

NINETEENTH CENTURY CARVED EBONY FURNITURE FROM SRI LANKA: SUGGESTED METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

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This article will suggest methods for the interpretation of furniture manufactured in a European colony, specifically carved ebony furniture made on the island of Ceylon/Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century. Whilst including examples of the various categories of empirical evidence regarding this type of furniture, the first part of the article takes the form of a suggested framework to interpret Sri Lankan furniture. A model for the structure of this paper is found in an article by B. D. Cotton,¹ where research methods for the study of British regional furniture are outlined.

The historian of colonial furniture faces a number of difficulties of both a conceptual and a geographical nature. As with much eighteenth and nineteenth century British made furniture, a large proportion of colonial furniture, at some stage in its history, has been removed from its place of production. Unlike most British furniture, however, this displacement can be from one continent to another. Primary sources regarding the production and use of furniture made in the colonies can be elusive, incomplete or non-existent. Much European-style, colonial furniture is reassuringly familiar in terms of its form and style but disarmingly unfamiliar in terms of non-European timber, ornament and methods of construction. Much of the historiography of furniture produced under European colonial control in Asia is now outdated and shows a preference for a Euro-centric approach,² which bypasses or does not acknowledge the skill, creativity and longevity of craft traditions in the production of artifacts prior to and during contact with Europe.³ This historiography, including recent publications, which contain useful documentary material⁴ also tends to concern itself, for the most part, with appreciation of visual form and typologies of ornament.

Any category of furniture is an expression of the material culture in which it has been designed, produced, purchased and used. The productive process becomes complicated as far as colonial furniture is concerned, in that producers and users do not share common cultural values. It is true that during the nineteenth century a greater commonality of cultural values developed in many colonies amongst the limited number of groups in the indigenous population, which took advantage of European educational opportunities offered to them.⁵ However, the cultural gulf between artisan/craft classes and the European cultural hegemony of the colonists left an almost unbridgeable divide. It is, perhaps, this mismatch of cultural values which has focused the study of European style colonial artifacts in the directions mentioned above. It is suggested in this article that, using European-style Sri Lankan furniture of the nineteenth century as a case study, such as articles of the type illustrated as Fig. 1, an interdisciplinary framework can be adopted to analyse the interrelationship between coloniser and colonised in the sphere of furniture production. The key disciplines from which this framework derives comprise



1. Sri Lankan Carved Ebony Tea Caddy, of European form, c. 1830. Height 87cm, width 47cm, depth 33cm

Spink and Son, London

anthropology and furniture history. Specifically, within the field of anthropology, methods from material culture studies, works on commoditisation and consumption, will be used. For example, a model suggested by I. Kopytoff,⁶ in *The Social Life of Things* (1986) for the interpretation of the complete lifespan of an object or its 'cultural biography', including its production, first use, and exchange is of particular value to the study of Sri Lankan furniture. As he states 'Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure. For example, in situations of culture contact, they can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects — as of alien ideas — is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use.'⁷ The 'cultural biography' of nineteenth century European-style Sri Lankan furniture will encompass its manufacture to European requirements by indigenous craftsmen working within and mediated through ancient and localised traditions, though demonstrating knowledge of prior cultural contacts with Europe (through the Portuguese and Dutch). The biography will encompass the purchase and use of that furniture in the colony of manufacture or an adjacent colony (i.e. British possessions in India), and its possible transfer to Europe, where it remains a familiar yet alien object, removed from the context of commissioning and manufacture, a remnant of the exotic. The biographical approach to colonial

artifacts, particularly regarding those made in the nineteenth century, comprehends the production of furniture in Sri Lanka and its appearance at the various International Exhibitions in Europe. The idea of a commodity phase in the 'life' of an article of furniture suggested by Kopytoff and others, is particularly appropriate in this case, as the articles of furniture, cloth, pottery and so on, sent from the colonies for exhibition in Europe, were intended to represent the diversity and abundance of commodities available to the colonising power from those colonies.⁸ The approach suggested in this article encompasses the production of Sri Lankan furniture, the transcultural context of its production and its consumption. As A. Appadurai states in *The Social Life of Things*, '... we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories' and 'even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view, it is the things in motion that illuminate their human and social context'.⁹ It is suggested that in order to analyse the material output of the cultural interaction between coloniser and colonised, it is necessary to fully comprehend both sides of that interaction.

