

# COMMISSIE KOLONIALE COLLECTIES

## ADVIES

Object	Singalees kanon bekend staand als Lewke's kanon
Huidige eigenaar	Nederlandse Staat
Beheerder	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Teruggaveverzoek van	Republiek Sri Lanka
Datum teruggaveverzoek	4 maart 2021, gespecificeerd op 18 november 2022
Adviesnr.	SL-2023-1
Datum advies	12 mei 2023
Samenstelling Commissie i.c.	Mr. L.Y. Gonçalves-Ho Kang You (voorzitter), prof. dr. L.N.K. van Broekhoven, prof. dr. R. Raben (leden)
Secretaris	Mr. J.A. van Ooijen MA

### 1. Het object

Het verzochte kanon is gegoten in brons en rijk geornamenteerd met zilver, goud en edelstenen, waaronder robijnen. De ornamenten zijn aangebracht in diverse decoratieve motieven afkomstig uit Kandy waaronder een schild. In een inscriptie in het Sinhala is de naam Lewke Disava op het kanon vermeld als schenker. Het kanon is geregistreerd onder inventarisnummer NG-NM-1015.

### 2. Het beleidskader

De beoordeling in dit advies vindt plaats binnen de kaders van de *Beleidsvisie collecties uit een koloniale context* van de Minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap.<sup>1</sup> De beleidsvisie is gebaseerd op het rapport *Koloniale collecties en erkenning van onrecht* van de Raad voor Cultuur.<sup>2</sup> Een verzoek om teruggave kan worden ingediend door een Staat waar Nederland langere tijd koloniaal gezag uitoefende.

In de Beleidsvisie zijn de kaders van de beoordeling samengevat als volgt omschreven:

De Commissie stelt eerst vast of het herkomstonderzoek toereikend is.

Vervolgens stelt de Commissie vast of er sprake is van onvrijwillig bezitsverlies. Daartoe wordt beoordeeld of met een redelijke mate van zekerheid kan worden vastgesteld dat het verzochte cultuurgoed onvrijwillig is verloren in een land waar Nederland langere tijd koloniaal gezag uitoefende. Als wordt vastgesteld dat dat het geval is, zal worden geadviseerd tot een onvoorwaardelijke teruggave van het cultuurgoed.

Indien uit de herkomstgeschiedenis niet kan worden vastgesteld of sprake is van onvrijwillig bezitsverlies, en voor zover deze cultuurgoederen voor het land van herkomst een bijzonder cultureel, historisch of religieus belang vertegenwoordigen, maakt de Commissie een afweging. Het belang van

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<sup>1</sup> Beleidsvisie 29 januari 2021, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2021/01/29/rapport-beleidsvisie-collecties-uit-een-koloniale-context>

<sup>2</sup> Rapport 7 oktober 2020, <https://www.raadvoorcultuur.nl/documenten/adviezen/2020/10/07/advies-koloniale-collecties-en-erkenning-van-onrecht>

teruggave voor het herkomstland dient dan naar redelijkheid en billijkheid te worden afgewogen tegen andere relevante belangen.

Relevante belangen kunnen zijn het culturele belang van het cultuurogoed voor het herkomstland, de betrokken gemeenschappen in de herkomstlanden en in Nederland, de betekenis voor de Collectie Nederland, de toekomstige bewaaromstandigheden en de publieke toegankelijkheid. Objecten kunnen veelzeggend zijn voor nationale en regionale tradities en de identiteit van een land, volk, gemeenschap of individu. Het belang van een koloniaal cultuurogoed zal vaak voor Nederland anders zijn dan voor het land van herkomst. Ook voor Nederlanders met wortels in de herkomstlanden kunnen koloniale cultuurogoederen in Nederlandse musea van speciale betekenis zijn.

Indien het teruggevraagde object afkomstig is uit een voormalige kolonie van een andere mogendheid maakt de Commissie eveneens een afweging. Het belang van teruggave voor het herkomstland dient naar redelijkheid en billijkheid te worden afgewogen tegen andere relevante belangen. Wel zal herstel van onrecht in de beoordeling het uitgangspunt moeten zijn. In dit geval is het onrecht niet door Nederland veroorzaakt, maar is Nederland als huidige eigenaar van de objecten wel de enige om dit onrecht te herstellen.

Indien de Commissie adviseert tot teruggave aan de verzoekende staat, dient ingevolge de Erfgoedwet en de *Beleidsvisie collecties uit een koloniale context* van de Staatssecretaris van Cultuur en Media rekening gehouden te worden met de vervreemdingsprocedure voor publieke collecties en wordt het advies van de Commissie tevens beschouwd als een advies over de onmisbaarheid en onvervangbaarheid van het object in de zin van artikel 4.18 van de Erfgoedwet.

### 3. De procedure

Op 18 november 2022 heeft de Republiek Sri Lanka een verzoek ingediend bij de Staatssecretaris voor Cultuur en Media om teruggave van een kanon dat is buitgemaakt in Kandy in 1765. De Staatssecretaris heeft de Commissie Koloniale Collecties (hierna: de Commissie) verzocht te adviseren over het teruggaveverzoek.

De beheerder van het object, het Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam, heeft onderzoek gedaan naar de herkomstgeschiedenis en heeft daarvan rapport uitgebracht (bijlage 1).

De Commissie heeft het teruggaveverzoek en het herkomstrapport besproken in haar vergadering van 9 januari 2023. De Commissie heeft dr. Alicia Schrikker als herkomstonderzoeker over dit rapport gehoord. Aangezien zij tevens lid is van de Commissie heeft zij niet deelgenomen aan de inhoudelijke beraadslaging en besluitvorming van de Commissie over dit object.

De Commissie had geen aanvullende vragen voor nader herkomstonderzoek.

In januari 2023 heeft Commissielid dr. Schrikker in Colombo gesproken met verschillende vertegenwoordigers van de Ministeries van Cultuur en Buitenlandse Zaken, de senior presidentieel adviseur veiligheid, de Director General van het Department of National Museums en de Nederlandse ambassadeur. Zij heeft met hen gesproken over de voortgang van de behandeling van de teruggaveverzoeken en over mogelijke vervolgstappen.

Op 24 maart 2023 heeft de Commissie gesproken met drs. Taco Dibbits, directeur, en dr. Valika Smeulders, hoofd Geschiedenis, als vertegenwoordigers van het Rijksmuseum, de beheerder van de collectie. Daarbij hebben zij aangegeven het teruggavebeleid te ondersteunen en de samenwerking met het land van herkomst van de objecten belangrijk te vinden.

Het herkomstonderzoek is in Engelse vertaling gedeeld met vertegenwoordigers van Sri Lanka. Het herkomstonderzoek gaf geen aanleiding tot aanvullende vragen.

Op 24 maart 2023 heeft de Commissie het teruggaveverzoek opnieuw besproken en besloten te adviseren zoals hieronder weergegeven.

#### 4. Het herkomstonderzoek

Het herkomstonderzoek is gedaan door dr. Alicia Schrikker en Doreen van den Boogaart RMa in samenwerking met prof. Asoka de Zoysa, dr. Ganga Dissanayake, Ruth Brown, Kay Smith en Arie Pappot. Alicia Schrikker en Doreen van den Boogaart waren ten tijde van het onderzoek werkzaam als herkomstonderzoekers voor het PPROCE project en in dienst van het NIOD.

Het rapport van het onderzoek is als bijlage bij dit advies gevoegd (*bijlage 1*). De inhoud van het rapport wordt beschouwd als onderdeel van dit advies. In het rapport hebben de onderzoekers - samengevat- de volgende bevindingen neergelegd.

“The small bronze cannon, often referred to as Lewke’s cannon, is richly decorated with silver, gold, and gemstones. It carries a shield that resembles Kandyan royal emblems and is embellished with typical Kandyan motifs such as liyawel, kalpa vrukshaya, and nari lata. It is called Lewke’s cannon because Lewke Disava is mentioned as the donor in the Sinhala inscription on the cannon. Lewke was an aristocrat in the Kandyan Kingdom and held the honorary title of Disava (provincial governor).

The inscription does not explicitly state who the cannon was donated to. Different provenance histories of the cannon have circulated since its arrival in the Dutch Republic. For a period in the nineteenth century, it was considered part of the legacy of the Dutch national hero Michiel de Ruyter. It was only around the 1880s that the Sri Lankan origin of the cannon was rediscovered and in 1894 the inscription was translated for the first time from Sinhala to English. The inscription has been subject to various interpretations and one of the main questions has been whether Lewke gifted the cannon to the Dutch, or whether the Dutch had taken the cannon as war booty during the Kandyan-Dutch war (1762-1766).

The report brings to light the hitherto unknown history of the cannon prior to the moment it was taken and sent to the Dutch Republic. The object analysis shows that the cannon was made in a foundry in the Dutch Republic or Batavia probably as a gift for, or on the orders of, the king of Kandy at an unknown date. The inscription was carefully analysed and allowed us to conclude that Lewke Disava had the exquisite decoration added onto the cannon as a gift for King Sri Vijajaya Rajasinghe (r. 1739-1747) between 15 April 1745 and 15 April 1746. Next it was, in all likelihood, recorded by the Dutch as war booty in 1765, after the Dutch siege and destruction of the palace of Kandy. In 1766, the cannon served once more as a gift, this time from the Dutch governor, Lubbert Jan van Eck of Ceylon, to the guardian of the Dutch Stadtholder Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick-Lüneburg. After its arrival in the Dutch Republic, it was presented as a war trophy in the Cabinet of Curiosities of the Dutch Stadtholder Willem V. One of the crucial moments in the research was the weighing of the cannon as this allowed us to identify the cannon described in records as war booty with Lewke’s cannon in the Rijksmuseum with near certainty.

On the basis of the object analysis and archival evidence, this report thus explicitly dismisses the thesis that the cannon had been presented to the Dutch as a gift from Lewke Disava or the king of Kandy, and in our view, this confirms the thesis that the canon was sent to the Dutch republic as war booty.”

#### 5. Inhoudelijke beoordeling van het teruggaveverzoek

Het verzoek om teruggave is ingediend door een Staat waar Nederland langere tijd koloniaal gezag uitoefende en derhalve is de *Beleidsvisie collecties uit een koloniale context* van toepassing.

De Commissie is van oordeel dat het onderzoek deugdelijk is uitgevoerd en voldoende basis biedt om te kunnen adviseren. Er is grondig bronnenonderzoek gedaan en de bestaande kennis is kritisch geëvalueerd. Het rapport geeft voldoende informatie over de oorsprong van het object, de verwijdering en de overkomst naar Nederland.

De Commissie heeft zich vervolgens afgevraagd of hier sprake is van onvrijwillig bezitsverlies als bedoeld in het beleidskader. Daartoe overweegt zij als volgt.

Omdat er verschillende theorieën in omloop waren over de herkomst van het kanon, was het onderzoek breed opgezet. De onderzoekers hebben drie kernvragen geformuleerd. De antwoorden daarop verschaffen helderheid, omdat ze duidelijk een theorie bevestigen en de andere ontkrachten. Uit het rapport komt het volgende naar voren.

#### Voor wie is het kanon vervaardigd en welke rol had Lewke Disava, genoemd in de inscriptie in de herkomstgeschiedenis?

Het kanon is vervaardigd in een gieterij in de Republiek der Nederlanden of in Batavia, waarschijnlijk als schenking aan, of in opdracht van, de koning van Kandy. De inscriptie wijst erop dat Lewke Disava, een plaatselijk provinciehoofd, het kanon vervolgens opnieuw heeft geschonken aan koning Sri Vijajaya Rajasinghe in 1745 of 1746. Het rapport concludeert dat deze schenking de buitenste decoratie van zilver, goud en robijnen betrof en dat Lewke Disava deze later heeft laten toevoegen. Deze decoraties van het kanon wijzen ook op de koninklijke bestemming van het kanon. Een ooggetuigenverslag uit 1749 bevestigt dat een kanon dat voldoet aan de beschrijving van dit kanon, voor de audiëntiehal in het paleis geplaatst was. Ook het onderstel van het kanon, de affuit, voldoet aan de beschrijving.

#### Kan dit kanon worden geïdentificeerd als het kanon dat werd buitgemaakt bij de aanval op Kandy in 1765?

In 1765 werden Kandy en het koninklijk paleis aangevallen en verwoest door Nederlandse troepen onder leiding van de Nederlandse gouverneur van Ceylon, Lubbert Jan van Eck. Van Eck overleed kort na de inname van Kandy. Zijn opvolger Iman Willem Falck liet de executeurs van de nalatenschap van Van Eck weten dat tien objecten in de nalatenschap oorlogsbuit uit Kandy waren. Deze objecten werden overgebracht naar de VOC in Colombo. Het bestuur van de VOC in Batavia kreeg een lijst met beschrijvingen, waaronder het exacte gewicht van het kanon, en taxaties. Het bestuur besloot dat het kanon in de nalatenschap van Van Eck mocht vallen. Falck wist echter dat Van Eck het kanon had bestemd voor hertog Louis Ernest van Brunswick-Lüneburg, voogd van de toen nog minderjarige stadhouder. Hij liet het kanon in november 1765 overbrengen naar de Republiek der Nederlanden, waarna het via Van Brunswick in de collectie van stadhouder Willem V terecht kwam. Kort daarna werd het kanon als oorlogsbuit tentoongesteld in het 'curiositeitenkabinet' van de stadhouder in Den Haag. Hoewel het kanon niet op de inventarislijst van Willem V voorkomt, geven bronnen een beschrijving die overeenkomt met die in de archieven van de familie Van Eck. Een ooggetuige heeft in 1777 opgetekend dat het kanon als oorlogsbuit geroofd van de koning van Kandy werd tentoongesteld: "welche die Hollander in ihren lesten kriege, met den koninge von Candi erbeutet haben". Vanuit de collectie van Willem V is het kanon -na verdere omzwervingen door verschillende Nederlandse collecties en locaties- in 1927 opgenomen in de collectie van het Rijksmuseum.

#### Welke betekenis en achtergrond is toegeschreven aan het kanon sinds de opname in Nederlandse collecties?

Over de herkomst van het kanon hebben geruime tijd verschillende foutieve theorieën bestaan. Zo is tijdens de negentiende eeuw lange tijd aangenomen dat het kanon behoorde tot de nalatenschap van

admiraal Michiel de Ruyter. Pas rond 1880 werd de Sri Lankaanse herkomst van het kanon herontdekt. Ook is de inscriptie op het kanon geruime tijd opgevat als indicatie dat Lewke Disava het kanon aan de Nederlanders had geschonken. Uit het herkomstonderzoek is de onjuistheid van deze theorieën gebleken. Naast archiefonderzoek is ook uitgebreid materiaalonderzoek gedaan. Uit de gebruikte materialen en de specifieke motieven toegepast in de decoratie komt naar voren dat de herkomst uit het paleis van Kandy zeer aannemelijk is. Aan de hand van weging van het kanon in het Rijksmuseum kon met zekerheid worden vastgesteld dat dit hetzelfde object is als het kanon dat voorkomt op de lijst van de VOC die is opgemaakt na het overlijden van Van Eck.

Dat het exacte moment waarop het kanon is buitgemaakt in het paleis niet met 100% zekerheid kan worden vastgesteld is niet vreemd gezien de chaotische situatie rond de plundering. Het is zeer aannemelijk dat het kanon is buitgemaakt tijdens de aanval in 1765.

#### Overwegingen van de Commissie

Op grond van het vorenstaande staat vast dat Van Eck niet de eigenaar van het kanon was. Uit het rapport blijkt immers dat de opvolger van Van Eck, Iman Willem Falck samen met de executeurs van de nalatenschap van Van Eck tien objecten in de nalatenschap, waaronder het kanon, bestempelde als oorlogsbuit uit Kandy. Vervolgens werd door het bestuur van de VOC besloten dat het kanon in de nalatenschap van Van Eck mocht vallen. Falck heeft de vredesonderhandelingen en eventuele teruggave van objecten aan Kandy niet afgewacht, en het kanon alvast vooruit gezonden naar de Republiek als geschenk aan de stadhouder, zoals Van Eck had gewild. Dat neemt niet weg dat het kanon als oorlogsbuit gekwalificeerd moet worden en derhalve de eigendom daarvan onvrijwillig aan Kandy is ontnomen. Het kanon is ook direct na aankomst in Nederland als oorlogsbuit tentoongesteld.

Tenslotte blijkt uit het onderzoek op welke wijze het kanon uiteindelijk in de collectie van het Rijksmuseum terecht is gekomen. Andere routes waarlangs het kanon mogelijk in Nederland had kunnen terechtkomen dan de gevonden route via Van Eck, Van Brunswick en Willem V, zijn niet gevonden of aannemelijk geworden.

Het Rijksmuseum gaat zelf ook al decennialang uit van roof als herkomst en er zijn geen aanwijzingen gevonden die wijzen op iets anders.

De Commissie is op vorenstaande gronden, vervat in het herkomstrapport, van oordeel dat met een redelijke mate van zekerheid is aangetoond dat het verzochte cultuurgoed onvrijwillig is verloren in een land waar Nederland langere tijd koloniaal gezag uitoefende. De Commissie adviseert op grond van het voorgaande tot onvoorwaardelijke teruggave van het kanon met inbegrip van de affuit vanwege het onvrijwillige bezitsverlies.

De Commissie is gevraagd te adviseren over de toepassing van artikel 4.18 van de Erfgoedwet indien het advies inhoudt dat de gevraagde objecten moeten worden teruggegeven. Naar het oordeel van de commissie prevaleert in dit geval het herstel van het onrecht uit het verleden en komt toepassing van artikel 4.19 Erfgoedwet daarom niet aan de orde.

#### 6. Het advies

De Commissie heeft het teruggaveverzoek beoordeeld en adviseert de Staatssecretaris tot onvoorwaardelijke teruggave van het kanon met inventarisnummer RV-3600-193 met inbegrip van de affuit aan de Republiek Sri Lanka.

Dit advies is vastgesteld door de Commissie Koloniale Collecties op 12 mei 2023.

De voorzitter

De secretaris

Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You

Jo'anne van Ooijen


#### Bijlagen

1. Provenance report regarding 'Singalees kanon of Lewuke's kanon' (A.F. Schrikker, D. van den Boogaart, maart 2022)

## Provenance report regarding Singalees kanon of Lewuke's kanon

Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart

*In collaboration with Asoka de Zoysa, Ganga Dissanayake, Ruth Brown, Kay Smith and Arie Pappot*

	Custodian	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
	Current possessor	Dutch state
	Inventory number	NG-NM-1015
	Material/ technique	Bronze, silver, gold, rubies, wood Casting / inlay (process) / sawing
	Measurements	Carriage: Height 54 cm × width 181 cm × depth 77 cm Cannon: Length 98 cm × diameter 43 cm

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. NG-NM-1015

### Summary of findings

The small bronze cannon, often referred to as Lewke's cannon, is richly decorated with silver, gold, and gemstones. It carries a shield that resembles Kandyan royal emblems and is embellished with typical Kandyan motifs such as liyawel, kalpa vrukshaya, and nari lata. It is called Lewke's cannon because Lewke Disava is mentioned as the donor in the Sinhala inscription on the cannon. Lewke was an aristocrat in the Kandyan Kingdom and held the honorary title of Disava (provincial governor). The inscription does not explicitly state who the cannon was donated to.

Different provenance histories of the cannon have circulated since its arrival in the Dutch Republic. For a period in the nineteenth century, it was considered part of the legacy of the Dutch national hero Michiel de Ruyter. It was only around the 1880s that the Sri Lankan origin of the cannon was rediscovered and in 1894 the inscription was translated for the first time from Sinhala to English. The inscription has been subject to various interpretations and one of the main questions has been whether Lewke gifted the cannon to the Dutch, or whether the Dutch had taken the cannon as war booty during the Kandyan-Dutch war (1762-1766).

