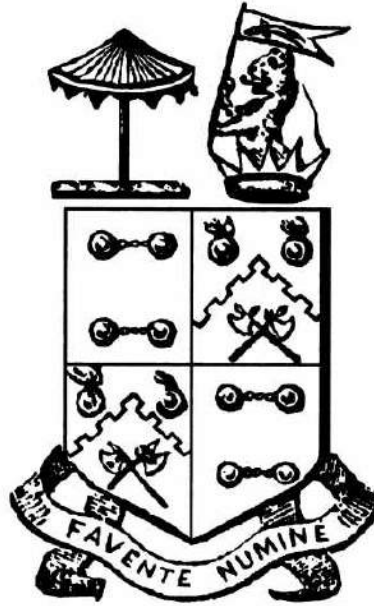
16(b). Mary Ann Weld-Forester (née Jervis), Lady Forester, by Henry Brett, published by Edward Bull, published by Edward Churton, after James Godsell Middleton; stipple engraving, published May 1834, NPG D6858, © National Portrait Gallery, London



16(a). John Scott (titled, dated and signed), Portrait of the Honourable Mary Anne Jervis, aged 18, 1834, 142.7 X 118.6 CM, Oil on Canvas, Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire; copied from an original painting by J.G. Middleton



17. Karoly "Charles" Brocky (signed), Portrait of David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre, ca. 1840s, [Image Size Unknown], © Image Courtesy of the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, UK. 2020



18. Image of Dyce Sombre's Coat of Arms and Motto "God Willing", taken from Michael H. Fisher (2006), *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857*, New Delhi: Permanent Black: 322

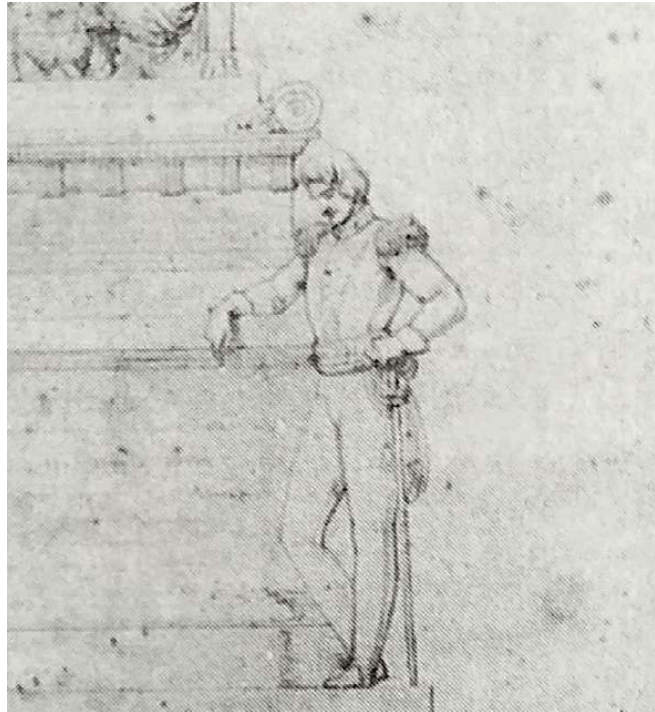


19. Detail from Muhammad A'zam's painting of Begum Samrū and her household, ca. 1820–25. David Dyce Sombre (dressed in all black) is seated on the left, between the Begum and John Thomas (dressed in flamboyant Indian style). His arms are crossed, he looks to John Thomas, as if in conversation, but still appears "ill at ease in society" (Leach, pg 793)

20. Sketch of the Monument (a), with detail showing the sketch of Dyce Sombre (b). Taken from Pisano, *Liberio C. 'The studio of Adamo Tadolini, sculptor in Rome'*. *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte*. January, 2000: 57