The 'biography' of nineteenth century Sri Lankan furniture can be illuminated by an analysis of the West's defining and categorising the supposedly 'exotic' East, as suggested in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978).¹⁰ Whilst Said's thesis is developed from textual analysis, i.e. western writing about 'the Orient', his methods have been applied to the study of the production and perception of objects. Within this framework, Sri Lanka's furniture makers can be seen as supplying a market for products which were closely defined by the European/British consumer and in which the producer had marginal input. It is extremely difficult to establish from documentary sources how the makers of European-style furniture in Sri Lanka regarded the furniture which they were producing. In a number of contemporary accounts of the island European writers speak for the cabinet makers, for example commenting on their complaints about the sharpness of British tools in dealing with the toughness of Sri Lankan timber.¹¹ Said's ideas have been explored by certain design historians.¹² The appearance at a number of International Exhibitions of Sri Lankan carved ebony tables of mid nineteenth century British form whose tops are inlaid with a wide range of tropical woods, could be interpreted as conforming to the West's perception of the exotic 'other' and the perceived abundance of useful colonial products, namely timber, which were now available to the colonial power. As Susan Pearce has stated in *On Collecting* (1995)¹³, until recently, collected objects from the Indian subcontinent were the medium through which notions about Indian culture and the diversity of materials and products of that culture were transmitted to Europe.

Furniture history is the other key discipline in the development of the interdisciplinary framework to analyse European-style colonial furniture. The means of furniture scholarship have remained relatively unchanged since the early part of the twentieth century. The most important change has not been in relation to the subject matter but in how that subject matter is studied. Gerald W. R. Ward¹⁴ has outlined four fundamental categories of evidence in the study of furniture, namely the study of the objects themselves, the study of secondary sources and primary sources relating to the furniture and contextual information in the form of a comparison with prototypes and parallels from other countries. He states that such evidence is the grammar on which theoretical

studies can be based but concludes that the 'study of furniture cannot make a distinctive contribution to history (or any discipline) unless we attempt to understand the furniture itself.'¹⁵

In order to interpret the initial stages of the 'biography' or actual production of Sri Lankan furniture, methods from furniture history have been used, including the recording and study of inscribed or labelled examples of furniture from the island. This would include such items of furniture as a carved and inlaid ebony circular centre table with lobed stem, raised on square concave-sided platform base signed, 'Andres de Costa, Galle, Ceylon'.¹⁶ A number of related tables are known, all with similar tops (though with differing supports) demonstrating the variety of Sri Lankan timber available to cabinet makers during the nineteenth century. Another table, formerly at the Royal Commonwealth Society, London is inscribed on an ivory roundel 'Presented to Mrs R B Tytler by the parents of the Kandy Sunday Scholars with their grateful and affectionate regards, New Years Day, 1836.'¹⁷ To date no inscribed carved ebony seating furniture has been discovered, although there is a strong likelihood in view of the similarity of construction, ornament, quality of carving and woods used that it may be possible to localise certain groups of armchairs to Sri Lanka (Fig. 2). Large quantities of these armchairs must have been produced judging by the numbers that survive in British collections today.¹⁸

One of the most striking features of nineteenth century Sri Lankan furniture is the diversity and beauty of the indigenous cabinet making woods. This diversity is demonstrated by a Sri Lankan centre table exhibited amongst the other 'useful products of the colony', at the International Exhibition held in Paris in 1855. A similar table is illustrated as Figs 3 and 4. The table is briefly described in the *Catalogue of the Natural and Artificial Products of Ceylon* at the Exhibition.¹⁹ Included in this catalogue is a guide in the form of a 'list of timbers inlaid in round table, from righthandside'.²⁰ Some of the names of the woods are recognisable, despite being transcribed from the vernacular Sinhalese and are diagnostic of Sri Lankan made furniture, in view of the limited distribution of these species of trees. The woods listed include, for example, 'Calumediriye — Calamander', 'Teakke — Ceylon Teak', 'Siyembelan — Tamarind', 'Na — Ironwood', 'Pol-coconut' and 'Cadoembeiriye — Bastard Ebony'. Other timbers were obviously less familiar to the compiler of the catalogue and only an anglicised version of the vernacular word is included, such as the memorable 'Pattabely or Belygobol' and 'Ratbereliye'. The 'large round inlaid table' was, due to its extended description, an important attraction at the Ceylon Court of the Paris Exhibition of 1855. The entry prior to the round table records, '2 small ebony tables, inlaid'.²¹ This may be of a related form to a table recently in the London trade.²² This table is illustrated as Figs 5 and 6. The top of the table is rectangular and is supported on two leaf carved and incurved scrolling supports raised on a platform base. The feature which distinguishes this table, apart from the usual arrangement of segmental inlays, is that each timber is identified in English or vernacular Sinhalese by an engraved ivory plaque around the edge of the table top, making it an important diagnostic article for the localisation of Sri Lankan furniture.²³