The report brings to light the hitherto unknown history of the cannon prior to the moment it was taken and sent to the Dutch Republic. The object analysis shows that the cannon was made in a foundry in the Dutch Republic or Batavia probably as a gift for, or on the orders of, the king of Kandy at an unknown date. The inscription was carefully analysed and allowed us to conclude that Lewke Disava had the exquisite decoration added onto the cannon as a gift for King Sri Vijajaya Rajasinghe (r. 1739-1747) between 15 April 1745 and 15 April 1746. Next it was, in all likelihood, recorded by the Dutch as war booty in 1765, after the Dutch siege and destruction of the palace of Kandy. In 1766, the cannon served once more as a gift, this time from the Dutch governor, Lubbert Jan van Eck of Ceylon, to the guardian of the Dutch Stadtholder Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick-Lüneburg. After its arrival in the Dutch Republic, it was presented as a war trophy in the Cabinet of Curiosities of the Dutch Stadtholder Willem V.

One of the crucial moments in the research was the weighing of the cannon as this allowed us to identify the cannon described in records as war booty with Lewke's cannon in the Rijksmuseum with near certainty. On the basis of the object analysis and archival evidence, this report thus explicitly dismisses the thesis that the cannon had been presented to the Dutch as a gift from Lewke Disava or the king of Kandy, and in our view, this confirms the thesis that the canon was sent to the Dutch republic as war booty.

This report is accompanied by two appendices: [appendix 1](#) discusses the provenance of the carrier and [appendix 2](#) provides an overview of the history of restitution requests.

## Reconstruction provenance

### < 1745-1746

Kandyan kings

### < 1745-1746

Lewke Disava

*Inscription on NG-NM-1015 Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*

### Between 14 April 1745 and 14 April 1746 – 19 February 1765

Kandyan Kings, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha (1739-1747) and Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-1782)

*NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, "Inventaris van het archief van de familie Van Panthaleon van Eck, 1398-1946" [Inventory of the family archive of Van Panthaleon van Eck, 1398-1946], Inv.no. 60. 1, "Brieven betreffende overlijden en regeling der nalatenschap van Lubbert Jan van Eck, heer van Overbeek, gouverneur van Ceylon, door de executeurs van diens testament te Colombo aan de erfgenamen gericht. Met bijlagen." [Letters regarding the death and settlement of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck, Lord of Overbeek, Governor of Ceylon, addressed to the heirs by the executors of his will in Colombo. With attachments], dated 10 November 1765.*

### 1765

Governor Lubbert Jan van Eck

*NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, "Copia berigt van de Candiasche rariteiten die in de groote geldkas overgebracht zijn" [Copy of message about the Kandyan rarities that have been delivered to the great cash register], f. 875.*



**1766 – [no date]**

Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick-Lüneburg  
*NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 61*

**<1769 – 1795**

Collection Stadtholder Willem V  
*NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 66, "Inventarissen van de nagelaten goederen van Lubbert Jan van Eck etc."*  
*[Inventories of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck etc.], dated 20 March 1769.*

**1795 – 1800**

State General (Staten-Generaal) at Binnenhof, the Hague  
*Nieuwe algemene konst- en letter-bode, voor meer- en mingeoeffenden. Behelzende berigten, uit de geleerde  
waereld, van alle landen.* (Loosjes Pz, Adriaan Haarlem, 1783-1803, 1795), dated 27 March 1795,  
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dpo:8171:mpeg21:0103>.

**1800 -1808**

Nationale Konst-Gallerij, Huis ten Bosch  
*E. W. Moes and Eduard van Biema, De Nationale Konst-Gallery En Het Koninklijk Museum: Bijdrage Tot de  
Geschiedenis van Het Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1909): 38, 53.*

**1808**

National Cabinet at Buitenhof, The Hague  
*E. W. Moes and Eduard van Biema, De Nationale Konst-Gallery En Het Koninklijk Museum: Bijdrage Tot de  
Geschiedenis van Het Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1909): 105.*

**1808**

Royal Museum in the Hague  
*E. W. Moes and Eduard van Biema, De Nationale Konst-Gallery En Het Koninklijk Museum: Bijdrage Tot de  
Geschiedenis van Het Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1909): 121.*

**1809 -1825**

Royal Museum in Amsterdam, later 's Rijksmuseum  
*NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 844 "Stukken betreffende de overdracht van kunst- en andere voorwerpen door  
personen en overheidsinstanties" [Documents regarding the transfer of art and other objects by persons or public  
authorities], 1815-1862.*

**1825 – 1875**

Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden  
*NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 1092, "Inventaris van kunstvoorwerpen, door het Nederlandsch Museum van  
Geschiedenis en Kunst ontvangen van het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden" [Inventory of art objects,  
received by the Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst from the Koninklijk Kabinet van  
Zeldzaamheden], 1875.*

**1875 – 1927**

Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst  
*NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 1092, "Inventaris van kunstvoorwerpen, door het Nederlandsch Museum van  
Geschiedenis en Kunst ontvangen van het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden" [Inventory of art objects,  
received by the Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst from the Koninklijk Kabinet van  
Zeldzaamheden], 1875.*

**1927 – today**

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

## Introduction and context

This provenance report focuses on NG-NM-1015, a small bronze cannon richly decorated with silver, gold, and gemstones currently displayed in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam in room 1.5: *The Netherlands overseas*. The current narrative adopted by institutions and researchers is that NG-NM-1015 together with a golden-hilted sabre (NG-NM-560), a silver hilted sabre (NG-NM-7112), and a knife (NG-NM-7114), together with two wall guns (NG-NM-519 and 520) were spoils of the 1760-1766 Kandyan-Dutch war and obtained during the violent, ruthless plundering of the Kandyan palace in 1765. However, an ambiguous inscription on the cannon made by Lewke Disava, has in the past led scholars to conclude that the gun was sent as a gift from Kandy to the Dutch Stadtholder in 1745. For a long period, these two conflicting tropes circulated side by side and have been the cause of much confusion regarding the cannon's provenance.<sup>1</sup> The object has been requested for restitution several times since 1965 and twice it was rejected explicitly on the ground that it was not war booty. Arguments used for these rejections was that the cannon had been a gift from Kandy to the Dutch (see appendix 2), while at the same time the cannon was described as war booty in exhibition catalogues.

Our approach with this provenance research has been threefold: to assess the evidence used so far to substantiate the different hypothesis; to search for new evidence regarding the history of the cannon; and to explain the emergence and persistence of divergent views of the cannon over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We have therefore formulated the following four basic questions:

When, how, by whom was this cannon founded and decorated?

- 1) For whom has this cannon been made and what role does Lewke Disava – whose name is inscribed on the cannon – play in this?
- 2) Can we identify this specific cannon as the cannon that is recorded in the Dutch archival sources as part of the spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war and attack of Kandy in 1765?
- 3) Which meanings or provenance has been ascribed to the cannon from 1795 (in public collections) onwards and why?

The first two questions are addressed in section 1: Object information. Here the report includes both the material analysis and art-historical interpretation of the decoration, as well as a new translation and interpretation of the inscription. The identification of the cannon in the archival records pertaining to the spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war (question 3) is discussed in section 2: Cannon as a spoil of war, 1765 Section 3: The history of Lewke's cannon in The Netherlands maps out the history of the different and conflicting meanings that were attributed to the cannon since its arrival in the Dutch Republic.

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the literature, see the third section of this report: "The history of Lewke's cannon in the Netherlands."

## 1. Object analysis

The object analysis focuses on two questions: 1) When, how, by whom was this cannon founded and decorated? And 2) For whom has this cannon been made and what role does Lewuke Disava – whose name is inscribed on the cannon – play in this?

The cannon is a layered object: at first sight it appears like a Kandyan and European amalgam in style, shape, and decoration. A close look quickly reveals a variety of materials used: it is cast in bronze, gilded, engraved, and inlaid with silver motifs and gems. When looked at in greater detail, it becomes clear that the cannon was made in two phases: some of the decorative elements were already integrated in the original casting process, while other elements were applied later. To disentangle this layered production process, we have asked advice from Sri Lankan art-historians and British and Dutch specialists in early modern cannons and bronze casting.<sup>2</sup> They have each provided us with reports in which they explain their findings and these form the basis of the analysis below. The reports can be consulted through the Rijksmuseum documentation system.

We have addressed the question about the founding and decoration in two steps. The cannon's inner layer is analysed first in our reconstruction of the founding of the cannon and we move to the outer layer in our subsequent discussion of the decoration. The inscription forms the starting point of our analysis of the political position of Lewuke and the role that he played in the history of the cannon.

### The founding of the cannon

The first step in our analysis of the cannon's inner layer was to measure the copper. Arie Pappot from the Rijksmuseum's conservation and science department provided us with a report that compared the copper composition of Lewuke's cannon with other bronze cannons and objects. His analysis shows that Japanese copper was used for the casting of the cannon. Japanese copper was commonly employed throughout the VOC world.<sup>3</sup> The use of Japanese copper would direct us to a foundry in Asia, where the most likely possibility would be Batavia, as it is known that cannons of relatively high quality were produced there. Arie Pappot also considered the possibility that the cannon was cast in Sri Lanka itself, as it is known that a foundry existed in Jaffna in the early eighteenth century, where copper of similar composition is known to have been used. Yet the only known example of a cannon made in Jaffna is of a very different style.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, founding in the Dutch Republic could not be excluded on the basis of the copper analysis, as it is known that in periods of copper scarcity Japanese copper was also imported there.<sup>5</sup>

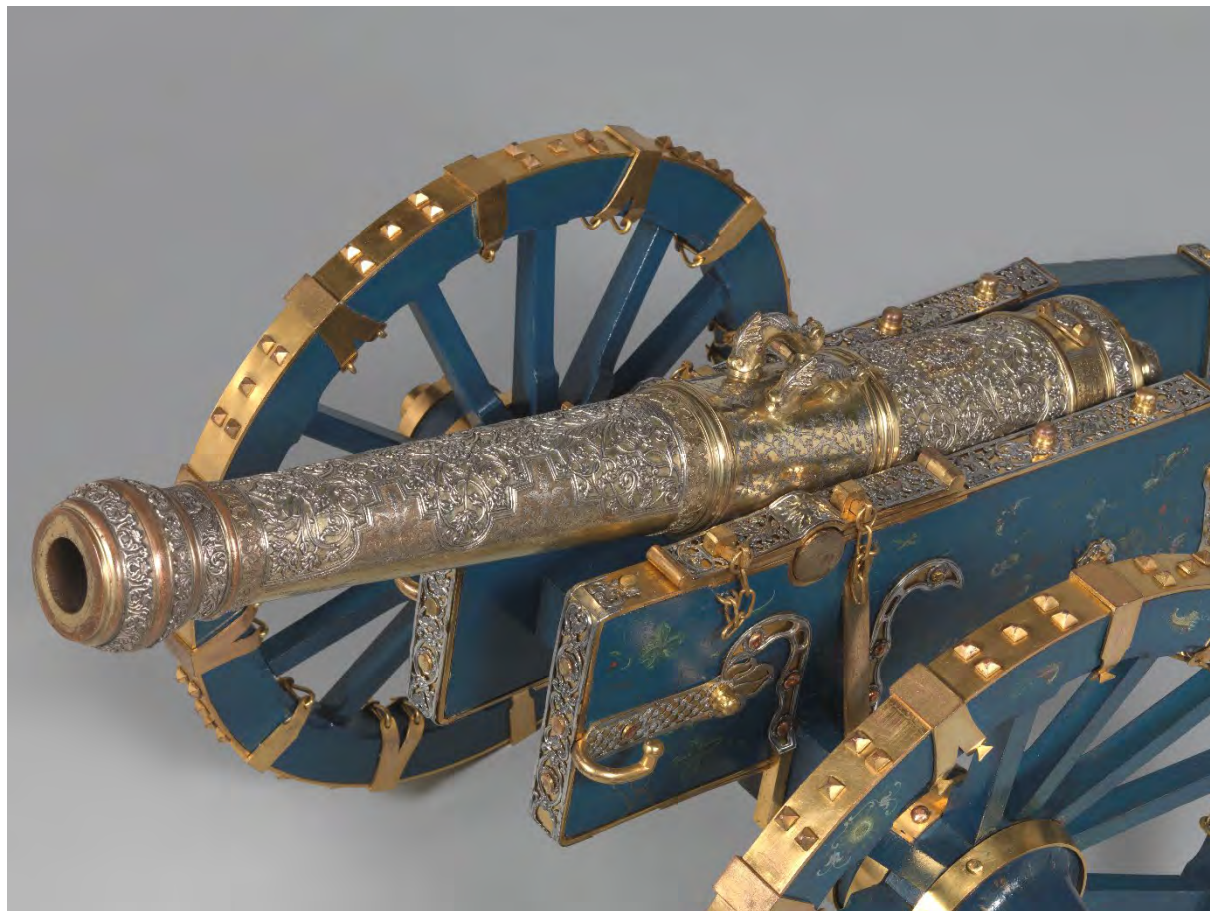
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<sup>2</sup> Asoka de Zoysa, Ganga Dissanayake, Ruth Brown and Kay Douglas Smith, Arie Pappot, Nico Brinck and John R. Verbeek (who sadly passed away in the course of the project).

<sup>3</sup> Report Arie Pappot, Conservation & Science Rijksmuseum, "Levke's cannon. Technical and stylistic report", 23 August 2021, p. 7-8. Please note that this report will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. See also, report Ruth Rhynas Brown and Kay Smith, "Decorated cannon in the Rijksmuseum, NG-NM-1015", June 2021. Please note that these reports will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022. For Jaffna foundry see: John R. Verbeek, 'De in Fortificaties Opgestelde Artillerie van de VOC', in *Verre Forten, Vreemde Kusten. Nederlandse Verdedigingswerken Overzee*, ed. Kees Ampt, Edwin Paar, and Ad Littel (StoneSide, 2017): 213. 1.04.02, Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795 [Inventory of the Archive of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), 1602-1795], inv.no. 10150, 'Staat en inventaris van alle kanonnen en andere wapens die zich op de stadswallen, buitenposten en magazijnen in Colombo en andere posten op Ceylon bevinden [Status and inventory of all cannons and other weapons that are present at the ramparts, outposts and warehouses in Colombo and other posts in Ceylon] dated 1779.

<sup>5</sup> Report Pappot, 223 August 021.

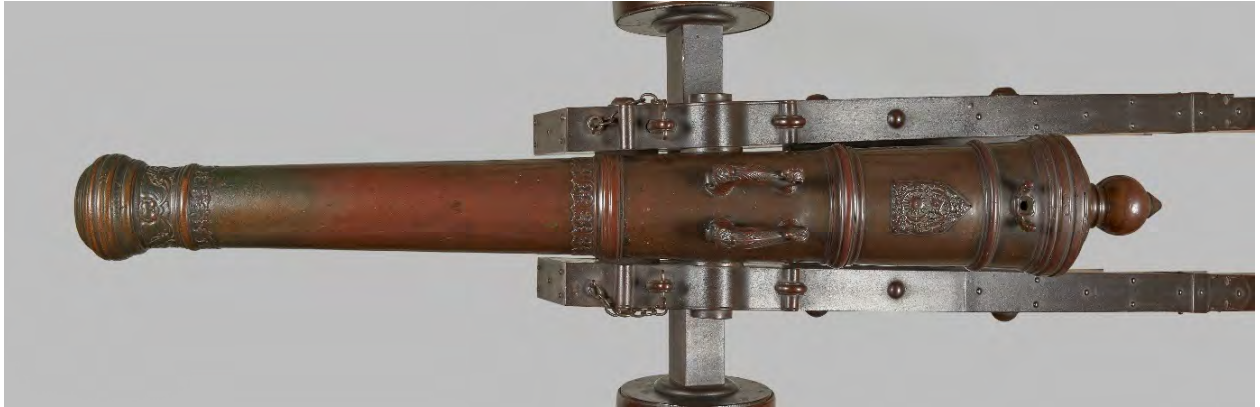


*Photo 1. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, NG-NM-1015*

A breakthrough in our research on the production history of the cannon was the discovery of two similar cannons, RCIN 72822 and RCIN 72821, kept at Windsor castle, Royal Collection Trust. These two cannons provide important clues to the history of the original casting and decoration. The three cannons are all of the same size and proportion: Lewuke's cannon is 98 cm long; the other two cannons are 94,5 and 102 cm long, respectively. A comparison of the three objects shows that they must have been cast at the same time as Lewuke's cannon. One version is embellished with silver and gilded, though the decoration appears not as rich as that of Lewuke's cannon. The palest version (RCIN 72822) shows the original decorative elements that came with the casting.



*Photo 2. RCIN 72821 Royal Collection Trust*



*Photo 3. RCIN 72822 Royal Collection Trust*

Ruth Brown and Kay Smith, renowned historical cannon experts from the UK, directed us to the Windsor cannons and have provided us with a report of the comparison of the Lewke cannon with these two cannons.<sup>6</sup> We obviously cannot cite the entire report here, but instead will highlight two important elements that contributed to our understanding of the foundry of the cannon: the shield at the centre and the cherubs around the muzzle (photo 4-6):



*Photo 4. RCIN 72821 Royal Collection Trust*

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<sup>6</sup> Brown and Smith, 'Decorated cannon in the Rijksmuseum, NG-NM-1015' (June 2021)



*Photo 5. RCIN 72822 Royal Collection Trust*



*Photo 6. Muzzle of NG-NM-1015 Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*

The muzzle of the pale cannon has a ring of cherubs and of acanthus leaves that are also found on the muzzle of the two other cannons, where they have been further embellished with silver. The two shields on the left (Photos 7 and 8) are from the Windsor cannons, the one on the right from Lewke's cannon. That fact that the pale cannon also has a Kandyan shield, suggests that it was part of the original design when the cannon was cast.<sup>7</sup>



*Photo 7. Shield detail of RCIN 72822 Royal Collection Trust;*



*Photo 8. Shield detail of RCIN 72821 Royal Collection Trust;*



*Photo 9. Shield detail of NG-NM-1015, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*

<sup>7</sup> Please note that we were not able to inspect the Windsor castle guns in person during the course of this research. A more careful analysis of the Windsor shields and decoration would enrich the comparison, for example it is noted that the flowerly decoration around the shield of Windsor cannon 72821 is applied with a different technique from that of Lewke's cannon, it seems to have been carved out, rather than applied on the cannons surface. Hence the shield of this gun appears to be elevated above the decoration. The comparison on the basis of these pictures also raises further questions about the technique with which the shield on Lewke's cannon was decorated. Arie Pappot suggests that part of the original shield might have been polished away when the gold and silver embellishment was added, also to create space for the gems. See infographic made by Arie Pappot, 'Shield and floral decoration', 22 February 2022. Please note that this report will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

Ganga Dissanayaka, art historian and specialist on the Kandyan period, writes about the shield on Lewuke's cannon: "On the shield the sun and the moon are Kandyan symbols of power. The sun and the crescent have been used as symbols of sovereignty in various contemporary countries, and one can get an idea of the Sri Lankan social role of these symbols by using the flag of Satarakorala [four korales] and the throne of Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe etc. as examples."<sup>8</sup> In her report, Ganga Dissanayaka discusses this iconography at length, using various examples of Kandyan flags, coins, and other objects in which the Sun, Moon, and Lion are present. The figure of the lion is not always the same, which is also evidenced from the three shields. His position (spitting fire, holding a sword in his paw, or holding a whip) might refer to a specific king. But in the case of the shield of Lewuke's cannon she explains that it is not obvious to which king it might refer.<sup>9</sup>

The 'discovery' of the Windsor cannons provided us with new insights in the casting process.<sup>10</sup> Based on comparison with other cannons in Europe and one cannon of similar size made in Jaffna in the period, Ruth Brown and Kay Smith concluded that the proportions and plain design of the cannons were typical for cannons made in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. And because of the similarities in design, they consider it most likely that all three cannons were cast at the same time, probably in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Because of the decorative elements in the casting and because the shield was also part of the plain design, they concluded that it was most likely either a gift to the king of Kandy, or made for the king of Kandy on order.