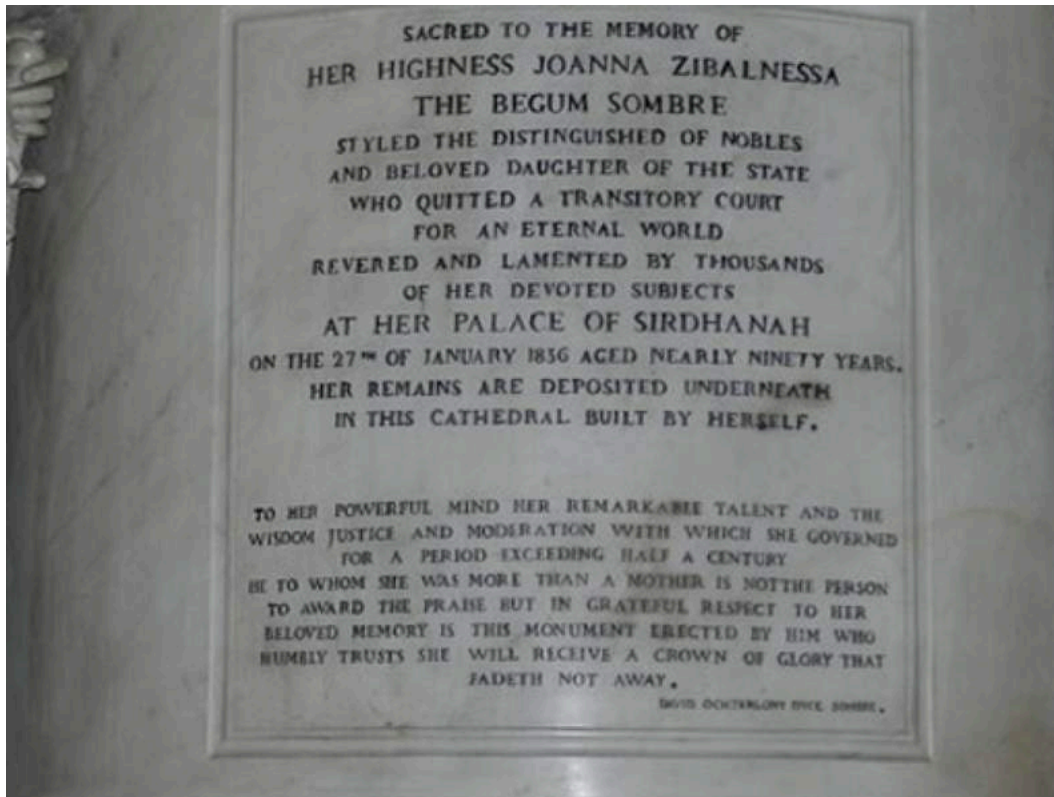
a.



b.



21. Taken from the preface to the printed autobiography: Tadolini, Adamo and Tadolini, Giulio. Ricordi autobiografici di Adamo Tadolini : scultore (vissuto dal 1788 al 1868). Rome: Giovanni, 1900



22. *Right side detail of the Monument made in memory of the Begum of Sardhana, by Adamo Tadolini (in 1839–42), installed at Sardhana Church in 1848. Photographed in 2018–2019*

## Images for Chapter 2: Mobilities



2. Johann Zoffany, Self Portrait, ca. 1776. From Bond, Anthony, and Joanna Woodall. 2007. Self Portraits: Renaissance to Contemporary. London: National Portrait Gallery Publications: 24



3. Major William Palmer with his second wife, the Mughal princess Begum Faiz Bakhsh, 1785. Oil on canvas; 40 by 50 ins (127 by 101.5 cms). British Library, F597.



4. Johann Zoffany, Colonel Mordaunt's Cock match, 1760. Oil on Canvas, 103.9X150X2 cm, Tate, London





5. Johann Zoffany, Colonel Antoine Polier, Claude Martin, and John Wombwell with the Artist, 1786, Oil on Canvas, Victoria Memorial. Online: <http://www.victoriameorial-cal.org/jzoffany.html>



6. Johan Zoffany, 1772-77, Tribuna of the Uffizi, Oil on Canvas, 123.5 X 155 cm, Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 406983



7. Adamo Tadolini, 1853, Bronze Equestrian Statue of Simon Bolivar, Lima, Peru. Image Source: [Wiki Images](#)



8. Giulio Monteverde, 1876, Statue of Giuseppe Mazzini, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Image Source: [istockphoto](#)