Sri Lankan timber was an abundant resource for exploitation during the nineteenth century. Of the many books produced to catalogue this resource, including a number



2. Sri Lankan Carved Ebony Armchair, second quarter of the nineteenth century. Height 90cm



3. Sri Lankan Carved Ebony and Inlaid Centre Table, of European form, nineteenth century. Height 77cm, diameter 113cm

Spink and Son, London

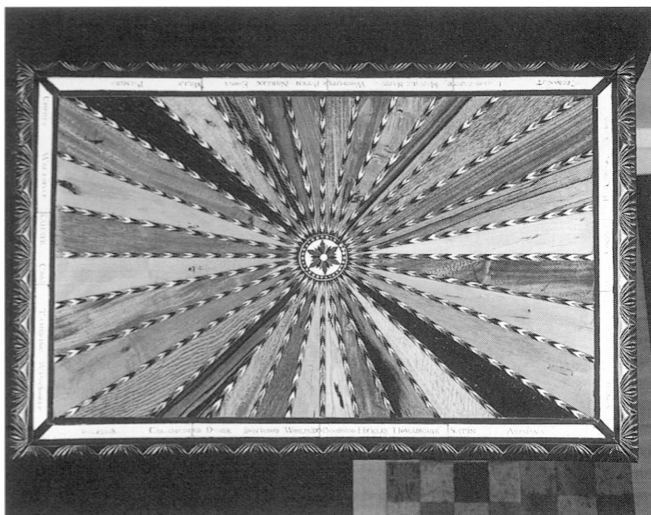


4. Table shown above with top tilted



5. Sri Lankan Carved Ebony and Inlaid Side Table, of European form, the top with engraved ivory descriptions of the woods used, nineteenth century. Height 75cm, width, 80cm, depth 54cm

Spink and Son, London



6. Detail of the top of the side table shown as above

Spink and Son, London

produced under the aegis of the Indian Forest Department,²⁴ James Sykes Gamble's *A Manual of Indian Timbers* (1881)²⁵ is amongst the most useful. Regional furniture studies have highlighted the importance of historical contextual information relating to timber and its use in furniture making. Gamble's publication intended 'to show the variety and extent of the resources of the Indian forests and the magnitude of the task which is imposed on the Indian Forest Department in properly managing its splendid estate for the benefit of the Indian people and the finances of the Indian Empire'. *A Manual of Indian Timbers* was intended as a taxonomic guide to timber trees and included indigenous vernacular words for the range of species, together with a commentary on the physical characteristics of the woods and the uses to which they were put. For example, under the entry for *Chloroxylon Swietenia*²⁶ or satin wood, Gamble lists the variety of indigenous Asian words for the wood, including the Sinhalese description of the wood 'buruta'. After describing its features he states, 'this beautiful tree gives the satinwood of commerce, which is largely exported from Ceylon, and, to a much less extent, from India. It is much used for cabinet work . . . and also for pretty furniture and picture frames . . . In Ceylon it affects the dry regions of the north and east, the finest forests being those about Puttalam and Batticaloa.'²⁷ The Sinhalese word 'Nedun', the only vernacular description for this variety of wood, is recorded by Gamble under *Pericopsis Mooniana*²⁸ (no English equivalent), where he describes it growing in the 'moist low country to Ceylon, up to 1000 feet . . .'. He describes it as 'a fine wood, in considerable demand, and much used for furniture (some of which looks very handsome) carts and other purposes'. Gamble gives detailed descriptions of the Indian and Ceylonese genera and species of ebony or *ebenaceae*, including *Diospyros Ebenum*,²⁹ whose Sinhalese name he records as 'kaluwara'. Gamble records the wood as growing in the 'dry regions of Ceylon, chiefly in the Northern Provinces, but extending to the south-east round the coast.' He states, 'This, the chief ebony-yielding tree, and the only one giving a black wood without other streaks or markings, is very little cut and exported in India . . . but in Ceylon it is one of the chief woods'.