Robert Knox, an Englishman who was held captive for nineteen years at the court of Kandy, between 1661 and 1680, refers in his account to the reverence for guns and cannons by the Kandyan King Rajasinghe II (1629-1687), which he had displayed in lavishly decorated carriages:

"He hath eight or nine small Cannon, lately taken from the Dutch, which he hath mounted in Field-Carriages, all rarely carved, and inlay'd with Silver and Brass, and Coloured Stones, set in convenient places, and painted with Images and Flowers. But the Guns disgrace the Carriages."<sup>11</sup>

This royal appreciation for ceremonial cannons was taken over by the subsequent kings of Kandy. Another eyewitness observed a collection of small cannons on display at the palace entrance in 1736. He suggests that some of them had been gifted by the Dutch to Kandy:

"Between these pillars stood fine cannons about 3, 4 to 4,5 feet long, of cast metal, on small carriages of which they had captured some from the Portuguese and received some as gifts from the Dutch."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 102. Please note that these reports will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 102-5.

<sup>10</sup> We call it a discovery, because in Windsor they are catalogued as originating from Seringapatnam. That it is more likely that the cannons originated from Kandy is communicated with the conservators. It was confirmed that the cannons could very well be Kandyan, as little is actually known about their history. No further provenance research has yet been done for these cannons. Email correspondence with Francesca Levy, arms and armour conservator, Royal Trust Collection, 8 July and 18 August 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Knox, Robert (1681). *An historical relation of the island Ceylon, in the East-Indies*. (Richard Chiswell, London 1681): 42.

<sup>12</sup> R. Raven-Hart, *Heydts Ceylon. Being the relevant sections of the Allerneuster geographisch und topographischer schau-platz von Africa und Ost-indien etc.etc.* by Johan Wolffgrang Heydt, 1744. (Colombo 1952): 93

The three cannons we have discussed above are between three and four feet in length and so it could very well be that they were among the cannons described by Heydt as gifts from the Dutch.<sup>13</sup> This could thus corroborate the observation made by Ruth Brown and Kay Smith that the three cannons were originally cast as gifts or made on order of the King. Asoka de Zoysa has provided us with an extensive analysis of the use of small ceremonial cannons as gifts in early modern diplomacy and identified a number of examples in his report. He shows that gifting of ceremonial cannons was a common practice in early modern Europe as well as in Asia.<sup>14</sup>

Yet another eyewitness account tells us that by 1749 two of the small cannons were gilded and displayed on painted carriages in front of the audience hall:

[...] voorts twee veldstukjes, waarvan de loop en het beslag verguld en de affuiten verlakt, voor gemelde audientiezaal [ ..]<sup>15</sup>

We now assume that the two cannons described here are Lewke's cannon and the decorated Windsor cannon RCIN 72821, as that still bears the traces over being overall gilded. It allows us to locate Lewke's cannon at the palace four years after the outer layer of decoration was added.<sup>16</sup>

Nico Brinck (an independent scholar and cannon expert) and Arie Pappot (of the Conservation & Science Department at the Rijksmuseum) arrived at the conclusion that the basic style and proportion of the cannon resembles practices in the Dutch Republic. Arie Pappot looked further into the cherubs on the cannon, and compared these with cherubs on the bells cast by the Hemony brothers in the period 1660-1680.<sup>17</sup> The Hemony brothers are known to have cast a number of cannons in the 1670s though no examples survived. Like Ruth Brown and Kay Smith, Nico Brinck suggested that the cannon was cast as a gift or made on order and was intended to meet oriental tastes: he pointed out that the onion shaped knob at the rear end is oriental in shape and that this element is not found among any of the known cannons that were made in the Dutch Republic.<sup>18</sup> The Rijksmuseum actually holds one example of a bronze cannons that has a similar onion shaped knob. This one originates from Batavia and was cast by Laurens Oxsen in 1667 (Photo 11).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The exact measurements of the cannons in Windsor are 94,5 cm and 102 cm; Lewke cannon is 98 cm. "The VOC used the Amsterdam voet as standard, which measured 28,3 cm, so the three cannons indeed measured between three and four feet.

<sup>14</sup> Asoka de Zoysa "Report No – 01" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 8-16. See also for a comparative case of a cannon from Myanmar that carries a history of being gifted, looted and engraved with an inscription: Ruth Brown Ruth Rhynas Brown and Fiona Hird, 'Captured one hour after four strokes of the drum: Edinburgh's Portuguese cannon.' In: *ICOMAM Magazine*, 22, 2019: 42-43.

<sup>15</sup> NI-HaNA 1.04.02, 2735 Copia rapport bij forme van dagverhaal van den gesant naar Candia Van den Hoft in dato 9 April 1749 concernerende het voorgevallene en door hem verrigte gedurende het gezantschap, annex de gewisselde brieven.

<sup>16</sup> Email correspondence with Francesca Levy, arms and armour conservator, Royal Trust Collection, 8 July and 18 August 2021. In an added file Francesca Levy points out where RCIN 72821 shows traces of gilding and silver overlay: Francesca Levy, 'Grand stair guns'. Please note that this report will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Pappot, "Lewke's cannon."

<sup>18</sup> Nico Brinck, "Onderzoek naar de oorsprong van het Kanon van Kandy" (2021). Please note that this report will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Email correspondence with Arie Pappot, 15 January 2022; The Rijksmuseum also holds another small eighteenth century cannon (described as lilla) from Lombok that (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, NG-NM-10373) that has a similar onion shaped knob, it is probably founded is a European foundry.; In their response to the present report Ruth Brown and Kay Smith discussed the possibility that the knob might have been carved in the onion shape after it was cast. Ruth brown and Kay Smith, 'Report no 263 – responses' 28-02 2022. They suggest that an x-ray be made to see whether there are traces of alterations.





*Photo 10 and 11. Onion shaped knob gilded and engraved, NG-NM-1015. The picture on the right shows the Oxen cannon, NG-MC-1104, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.*

To conclude then, Lewke's cannon was probably cast in the last quarter of the seventeenth century in the Dutch Republic, possibly in Batavia. It was cast for the king of Kandy either as a gift or on order, together with at least two other cannons.

#### The outer layer of decoration

When Lewke's cannon was originally cast it was much plainer than it is now and only included the sober, though elegant, decoration around the muzzle and the shield of the king of Kandy at the centre. The lavish decoration that we now see on the cannon was thus added later. What does this second outer layer of the cannon tell us about its history? When, where, and why was this added? For this part of the object analysis we have worked together with Dr Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka and Prof. Asoka de Zoysa.<sup>20</sup> They also provided us with an historical interpretation of the Sinhala inscription, and helped us contextualise the position of Lewke within the political constellation of the Kandyan kingdom.

The Kandyan decorative elements of the silver inlay and engraved motifs in the gilding are considered by Ganga Dissanayaka as typical, pre-1750. She also concludes that the craftsmen might

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<sup>20</sup> Ganga Dissanayake is Ethnographer and Art Historian Deputy Director at the Samkathana Research Centre, Kelaniya University; Asoka de Zoysa is Director of the Samkathana Research Centre at Kelaniya University. Their extensive report has integrated the results from Arie Pappot's analysis and that of Ruth Rhynas Brown and Kay Smith. The report consists of two parts. The first is written by Professor de Zoysa, who contextualises the canon in a global (art)history of gift giving; the second, by Ganga Dissanayaka, focuses on the Kandyan art-historical context and includes an analysis of the inscription and the position of Lewke Desava. The reports are very extensive and provide more details and information than we could incorporate into this provenance report.

have come from the craftsman villages in the hatara korale, the province of Lewke which was known for silverwork. We will explain below how she has drawn this conclusion, using some of the examples from her extensive report.

Kandyan arts and crafts carry certain classic elements that find their origin in pre-Kandyan (pre-sixteenth century) and pre-Kotte period (pre-fifteenth century). At the same time, as Asoka de Zoysa recognized in his report, Kandyan arts and crafts should also be understood in the context of a global artistic culture that developed through contact and exchange, in particular with Arakan (Myanmar), Ayutthaya (Siam, Thailand), and Southern India as well as with the Portuguese and the Dutch.<sup>21</sup> Dissanayaka has used a common classification system of traditional Sinhala decorative design motifs that was first established in by Ananda Coomaraswamy and later improved. These are recognized as follows:<sup>22</sup>

Divine — Objects considered as divine. Example: Sun, Moon; **2.** Fauna — Live animals. Example: Human, dwarf, elephant; **3.** Flora — Designs of inanimate objects in geometric shapes made from botanical foliage and vines. Example: Binara flowers, Kathira flowers, Bo leaves; **4.** Inanimate — designs made of inanimate objects with geometric shapes. Example: stripes, curves, circles, triangles; **5.** Conceptual — Animals and trees from imaginary creations and trees not found in the living world. Example: Sarapendi, Bherunda, Naari Devi.

Design elements from these five classifications are found on the cannon. In the words of Ganga Dissanayaka: "The designer has ably attempted to apply the designs with a good flow, taking into account the circumference and surface area." She further describes the design as "aesthetically pleasing."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022). A nanda K. Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art (Being a Monograph on Mediaeval Sinhalese Arts and Crafts, Mainly as Surviving in the Eighteenth Century, with an Account of the Structure of Society and the Status of the Craftsmen)* (Broad Campden: sn, 1908): 54-59. See Asoka de Zoysa report no: 01 for a reflection on the global history of Kandyan art.

<sup>22</sup> Sri Lankan decorations and designs are categorised into five categories for ease of identification. (Art Syllabus. GCE O/L & A/L) (Dissanayake, 2005, p.20). While Coomaraswamy classifies the said arts into four sections, this classification does not include the term conceptual. (Coomaraswamy,trans,1962): 78.

<sup>23</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 91.



*Photos 12a and b. Surface decoration around the shield, silver embellishment with liyawel motifs.  
Photograph made by the authors*

The most prominent motif is the typical liyawel, or vines. Ganga Dissanayaka considers the use of the liawel here as complex: “Here, it is used as a vine and chain of flowers. The vines are formed by the combination of flowers and leaves. The Seeni Mala and Kathuru Mala are widely used as the flower. [...] The Liyawela is arranged in such a way that the entire surface is divided into a geometric pattern and extends upwards from a vase.”<sup>24</sup> Across the cannon birds are hidden in the liyawel motif. Through a comparison with the application of liyawel in temples and ivory boxes of the Kotte and Kandyan period, she considers the design of the liyawel on the cannon to be subtle in comparison with the late Kandyan period (after 1750). Overall, she concluded that the cannon’s decorative motifs are more in line with the designs of the Kotte period (sixteenth century) and are somewhat inspired by the early Kandy era. The question now is whether the decoration represents a particular school of art. What is known is that the craftsman villages in the hatara korale (which formed the base of Lewke Disava’s power, see next section) were known for their silverwork and for the influence of the Kotte era-style on their work. To locate the craftsmen, more fieldwork is needed.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, “Report No:02” in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the “Lewke cannon” in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 97.

<sup>25</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, “Report No:02” in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the “Lewke cannon” in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 97.



*Photo 13. A ring of 14 Annansi mala (pineapple flower) around the muzzle. Photograph made by authors*

At the muzzle the pineapple flower (*Annansi mala*) is recognizable (Photo 13). Dissanayaka writes: “The middle section of this flower is designed in the shape of a pineapple. Being an imaginary floral design, it is widely used for metal, ivory, stone, and wood designs. It is especially used for overall and border designs. [...] The pineapple flower design is a specialty that was widely used in all industries in Sri Lanka and is still in use today.”<sup>26</sup> Asoka de Zoysa provided us with a range of examples of this, and showed how the Anansi Mali is repeated in the silverwork at different locations on the cannon.<sup>27</sup>



*Photo 14. Example of the four engraved Narilatha's on the sides of Lewuke's cannon. Photograph made by the authors*

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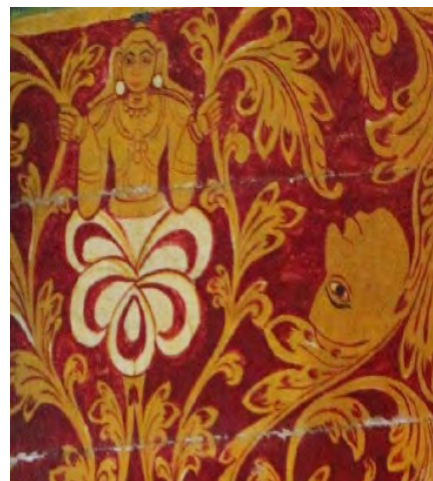
<sup>26</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, “Report No:02” in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the “Lewke cannon” in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 92

<sup>27</sup> Asoka de Zoysa, “Report No: 01”: 20.

Among the traditional embellishments is a highly artistic design that is created to depict the female upper body on a floral ornament as a fictional design. It is known as the "Narilatha flower" or the "Nari Deviya." This motif is commonly used in ivory carvings and metalwork. A combination with the liyawel, or vine motif, however, is not common, although a type of motif which joins only the 'head' which appears like a human figure, to the 'liyawela,' is mostly found after the middle of the nineteenth century (see photos 15 and 16). The face and wings of the Narilatha on the cannon are unusual and might signify influence from European prints.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the artist meant to echo the wings and face of the cherub on the muzzle.<sup>29</sup>



*Photo 15. Temple painting /early nineteenth century/  
"Narilatha flower" or the "Nari Deviya"/Aththanagoda,  
Doragamuwa/Aththanagoda': Jeewana Manaram Kodagoda  
Source: Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka.*



*Photo 16. Temple painting /early nineteenth century/  
"Narilatha flower" or the "Nari Deviya"/Aththanagoda,  
Doragamuwa/Aththanagoda' Source: Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka.*

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<sup>28</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 94.

<sup>29</sup> Asoka de Zoysa, "Report No:01" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 21.

The engraved gilded part in the middle of the cannon, in between and on the outer sides of the two grips, provide pre-Kandyan traditional motifs that were probably meant as symbols of prosperity, or good luck and wealth, thereby underlining the intentions of the gift giver. The middle section has a design that is known among traditional designs as the “flower plant” with a bird on top, which might have carried symbolic meaning. There are examples of the use of this motif from Mihintale and the early Anuradhapura period up to the Kandyan period.<sup>30</sup>



*Photo 17. “The flower plant in pot with bird on top,” between the two dolphin grips. Photograph made by the authors*



*Photo 18. One of the two Kalpa Vrukshaya with deer, giant squirrel, and birds at the centre of the cannon. Photograph made by the authors*

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<sup>30</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, “Report No:02” in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the “Lewke cannon” in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 98-99.; Asoka de Zoysa, ‘Report No: 01’: 22.

On the two outer sides a Kalpa Vrukshaya (Eternal Tree) is engraved. Ganga Dissanayaka describes it as follows: "This is a popular decoration that had been used during the Kandyan era and also spread to the post-Kandyan era. The flower, animal, leaf and fruit designs added to it according to the creative utility of the time comprise a wide range. In creative terms, the 'Kalpa Vruksha' painting at the Kelani Viharaya and the 'Kalpa Vruksha' painting at the Dapane Vihara are similar to the 'Kalpa Vruksha' depicted on the cannon (photos 19 and 20). Used regionally in many countries such as Indonesia, Burma (Myanmar), India etc. it is also a decorative design used in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. Known as the 'Divine Tree' used to fulfill one's wishes, it is [has been] popularly noticed in Sri Lanka since after the Kotte era."<sup>31</sup> According to Ganga Dissanayaka the Eternal Tree is a suitable decoration for a gift.



*Photo 19. Dapane Viharaya/ Temple painting/ Ceiling decoration/ Mid nineteenth century/ "Kalpa Vrukshaya"  
Source: Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka. (Eternal Tree):  
Jeewana Manaram Kodagoda*



*Photo 20 Dapane Viharaya/ Temple painting/ Ceiling decoration/ Mid nineteenth century/ "Kalpa Vrukshaya"  
(Eternal Tree): Jeewana Manaram Kodagoda Source:  
Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka.*

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<sup>31</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 100.; Asoka de Zoysa, "Report no: 01": 22.

The decoration on the cannon as gift



*Photos 21 and 22. The inscription on lewke's cannon. Photograph made by the authors*

The analysis of the founding process revealed that the cannon was probably cast as a gift for (or made on order by) the king of Kandy in the late seventeenth century. Some of the Kandyan motifs used on the outer layer of the cannon's decoration such as the Kalpa Vruksha also bear the connotation of gift giving. In this section, we therefore explore the questions of when and why the outer layer of decoration was added.

Joosje van Bennekom and Arie Pappot closely inspected the inscription, and concluded that the gilding and the accompanying decoration were added to the cannon at the same moment in time.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the question of when the outer decoration was added can be answered through a reading of the transcription, found at the rear end of the cannon.<sup>33</sup> As previous translations and interpretations of the inscription gave cause for conflicting theories about the cannons provenance, Ganga Dissanayaka transcribed and translated the transcription anew. Her interpretation of the transcription is based on contemporary epigraphic and etymological evidence.

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<sup>32</sup> Joosje van Bennekom and Arie Pappot, "Resultaten Atelieronderzoek 25 november – 3 december 2021 -- Joosje van Bennekom en Arie Pappot, in overleg met Chamikara Pilapitiya (25 november)," p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> For more information on the history of the first transcription see the part on ' The history of the cannon in The Netherlands.'



The inscription reads as follows:

ශක වර්ෂ එක්වාදහස් සසිය හැටහතට පැමිනි ක්රෝධ නම් වූ ක්‍රෝධ වර්ෂයෙහි  
රිච්චරාධිපති වූ අන්තනිච්චි විංශතිකයෙහිදී සතර ක්‍රෝධ ක්‍රෝධ දිසාව මෙලී නික්මෙන  
ක්‍රෝධක ක්‍රෝධ නැන්තනැහ වසින්ත වැඩකරවා දක්කවාපු කාමුවක්‍රෝධ වයි.<sup>34</sup>

Saka warsha ekwadahas sasiya hatahathata pamini kroda nam wu me warshayehi anthima  
winshathiyehi satara korale disawa labi thibena Lewke thenenneha widin wadakarawa dakwapu  
Kalathuwakkuwai.<sup>35</sup>

She confirmed the earlier translations of the inscription, but added further explanation of the  
connotation of certain words which are highlighted in bold-italic:

This is the cannon made (**Wadakarawa dakwapu**) by **Lewke Thethennehe**, who received the Disawa  
post of the **Satara Korale** during the last **Vinsathiya** of this year, which was called **Kroda**, which came  
in the **shakawarsha** (year) one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven.<sup>36</sup>

She explains the extra information that she draws from the wording as follows:

1. A more precise indication of the date: this cannon was donated on a day within the period from  
14 April 1745 to 14 April 1746. Namely, the year named Kroda in the 59<sup>th</sup> year in the 'Surya' era of  
the 'Chandra,' 'Jwalana,' 'Ashwini' eras.
2. The usage of *thethennehe* refers to Lewke's appointment as Disava of the four korales
3. The usage of *wadakarawa dakwapua* ("this is made by") also reflects the high rank of Lewke

Thus, between 14 April 1745 and 14 April 1746 the Lewke Disava had the cannon decorated as a gift,  
yet the inscription does not tell us directly to whom it was gifted. Indirectly, this can be drawn from  
the history of Lewke's position in the Kandyan Kingdom. Lewke was a crucial political and intellectual  
figure at the time. The Lewke lineage can be traced back to the Kotte Kingdom and it has been  
suggested that the Lewke family has a royal lineage that connects them to the island's Southern  
Province. In the eighteenth century, different generations from the Lewke family held the post of  
Disava (governor) of the three and four korales, two provinces in the Kandyan Kingdom that  
bordered Dutch territories.<sup>37</sup> In the period when the cannon was decorated, Lewke tried to reinforce  
the Kandyan position vis-à-vis the Dutch, while at the same time improving his own political position  
in Kandy through different means. For example, he is known to have supported cinnamon peelers in  
a rebellion against the Dutch. Moreover, he played a crucial role in the renewal of the Buddhist

<sup>34</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 113.