9. Christopher Columbus Statue sprayed with red paint and graffiti of "Black Lives Matter", Image Source: [Bostonmagazine](#)



10. Henry Lathrop monument, 1901, The Angel of Grief, Original by William Story, Image Source: [Wiki Image](#)



11. Antonio Canova, 1802–06, Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker, White marble, 345 cm, Apsley House, London, Image Source: [Wiki Image](#)



12. Edmonia Lewis, 1876, Death of Cleopatra, Marble Sculpture, 160 X 79.4 X 116.8 cm, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Image Source: <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/death-cleopatra-33878>



13. Painting of Begum Samru with two male attendants. Date of making unknown, Sardhana Church. Photographed 2019



14. Rows of Tableaus from the death of Christ, Sardhana Church. Photographed 2019

## Images for Chapter 3: Medium



15. Adamo Tadolini, Memorial Monument to Begum Samru, 1839–1842, Sardhana, Photographed 2018



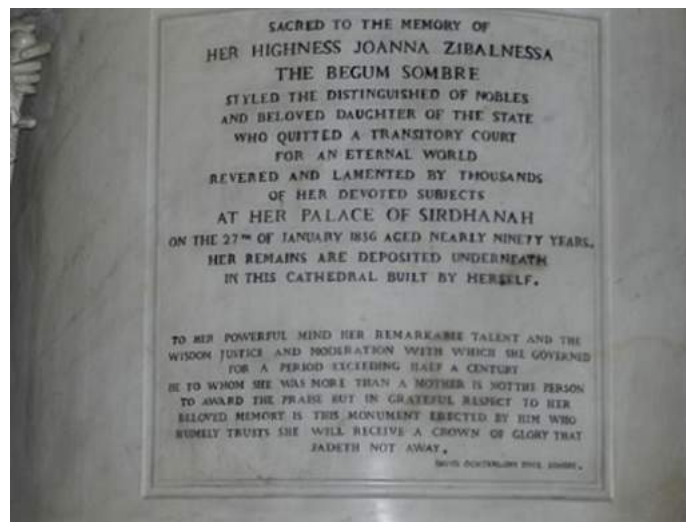
16. Michelangelo Buonarroti, Pietà, 1498–99, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. Image Source: [Wiki Image](#)



17. Adamo Tadolini, 1839–42, *Monument to Begum Samru*, Sardhana. Photographed 2018



18. Adamo Tadolini, *Monument*. Detail of Begum Samru Statue



19. Adamo Tadolini, *Monument*. Detail of the Eulogy



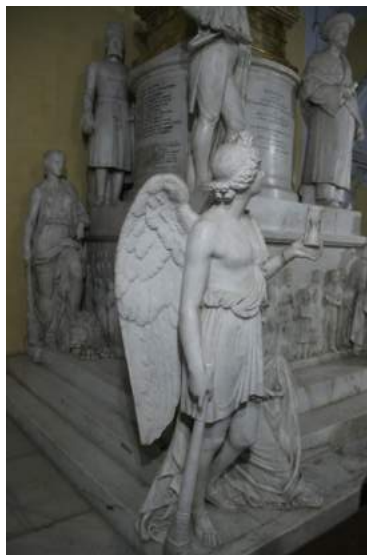
20. Adamo Tadolini, *Monument*. Detail: Inayatullah Khan Statue



21. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Detail of Cornucopia, Vecchio, Little child, and Breastfeeding Mother



22. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Detail of Young Woman with club and a subdued lion



23. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Detail of the Angel of Time





24. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Detail of Shrouded Figure with Snake



25. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Detail of *Vecchio* (Old Man) and *Abundantia* or *Abbondanza* (Abundance)



26. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Detail of child holding up a fruit and breastfeeding mother



27. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Statues of Dyce Sombre (L), Begum Samru (top), Diwan Rae Singh (R)



28. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Statue of Fr. Julius Caesar Scotti



29. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Front bas-relief



30. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Left bas-relief



31. Adamo Tadolini, Monument. Right bas-relief



32 Begum Samru with Clerics, ca. 1826, Governor's Palace, Lucknow, India. Photograph of the replica in the Sardhana Basilica. Photographed 2019