Other sources, which may be used to analyse cabinet making in Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century include the works of contemporary commentators. These may range from private letters to published accounts of the island and its people. The former would include, for example, a letter from Lady Dalhousie³⁰ wife of the Governor General of India to her daughter, dated 1852 where she says, 'Papa has told me to order any ebony furniture I may take a fancy to at Galle, they carve very pretty things there.' A number of accounts of the island of Ceylon were published during British rule. Amongst them J. W. Bennett in *Ceylon and its Capabilities* (1843)³¹ gives some insight into the structure and functioning of cabinet making in Sri Lanka. He states of the Galle craftsmen 'the master cabinet makers are generally Portuguese, but the workmen Sinhalese; these make a very durable and beautiful cabinet furniture of every description, but they complain greatly of English tools as being very badly adapted to the hardness of ebony and satinwood timber'.³² The complexities of European/Sri Lankan trans cultural contacts are illustrated in this quotation. Sir J. E. Tennent, describing the state of crafts on the island of Sri Lanka in *Ceylon: An Account of Island* (1860)³³ includes the following contextual information on furniture production, 'but the principal handicrafts — men are cabinet makers (in Galle), carpenters and carvers in Calamander — wood, ebony and

ivory. Their skill in this work is quite remarkable, considering the simplicity of their implements . . .’.

English language newspapers published in Sri Lanka are a further useful source of information. For example, *The Ceylon Times*, 5th February 1850, in an editorial section regarding the forthcoming Great Exhibition states, ‘Like India, Ceylon possesses many manufactures, which would hold their own with the productions of more favoured countries. Her infinity of carved wood and manufactures, the beauty of the various specimens of inlaid work on wood and ivory . . . are well known to many.’³⁴ Advertisements in *The Ceylon Times*, and *The Colombo Observer* give evidence of the local market in secondhand Sri Lankan furniture. For example, an advertisement in *The Colombo Observer* on Thursday, 18th January 1849³⁵ states ‘Auction sale at Kandy. To be sold by auction on Saturday, the 20th inst. at Pavilion Street, opposite the church — household furniture consisting of ebony and jackwood chairs, tables, couches, sideboard, table lamps, Almirah, bedstead and bedding . . . J. A. Kwesius, auctioneer’. Similarly, *The Ceylon Times* of 10th November 1846³⁶ states, ‘Nuwera Ellia, Sale of Valuable Household Furniture . . . on the 15th Dec next will be sold by auction the following property of Captain William Driberg consisting of ebony, calamander, satin, rose, jackwood couches, Almirahs, tables, chairs, settees, sideboards, large and small bedsteads, bookends, lamps . . .’ Such advertisements appear with regularity in the two most important newspapers of nineteenth century Sri Lanka and give an indication of the quantities and types of furniture produced by Sri Lankan cabinet makers at this time. Editorial comment in *The Ceylon Times* gives some insights into the cultural interaction between the British and Sinhalese, reflecting the former’s proscription and defining of the creative output of the latter, in similar ways to those described by Edward Said.³⁷ An editorial of the 11th October 1850, reviewing the objects to be sent from Sri Lanka to the Great Exhibition states, ‘in place of the beautiful furniture made in Ceylon from calamander, ebony and other woods, we noticed a primitive chair about ten inches square by so many in height, which must afford our English friends but a queer idea of the state of carpentry in the island.’