<sup>35</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 113.

<sup>36</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 114. She also provides a more extensive analysis of the engraving itself and the Sinhalese letters used, by comparing them to copper sannas (charters or deeds) from different periods, which also confirmed a mid-eighteenth century province in the inscription. Her analysis of the Kandyan astrological calendar helped her define the dates more precisely.

<sup>37</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 120-4. For more on the Lewke lineage see also: Eric Meyer: "LEWUKÉ DISAWA : un aristocrate kandyen du 18ème siècle:" <https://slkdiaspo.hypotheses.org/tag/kandy> (Accessed 5 February 2022)

Sangha, by setting up diplomatic contact with Siam and Arakan, through the help of the Dutch. Thus, in the 1740s, Lewke Disava was actively negotiating this power through his relations with the King Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe, the Dutch governor and the Buddhist monastic order, the Sangha.

Ganga Dissanayaka's research shows that it is likely that the donation of the decoration on the cannon was an expression or confirmation of the good relations between King Vijaya Rajasinghe and Lewke. Two years prior to the donation of the decorated cannon, in 1743, Lewke received a copper sannasa (a charter or deed) from King Vijaya Rajasinghe. This sannasa was described by Lionel Frederic Lee in 1871, but was never fully transcribed or translated and its current location is unclear. According to the description from Lee, "this Sannasa praises Lewke in a way that is not found in any other royal Sannasa."<sup>38</sup> Ganga Dissanayaka therefore carefully concludes that: "Although there is a lack of information on how many privileges and assets Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe had granted to Lewke through the Sannasa, the date on which the cannon had been donated can be identified as a humble tribute towards it."<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusions drawn from the object analysis

To conclude, the object analysis has revealed that the cannon was cast in the Dutch Republic, possibly by the Hemony brothers in Amsterdam, or in Batavia. It was cast together with at least two other cannons probably as a gift for (or ordered by) the king of Kandy, and these were possibly displayed at the palace entrance already prior to 1736. Gifting of small cannons was a known practice in early modern diplomacy in Asia as well as in Europe. The rich and elegant silver and gold embellishment has been added as a gift by Lewke Disava to King Srivijaya Rajasinghe sometime between 1745 and 1746, probably to enhance his internal position in the kingdom.

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<sup>38</sup> Ganga Dissanayake, "Report No:02" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, provenance research of the "Lewke cannon" in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2022): 111-2. For more information on the copper sannasa of 1743, see: Lewuké Sannasa, in: *Sannas of the Central Province vol 1 n° 194, Sri Lanka National Archives, Land Settlement Department Records*; Lionel Lee, "Notes on a Sannas," *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1871, pp. 8-10.

<sup>39</sup> Ganga Dissanayaka, "Report no:01:" 111-112: The recipient of the Royal Sannas is usually not praised. Praised the king as the donor. However, the recipient will be introduced with adjectives, depending on the cause of each Sannasa. They are often introductions to the activities for various victories and expressions of loyalty to the king and government. But in a very friendly language in Lewke Sannasa, Lewke's lineage and character from the past are described. There is something special about that introduction.

## 2. Cannon as a spoil of war, 1765

In the Rijksmuseum the cannon is currently displayed as war booty. It states that Lewuke's cannon was seized by the Dutch during their military campaign against the Kingdom of Kandy in 1765. This is also recognized in the most recent publications on the cannon.<sup>40</sup> What do we know about the siege of Kandy and the subsequent looting? (How) does the cannon appear in the historical records of the time?

### Context of Kandyan-Dutch war, 1762-1766, and spoils of the war

The Kandyan-Dutch war of 1762-1766 is commemorated in both Sinhala and Dutch primary sources, and in both cases the looting of objects plays a prominent role. The *Cūlavamsa*, a royal historical chronicle from the island, contains a description of how the King of Kandy decided to support popular resistance against the VOC. "[His] dignitaries set forth with the people living in Lanka, fought the fearful battle with the Olanda people, destroyed the foe, burned down the strongholds and terrified him in every possible way."<sup>41</sup> Conflicts between the Dutch and the local inhabitants of the Dutch occupied areas had started in 1759-60, but in 1761 the restrained relations between the Dutch in Colombo and the King of Kandy led to open warfare.<sup>42</sup> VOC Governor Lubbert Jan van Eck got hold of the Kandyan lowlands in 1762 and 1763, whereupon he decided to invade the town and palace of Kandy up in the mountains. The first campaign of early 1764 failed completely.<sup>43</sup> Even after the Dutch VOC troops invaded the city of Kandy on 19 February 1765 the Kandyan defiance used guerrilla tactics, by retreating quickly after an attack and using the rainy season to their advantage.<sup>44</sup> If the Rijksmuseum information is correct, it would have been in this phase of the war that Lewuke's cannon was looted from Kandy.

During the siege of Kandy, the Kandyans tried to safeguard the most sacred objects. In the days before the invasion of Kandy, king Kirti Sri Rajansinha brought to safety his family and the treasures of the Kandy Palace and Temple of the Tooth.<sup>45</sup> An eyewitness, a Dutch soldier who worked as surgeon in Kandy, described the situation as follows "The King, with tears in his eyes, had caused the most precious objects to be removed from the Palace, and had then given leave to his troops to take what they wished of the remainder [treasures]."<sup>46</sup> This was not in vain, as the Temple of the Tooth, the most important Buddhist shrine on the island, was indeed targeted by the Dutch army. When they had forced their way into the town, the palace and temple were razed by the troops and they "destroyed the sacred books and everything else."<sup>47</sup> The court was desecrated due to the slaughtering of the holy cows and the destruction of the Buddha statues, and the palace was set on

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<sup>40</sup> See the part on 'The history of the cannon in The Netherlands.'

<sup>41</sup> Wilhelm Geiger and C. Mabel Rickmers, *Culavamsa: Being the More Recent Part of the Mahavamsa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996): p. 266, line 115.

<sup>42</sup> R. Raven-Hart, *The Dutch Wars with Kandy, 1764-1766*, Ceylon Historical Manuscripts Commission. Bulletin. No. 6. (Nugegoda, 1964): 3.

<sup>43</sup> Lodewijk J. Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants: Sri Lanka and the Netherlands from 1600* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2016): 121.

<sup>44</sup> Raven-Hart, *The Dutch Wars with Kandy*, 114; Professor Gananath Obeyesekere, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, "The Many Faces of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1591-1765: Lessons for our Time?" 23 April 2014, Colombo, Princeton University lecture, p. 36-37. <http://www.thesapri.org/pdf/lecture.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> *Culavamsa*, p. 267, line 122-126 "The King had sent two Uparajas with his treasures and the sacred Tooth Relic to 'a province which was scarcely passable owing to mountains, forest and difficult roads."

<sup>46</sup> Raven-Hart, *The Dutch Wars with Kandy*, 98-99; Sri Lanka National Archives, Colombo (SLNA), Lot 1: Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon, inv.no. 4881, "Report of the military campaign." Transcription kindly shared with us by Chris Nierstrasz, author of *In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Its Decline (1740-1796)* (Brill, 2012).

<sup>47</sup> *Culavamsa*, p. 267, line 122-126.

fire when the Dutch troops eventually retreated from the city due to strong resistance and a lack of food on 31 August 1765.<sup>48</sup>

The troops invading the city on 19 February 1765 were explicitly instructed not to plunder, but upon arrival in Kandy, the Dutch troops had found the warehouses partly emptied by the retreated Kandyan troops, who were allowed to do so by the king.<sup>49</sup> The looting that followed spread from the warehouses to the king's private apartments.<sup>50</sup> Among the booty were "linen, fabrics, furniture, some silver-gilted objects, curiosities, and copper coins."<sup>51</sup> Officers, soldiers, and the enslaved alike engaged in the looting. One of the officers possessed "silverworks, diamonds, and rings with and without stones" from the Kandyan booty.<sup>52</sup> This officer had defended himself later in Colombo by saying that he had bought the objects from two soldiers, just as Governor Van Eck himself had done. Indeed, Van Eck had also bought several valuable and rare objects from the booty. "Those objects would have been sold for give-away prices to Moors [South Asian Muslim traders] who were waiting to buy it,"<sup>53</sup> he wrote. Indeed, we also know from the records that a great deal of the booty was sold or left behind by the soldiers in Kandy or during their trip back to Colombo.<sup>54</sup>

Governor Van Eck died some weeks after the conquest of Kandy. After his death, Governor Iman Willem Falck succeeded him. On 25 September 1765, Governor Falck was informed by the executors of the estate of Van Eck that in his estate ten Kandyan objects were identified as spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war.<sup>55</sup> These objects were transferred to the Treasury of the VOC in Colombo and the Government of the VOC in Batavia was informed.<sup>56</sup> On 22 October 1765, the political council in Colombo received a list that had been drawn up on 17 October with the objects that were all appraised by a committee consisting of VOC officials and local headmen.<sup>57</sup> Here the cannon is described for the first time as "a little canon, weighing 90 pounds" and it was appraised at 20 Rix-dollars. The political council later decided that this cannon and some other curiosities were "without any use." These objects would go back into the estate of Van Eck for the appraised amount.<sup>58</sup>

Information regarding the value given to the cannon is somewhat contradictory. In November Falck decided to ship the cannon with the Overnes.<sup>59</sup> It might have been appraised with a low value in

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid; Lorna Dewaraja, "Thailand's Sublime Gift to Sri Lanka: The Services rendered by UPĀLI MAHĀ THERA and his associates," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* 48 (2003): 88.

<sup>49</sup> SLNA, Lot 1, inv.no. 4881, "Report of the military campaign," f. 223

<sup>50</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden in dato 10 November 1765 [Copy of the secret letter from the Governor [Falck] only to the general and boards, dated 10 November 1765], f. 363.

<sup>51</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van de leeden van het geheime committe aan generaal en raden in dato 31 Maart 1765 [Copy of the secret letter of the members of the secret committee to the General and boards, dated 31 March 1765], f. 463b-464.

<sup>52</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden in dato 10 November 1765 [Copy of the secret letter from the Governor [Falck] only to the general and boards, dated 10 November 1765], f. 366b-367: "De kannekappel [clerk] van La Baume (...) heeft verklaard, dat hij veele gouden ringen met en sonder steenen, zoo ook veel ander klein zilverwerk bij La Baume gezien had, waar van de kostbaarste ring aan den Her Kommandeur Mooijaart, toen ter tijd op Kolombo zich bevindende, voor 80 Rijkst door hem kannekappel verkocht was."

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, f. 366b.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, f. 369.

<sup>55</sup> For a full transcription and discussion of this list see Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart, PPOCE reports NG-NM-560, 7112, 7114.

<sup>56</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3143 Ceylon, "Resolutien genomen in raden van politie zeedert 5 Januarij tot 31 December 1765" [Resolutions taken in the boards of Police, from 5 January to 31 December 1765], dated 28 September 1765, f. 2823-2824.

<sup>57</sup> These were: Lieutenant of the "Burgerije" (citizens) Johannes Jongbloed, the council [head] of the Type Foundry Reinaldus Hendriksz., the mudaliyar of the Porta Moettoe Chadeappa (Native headmen working at the Court of the Governor in Colombo.) and three other locals. NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3143 Ceylon, 'Resolutien genomen in raden van politie zeedert 5 Januarij tot 31 December 1765' [Resolutions taken in the boards of Police, from 5 January to 31 December 1765], dated 22 October 1765, f. 2882.

<sup>58</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3143 Ceylon, "Resolutien genomen in raden van politie zeedert 5 Januarij tot 31 December 1765" [Resolutions taken in the boards of Police, from 5 January to 31 December 1765], dated 22 October 1765, f. 2882.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. "Een kannonetje met zilver ingelegt, zwaar 90 lb; en geschat op 20 Rixd"

rixdollars, but it was considered an important piece nonetheless: Van Eck had intended the cannon as a gift for Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Falck wanted to obey this wish. Wolfenbüttel was at that time the guardian of Prince Willem V and a regent of the Dutch Republic. Van Eck had established relations with the duke and corresponded with him in 1764 about recommendations for certain appointments.<sup>60</sup> When the executors of Van Eck's will informed his heirs about the object, they recognized that "this small cannon, together with some other items, is rather important as it was said that might have been part of the Crown, or at least belonged to the King of Kandy."<sup>61</sup> Clearly, the cannon was considered valuable, and despite its initial, relatively low appraisal of 20 Rix-dollars, Van Eck saw it as an important war-trophy.<sup>62</sup>

The cannon was the only object from the list of looted objects that was shipped to the Dutch Republic in November 1765. In a letter to the heirs, the executors of Van Eck's estate explained that they had planned to send them all the listed objects in remembrance of Van Eck, rather than selling them. However, they had been instructed to keep the objects in place in Colombo, while awaiting for instructions from the high government in Batavia.<sup>63</sup> On 10 November 1765 Governor Falck had indeed written to the Governor General and Boards in Batavia asking for their response about the looted objects from Kandy.<sup>64</sup> Batavia responded in May 1766 and gave permission to ship the Kandyan objects in the estate of Van Eck to his heirs, provided that Kandy would not demand their restitution during the peace negotiations.<sup>65</sup> Two objects from this list were indeed returned to Kandy in 1767 when the peace was signed. These were the cover of the Tooth and the accompanying *howdah* (canopy).<sup>66</sup> The cannon was never subject of these negotiations for the simple reason that it had already been shipped to the Dutch Republic as early as November 1765. Falck had clearly bypassed the instructions from his superiors, and perhaps the initial low appraisal of the cannon's value should also be seen in this light.

When the cannon travelled on the *Overnes* which departed from Colombo on 18 November 1765, Falck once more underlined that it was an "invaluable piece," but also explicitly referred to the cannon as a spoil of war, or in his own words: "a small piece of canon conquered in Kandy."<sup>67</sup> The

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<sup>60</sup> NA (NL), 1.10.65.01. Inventaris van het archief van de familie Van Panthaleon van Eck, 1398-1946. Inv. no. 20, br 801, November 1764; See also Chris Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Its Decline (1740-1796)* (Brill, 2012), <https://brill.com/view/title/22012>. p. 206.

<sup>61</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 60. 1, "Brieven betreffende overlijden en regeling der nalatenschap van Lubbert Jan van Eck, heer van Overbeek, gouverneur van Ceylon, door de executeurs van diens testament te Colombo aan de erfgenamen gericht. Met bijlagen." [Letters regarding the death and settlement of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck, Lord of Overbeek, Governor of Ceylon, addressed to the heirs by the executors of his will in Colombo. With attachments], dated 10 November 1765. "[E]n welk cannonnetje, benevens nog eenige andere dingen /: als min of meer Criticq en volgens 't gemeen gerugt, zo niet tot de kroon, ten minsten tot de goederen van den Koning van Candia behoord hebbende."

<sup>62</sup> Lodewijk Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants*: 123.

<sup>63</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 60. 1, "Brieven betreffende overlijden en regeling der nalatenschap van Lubbert Jan van Eck, heer van Overbeek, gouverneur van Ceylon, door de executeurs van diens testament te Colombo aan de erfgenamen gericht. Met bijlagen." [Letters regarding the death and settlement of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck, Lord of Overbeek, Governor of Ceylon, addressed to the heirs by the executors of his will in Colombo. With attachments], dated 10 November 1765.

<sup>64</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3138 Ceylon, "Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden" [Copy of secret letter by the Governor, only addressed to the General and Boards], dated 10 November 1765, f. 367.

<sup>65</sup> SLNA, Lot 1, inv.no 2232, "Correspondence with Batavia and Holland 1766-1767," dated 13 May 1766.

<sup>66</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3174, "Instructie voor den oppercoopman en secretaris van politie Van Angelbeek in dato 28 Januarij 1767 gaande als gesant naar 't hof van Candia" [Instruction for the chief merchant and the secretary of the police Van Angelbeek dated 28 January 1767, who went as an ambassador to the Kandyan court], f. 1454b-1455. For more information on this episode see the report on the golden and silver kashane and the golden dagger.

<sup>67</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden in dato 10 November 1765 [Copy of the secret letter from the Governor [Falck] only to the general and boards, dated 10 November 1765], f. 367. "En vermits het geen stuk van waarde is, heb ik de vrijheid genoomen, om te zelve aan zijne doorluchtige hoogheid met het retour schip *Overness* toe te zenden.;" See: NA (NL), 1.04.02, 3137, Origineele missive van den gouverneur en raad [te Colombo] aan de vergadering van 17 in dato 12 November 1765. 41-42. A small cannon peace conquered in Kandy: "een klein stukje kanon in Kandia veroverd."

cannon was kept safe and apart from the cargo in a casket with the symbol of the VOC on it.<sup>68</sup> The Overnes carried cargo for the VOC Chamber of Amsterdam, it arrived at Texel on 15 June 1766.<sup>69</sup> Initially, the Chamber of Amsterdam had refused to release the cannon, even though Governor Falck had explained in a letter to the Board of the VOC, the Heren XVII, that this cannon piece was dedicated to the duke.<sup>70</sup> On 1 October 1766, after negotiation by the stadholder's representative, Thomas Hope,<sup>71</sup> the Heren XVII indeed decided that the box containing the cannon could be released from the presiding chamber (Amsterdam) and sent to the duke.<sup>72</sup>

What happened with the cannon after the duke received it? To answer this question, we turn to the family archive of Van Panthaleon van Eck. When Governor Van Eck's estate arrived in the Republic almost three years later, on 20 March 1769, an inventory was drawn up. It includes a reference to the cannon:

A small cannon piece with silver mounting that was assigned by the deceased to be sent as a present to the Lord Duke of Brunswick Wolfenbüttele field marshal of the state and accordingly sent by the Lord executors. It is now displayed in the Curiosities Room of the Lord Stadtholder in The Hague.<sup>73</sup>

The cannon from Kandy thus had become part of Stadtholder Willem V's collection somewhere between 1766 and 1769. It could have been that the duke transferred it directly to Willem V, since he had reached the age of eighteen in March 1766. It was at least exhibited there by 1769, and visitors were also informed about the provenance of the cannon. We know this because in 1777 the cannon clearly impressed one such visitor named Carl Hendrich Titius:

In zweeten saale ist unter den kunstsachen eine ganz silberne kanone mit golde ubersogen, graviert, und mit edelgesteinen besetzt, welche die Hollander in ihren lesten kriege, met den koninge von Candi erbeutet haben, und viele andre sehr kostbare Waffen.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Koninklijke Verzamelingen [Royal Collections] (NL-KaHV), archive access A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), Inv. No. 1773, Briefwisseling van Thomas Hope, representant van de stadhouder bij de V.O.C., met de hertog van Brunswijk en sporadisch met Willem V, [[Correspondence between Thomas Hope, representative of the Stadtholder for the VOC, with the Duke of Brunswick and sometimes with Willem V 1765-1771], dated 20 July 1766.