33. Muhammad A'zam, Begum Samru and her retainers, ca. 1820-25, Gouache on paper, h. 45.6 cm, w 63.2 cm, Chester Beatty Library Collection, Dublin. Accessed Online: [https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/In\\_74\\_7/1/LOG\\_0000/](https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/object/In_74_7/1/LOG_0000/)



34. Unknown artist, Begum Samru and Her Army, ca. 1805-26, Gouache on Paper, h. 41.5 cm, w 62.5 cm, Chester Beatty Library Collection, Dublin. Accessed Online: [https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/In\\_74\\_6/1/LOG\\_0000/](https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/In_74_6/1/LOG_0000/)



35. Adamo Tadolini (attributed), c.1829, Model for the Monument to Count Nikolai Demidov (1773-1828), Sotheby' Winter Collection E-Catalogue, Lot 119, Auctioned 2015



36. Charles Felix Rossi, 1807–1811, Monument to Marquis Charles Cornwallis, Painted Plaster, 249 X 167 X 66 cm, Audley End House. Image Source: [Art UK](#)

## Bibliography

- Ajmar, Marta. "Looking Into the Transcultural Object." In *EurAsian Matters, China, Europe, and the Transcultural Object, 1600-1800*. Grasskamp, Anna, Juneja, Monica (eds.), Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context. Springer (2018): 247–253.
- Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1986).
- Archer, Mildred. *India and British Portraiture, 1770–1825*. Sotheby Parke Bernet, London and New York: Oxford University Press (1979)
- Archer, Mildred. *Early Views of India. The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786–1794*. London: Thames and Hudson (1980).
- Argan, Giulio Carlo and West, Rebecca. "Ideology and Iconology." In *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 2, No. 2: Published by University of Chicago Press (Winter 1975): 297–305. Online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1342905>
- Asher, Catherine B., ed. *Architecture of Mughal India (The New Cambridge History of India I:4)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1992).
- Bayly, CA. *The Birth of the Modern World: Global Connections and Comparisons, 1780–1914*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. (2004).

- Behl, Aditya. "Articulating a Life in Words and Pictures: Begum Samru of Sardhana and *The Ornament of Histories*." in Barbara Schmitz, ed., *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Mumbai: Marg Publications (2002): 100–123.
- Belting, Hans. "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology." In *Critical Inquiry*, 31, 2 (Winter 2005): 302–319.
- Black, Jeremy. *The British and the Grand Tour*. London: Croom Helm (1985).
- Black, Jeremy. *Italy and the Grand Tour*. New Haven: Yale University Press (2003).
- Bohicchio, Luca. "Transported Art: 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian Sculptures Across Continents and Cultures." *Material Culture Review*. 74–75: (Spring, Printemps 2012): 70–85.
- Borges, Maria Elizia. *Funerary Art in Brazil, 1890–1930: Italian Marble Carver Craft in Ribeirão Preto*. Belo Horizonte: C/Arte (2002).
- Brown, Rebecca M. "Inscribing Colonial Monumentality: A Case of the 1763 Patna Massacre Memorial." In *The Journal for Asian Studies*. 65(1) (February 2006): 91–113. DOI: 10.1017/S0021911806000076.
- Bryant, Julius. "Eccentric Pioneers? Patrons of Modern Sculpture for Britain c. 1790." In Diana Dethloff, Tessa Murdoch, Kim Sloan, Caroline Elam, eds., *Burning Bright: Essays in Honour of David Bindman*, London: University College of London Press (2015): 66–75

Burnage, Sarah. "Commemorating Cornwallis: Sculpture in India." In *Visual Culture in Britain*. 11 (2010): 173–94.

Chand, Lala Gokul and Shreeve, Nicholas. *The History of Zeb-ul Nissa, The Begum Samru of Sardhana*. Arundel, West Sussex: Bookwright (1994).