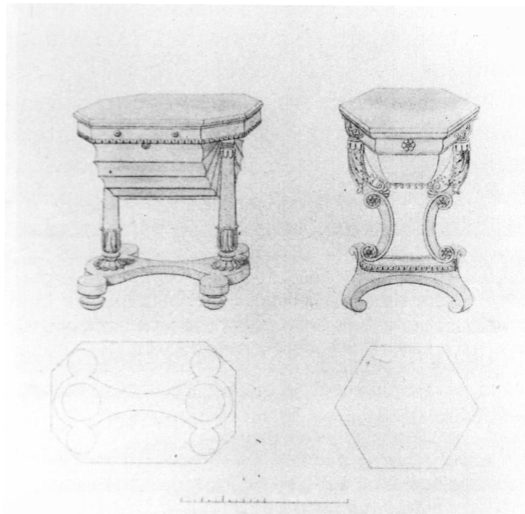
Most furniture made in Sri Lanka during the British occupation was intended for local consumption by officials, planters, merchants and high status Sinhalese. However, evidence of a healthy furniture making industry on the island is shown by the recording of ‘cabinet ware’ in ‘*the Ledgers of Exports From Colonies — Under Countries*’³⁸ and the recording of the sterling value of ‘cabinet ware’ from Sri Lanka to Great Britain, Mauritius, the African ports in the Red Sea, the British and French possessions in India. For the years so far examined, (between 1839 and 1843) exports of Sri Lankan cabinet ware to Britain and the British possessions in India account for the greater part of these shipments. These ledgers also give a clear indication of the huge quantity of dye and hardwood, such as ebony, which was exported from Sri Lanka to India, presumably, in view of its differentiation in the ledgers and its value, this timber was intended, in part, for the cabinet and wood manufacturing industries of the British possessions in India.

Finally, the documentary sources relating to the design of Sri Lankan furniture in the nineteenth century demonstrate the complexities of this process. There may be evidence that British patterns and designs for the decorative arts were circulating prior to 1850 on the island.³⁹ The form or outline of early nineteenth century Sri Lankan furniture seems



7. Small Sri Lankan Carved Ebony and Inlaid Hexagonal Topped Table, second quarter of the nineteenth century. Height 76cm, width 55cm

Spink and Son, London



8. Thomas King, *The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified* (1829), Plate 14, A work table in the Grecian style and a work table in the French style. The latter appears to be a source for the type of Sri Lankan table illustrated as Fig. 7

to owe much to British designs, which were published during the 1830s and 1840s. For example, certain published prints of furniture in fashionable styles by Thomas King, self-styled 'upholsterer of forty-five years' experience' of Lincoln Inn Fields, London seem to have been the direct source for a group of small Sri Lankan carved ebony and inlaid hexagonal topped tables (Fig. 7). King's collection of designs entitled *The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified*⁴⁰ first published in 1829, shows two work tables as plate 14, one in the 'Grecian', the other in the 'French' style (Fig. 8). The work table in the 'French' style would appear to be a model for a group of Sri Lankan tables, all with hexagonal tops inlaid with segments of different woods, supported on two incurved leaf and rosette carved C-scroll supports on concave platform base with scrolled feet.⁴¹ King's design for the 'French' work table may have also been the source for the base of the small rectangular topped table, segmentally inlaid and with engraved ivory key to the woods, which was recently in the London trade.⁴² If the form of some Sri Lankan furniture derived from British pattern books, the source of the larger part of the carved and inlaid work would appear to be of local origin. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908)⁴³ whilst arguing for the detrimental effect of the west on the traditional craftsmanship of the island,⁴⁴ surveys the diversity of craft skills in Sri Lanka and discusses many of the motifs which are found on Sri Lankan furniture, including the *pala-peti* or lotus flower derived ornament, (found as a carved motif to table edges) and the *hamsa* or sacred goose (found as a foot terminal on large centre tables). He also discusses the *vaka deka* or double curve, the main decorative motif of the large circular centre tables. As he states, 'the first and most thorough part of the Sinhalese craftsman's education in design consists in the close study of the ideal curved form of the vaka deka, or double curve, and from this point — the spiral being evolved by the reflexion of the simple curve upon itself — he is carried on until he has . . . command of the curved form . . .'⁴⁵ The trans-cultural relationship between Britain and Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century in terms of furniture design and decoration can be illustrated by two examples. In order to encourage Sri Lankan manufactures, with the intention of representing the best of the island's products at 'The Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations' in 1851, a notice was placed in *The Ceylon Times* in 1850⁴⁶ to seek out the 'best designs for carving in wood and ivory'. The conditions for payment of 'premiums' for the best designs illustrate the British desire to encourage the production of craft objects, which from a European, orientalist perspective, were the quintessence of Sri Lanka. The notice in *The Ceylon Times* states that, '1. The designs must be the production of natives of Ceylon. 2. The works to be executed must be ornamented with figures, flowers, fruit and 3., strictly Ceylonese'. This proscription of supposedly indigenous or vernacular Sri Lankan decorative forms by the British is illustrated by an article of furniture made in Sri Lanka and exhibited at the International Exhibition, London in 1862. The *Catalogue of the Ceylon Court* of that exhibition⁴⁷ lists in section II a variety of articles of furniture, such as number 13, 'a round table of various woods' and number 26, 'a small cocoanut wood cabinet with specimens of the woods of Ceylon'. Several items of furniture at this exhibition were produced by the Native Industrial School, Colombo, including no 18, described as a 'carved Davenport of fancy woods'. This item is given a long descriptive entry in the catalogue⁴⁸ and indicates nineteenth century European perceptions of the ideal attributes of Sri Lankan