<sup>69</sup> rik, "Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries," ING Project, 2 February 2015, <http://resources.huuygens.knaw.nl/das/detailVoyage/98548>.

<sup>70</sup> NL-KaHV, A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), Inv. No. 1773, Briefwisseling van Thomas Hope, representant van de stadhouder bij de V.O.C., met de hertog van Brunswijk en sporadisch met Willem V, [[Correspondence between Thomas Hope, representative of the Stadtholder for the VOC, with the Duke of Brunswick and sometimes with Willem V 1765-1771], dated 20 July 1766, attached: Iman Willem Falck to Thomas Hope, dated 12 November 1765, on the inheritance of Governor van Eck.; see also: NA (NL), 1.04.02, 3137, Origineele missive van den gouverneur en raad [te Colombo] aan de vergadering van 17 in dato 12 November 1765. 41-42  
<sup>71</sup> Even though Willem V had taken up his task as stadtholder when reaching the age of eighteen in March 1766, correspondence about the situation in the colonies seemed still to be addressed to the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttele. On the position of the stadtholder vis-à-vis the VOC and WIC, see: Edwin Van Meerkerk, "Colonial Objects And The Display Of Power. The Curious Case Of The Cabinet Of William V And The Dutch India Companies," in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen, Elmer Kolfin, and Jan L. de Jong (Brill, 2010), 415–35, [https://brill.com/view/book/9789004193567/Bej.9789004186590.i-448\\_019.xml](https://brill.com/view/book/9789004193567/Bej.9789004186590.i-448_019.xml). 419; Thomas Hope was the stadholder's representative for the VOC. A. Wassing, "Inventarisatie van stukken in het Koninklijk Huisarchief betreffende de relatie van de stadhouders prins Willem IV en prins Willem V met de V.O.C. en de W.I.C." Koninklijk Huis Archief (Den Haag, 1999). The correspondence between Thomas Hope and the Duke allowed us to follow the arrival of the cannon until its release in October 1766, see NL-KaHV, A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), Inv. No. 1773, Briefwisseling van Thomas Hope, representant van de stadhouder bij de V.O.C., met de hertog van Brunswijk en sporadisch met Willem V, [Correspondence between Thomas Hope, representative of the stadtholder for the VOC, with the Duke of Brunswick and sometimes with Willem V 1765-1771], letters dating 19 July 1766.

<sup>72</sup> NA (NL), 1.04.02, 61 (Minute resolutions Heren XVII), dated 1 October 1766.

<sup>73</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 66, "Inventarissen van de nagelaten goederen van Lubbert Jan van Eck etc." [Inventories of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck etc.], dated 20 March 1769.

<sup>74</sup> Carl Heinrich Titius cited by Johann Jacob Volkmann, *Neueste Reisen durch die vereinigten Niederlande*, 1783, p. 157. "In zweeten saale ist unter den kunstsachen eine ganz silberne kanone mit golde ubersogen, graviert, und mit edelgesteinen besetzt, welche die Hollander in ihren lesten kriege, met den koninge von Candi erbeutet haben, und viele andre sehr kostbare Waffen."

After its arrival in the Dutch Republic, the cannon thus started a new life as a war trophy, just as Van Eck (and Falck) had wished.

### Is the cannon described in the records the cannon that is now in the Rijksmuseum?

From the archival records discussed above, the evidence that Lewuke's cannon was sent to the Dutch stadtholder Willem V as war trophy seems pretty straightforward. In the past, historians had proposed alternative routes, however. The question we therefore raised during our research was: can we be certain that the cannon in the Rijksmuseum is indeed the cannon described in the archival records above? To answer that question, we further analysed the archival evidence, and we also looked into other possible routes that the cannon might have taken into the collection.

As we looked into it more closely, we indeed discovered reasons to raise such doubts. For example, the cannon does not appear in the available inventories of objects belonging to the stadtholder.<sup>75</sup> However, as described above, its actual arrival in the collection of the stadtholder was recorded in the family archive of Van Panthaleon van Eck, and was further confirmed by the eyewitness account from 1777. We therefore concluded that the silence regarding the cannon in the inventories of the stadtholders' collection seems to reveal gaps in the recording of the possessions of the stadtholders' collection, rather than that it raises doubt on the arrival of the cannon.

There are more issues regarding the archival evidence, though. In 1960, Leslie Brohier raised questions about the identification of the cannon in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam with the cannon described in 1765. Indeed, there are some curious discrepancies: for example, the cannon was described in the letters to the heirs of Eck as "a small but fine cannon, decorated from top to bottom, silver plated and around two feet long."<sup>76</sup> The cannon in the Rijksmuseum is 98 centimetres, which is more than three feet.<sup>77</sup> But there is reason to believe that the length was not measured exactly; the

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<sup>75</sup> Koninklijke Verzamelingen [Royal Collections] (NL-KaHV), A, William IV, prince of Orange, ruler of Nassau (1711-1751), inv.no. 46 III, 'Bekorte Staat en Inventaris van het Kabinet der Natuurlijke en door Kunstgemaakte Zeldzaamheden...' [Concise overview and inventory of the Cabinet of natural and artistic curiosities]; NL-KaHV, A30, Anne of Hannover, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland (1709-1759), inv.no. 415, 'Inventaris der Rariteiten overgegeven in het Kabinet der Natuurlijke en door Kunstgemaakte Zeldzaamheden, berustende onder de bewaaring van den Directeur Vosmaer' [Inventory of curiosities transferred to the Cabinet of natural and artistic curiosities, residing under the custodianship of director Vosmaer]; NL-KaHV, A30, inv.no. 415, 'Nadere Inventaris benevens derselver bij gevoegde taxatie van de Rariteiten overgegeven in het Kabinet der Natuurlijk en door Kunstgemaakte Zeldzaamheden...' [Further inventory along with the associated valuation of the Curiosities transferred to the Cabinet of natural and artistic curiosities...]; NL-KaHV, archive access A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), inv.no. 173, 'Inventarissen van kleding, sieraden, linnen en zeldzaamheden [Inventories of clothing, jewellery, linen and curiosities], dated 1749-1766; NL-KaHV, A31, inv.no. 184, 'Inventaris van de kostbaarheden van Willem V in bewaring bij de kamerdienaar Oostheim, vervaardigd door A. Vosmaer [Inventory of precious items belonging to William V held in safekeeping by chamberlain Oostheim, drawn up by A. Vosmaer], 1782; NL-KaHV, A31, inv.no. 185, 'Lijsten van in januari 1795 meegenomen gouden en zilveren tafelgoed, schilderijen en kleding' [Lists of the golden and silver tableware, paintings and clothing that were taken along] dated 1795-1798; NL-KaHV, A31, inv.no. 186, 'Briefwisseling tussen W.C. Vosmaer en Willem V over restanten van de stadhouderlijke collecties die naar Duitsland verzonden kunnen worden' [Correspondence between W.C. Vosmaer and Willem V on what was left of the stadtholder's collection that could be shipped to Germany] dated 1803. Also consultation of the inventory of the Vosmaer family did not give any result. The following numbers are part of the section of Arnout Vosmaer as director of the Stadhouder's cabinets. NL-HaNA, 2.21.271 'Inventaris van het archief van de familie Vosmaer' [Inventory of the archive of the Vosmaer family], inv. no. 63-67; Laura Smeets, "Door kunst gemaakt. De verzameling zeldzaamheden van Stadhouder Willem V," (MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2010);

<sup>76</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 60. 1, "Brieven betreffende overlijden en regeling der nalatenschap van Lubbert Jan van Eck, heer van Overbeek, gouverneur van Ceylon, door de executeurs van diens testament te Colombo aan de erfgenamen gericht. Met bijlagen." [Letters regarding the death and settlement of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck, Lord of Overbeek, Governor of Ceylon, addressed to the heirs by the executors of his will in Colombo. With attachments], dated 10 November 1765.

<sup>77</sup> According to the Amsterdam feet, introduced by the VOC in 1650, two feet would be 56,6 cm.

heirs had only added that it was around two feet long ('omtrent twee voeten lang').<sup>78</sup> Another discrepancy emerges from the fact that the cannon is described several times in the archival sources as "inlaid with silver" only.<sup>79</sup> As the first section of this report made clear, Lewkes cannon is a bronze cannon, it is gilded, with silver damascened decoration and embellished with gems.<sup>80</sup> Yet, the "small cannon inlaid with silver" was actually weighed and valued by the executors of Van Eck's estate at "90 pounds and estimated at twenty rix-dollars."<sup>81</sup> While most of the descriptions of the objects were not very precise and appear as estimates rather than exact measurements, the cannon's weight turned out to be very precise: on 18 May 2021 Lewke's cannon was weighed and it turned out to be exactly 45 kilos, or 90 pounds.<sup>82</sup>



*Photo 23. Weighing of the cannon, 18 May 2021. Photograph made by the authors.*

This perfectly matches with the cannon described in the records as looted from Kandy. While in 1765 the observation about the length appears as estimate, 'op t oog,' and the description of the decorative elements is generic and incomplete, the weighing was meant to be exact, probably in

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<sup>78</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, "Inventaris van het archief van de familie Van Panthaleon van Eck, 1398-1946" [Inventory of the family archive of Van Panthaleon van Eck, 1398-1946], Inv.no. 60. 1, "Brieven betreffende overlijden en regeling der nalatenschap van Lubbert Jan van Eck, heer van Overbeek, gouverneur van Ceylon, door de executeurs van diens testament te Colombo aan de erfgenamen gericht. Met bijlagen." [Letters regarding the death and settlement of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck, Lord of Overbeek, Governor of Ceylon, addressed to the heirs by the executors of his will in Colombo. With attachments], dated 10 November 1765.

<sup>79</sup> Among others: NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, NA (NL) 1.04.02, 3138, "Copia berigt van de Candiasche rariteiten die in de groote geldkas overgebracht zijn" [Copy of message about the Kandyan rarities that have been delivered to the great cash register], f. 875.

<sup>80</sup> Pappot, "Levke's cannon.":1.

<sup>81</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3143 Ceylon, "Resolutien genomen in raden van politie zeedert 5 Januarij tot 31 December 1765" [Resolutions taken in the boards of Police, from 5 January to 31 December 1765], dated 22 October 1765, f. 2882. "Kleen kanon stuk met zilver ingelegd weegt 90 pd. en gewaardeerd voor twintig rds."

<sup>82</sup> At present in the Netherlands one pound refers to 500 grams, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century the situation was similar: the Dutch pound weighed between 494 and 500 grams. The VOC used Dutch pounds as a weight measure: see [De VOCsite : woordenlijst personeel en organisatie](#). (last accessed 6 March 2022).



order to establish the value of the bronze. This was normal procedure with cannons and other bronze or copper pieces. The weight of the cannon thus leaves little to no doubt that Lewuke's cannon is indeed the decorated cannon recorded as looted from Kandy in 1765, despite the other somewhat vague descriptions of the object made at the time.

During our research, we also assessed the evidence for the theory that Lewuke's cannon had been a gift to the Dutch stadtholder in 1746-6. This theory had been circulating in the literature since 1894. (See section 3) The new analysis of the inscription already showed that the inscription could not confirm such a theory, but rather that it was gifted by Lewuke to King Srivijaja Rajasinghe.

Furthermore, from our assessment of the literature it appeared that until now no archival evidence has been produced that could confirm this theory. Therefore, we also analysed the VOC records for the period around the years 1745-6. The 1740s and early 1750s were a period of intense diplomatic contact between Kandy and the Dutch. The VOC had helped Kandy reestablishing its religious and diplomatic relations with Arakan and Ayuthaya. We found that during this period, governors and governor generals indeed received expensive gifts, including gilded sabres, guns ('snaphanen') inlaid with silver and gold, knives, rings, and toothed elephants. However, in none of the lists of gifts received did we find any reference to a decorated cannon, nor anything that might resemble it.<sup>83</sup> We thus not only conclude that the cannon in the Rijksmuseum was the cannon recorded as looted, but we can now also definitively eliminate the thesis that it had been presented as a gift to the Dutch in or around 1745.

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<sup>83</sup> During the PPOCE research a start was made with mapping the practice of giftgiving between the VOC and Kandy in the 1740s and 1750s, as well as to what happened to the objects after they were in VOC hands. A draft document 'Gift giving, Embassies and Collections' on this subject will be available in the documentation folders of this object from April 2022. An elaboration on this research went beyond the object of the PPOCE research, but future elaborate research on the practice of gift giving, flows of gifts, as well as the afterlives of these Kandyan gifts in Sri Lanka, the Netherlands and the rest of the world. The draft document and list of accessed archival sources could be consulted as a starting point for future research.

### 3. The history of the cannon in The Netherlands

It is clear that in the 1770's there was widespread knowledge about the cannon as originating from Kandy and looted from the royal palace during the siege led by Van Eck in 1765. In fact Van Eck's diary had also been published as a sort of feuilleton in the Middelburg and Leiden newspapers during the years after the peace was signed.<sup>84</sup> If knowledge about the war and the siege of Kandy, and about the provenance of the cannon itself was available when the cannon arrived in the collection and was displayed as such in the stadtholders' cabinet of curiosities in the 1770s, how could it then have been interpreted as gift from Kandy to the Dutch in 1894 and the decades thereafter? What had happened to the cannon in between?

In this last section of the report, we follow the cannon through the various Dutch collections and map out the process of forgetting and rediscovering the Kandyan origins of the cannon. Throughout, we pay specific attention to the various meanings that were attributed to the cannon. It assesses museum documentation as well as descriptions of the object in journals, books, scholarly research, and diplomatic correspondence over the years.

#### New attributions to Lewuke's cannon

The Royal Cabinet of Willem V and his wife, Wilhelmina of Prussia, reflected their personal tastes for the part they acquired, of course, but also the circumstances around the portion of the cabinet comprised of gifts. A considerable part of Willem V's cabinet was made up of gifts from the territories exploited by the West India and Dutch East India Companies, including Lewuke's cannon. At the start of the Batavian-French era in the Netherlands (1795 tot 1806), the invading French troops confiscated Stadtholder Willem V's Cabinet.<sup>85</sup> Five of these objects were now labelled as the "vaderlandsche gedenkstukken" (fatherland's memorabilia) and were presented to the new Batavian Parliament by the French including "a golden cannon full of gemstones once gifted to the State General by an Indian King."<sup>86</sup> They were to recognize a new Netherlands.<sup>87</sup> (Photo 23) In 1795, Lewuke's cannon had thus already transformed from a war trophy to a gift and then into a national symbol. This was just the beginning, over time other stories were added.

When the Nationale Konst-Gallerij was opened in Huis ten Bosch on 31 May 1800, the cannon moved once more, together with the other four national memorial pieces. The cannon was at that point described as a cannon piece embellished richly with gold and [gem]stones.<sup>88</sup> In 1801, in the

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<sup>84</sup> See for example: Middelburgse courant 13-5 1766: "slot van het dagverhaal der generale expeditie tegen de koning van Candia" (accessed via [delpher.nl](http://delpher.nl))

<sup>85</sup> Willem V was only three years old when his father (Willem IV) died in 1751. He had several regents, including his mother Anna van Hannover and Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1759-1766). The princely collections were partly brought together by his predecessor and regents Edwin Van Meerkerk, "Colonial Objects And The Display Of Power. The Curious Case Of The Cabinet Of William V And The Dutch India Companies," in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen, Elmer Kolfijn, and Jan L. de Jong (Brill, 2010): 415-416.

<sup>86</sup> *Nieuwe algemene konst- en letter-bode, voor meer- en mingeöeffenden. Behelzende berigten, uit de geleerde waereld, van alle landen.* (Loosjes Pz, Adriaan Haarlem, 1783-1803, 1795), dated 27 March 1795, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dpo:8171:mpeg21:0103>. "Een gouden met edelgesteenten omzet Kanon, 't welk zeker Indiaasch Koning, weleer, aan de Staten Generaal ten geschenke had gegeven."

<sup>87</sup> Eveline Sint Nicolaas, "Het kanon van de koning van Kandy," *Historiek*, accessed 3 February 2022, <https://historiek.net/het-kanon-van-de-koning-van-kandy-10/18808/>. The five objects had been handed over by the French general Jean Baptiste Du Monceau to the chairman of the Dutch State General, as a symbol for a new Netherlands

<sup>88</sup> *Nieuwe algemene konst- en letter-bode, voor meer- en mingeöeffenden. Behelzende berigten, uit de geleerde waereld, van alle landen.* (Loosjes Pz, Adriaan Haarlem, 1783-1803, 1800), dated 7 December 1800: "De Zesde Kamer intredende, ziet men de bedrieglykste, in

catalogue of the Nationale Konst-Gallerij the “magnificent cannon inlaid with gold and silver” was given a new meaning when it was described as being a present from the emperor of Tunis to the state, shipped to the Netherlands by Admiral de Ruyter.<sup>89</sup> In the inventory of 1804, the cannon is described as “a cannon covered with gold, a present from the Bey of Algiers, shipped by De Ruyter.”<sup>90</sup>



Photo 24. Reinier Vinkeles, *Teruggave door de Fransen van historische stukken uit stadhouderlijke collectie aan de Staten-Generaal, 1795*. [Return of historical items from the stadtholder's collection by the French to the States General, 1795]. Before 1803. Source: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-64.118.

In 1805 the collection in Huis ten Bosch was evacuated, but in 1808 in the inventory of the National Cabinet on Buitenhof, The Hague we find a golden cannon.<sup>91</sup> In the same year, the cannon is found on a list with leftover paintings and curiosities in the Royal Museum in the Hague. Here we also find the first mention of the carrier, when it is described as displayed in the sculpture as: “a golden cannon with carrier.”<sup>92</sup> In March 1809, the five relics found their way to the Royal Museum in Amsterdam. The Koninklijk Museum was initiated by King Lodewijk Napoleon, who took 500 objects from the Nationale Kunst-Gallerij. Lodewijk Napoleon reigned only for a short period, as in 1810 the Netherlands became part of France. However, the museum on the Dam continued to exist and its

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Basrelief geschilderde grauwen van J. de Wit. Voorts zijn in deze zaal geplaatste die weinige kostbare en zelfzaamheden, welke de geschiedenissen onzes lands betreffen en hier te lande nog voorhanden zijn; als een ryk met goud en gesteentes vercierd stuk Kanon.”

<sup>89</sup> E. W. Moes and Eduard van Biema, *De Nationale Konst-Gallery En Het Koninklijk Museum: Bijdrage Tot de Geschiedenis van Het Rijksmuseum* (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1909): 53. ‘Een magniefiek rijk met goud en zilver opgelegd stuk kanon zijnde een present van den Keizer van Tunis aan den Staat, overgebracht door den Admiraal de Ruiter.’

<sup>90</sup> Moes and Biema, *De Nationale Konst-Gallery*, 73, number 224. “Een met goud overtrokken kanon, een geschenk van den Dei van Algiers door De Ruyter medegebracht.”

<sup>91</sup> Moes and Biema, *De Nationale Konst-Gallery*, 105. “t Goude kanon.”

<sup>92</sup> Moes and Biema, *De Nationale Konst-Gallery*, 121. “Een zogenaamd Goud-kanon en affuit.”

collection was the start of the so-called 's Rijks Museum.