Cohn, Bernard. "The Transformation of Objects into Artefacts, Antiquities and Art in 19<sup>th</sup>-century India." In Saloni Mathur & Kavita Singh, eds. *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia*. New Delhi: Routledge ([1992] 2015): 21–44.

Colletta, Lisa , ed. *The Legacy of The Grand Tour: New Essays on Travel, Literature and Culture*. Madison & Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press (2015).

Coutu, Joan. *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire*. McGill-Queen's Press (2006).

Dalrymple, William. "Transculturation, Assimilation, and its Limits: The Rise and Fall of the Delhi White Mughals, 1805–57." In Margrit Pernau, ed. *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, The Colonial State, and Education before 1857*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press (2006): 60–101.

Dalrymple, William, ed. *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*. London: The Wallace Collection & Philip Wilson Publishers. Bloomsbury Publishing (2019).



- Davis, Whitney. "Winckelmann Divided: Mourning the Death of Art History." In Donald Preziosi, ed. *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2009[1994]): 35–44.
- Derrida, Jacques. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. London: Routledge (2001).
- Dunstan, Angela. "Nineteenth-Century Sculpture and the Imprint of Authenticity", 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 19, (2014):1–22, Online: <http://19.bbk.ac.uk>
- Eaton, Natasha. "Chapter 6: A Sword with Two Edges, British Painters' Exaltation and Exploitation of Indian Rulers, c. 1772–1795." In *Imaging Empire: The Trafficking of Art and Aesthetics in British India, c. 1772–1795*, PhD Thesis, University of Warwick Department of History of Art (2000).
- Eaton, Natasha. "'Enchanted Traps?': The Historiography of Art and Colonialism in Eighteenth Century India." *Literature Compass* 9, 1 (2012): 15–33, DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00863.x.
- Eaton, Natasha. "Excess in the City? The Consumption of Imported Prints in Colonial Calcutta, c. 1780–c. 1795", in Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy, eds., *Empires of Vision: A Reader*, Durham and London: Duke University Press (2014): 159–188.
- Edwards, Jason. "From the East India Company to the West Indies and Beyond: The World of British Sculpture, c. 1757–1947." *Visual Culture in Britain*. 11 (2010): 147–72.

Edwards, Jason. "John Charles Felix Rossi's Cornwallis Monument (1807–11) and the colonial cosmopolitanism of the British School." in Jason Edwards and Sarah Burnage, eds. *The British School of Sculpture, c. 1760–1832*. London and New York: Routledge (2014):188–209.

Edwards, John. 'Review Essay.' *Visual Culture in Britain*.10 (2009): 201–7

Eimen, Alisa. "Reading Place through Patronage: Begum Samru's Building Campaign in Early Nineteenth Century India." In *Woman's Eye, Woman's Hand: Making Art and Architecture in Modern India*, edited by D. Fairchild Ruggles, New Delhi (2014): Zubaan: 12–40.

Ernst, Wolfgang. "Frames at Work: Museological Imagination and Historical Discourse in Neoclassical Britain." *The Art Bulletin*, 75(3) (September, 1993): 481–498, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3045970>.

Fisher, Michael H. "Becoming and Making 'Family' in Hindustan", in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia*, edited by Indrani Chatterjee, Delhi: Permanent Black (2004).

Fisher, Michael H. *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857*, Delhi: Permanent Black (2004)

Fisher, Michael H. "Excluding and Including "Natives of India": Early-Nineteenth-Century British-Indian Race Relations in Britain", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and*

*the Middle East*. Vol. 27, No. 2, (2007). doi: 10.1215/1089201x-2007-007, © Duke University Press

Fisher, Michael H. *The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian MP and "Chancery Lunatic"*. New York: Columbia University Press (2010).

Fisher, Michael H., Haldipur, C.V. & Pies, Ronald. "The Mysterious Illness of Dyce Sombre." *Innovations in Clinical Neuroscience*, 9 (2012): 10-12.

Fisher, Michael H. "Writing Lives of Indians in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India and Britain." *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques*, LXVII, 4 (2013): 1089–1114. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5169/seals-391492>.

Fisher, Michael H. "Conflicting Meanings of Persianate Culture." in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*. Edited by Nile Green, Oakland, California: University of California Press (2019):225–242.