design at this time. For instance, the catalogue description reads, 'the panels are carved (with) palms and the costumes of the different provinces . . .' and 'on the desk and pillars are carved some of the indigenous plants of the island . . .' The design for this and the other items of furniture in the Ceylon court were quite carefully defined from a European viewpoint. The furniture itself was produced by indigenous Sinhalese furniture makers using local materials and, at this stage, a mixture of European and indigenous constructional techniques. A linguistic analogy, suggested by Craig Clunas in an article entitled *Design and Cultural Frontiers*⁴⁹ provides a basis to comprehend the interrelationships between the form of the object and the technical details of construction and ornamentation. The interaction between the major and minor features, on, for example, the circular inlaid tables or the davenport from the Native Industrial School, could be compared to the 'linguistic phenomenon known as creole . . . a language which takes its morphology from one language and its syntax from another'.⁵⁰ How far this analogy can be followed in relation to European style, colonial manufactured furniture, requires exploration. However, the essential characteristics of creole: its ability to mix and refashion material from different sources and its robustness in surviving in a hostile environment⁵¹ may be a useful model with which to examine, in this case, nineteenth century Sr Lankan furniture.

In conclusion, this article has intended to suggest approaches to interpret a particular category of colonial furniture. It must be stated that present research is at an early stage and the theoretical framework, outlined in the first part of this paper, requires a further development. Any attempt to understand and analyse a category of furniture manufactured under the colonial control of another country requires a thorough and comprehensive study of the objects themselves and their context of production, as illustrated by relevant primary, historical documentation. It is also suggested that insights can be gained, by not merely focusing on the circumstances of their production, but by considering their 'biography' or lifespan and the complex web of cultural relations between coloniser and colonised, which led to their production and consumption.

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17. Sold Sotheby's, Chester, lot 2028, 8th July 1987.
18. T. Falk, 'Inlaid and Ebony Furniture from British India', *Orientalism*, 1986, Vol 17, 3, p. 55. The table was sold from the collection at Commonwealth House by the auctioneers, Tilleke Vigor in May 1992 and was subsequently offered for sale at Sotheby's, London, 9th July, 1993 as lot 287.
19. For example Penrhyn Castle, Gwynedd, and Kingston Lacy, Dorset.
20. Paris International Exhibition, *Catalogue of the Natural and Artificial Products of Ceylon . . . 1855*, p. 26, 'A large round inlaid table', National Art Library (N.A.L.) A22 (19).
21. The full list of timbers is described as follows:
1. Pol — coconut
2. Kahatte
3. Calumediriye — Calamander
4. Teakke — Ceylon Teak
5. Petan
6. Tal — Palmira
7. Pattabely or Belygobol
8. Calumediriye — Calamander
9. Welicaha
10. Arremene
11. Cadoembeiry — Bastard Ebony
12. Patengy — Sappan
13. Wirancaluvere — coloured ebony
14. Diyenaw — Ironwood
15. Sooriye — Persian
16. Ukbeiriye
17. Burute — Satin
18. Hoamediriye
19. Nendoon — Dalbergia
20. Geriette
21. Kittool — Nepera
22. Bely — Bengal Quince
23. Siyambelan — Tamarind
24. Dombe
25. Beete — Bombay Blackwood