In 1825, Lewuke's cannon was transferred to the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden.<sup>93</sup> In 1875, a part of this collection was subsequently transferred to the Nederlandsch Museum, that was eventually integrated into the Rijksmuseum collection. The cannon is described as follows on the inventory of 1875 of art pieces received by the Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst from the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden: "Number 29 was a cannon with silver and decorated with gold, of which is said to be a gift of the O.C. – [VOC?] to Michiel de Ruyter."<sup>94</sup> The nineteenth century was a century in which heroes like De Ruyter were glorified as part of the nation building process, and throughout the period, Lewuke's cannon continued to be associated with that history.<sup>95</sup>

The transfer to the Nederlandsch Museum would eventually prove to be a turning point in this history. In 1880, D. van der Kellen, Jr., the director of the Nederlandsch Museum, dismissed the idea that the cannon was part of De Ruyter's legacy.<sup>96</sup> In the *Nederlandse Kunstbode* D. van der Kellen wondered who the donor and owner of the cannon was, as he could not find anything about it in the Royal House Archives.<sup>97</sup> He noticed the Sinhalese decoration and inscription, but at that moment nobody could translate it for him. He further stated that De Ruyter had never been to Ceylon, so he could never have received this there. He therefore assumed that the cannon had been a gift to the stadtholder by someone else.<sup>98</sup> Three years later, during the World Exhibition in Amsterdam, a part of the current Rijksmuseum building was opened for the public. In one of the rooms, the cannon was presented with recognition of its Sri Lankan history:

'[B]eautifully crafted small yellow copper cannon on carrier; the cannon is richly ornamented with silver and stones, with inscriptions, its carrier is varnished, painted with flowers and birds and with silver attachments, the wheels varnished and with yellow copper, Sinhalese work, probably made in the cannon factory in Ceylon, when this island was occupied by the Dutch.'<sup>99</sup>

David van der Kellen concluded the period of the myths on the cannon by writing that "this excellent piece" had been attributed to the Ruyter's collection without any evidence.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 844 "Stukken betreffende de overdracht van kunst- en andere voorwerpen door personen en overheidsinstanties" [Documents regarding the transfer of art and other objects by persons or public authorities], 1815-1862.

<sup>94</sup> NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 1092, "Inventaris van kunstvoorwerpen, door het Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst ontvangen van het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden" [Inventory of art objects, received by the Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst from the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden], 1875. "Een kanon met zilver en verguld bewerkt, men vermeent een geschenk der O.C. aan de Ruyter."

<sup>95</sup> Cf. R. van Luttervelt, "Herinneringen Aan Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter in Het Rijksmuseum," *Bulletin van Het Rijksmuseum* 5, no. 2 (1957): 28–70.

<sup>96</sup> D. van der Kellen, "Een merkwaardig stukje geschut," *Nederlandsche Kunstbode* (1880), p. 388.

<sup>97</sup> With the help of Dr Frits van Dulm a first reference to the cannon was traced in the Koninklijk Huisarchief. The authors have been able to trace more references afterwards in the archive of Willem V in the Koninklijk Huisarchief, see section 2 of this report. Email: Frits van Dulm, "Zonder eigen winne en glorie" *mr. Iman Wilhelm Falck (1736-1785), gouverneur en directeur van Ceylon en onderhorigheden* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012) 25 February 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Van der Kellen, "Een merkwaardig stukje geschut," 388.

<sup>99</sup> *Tentoonstelling - Internationale Koloniale En Uitvoerhandel - Amsterdam 1883: Gids Op de Tentoonstelling van Retrospectieve Kunst* (Amsterdam, 1883): 17.

<sup>100</sup> David van der Kellen Jr., *Gids voor de bezoekers van het Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst*, 1888, 20, 21.

### Knowledge in museum publications and literature

Once the Sri Lankan history of the cannon was again recognized, efforts were made to read the inscription and to reconstruct its history. It was not until the 1940s that the connection with the Kandyan-Dutch war was again made. And even afterwards, the idea that the cannon had been a gift to the Dutch stadtholder lingered on. In this final section of the paper we discuss the persistent circulation of two conflicting interpretations of the cannon and how this created confusion and recurring doubt among policymakers, scholars, and museum staff.

In 1894, Don M. de Zilva Wickremasinghe published his interpretation of the inscription on Lewke's cannon in his article "A Sinhalese Inscription of 1745 A.D." *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde* 5:10.<sup>101</sup> Professor Dr Johan Hendrik Kern (Leiden University, Netherlands) had provided De Zilva Wickremasinghe with a pencil rubbing of the engraving on the cannon. De Zilva Wickremasinghe concluded that the cannon was gifted to the Dutch, as the cannon was now in the Netherlands and Lewke was in close contact with the Dutch Governors in the 1740s. He interpreted the inscription as follows:

This is the cannon which Lewke, the minister holding [the office of] Disawa over the Four Korales, has had made and presented [to the Hollanders] in the year named Krodha, which has become the 1667<sup>th</sup> of the Saka era [which is] in the last vinsati (period of 20 years) of the cycle under the regency of Iswara (Jupiter cyclus).<sup>102</sup>

In the 1940s, this vision was revised by P.E.P. Deraniyagala, the Director of National Museums in Sri Lanka. Deraniyagala and his predecessor, Andreas Nell, had been in contact with curators in the Netherlands. Nell had shared the translation of the inscription made by Don M. de Zilva Wickremasinghe with the Rijksmuseum curators in 1931.<sup>103</sup> In his publications from 1948 and 1948 Deraniyagala concluded that the cannon must have been Kandyan royal property. In his view, this was evidenced by the symbols on the weapon shield (sun, moon, lion). He further pointed to similarities in the decoration with the Sinhala Throne.<sup>104</sup> He suggested once more that the cannon must have been seized by the Dutch when they raided Kandy in 1765, and that it was afterwards brought over to The Netherlands. But he did not look for archival evidence.

In 1946, Dr Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, then the curator at the Rijksmuseum, also made this connection, when he came across the travel account of Carl Hendrich Titius, who described the cannon as a war trophy in the stadtholder's cabinet in 1777 (see section 2 of this report). Lunsingh Scheurleer concluded that Titus must have seen "the fine gilded bronze decorated cannon, donated by Leuke Dissava, [to] the king of Kandy in Ceylon, captured by the Dutch in 1765 and kept up to date

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<sup>101</sup> Don M. de Zilva Wickremasinghe, "A Sinhalese Inscription of 1745 A.D.," *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde* 5:10 (Den Haag Martinus Nijhoff 1894).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 659.

<sup>103</sup> Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, correspondence Andreas Nell in file with object information NG-NM-7114, D004721; Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden en zijn beteekenis voor het Rijksmuseum," *Oudheidkundig Jaarboek* 13 (1946) 50.

<sup>104</sup> P.E.P. Deraniyagala et al., *Administration Report of the Director of National Museum for 1948 : part IV - Education, Science an Art (F), Ceylon* 1949, F 6 purchases 1, plate II; P.E.P. Deraniyagala et al., "A Sinhala Cannon of 1745 A.C.," *Spolia Zeylanica* 24:2 (1945)157-160, plate XX.

in the Rijksmuseum.”<sup>105</sup> In 1948 a plaster copy was made of the cannon, perhaps through the mediation of Deraniyagala and Lunsingh Scheurleer, at the order of the Colombo National museum and sent to Sri Lanka.

However, some fifteen years later, in 1960 R.L. Brohier published an article in the *Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon* titled “An Unique Museum-Piece,” in which he stated that the Rijksmuseum cannon was not the same as described in archival sources in relation to the siege of Kandy.<sup>106</sup> He cited the note from the Dutch East India Company archive dated 22 October 1765 that described the cannon as: “one small cannon, inlaid with silver, weighing 90 lbs. and valued at 25 Rix dollars.”<sup>107</sup> He suggested that the cannon in the collection of the Rijksmuseum could not be the same as the described cannon. Brohier mirrored De Zilva Wickremasinghe's interpretation of the inscription, and reaffirmed once more that the cannon was presented to the Dutch by the Kandyan king, and not looted by the Dutch. In section two, we discussed this problem more extensively and showed the mistakes in Brohier's reasoning. Yet, his conclusions remained influential at least until the 1970s.

Around that time, two exhibitions were prepared in the Netherlands, one in the Dutch National Archives (then called Algemeen Rijksarchief) on the history of the VOC in Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) (*Ceylon-Nederland in het verleden 1602-1797*), and one memorial exhibition on the royal collections: *Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek en Koninklijk Penningkabinet*.<sup>108</sup> In the latter exhibition, made by the previously mentioned Lunsingh Scheurleer, the cannon was displayed together with NG-NM-560, NG-NM-7112, and NM-7114.<sup>109</sup> The catalogues describe these objects explicitly as spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war. The catalogue referred to the archival records of the VOC that dealt with the aftermath of the siege of Kandy and to the family archive of Governor Van Eck that dealt with his estate. Lunsingh Scheurleer observed that the cannon differed from the cannons known from Sri Lanka (gingals, grasshoppers). The shape of the cannon was defined by him as “European (like).”<sup>110</sup>

Correspondence between the Rijksmuseum and the Dutch National Archives in 1965 show how both parties were looking for archival evidence on the provenance of the Kandyan objects.<sup>111</sup> Besides the already known document of 22 October 1765, copies from the estate of Governor Van Eck from his family archives were also added as evidence of the objects' provenance.<sup>112</sup> The curators of the History Department at the Rijksmuseum had shared this information again with Lunsingh Scheurleer.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer “Het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden,” 50: “Het is het prachtige verguld bronzen sierkanon, door Leuke Dissava, de koning van Candi op Ceylon geschonken, in 1765 door de Hollanders buitgemaakt en thans nog in het Rijksmuseum bewaard.”

<sup>106</sup> R.L. Brohier, “A unique museum piece,” *Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon* 1, no. 5, 1 & 2 (Jan- April 1960).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>108</sup> M.A.P Roelofs, Marius Petrus Henricus Roessingh, and Algemeen Rijksarchief ('s-Gravenhage), *Ceylon-Nederland in het verleden, 1602-1796: tentoonstelling in het Algemeen Rijksarchief, 's-Gravenhage, mei-sept. 1965* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1965), Th.H Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Koninklijk Penningkabinet: herdenkingstentoonstelling in het Mauritshuis, 1966* ('s-Gravenhage, 1966).

<sup>109</sup> See Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Bogaart, PPOCE reports NG-NM560;7112 and 7114.

<sup>110</sup> Th.H Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Koninklijk Penningkabinet: herdenkingstentoonstelling in het Mauritshuis, 1966* ('s-Gravenhage, 1966): 75-76.

<sup>111</sup> Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, dossier objectdocumentatie NG-NM-560, D010291.

<sup>112</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar: Herdenkingstentoonstelling*, 74.

<sup>113</sup> Theodoor Herman Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Koninklijk Penningkabinet* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsdrukkerij, 1967): 45.

### The persistence of two conflicting interpretations of the history of Lewke's cannon

We were surprised to find that despite the new research that was done in the 1960s, and the explicit connection that was laid between the cannon and the looting of the Kandyan palace in 1765, the old trope, that the cannon had been a gift to the stadtholder was kept alive. In fact, it was referred to at a number of crucial instances when the Sri Lankan government showed an interest in the object. In 1964, the Sri Lankan Ministry of External affairs contacted the Dutch ambassador, Mr. H.S. Hallo, to ask if the cannon should be returned to the Ceylonese Government. Mr. Hallo forwarded the request to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and eventually it was rejected (See appendix 2). In 1966, Mr. H.S. Hallo received a letter from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the following counsel: according to the inscription it was presumably gifted to Julius Valentijn Stein van Gollenesse [Governor of Ceylon in the period of Lewke, 1745], and part of the collection of Willem V. "For this and other reasons it has national historical importance and cannot be missed in the Rijksmuseum."<sup>114</sup> No evidence accompanied this interpretation except for Brohier's article.

This line of argument was repeated once more in 1972, when the president of Sri Lanka had conveyed his interest in the cannon to the Dutch ambassador, Fredrik Calkoen. The president had visited a museum (probably the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Calkoen wrote that this cannon was thought to have been captured before the peace contract between Governor Iman Willem Falck and the Kandyan king in 1766.<sup>115</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs once more rejected this request, stating that this was a canon probably gifted to Van Gollenesse (Governor of Ceylon in the period of Lewke, 1745) by Lewke. The letter provides no archival evidence or other reference to the origin of the information.<sup>116</sup>

In 1975, P. H. D. H. de Silva, the director of the National Museum in Colombo, undertook the laborious task of identifying all Sri Lankan objects and manuscripts that were kept in collections outside Sri Lanka. His overview was published under the title *Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Abroad. Colombo: National Museum of Sri Lanka*.<sup>117</sup> He described the cannon as war booty and follows the information provided by Lunsingh Scheurleer. De Silva's catalogue has become a classic reference work and in 1980 it formed the basis of a large restitution request of the Sri Lankan government, which was unsuccessful. In the documentation of this request we found once more a note stating that Lewke's cannon and the other objects that were catalogued as spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war at the time, "were not looted in a war."<sup>118</sup> It is not clear to us what information this statement was based on, and it is not clear at all whether contact information was sought from the Rijksmuseum in this process.

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<sup>114</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, Inventaris van het code-archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 1965-1974 [Inventory of the code-archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1965-1975], inv. no. 9284 "Ceylon; behandeling van het verzoek van het ministerie van buitenlandse zaken van Ceylon om de teruggave van een Ceylonees kanon dat in het Rijksmuseum van Amsterdam staat. 1964-1972" [Ceylon: handling of the request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ceylon for the return of a Ceylonese cannon that is in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam 1964-1972], O.K.N., 114327, From Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 15 March 1965. "Om deze en andere redenen heeft het nationale historische betekenis en kan het dus allerminst in het Rijksmuseum gemist worden."

<sup>115</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, No. 4205, Letter from Fredrik Calkoen to J. Rookmaaker, dated 26 June 1792.

<sup>116</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, Memorandum No. 119/'72, dated 17 July 1972.

<sup>117</sup> P. H. D. H. de Silva, *A Catalogue of Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Abroad* (Colombo: Department of government printing, 1975).

<sup>118</sup> See appendix 2 to this report; for the history of the restitution requests of 1980 see Jos van Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects* (Sidestone Press, 2017)

Nonetheless, in the museum catalogues and publications the cannon continued to be described as a spoil from the Kandyan-Dutch war. One of the most recent publications about the Kandyan objects in the Rijksmuseum is Lodewijk Wagenaar's *Cinnamon and Elephants: Sri Lanka and the Netherlands from 1600* in 2016.<sup>119</sup> He follows the view of Lunsingh Scheurleer and Deraniyagala that the cannon was looted by the Dutch in 1765. He proposed that the cannon was made by the Dutch at the order of Lewke, who gifted the piece to King Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe in 1745 to be used as a cannon to mark the arrival or departure of distinguished guests. We now know the cannon had a more complex, layered history, that probably started in the late seventeenth century.

## Conclusion

This report has reconstructed the history of Lewke's cannon from the moment it was cast to its current display in the Rijksmuseum. Object analysis and archival research allowed us to reconstruct the layered history of the making, gifting, and looting of the object and the process of forgetting, recovering, and myth making during its life in the Dutch Republic and the Netherlands. Up until the present, various views of the cannon's history have circulated and different questions have been raised. In this report, we were able to answer most of these questions. Below, we sum up the most important results of this research.

This research revealed the cannon's earlier history and concluded that it was probably cast for the king of Kandy, either as a gift or made under the king's orders, in the late seventeenth century in the Dutch Republic or Batavia. The discovery of two very similar cannons in Windsor Castle formed a turning point in the reconstruction of the cannon's early history.

The decoration and inscription that had puzzled so many researchers in the past, revealed that it was the added decoration that was gifted to the king of Kandy by Lewke. A full understanding of the decorative motifs and the political position of Lewke Disava was crucial for the interpretation of this part of its history.

The next step was to establish whether the cannon had indeed been part of the spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war of 1762-66. Close reading of the archival evidence of 1765 led to critical questions about the identification of Lewke's cannon and the cannon described in the records. The weight of the cannon provided us with a final answer in this respect. On this basis, we argue that the cannon in the Rijksmuseum is indeed the cannon described in the records as looted from the Kandy Palace in 1765.

We were also able to definitively dismiss the other thesis that had circulated, namely, that Lewke had gifted the cannon to the Dutch stadtholder in 1745. No mention of a small decorated cannon, or something similar, was found in the archives of the VOC for the period around 1745-6. Furthermore we found an eyewitness account from 1749 describing two small gilded cannons on painted carriages in front of the king's audience hall. We assume that one of these was Lewke's cannon, and the other one the decorated cannon now at Windsor castle. This further strengthened our hypothesis that Lewke's cannon was indeed the cannon mentioned in the VOC records as war booty.

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<sup>119</sup> Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants*, 121.



The report also shows that the cannon has been presented as war trophy in the Stadtholder Willem V's cabinet of curiosities soon after its arrival in the Dutch Republic. In the late eighteenth century, the idea that the cannon was a Dutch national symbol took root. The subsequent process of forgetting, myth making, and rediscovery of the Kandyan origins of the cannon added yet another layer to the history of this object and helps to explain the persistence of conflicting views on the cannon's history throughout the twentieth century.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Tracing the provenance of the gun carriage**

The focus in the provenance report on Lewuke's cannon (NG-NM-1015) has been on the history of the cannon itself and the gun carriage on which the cannon is displayed is only referred to in passim. The provenance report shows that the carriage appears for the first time in the historical sources from around 1800. This made us question the provenance of the cannon: when was it made? And was it made in Sri Lanka or in the Dutch Republic?

Throughout the research on the cannon we collected data and historical information about the carriage and asked advice from various experts. The information brought together unfortunately does not allow us to draw a clear conclusion on the question raised, even though at this moment we would gravitate towards a provenance from Kandy. We have therefore decided to present in this appendix the range of observations made in the course of this project by various scholars from different disciplines and discuss some fragmented archival evidence that might help us place the carriage in perspective.

This appendix is therefore composed of summaries and translations of the observations shared with us by:

- 1.) Dr John Verbeek (independent scholar, expert on historical VOC cannons and artillery) on the construction of the carriage;
- 2) Jan Dorscheid, Arie Pappot and Joosje van Bennekom from the conservation and science department of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam on the wood, pigment and copper composition;
- 3) Prof. Asoka de Zoysa from the Samkathana Institute Kelaniya University on the motifs used in the silverwork and the decorative painting.

This appendix is concluded by a brief discussion of contextual evidence which we found in the VOC archives and contemporary accounts.

Below we summarize the main points that this research touches upon:

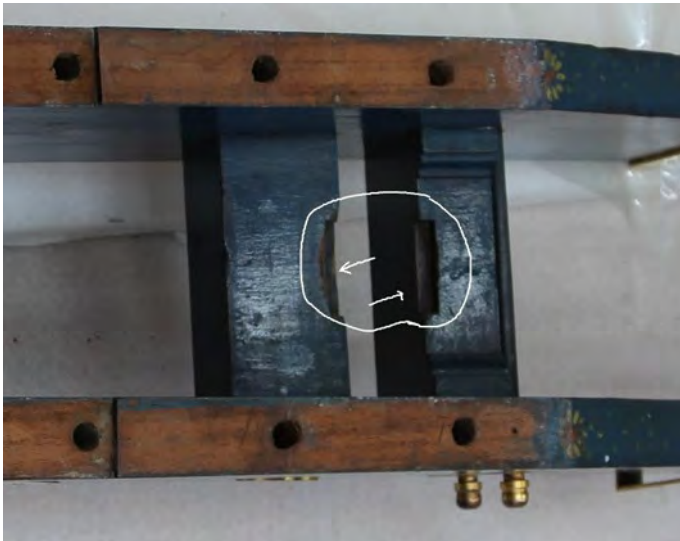
- Fibre analysis shows that the wood used on the cannon is tropical and that it could well have had a South or Southeast Asian origin. This would indicate a provenance from Sri Lanka rather than from the Dutch Republic. But could also be possible that the tropical wood used to manufacture the carriage was imported into the Dutch Republic.
- The design of the carriage design is European but could have been manufactured locally in Sri Lanka.
- The copper composition in the decoration resembles the copper used in VOC coins in the eighteenth century. This was copper imported from Europe. The dating of the copper between 1742-1749 would suggest that the metal decoration on the carriage was added simultaneously with the decoration on the cannon (1745-1746).