Fisica, Gior de. "Natural changes in Carrara Marble", *The Friend of India (Monthly Series)*, Volume VII, Serampore: Mission Press (1824): 278.

Gattuso, Reina. "The Tuscan Town Famous for Anarchists, Marble and Lard." 'Gastro Obscura.', *Atlas Obscura* (15 July 2019): Online Article: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/where-did-michelangelo-get-his-marble>

Gosden, Chris and Yvonne Marshall. "The Cultural Biography of Objects." In *World Archaeology*, 31:2 (Oct 1999): 169–178.

- Grosskamp, Anna and Juneja, Monika. "EurAsian Matters: An Introduction." In *EurAsian Matters: China, Europe, and the Transcultural Object, 1600–1800*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer (2018): 3–33.
- Groseclose, Barbara. *British Sculpture and the Company Raj: Church Monuments and Public Statuary in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay to 1838*. Newark: University of Delaware Press (1995).
- Greig, Charles. "Artists from Afar: Company Painters in the Princely Courts of India 1770–1900." In Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, ed. *Portraits in Princely India, 1700–1947*. Mumbai: Marg Publications (2008): 16–29.
- Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. 'The ideology of the 'aesthetic': The purging of visual tastes and the campaign for a new Indian art in late nineteenth/early twentieth century Bengal', *Studies in History*, 8, 2 (1992): 237–81
- Haskell, Francis, and Nicholas Penny. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1981).
- Hingorani, Alka; Artful Agency: Imagining and Imaging Begam Samrū. *Archives of Asian Art* ; 53, No. 1 (April 2003): 54–70.
- Hirst, Michael. "Michelangelo, Carrara, and the Marble for Cardinal's Pietà." In *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 127, No. 984 (March, 1985):152+154–156+159
- Hopkins, AG. *Globalization in World History*. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company (2003)

Joy, Jody. "Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives", *World Archaeology*, 41, No. 4 (Dec 2009): 540–556.

Keay, Julia. *Farzana: The Woman Who Saved an Empire*, Noida: Harper Collins (2013).

Kopytoff, Igor. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." In Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1986): 64–91.

Kriz, Kay Dian. "Introduction: The Grand Tour", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Fall, 1997): 87–89, Online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053646>.

Lall, John S. *Begam Samru: Fading Portrait in a Gilded Frame*. New Delhi: Roli Books (1997).

Lajer-Burcharth, Ewa. "The Object as Subject." In Stephen Melville, ed. *The Lure of the Object*. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Dalton, MA: Studley Press (2005): 157–177.

Leach, Linda York. *Mughal and other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*. London: Scorpion Cavendish (1995).

Lee, Vernon. *Belcaro, Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions*, London: Fisher (1881).

Leitch, Alison. *Materiality of Marble: Explorations in the Artistic Life of Stone*. Thesis Eleven. (2010): 65-77. DOI: 10.1177/0725513610381375.

Lisbon, Laura. "Notes on the Tableau." In *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 12: 1 (2013): 77–86, doi: 10.1386/jvap.12.1.77\_1

- Losty, J.P. “Raja Jivan Ram: A Professional Indian Portrait Painter of the Early Nineteenth Century”, *electronic-BLJ*, Article 3 (2015). Accessed Online: <https://www.bl.uk/eblj/2015articles/pdf/ebljarticle32015.pdf>
- Marshall, Wolfe and Russell (eds.). *Roma Britannica: Art Patronage and Cultural Exchange in Eighteenth-Century Rome*. British School at Rome (2011): 147–70
- Marinelli, Maurizio. “Domesticating Italy’s Foreignness in China: The Transcultural Politics of the Copy and the Real”, *Modern Italy*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2019): 417–436, DOI: 10.1017/mit.2019.53.
- Metcalf, Thomas R. “Frontmatter.” In *Ideologies of the Raj, i-xii. The New Cambridge History of India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1995).
- Mitter, Partha. *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850–1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1994).
- Mirzeoff, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London: Routledge (1999).
- Murray, John. *A Handbook of Rome and its Environs (Murray’s Foreign Handbooks)*. London: John Murray (1867).
- Nelson, Charmaine A. *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2007).
- Nelson, Charmaine A. “White Marble, Black Bodies and the Fear of the Invisible Negro: Signifying Blackness in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Neoclassical Sculpture.” In *RACAR*:

- revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 27, No.1/2 (2000): 87–101; Online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42631206>.
- O'Neil, Morna. 'Brocky, Charles [formerly *Károly*], 1807–1855', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (September 2004): Accessed Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3476>.
- Pantazzi, Sybille. 'The Roman Advertiser, 1846–1849'. In *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Winter, 1980): 119–124.
- Pinney, Christopher. 'Creole Europe: Reflection of a Reflection.' In *New Zealand Journal of Literature*, 20 (2003): 125–61.
- Pisano, Libero C. 'Lo Studio di Adamo Tadolini: Scultore a Roma'. *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte*. (January, 2000): 51–63.
- Griselda, Pollock. "Cockfights and Other Parades: Gesture, Difference, and the Staging of Meaning in Three Paintings by Zoffany, Pollock, and Krasner." *Oxford Art Journal* 26, no. 2 (2003): 141-65. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600394>.
- Rajagopalan, Mrinalini. "Cosmopolitan Crossings: The Architecture of Begum Samru". In *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. 77, No. 2 (June 2018): 168-185.
- Rheims, Maurice. *19<sup>th</sup> Century Sculpture*, tr. by Robert E. Wolf, New York: Harry N. Abrams (1972).
- Roberts, Helene E. *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography*, Vol. 1&2, Chicago, London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers (1998).

Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia, Tomo Secondo*. ([1603]1766)

Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia, Tomo Quarto*. ([1603]1766).

Sandigliano, Tomaso Vialardi di. *Un soldato di ventura alla corte Indiana di Sardhana: Paolo Solaroli, Novarese*. In *Studi Piemontesi*; 35, No. 2 (Dec 2006): 333–47.

Savage, Kirk. ‘The Obsolescence of Sculpture’, *American Art*, Vol 24, No.1 (Spring 2010): 9–14.

‘Snow White Marble of Carrara Still the Best.’ In *Scientific American*, Vol. 135, No. 3, (September 1926): 204–205; Accessed Online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/24976815>.

Shreeve, Nicholas. ‘Appendix VII: The Begum’s Benevolence.’ In *Dark Legacy*. Arundel, West Sussex: Bookwright (1996): 148–51.

Sombre, David O. D. *In Lunacy: in the Matter of David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre: A Person Found to Be of Unsound Mind*. London: Hansard (1851).

Sombre, David O. D. *Mr. Dyce Sombre's Refutation of the Charge of Lunacy Brought Against Him in the Court of Chancery* (1849).

Sombre, David O. D, and Shreeve, Nicholas. *From Nawab to Nabob: The Diary of David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre, 1833-8*. Crossbush: Bookwright (2000).



Stefani, Chiara. 'Cesare Ripa: New Biographical Evidence.' In *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 53: Published by the Warburg Institute (1990): 307–312;

Online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/751358>

Tadolini, Adamo and Tadolini, Giulio. *Ricordi autobiografici di Adamo Tadolini: scultore (vissuto dal 1788 al 1868)*. Rome: Giovanni (1900).

Thomas, Kirby. 'Carrara Marble.' In *Scientific American*, Vol. 90, No.17 (April 23, 1904): 331.

Accessed Online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/24993070>

Turner, Jane, ed. "Neo-Classical." In *The Dictionary of Art*, Vol. XXII', New York: Grove's Dictionaries; (1996).

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim [1755]. 'Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture.' In Donald Preziosi, ed. *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2009): 27–34.

Woods Jr., Naurice Frank. 'An African Queen at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition 1876: Edmonia Lewis's "The Death of Cleopatra."' In *Meridians*, 9, No. 1(2009): 62-82.

Zaidi, S. I. A. 'European Mercenaries in the Indian Armies: ad 1750–1803.' In *Studies in History*, 27, No.1 (2011): 55–83.