26. Sooriye Mauran
27. Na — Ironwood
28. Hoamediriye
29. Mannan
30. Ratbereliye
21. *Catalogue of the Natural and Artificial Products of Ceylon* . . ., 1855, op. cit., p. 26.
22. Spink and Sons, St. James, London, table exhibited at Grosvenor House Fair, June 1994.
23. The full list of woods is described as follows:
'obberiyē, calamander, dombe, ironwood, woalpaidd, pamboroo, hicklee, satin, homaderiye, aremana, sooriye, madeye, mara, cofee, porrowemal, nadoon, cocoanut, cadoonbariye, manale, wood apple, paten, naillee, ebony, mille, palmyra, chombe, kahate, coan, tameraing, wanciddele'.
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27. J. S. Gamble, *ibid* p. 161.
28. J. S. Gamble, *ibid* p. 265.
29. J. S. Gamble, *ibid* p. 456.
30. Quoted in footnote, Sotheby's House Sale, Colstroun, Haddington, 21 May 1990 lot 75.
31. Quoted in A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Singalese Art*, Broad Campden, 1908, p. 138, NAL 4 G 14.
32. J. W. Bennett op. cit. p. 761.
33. Sir J. E. Tennent, *Ceylon: an account of the island physical, historical and topographical*, London, 1860, NAL 4.E.15, 16. Quoted by J. Veenendaal, op. cit., p. 138.
34. *The Ceylon Times*, 5th February, 1850, p. 76, Public Record Office, PRO CO59/5.
35. *The Colombo Observer*, 1849 PRO CO59/21.
36. *The Ceylon Times*, 1846 PRO CO59/3.
37. E. Said, op. cit.
38. *Ledgers of exports from Colonies*, PRO CUST12.
39. *The Ceylon Times*, 15 December 1846. Advertisement for Hider & Co., coachbuilders and cabinetmakers, Madras 'Hider and Co are . . . completing several couches and chairs of elegant designs comprising the recent prevailing fashions in England'. PRO CO59/3.
40. Thomas King, *The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified in New Designs and Practically Arranged*, 1829, 2nd edition 1839, reissued 1862, second edition of 1839, N.A.L., 57.C.2.
41. For examples of similar tables, see Sotheby's, London sales of English Furniture 11 July 1986, 20 February 1987, 14 November and lots 166 and 167, 1 May 1987.
42. Spink and Sons Ltd., St. James's London, table exhibited at Grosvenor House Antiques Fair, June 1994.
43. A. K. Coomaraswamy, op. cit.
44. Jonathan Spencer, 'Occidentalism in the East: the uses of the west in the politics and anthropology of South Asia', in *Occidentalism: images of the west*, (ed.) J. Carrier, Oxford University Press 1995. Spencer relates Coomaraswamy's work to western views on alienated labour, the rupture of art from labour and the influence of William Morris on whose Kelmscott Press Coomaraswamy's book was published.
45. A. K. Coomaraswamy, op. cit., p. 104.
46. *The Ceylon Times*, 2nd April, 1850, p. 203, PRO CO59/5.
47. International Exhibition, London, 1862, — *Catalogue of the Ceylon Court*, NAL A16 (16).
48. The davenport is described as follows:
'Contributions from the Native Industrial School, Colombo.
365. A carved davenport, of ebony, the drawers on one side are specimens of the best plain Ceylon woods, viz., satinwood, jackwood, nedoon, and plain tamarind wood; on the other side they are of variegated woods, viz, variegated tamarind, kadoomberiya, calamander and variegated ebony. The mountings in the drawers and desks are all of solid silver. On the panels are carved the palms and the costumes of the different provinces, and they are surrounded with the leaves and pods of the tamarind. On the desk and the pillars are carved some of the indigenous plants of the Island, among which are the gloriosa superba, the pitcher plant and some ferns. On the openwork carving on the rail at the top of the desk are carved a sprig of coffee and one of cinnamon, crossing each other, with a sprig of nutmeg and one of cloves on either side; a pepper plant in each corner, the whole surrounded with a vanilla plant. On the tops of the pillars are fruits carved in relief, consisting of cashew, apple and nut, the goreka, the custard apple, the nutmeg, the flower and fruit of the pomegranate, and a species of rough lime.'

49. C. Clunas, *Design and Cultural Frontiers: English shapes and Chinese furniture workshops 1700-90*, Apollo, October, 1987, pp. 256-263.
50. C. Clunas, *Design and Cultural Frontiers* . . ., *ibid*, p. 261.
51. I. R. Smith in *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 291-296, 1993 review of K. D. Jackson, *Sing without Shame: oral traditions in Indo-Portuguese Creole verse with transcription and analysis of a nineteenth century manuscript of Ceylon Portuguese*, Amsterdam, 1990.