- The pigments have been tested. Conclusions were ambiguous, some of it matches with pigments that were used in the Eighteenth century, and some were in use even prior to that. But other pigments appear to have been nineteenth and twentieth century. The question is whether the nineteenth century pigments reflect later restoration, or whether they were part of the original paintwork.
- The art historical analysis of the silverwork shows that it contains Kandyan motifs and could well have been made by Kandyan craftsmen.
- The painting on the side panels and the wheels appears European, or at least influenced by European rococo and chinoise styles, which is in turn influenced by Asian artistic traditions. Yet, in Europe itself it was not a common practice to decorate gun carriages with elaborate paintings. If in Europe gun carriages were decorated for ceremonial cannons, it was through carving.
- In 1765 Dutch troops made an inventory of all ammunition and artillery in Kandy, and they listed both 'Dutch' and 'Sinhalese' gun carriages. It is not clear to us what distinguished the one from the other. They seem to have carried cannon of the same caliber and description. What this does tell us though is that European-style carriage were used in Kandy.
- An eyewitness account from 1749 describes two small gilded cannons in the palace of Kandy (in front of the King's audience hall) that were mounted on painted carriages.
- An eyewitness account from Robert Knox, who was held captive in Kandy for nineteen years in the 1670's, mentions the existence of ornamented and painted gun carriage.

## 1. Observations made by John Verbeek regarding the construction of the carrier, translated excerpts:<sup>1</sup>

The carriage is constructed of red hardwood, possibly jati wood or a local type of wood. The various bolts and reinforcements are made of gilt copper.

The carriage is arranged for the optimum presentation of the cannon, that is in the highest possible elevation. To achieve this, there is no stilt wedge and the pants (rear end) of the cannon rests directly on the *stelkalf* (these are the cross pieces connecting the two sides of the carriage). Apparently, this was not enough, because the *stelkalf* has slots in it, in which the high band rests. In this form, the cannon cannot be used for firing projectiles, at most for firing salutes with small loads.



*The cross pieces connecting the two sides of the carriage.  
(Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Behandelingsrapport NG-NM-1015, 2012)*

In a general sense, I find the wooden calves shallowly recessed, while the copper bolts providing the connection are very thin. In all, the woodwork is quite thinly executed. The copper fittings of the carriage and wheels correspond quite a bit to the French wheel carriage, which Saint Rémy depicts in *Memoires d'artillerie* in 1745.<sup>2</sup>

Looking at the carriage as a whole it can be concluded that this was a common model in the first half of the Eighteenth century. This may indicate that it was made in a workshop that also worked for European customers, or that local craftsmen simply copied from an example. However, the carriage was deliberately kept light in weight and arranged in such a way as to present the cannon advantageously. The aforementioned slots were certainly added later when the cannon became available and was fitted to the carriage.

<sup>1</sup> John Verbeek, 'Opmerkingen, bevindingen en onderzoeksvragen m.b.t. het Ceylonees kanon (Levuke's kanon) van het RM'. This report will be made available in the Rijksmuseum documentation folder as of April 2022. First due to the corona lock-down and later because of his illness, John Verbeek was not able to inspect the carriage in person. He sadly passed away before the completion of this report.

<sup>2</sup> Additional note from Doreen van den Boogaart and Alicia Schrikker: this publication first came out in 1697 and saw various reprints in the eighteenth century. We looked up the depiction Verbeek refers to in the version from 1707, which can be found on pages 166 – 169, see: Pierre Surirey de Saint-Remy *Mémoires d'artillerie, Volume 1* (Paris 1707).

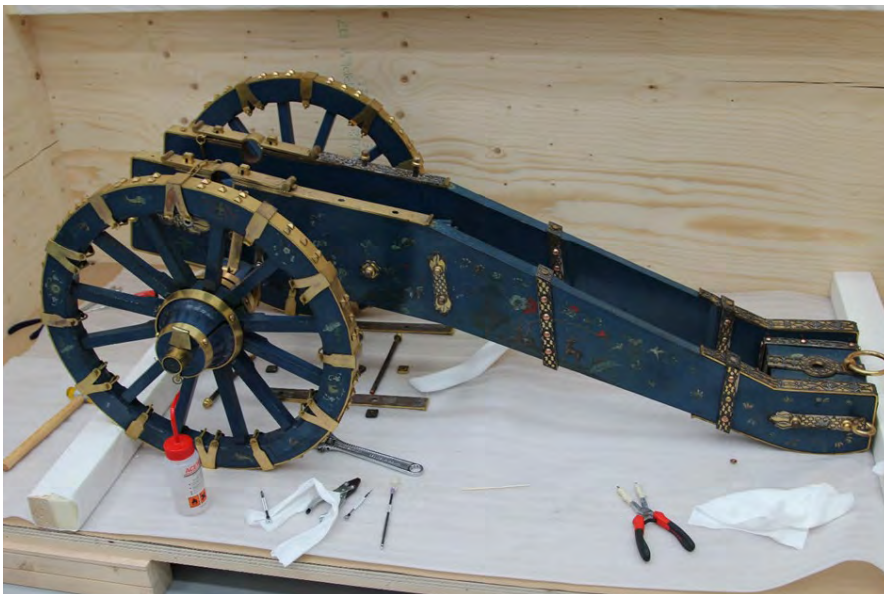


*The wooden tailstock with the drawbar eye is very shallowly recessed between the two sides and the copper bolts are very thin.*

*(Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Behandelingsrapport NG-NM-1015, 2012)*



*The lower fuse of the bolt was widely used until the first half of the 18th century. The copper flat nut is not; presumably this is a later restoration? (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Behandelingsrapport NG-NM-1015, 2012)*



*A view of the carriage as a whole. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Behandelingsrapport NG-NM-1015, 2012)*

In terms of decoration and finish, the carriage was made suitable for the mounting of a "golden cannon" by executing the iron fittings in gilded copper.

The carriage in its present form is painted dark blue and decorated with pictures of flowers, butterflies, etc. As the carriage is made of rather rough wood and not, for example, of precious walnut, it can be assumed that it was not left blank from the beginning. In carriage workshops at most, preservative paint would have been available in the colours white, black, grey and red. A grey paint layer gives a rather austere appearance. At some point a painted decoration was applied. This is colourful, but fairly fragile and vaguely executed.

#### Golden cannons in Europe

A gilded copper or brass cannon is known in Europe, donated to Louis XIV in 1676 by the Parliament de Franche-Comté as an educational tool. This is a 1:4 scale model and is signed Laurent Ballard. This cannon and carriage offer good comparisons in many ways. The French cannon is in the collection of the Musée de l'Armée with inventory number O 212. Based on the construction, finish, and placement of ornamentation, the ornamental Ceylon carriage was either manufactured by European craftsmen or strongly inspired by a model such as the one referred to here. A contemporary illustration that could be worked towards is unknown to me.

It should be noted that the carriage of the French cannon is unpainted and that expensive wood was used, e.g. walnut. In a general sense, the finish of Lewuke's cannon and the carriage is of significantly lesser class than the comparable French firing mouth. I have found no salute, educational or ornamental cannon on carriages decorated with painting. In Europe, carving was more obvious than ornamental painting in colour (at most a coat of arms).

### 3. Metal analysis Arie Pappot and Joosje van Bennekom (conservation and science department Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

#### Copper composition

Arie Pappot analysed the copper composition of the embellishment on the carriage (as well as in the cannon itself):

“Some of the mounts or the carriage were tested as well and compare more closely with types of copper used in Europe. The trunnion plates were made of unalloyed copper with moderate levels of arsenic, antimony, nickel and silver (row 7-8). Two VOC copper *duiten* (coins) minted in 1744 show very similar impurity levels (row 9-10). The cap squares and a bracket on the left wheel were made from an unalloyed copper with over 0.6% of antimony and moderate levels of arsenic, nickel and silver (row 11-13). Several VOC *duiten* with matching chemical composition were found dating between 1732 and 1749 (row 14-16).”<sup>3</sup>

This dating of the copper could suggest that the carriage was decorated simultaneously with the cannon, which would imply a Kandyan provenance.

part	object number	date	Fe	Ni	Cu	Zn	AsKb	Ag	SnK	Sb	Pb
1 <b>cannon</b>	<b>NG-NM-1015</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>93.73</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>5.31</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.63</b>
2	K.Scholten-1290	1700-1741	0.58	0.02	98.64	0.11	0.03	0.07	0.01	0.02	0.80
3	Sch.-1296-a	1783	0.07	0.03	98.66	0.09	0.04	0.05	0.00	0.01	1.37
4	Sch.-1290-a	1700-1741	0.10	0.03	99.17	0.10	0.06	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.80
5	Sch.-1289-a	1700-1741	0.08	0.05	98.84	0.09	0.06	0.03	0.11	0.02	1.02
6	Sch.-1290-c	1700-1741	0.29	0.03	98.32	0.09	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.01	1.49
7 <b>front trunnion plate right</b>	<b>NG-NM-1015</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>99.23</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.42</b>
8 <b>back trunnion plate right</b>	<b>NG-NM-1015</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>99.18</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>0.42</b>
9	KOG-MP-1-4411	1744	0.08	0.12	99.21	0.09	0.22	0.06	0.01	0.12	0.46
10	KOG-MP-1-4546	1744	0.22	0.12	97.90	0.46	0.28	0.11	0.48	0.18	0.59
11 <b>left cap square</b>	<b>NG-NM-1015</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>99.00</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.26</b>
12 <b>left wheel bracket</b>	<b>NG-NM-1015</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>98.74</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.36</b>
13 <b>right cap square</b>	<b>NG-NM-1015</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>98.98</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.29</b>
14	KOG-MP-1-4485	1747	0.06	0.08	99.08	0.09	0.27	0.05	0.00	0.78	0.03
15	KOG-MP-1-4487	1749	0.03	0.07	99.25	0.08	0.27	0.05	0.01	0.58	0.07
16	KOG-MP-1-4653	1732	0.02	0.08	99.37	0.09	0.20	0.11	0.02	0.36	0.16

Table 1: XRF results of Lewuke's gun and carriage mounts compared to Japanese ingots and VOC coins with matching chemical composition.

<sup>3</sup> Arie Pappot, 'Metal parts NG-NM-1015'. This report will be made available in the Rijksmuseum documentation folder as of April 2022.

### Silver alloy

Joosje van Bennekom measured the silver alloy for the mounts on the carriage and concluded the following:

“Because the silver is gilded, it is not possible to collect much information on the silver. The thin layer of gold ‘filters’ the radiation of the XRF, which causes an incomplete signal of the silver. The silver is fire gilded, which can be determined by the presence of mercury. Fire gilding was the technique to gild silver until the midst of the 19th century, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century galvanic gilding became more in use. The silver probably has a high percentage (around 90% or higher), but an exact number can't be stated.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Joosje van Bennekom, 'Analysis of the silver alloy used for the mounts on the carriage of the bronze canon NG-NM-1015.' This report will be made available in the Rijksmuseum documentation folder as of April 2022.



## **2. Observation Jan Dorscheid, conservation and science department Rijksmuseum Amsterdam**

Jan Dorscheid analysed the fibre to determine the wood used to build the carriage and provided us with a pigment analysis of the paint.<sup>5</sup>

The fibre report tells us that the wood is tropical, and probably originates from Southeast Asia, which confirmed the observations made by John Verbeek.

In an email 19 July 2021, Jan Dorscheid explained the results from the pigment analysis, please note that the translation is ours:

“It is clear that the canon has been restored quite a bit: The UV snapshots show that the varnish and probably blue finish has been touched up everywhere. The XRF measurements do suggest the presence of some pigments that were in use in the eighteenth century and partly before (but also after). At the same time, there are also some indications of nineteenth- and twentieth-century pigments. But without doing much deeper and more extensive research, I cannot say what the layer structure is like and where exactly which pigment is located.”

He further added: “While I sense that it could be the case, unfortunately I cannot confirm with certainty that the decoration and images are original and have only been retouched here and there, [with] a restoration varnish painted over them.”

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<sup>5</sup> Both reports can be found in the documentation folder of NG-NM-1015 at te Rijksmuseum under the titles “NG-NM-1015 Wood ID” and “NG-NM-1015 XRF pigments” (from April 2022).

### 3. Excerpts from Asoka de Zoysa "Report No:1" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, 'Levuke's cannon: NG-NM-1015'<sup>6</sup>

*Asoka de Zoysa's report on the cannon's biography includes an analysis of the decoration and embellishment on both the cannon and the carriage. He shows how certain features of the decoration on the carriage correspond with those on the cannon. Interestingly, he explicitly situates these objects within a global history of art in which motifs and emblems traveled and were adapted or appropriated in different cultural contexts. The decoration on the carriage is a clear case in point, which makes it really difficult to pinpoint whether it was made in Kandy or in the Dutch republic. Below we provide extracts from his report, including illustrations.*

Below we provide excerpts from the following two sections of this report that refer to the decoration of the carriage:

**IV.** Study of metal used in the canon and techniques of embellishment.

**VII.** The hybridity of designs shows a cross section of decorative motifs and borders popular in south Asia and Europe during the chinoiserie.

#### Designs on the trail

The trail of the gun carriage represents a bucolic landscape made up of many miniature motifs. Trees, flowers, exotic birds in flight and deer. As in the late rococo period such painted scenes did not follow any rules of perspective. Some of the deer seen here are reminiscent of the embossed deer on the metal (Plate 83).



Plate 83 The trail of the guncarriage seen in profile, Lewuke's cannon. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Behandelingsrapport NG-NM-1015, 2012)

On close examination one discovers the large red peonies, appropriated from Chinese designs and exotic parrots sitting on leafless trees (Figure 8 and 9). As the extensive work *Asia in Amsterdam* (2015)<sup>7</sup> conveys the designs on the cheek of the Lewuke's cannon is the just a tip of the iceberg that records Chinoiserie seen in today's Dutch museums and private houses such as the Geelvinck Hinlopen House Amsterdam.

<sup>6</sup> Asoka de Zoysa "Report No:1" in: Asoka de Zoysa and Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka, 'Levuke's cannon: NG-NM=1015'. This report will be available for consultation in the Rijksmuseum documentation folder from April 2022 onwards.

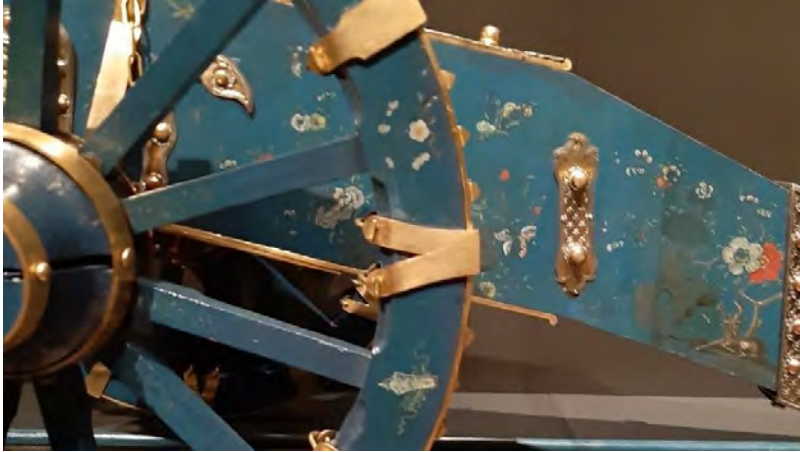
<sup>7</sup> Jan Van Campen et al., *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age* (Salem, MA, 2015).



*Plate 84 and 85: Details on the carriage of NG-NM-1015. Photographs by authors.*

### Designs on the wheel

The designs on the wheel in comparison show the radiant sun, a vase, an urn connotating “Memento mori” reminding of the inevitability of death, and the radiant sun symbol of the “Sun King” Louis XIV (Plates 86 and 87). They may represent the “Wheel of Fortune” that has symbols of prosperity and death (Plate 88). We publish many references which show similarities to chinoises of the mid-18th century (Plate 89).



*Plate 86 Rococo motifs on the Lewke's canon, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Photographs by authors.*



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*Plate 87 The vase, urn and horn of plenty and radiant sun, motifs from French Rococo, Lewke's cannon, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.*



Plate 88: Collage rococo motifs: Radiant sun, funerary urn and vase motif.  
(Photo Asoka de Zoysa)

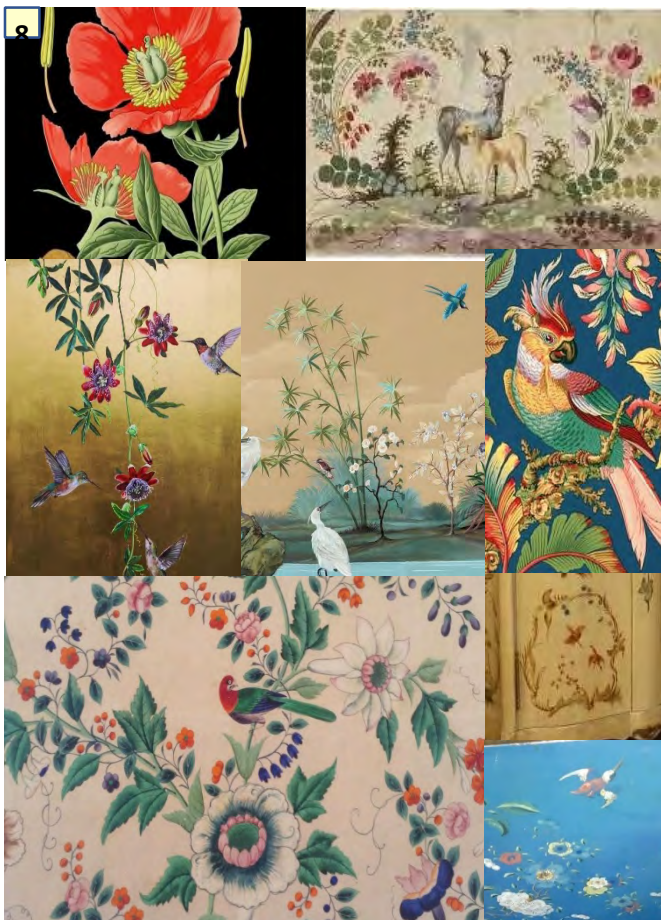


Plate 89: Collage, references to Rococo. (Photos Asoka de Zoysa)

The entire gun carriage is painted in Prussian blue, and as we have demonstrated point to late 18th century motifs on the wheels. On the cheeks one discovers a bucolic scene of deer, birds and exotic flowers known from the art embraced in the late Rococo known as “Chinoiserie”.

### Metal embellishments on gun carriage

When viewed from above, we find metal embellishments in the form of metal strips on the upper surface of the trail and on the wheels (Plate 75). The basic design is an intertwined loop punctuated by leaf and flower motifs (Plate 76). On the further sides we have a richly decorated embossed panel (Plate 77).



*Plate 77: Richly decorated embossed panel, Lewuke's cannon, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.  
(Photographs by authors)*

The middle section is the most intriguing revealing a crescent moon, heraldic bird, radiating sun and a walking lion holding a sword in the right paw. This seems to be an embossed plate which is perforated into a trellis design. The carriage revealed same symbols as the lion, radiating sun and moon which refer to the flag of the Four Korales or the flag of King Duttugamini as seen in Dambulla.

On the brass plates of the Gun Carriage the radiating sun occupies a rectangular space and the crescent moon faces the same kind of heraldic bird turning its head to the back (Plate 79). They both stand against a trellis work which had four petaled flowers at the intersections. The next section reveals the lion passant (walking) bearing the sword followed by the heraldic bird in the identical pose.



*Plates 78 and 79: mblems of heraldic bird, lion holding sword, radiant sun and crescent moon (Detail), Lewuke's cannon, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*

[...]

The radiant sun and crescent moon, lions standing upright or walking holding swords, crowned or uncrowned are part of mid-18th century emblems used by many ruling families both of the East and West.

[...]

The metal embellishments on the carriage are unique. They are embossed on a grill pattern with flower designs adorning the intersections: They bear heraldic symbols of the walking passant lion holding the sword, sun and moon symbols and a heraldic bird. The emblems once more have been crafted with precision could well be from Kandyan craftsmen.

## 5. Contextualizing the carriage through contemporary observations

### First description

The earliest explicit reference to the carriage we found was of a pictorial nature. The print below recorded the return of Lewuke's cannon to the States General in 1795, after the French had confiscated the objects of stadtholder Willem V's cabinet of curiosities.<sup>8</sup> As this is the first recording of the carriage in the Netherlands/Dutch Republic we have considered whether it might have been added by the French. We found for example blue painted carriages on the painting *Siège de Tournai*, 1745 made by Louis Nicholas van Blarenberghe in 1781. But these carriages are plain and not decorated with flowers or other motifs.



*Reinier Vinkeles, Teruggave door de Fransen van historische stukken uit stadhouderlijke collectie aan de Staten-Generaal, 1795. [Return of historical items from the stadtholder's collection by the French to the States General, 1795]. Before 1803. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-64.118)*

<sup>8</sup> See PPOCE report NG-NM-1015: 27.



### 'Sinhalese' and 'Dutch' carriages

A month after the siege of Kandy, on 25 March 1765, a list was made of the ammunition goods that were present at that moment in Kandy.<sup>9</sup> The ammunition goods were divided in ammunition of the VOC and that of the Kandyans. The latter must have been abandoned after the retreat of the city by the Kandyan King, his troops, and the court. Several cannons that are of metal or iron were listed under 'Sinhalese ammunition goods'. Remarkably, the accompanying carriages of these cannons were sometimes described Sinhalese and as Dutch in other cases. Of the cannons it is not certain if these are interpreted as typical Kandyan or Sinhalese cannons, all we know was that they were present when the VOC troops invaded the city. Of course, the mentioned cannons and carriages must have been different ones from the decorated cannon (NG-NM-1015) and the decorated carriage.

What is of relevance to us here is the distinction between Sinhalese and Dutch carriages. This points at two things: 1.) the usage of Dutch carriages by the Kandyans and 2.) as well as a visible difference between Dutch and Sinhalese carriages. As cannons with the same caliber could have either a Dutch or Sinhalese carriage, the shape of the cannon appears not to have affected the choice of carriage (Dutch or Sinhalese).<sup>10</sup> This episode shows the availability Dutch gun carriages in Kandy, which could possibly have served as a model for the carriage of NG-NM-1015.

### Earlier references to decorated carriages in Kandy

An eyewitness account from Van den Hoft, a Dutch ambassador to the king of Kandy tells us that in 1749 two small cannons were gilded and displayed on painted carriages in front of the audience hall:

“[...] voorts twee veldstukjes, waarvan de loop en het beslag verguld en de affuiten verlakt, voor gemelde audientieaal [..]”<sup>11</sup>

We now assume that the two cannons described here are Lewuke's cannon and the decorated Windsor cannon RCIN 72821.

Robert Knox, who lived in Kandy in captivity by King Rajasingha II (reign: 1629-1687) for nineteen years between 1660 and 1679, gives us the following impression of the guns and carriages on display at the palace of Kandy :

He hath eight or nine small Cannon, lately taken from the Dutch, **which he hath mounted in Field-Carriages, all rarely carved, and inlay'd with Silver and Brass, and Coloured Stones, set in convenient places, and painted with Images and Flowers.** But the Guns disgrace the Carriages.<sup>12</sup>

This would hint at a long-standing practice of decorating gun carriages in Kandy. It is well known that foreign craftsmen were employed at the court, and this could possibly explain the European style painting on the side-panels and the wheel.

<sup>9</sup> NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, 'Een lijst der ammunitie goederen onder 25 Maart 1765 ter Candia te vinden geweest' [List with ammunition goods that were in Kandy on 25 March 1765], f. 881-886.

<sup>10</sup> Idem. '3. [singalese ammonnutie goederen]. Drie ijzere kanons à 12 lb: 1. Op holl. en 2. Singalees affuiten' [3 Sinhalese ammunition goods. Three iron cannons à 12 lb: 1. On Dutch carriage and 2 on Sinhalese carriages].

<sup>11</sup> NL-HaNA 1.04.02, 2735 'Copia rapport bij forme van dagverhaal van den gesant naar Candia Van den Hoft in dato 9 April 1749 concernerende het voorgevallene en door hem verrigte gedurende het gezantschap, annex de gewisselde brieven.': f. 838v

<sup>12</sup> Knox, Robert (1681). *An historical relation of the island Ceylon, in the East-Indies.* (Richard Chiswell, London 1681): 42.

In the words of Gananath Obeyesekere:

'Rājasimha II was especially keen to have foreigners in his kingdom for a variety of reasons: as servants, as interpreters, craftsmen, soldiers, mechanics and gunners. He also seems to have appreciated – like many other Asian rulers – the variety of humanity in his domain, just as he loved to have a good stable and many animals and birds in his menagerie. As H. W. Codrington nicely put it, 'luckless Europeans as fell into his hands [were treated] as curiosities, much in the same way as the lion and other animals sent him by the Dutch.'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nāyakas: the many faces of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1591–1765.' In: Biedermann, Z ; Strathern, A. Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History. ( London, 2017). 161-178: 165.

## Appendix 2

### A history of restitution requests 1964-1972

Before the PPOCE research on the Kandyan cannon (NG-NM-1015) started, the restitution request on the cannon in 1980 via UNESCO had been subject of discussion in the work of Jos van Beurden.<sup>1</sup> However, during the current research, more documentation on earlier requests for and discussions about restitution were found in a dedicated folder in the code-archive of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1965-1975.

In this appendix we discuss the history and documentation of these earlier requests and we place them in the light of the results of the PPOCE Provenance research on the cannon. The PPOCE report shows that at the time two conflicting interpretations of the cannon's provenance circulated. What stands out is that in the period 1964-1972 the response from the Dutch Ministry of foreign affairs to the two requests was based itself on one the theory that cannon had been a gift to the Dutch in 1746) while curators of the Rijksmuseum at the time catalogued the cannon as a n object looted from Kandy during the Kandyan-Dutch war of 1762-1766. This appendix provides a description of the correspondence found in the beforementioned file and raises questions about the way in which the ministries of Education, arts and science and of Foreign affairs gathered and assessed information about the cannon's history.

#### 1964-1965 Restitution request via Dutch Ambassador Hallo

On 10 December 1964, H.S. Hallo, Dutch Ambassador in Sri Lanka, informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs in The Hague that the 'Ministry of External Affairs' in Sri Lanka contacted him with a request for the restitution of 'a Ceylonees cannon' in the collection of the Rijksmuseum.<sup>2</sup> Ambassador Hallo described the cannon as a special object, manufactured by Sinhalese craftsmen in mid eighteenth century when the Dutch occupied parts of the island. He very much encouraged the Minister to gift the cannon to the Sri Lankan (Ceylonese) Government and explained that there was a precedent: in 1934 the British Government had repatriated the Kandyan Crown and Throne, which they had taken in 1815, after a request from the Sri Lankan (Ceylonese) side.<sup>3</sup>

It seems that Hallo considered restitution appropriate on the ground that the cannon was of unique value to Sri Lankan history, rather than the question whether it had been looted in Kandy. Ambassador Hallo added information on the cannon, probably provided by R.L. Brohier, and included the translation of the inscription on the cannon: "This is the cannon which Levuke, the Minister holding the Disavaship of the Four Kerles, has caused to be made and presented in the year named Krodha, the 1667<sup>th</sup> of the Saka era in the last vinsati (period of 20 years) of the cycle under the regency of Isvara". The date mentioned above, when converted into terms of the Christian era, works out as the end of 1745 or early 1746.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See final paragraph in this appendix.

<sup>2</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, Inventaris van het code-archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 1965-1974 [Inventory of the code-archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1965-1975], inv. no. 9284 'Ceylon; behandeling van het verzoek van het ministerie van buitenlandse zaken van Ceylon om de teruggave van een Ceylonees kanon dat in het Rijksmuseum van Amsterdam staat. 1964-1972' [Ceylon: handling of the request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ceylon for the return of a Ceylonese cannon that is in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam 1964-1972], 5015/448, From H.S. Hallo to Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 10 December 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Robert Aldrich, 'The Return of the Throne: The Repatriation of the Kandyan Regalia to Ceylon: European Monarchies and Overseas Empires', in *Crowns and Colonies: European Monarchies and Overseas Empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 139–162, <https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9781784993153.003.0007>.

<sup>4</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, Attachment of no. 5015/488, dated 10 December 1964, Colombo.

In a follow-up letter, dated 6 January 1965, ambassador Hallo attached Richard Leslie Brohier's article 'An unique museum piece', as well as pictures and background information. He described Brohier as 'the well-known Sri Lankan historian.'<sup>5</sup> In 1960 Brohier had published this article on the 'Ceylonese cannon' from the Rijksmuseum in the *Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon*. In this article he argued that the cannon from the Rijksmuseum could not be the same as described in archival sources in relation to the siege of Kandy.<sup>6</sup> In the literature review, section 5, of the provenance report NG-NM-1015 we explain what arguments he used and how Brohier once more revived the old interpretation of the inscription of the cannon made by Don M. de Zilva Wickremasinghe in 1894.<sup>7</sup> Although De Zilva's interpretation had already been refuted in the 1940s, Brohier concluded that the cannon in the Rijksmuseum must have been presented to the Dutch by the Kandyan king, and that the cannon described in the archival records as looted from the palace in 1765 must have been another one.<sup>8</sup> Our provenance report discusses the grounds on which Brohier doubt was raised and after research in the VOC archives, analysing the inscription and weighing the object, it shows that Brohier and De Zilva had misinterpreted the cannon's provenance. .

The above mentioned two letters from Hallo were handed over to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science on 14 January 1965 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>9</sup> On 28 January yet another letter arrived from Ambassador Hallo. This time he suggested that could be presented to Sri Lanka on a suiting event, such as the moment when the new Sri Lankan ambassador, G.S. Peiris, would visit the Netherlands for the first time. Hallo explained that if the Rijksmuseum would be indeed willing to donate the cannon, this would be a very kind gesture towards Peiris, who had been very interested in this case. Hallo was probably not aware that the formal owner of the cannon was the Dutch state, rather than the Rijksmuseum.<sup>10</sup>

On 26 February 1965, S. Dörr (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) informs Ambassador Hallo that the request is taken into consideration, but that this would take a while.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile Dörr informs Hallo about the stance of the department [probably of Foreign Affairs], the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science and the museums vis à vis such requests: he explained that these type of requests frequently occurred but that actual restitution seldom followed. As example he discussed the restitution request from Australia regarding a tin plate from the Rijksmuseum that was the first proof of the landing of the Dutch on the continent.<sup>12</sup> This had been categorically rejected on the ground 'it was also part of our historical heritage'. 'Generally speaking', Dörr stated, 'objects that are part of a Dutch museum would never be given away'. The only exceptions he knew was a painting of Hobbema that was given to Canada after World War II and the letters of Marlborough to Churchill.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, 5015/448, From H.S. Hallo to Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 6 January 1965.

<sup>6</sup> R.L. Brohier, "An unique museum piece," *Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon* L, no. 5, 1 & 2 (Jan- April 1960).

<sup>7</sup> Don M. de Zilva Wickremasinghe, 'A Sinhalese Inscription of 1745 A.D', *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde* 5:10 (Den Haag Martinus Nijhoff 1894): 659. De Zilva Wickremasinghe had interpreted the inscription as recording the cannon being gifted to the Dutch, in his view this explained why the cannon was now in the Netherlands. He substantiated this idea by explaining that Lewuke had been in close contact with the Dutch Governors in the 1740s.

<sup>8</sup> See also Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Bogaart, PPOCE report NG-NM-1015.

<sup>9</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, GM-4572, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, dated 14 January 1965.

<sup>10</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, 184/34, H.S. Hallo to Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 28 January 1965.

<sup>11</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, GM-17429, From S. Dörr to H.S. Hallo, dated 26 February 1965.

<sup>12</sup> Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, NG-NM-825. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/my/collections/1679066--livingstone/terra-australis/objecten#/NG-NM-825,2>

<sup>13</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, GM-17429, From S. Dörr to H.S. Hallo, dated 26 February 1965.

I therefore do not believe that there is a profound hope that the cannon will be given back. It was after all a gift, and not a looted piece, (like the Throne of the Kings of Kandy).<sup>14</sup>

On 15 March 1965, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was indeed informed that the restitution request to gift the 'Ceylonese cannon' from the Rijksmuseum to the Ceylonese Government was rejected.<sup>15</sup> The state secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science, argued that the inscription recorded that it was gifted by the 'Sinhalese Minister' Lewke to Governor of Ceylon Julius Valentijn van Gollonnesse (1743-1751), who 'had provided a ship for a Kandyan embassy to Siam to bring Buddhist Orthodox monks to Ceylon. The cannon came later in possession of Prince Willem V.' This letter provides no further documentation. In the provenance report we make clear that at this exact moment the other interpretation on the provenance of the cannon was presented in museums and literature. Nonetheless, it led the ministry to decide that: 'Because of this reason and other reasons has this cannon a national historical importance and therefore can really not be missed in the Rijksmuseum.'<sup>16</sup> On 22 March 1965, Ambassador Hallo was also informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the rejection of the request.<sup>17</sup> The ministry of foreign affairs underlined the conclusion of the ministry of Education Arts and Sciences, that 'the cannon had been a gift to the Dutch and that is was of national historical importance.'

The accessed documentation does not give insight in the exercise of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science upon this request, who they consulted and on which grounds their decision was made. It seems that the rejection of the request was mainly based on the article of Brohier as Hallo had added this article when he forwarded the Sri Lankan request. The statements of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science for the rejection also correspond with Brohier's conclusion that the Rijksmuseum cannon was not the same as the one looted in Kandy in 1765 and that the inscription points at it being gifted to a Dutchman. However, the latter has been an interpretation by De Zilva Wickremasinghe 1894, he had put this in between brackets when he translated the inscription.<sup>18</sup>

We have tried to understand how it was possible that the both ministries so firmly concluded that the cannon in the Rijksmuseum could not have been part of the loot from the Kandyan-Dutch war, while curators from the Rijksmuseum had meanwhile catalogued the cannon as such. In 1945 Deraniyagala, Director of the Colombo national museum had revealed an interest in the cannon and had suggested that it had been part of the loot. In 1946 Dr Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, who was affiliated with the Rijksmuseum, made a connection with Lewke's cannon and the cannon looted in 1765 in Kandy.<sup>19</sup> In 1948 a plaster copy was made of the cannon, at the order of the Colombo National museum (and paid for by them). Around the time of the request via Ambassador Hallo, Lunsingh Scheurleer was preparing a memorial exhibition on the royal collections: *Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek en Koninklijk Penningenkabinet*. In the Dutch National Archives (then called Algemeen Rijksarchief) an exhibition was prepared on the history of the VOC in

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<sup>14</sup> Idem: 'Ik geloof dan ook niet, dat er veel hoop bestaat dat het kanon teruggegeven wordt. Het was après tout een geschenk, en geen veroverd stuk, (zoals de troon van de Koningen van Kandy).'

<sup>15</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, O.K.N., 114327, From Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 15 March 1965.

<sup>16</sup> Idem: 'Om deze en andere redenen heeft het nationale historische betekenis en kan het dus allerminst in het Rijksmuseum gemist worden.'

<sup>17</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, No. GM-444120/96, From Minister of Foreign Affairs (P.E. Nijhuijs) to H.S. Hallo, dated 22 March 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Ganga Dissanayaka reinterpreted the inscription in 2021 and with a historical analysis of the person Lewke and his relation to the Kandyan King and an art historical analysis of the decoration on the cannon, concludes that this cannon is gifted by Lewke, who added the decoration, to the Kandyan King in between 14 April 1745 to 14 April 1746. See: Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart PPOCE report NG-NM-1015.

<sup>19</sup> See Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van de Boogaart PPOCE report NG-NM-1015.

Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) (*Ceylon-Nederland in het verleden 1602-1797*).<sup>20</sup> In Lunsingh Scheurleer's exhibition (4 November 1966 – 4 January 1967) Lewuke's cannon was presented as spoil of the Kandyan-Dutch war of 1765 and as part of the booty in the estate of the VOC Governor of Ceylon at that time, Lubbert Jan van Eck.<sup>21</sup>

The Dutch National Archives requested from the Rijksmuseum photographs of the cannon for their exhibition.<sup>22</sup> NG-NM-560, NG-NM-7112 and NM-7114 were exhibited from 26 March 1965 to the end of September 1965, together with several archival sources that connected those objects to the Kandyan-Dutch war and it being spoils of war from the Kandyan Palace.<sup>23</sup> Those archival sources had also been shared with the Rijksmuseum, as we can see from correspondence with Rijksmuseum's curator of History Bas Kist and Marius Roessingh.<sup>24</sup> On 9 March 1965 Kist was informed by Roessingh of the existence of these archival sources and suggested to make photo copies of those. 15 March 1965 the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science rejected the request for restitution.<sup>25</sup> 26 March 1965 the exhibition in the National Archives was opened, that had a lot of focus spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war of 1765.

It is difficult to understand why two parallel tropes regarding the cannon continued to co-exists, and we have wondered why the ministries chose to follow only one of these tropes especially if it was publicly exhibited at the time as spoil of war. We do not know whether they actually considered the other theory regarding the cannon and on what grounds they decided to favor the one over the other. In fact it is not clear at all whether any research into the question was undertaken by the ministry. Could it be that the Dutch ministry of Education, Arts and Science never contacted the Rijksmuseum at the time?<sup>26</sup> It certainly did not consult the National Archives, as the ministry would certainly have received the same archival documentation as Lunsingh Scheurleer. This whole episode seems to reflect a lack of concern from the part of the Ministry, or even an unwillingness, to seriously engage with the Sri Lankan requests for restitution. The subsequent correspondence further emphasises this.

### **1966 Request for copy of the cannon for Gunner museum Colombo**

After Ambassador Hallo was informed that the request for restitution was not going to be fulfilled by the Minister of Education, Art and Science on 22 March 1966 and subsequently informed the Sri Lankan government about it. According to Hallo the cause of the rejection was eventually understood, after the extensive explanation.<sup>27</sup>

One month later however, on 22 April 1966, the Sri Lankan commander Lt. Col. A.E.R. MC Heyser requested a copy in plaster of the cannon. He wanted to exhibit this in the Gunner museum which he proposed to open in the permanent Headquarters of the Ceylon Artillery in Colombo. Ambassador

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<sup>20</sup> M.A.P Roelofs and Marius Petrus Henricus Roessingh, *Ceylon-Nederland in het verleden, 1602-1796: tentoonstelling in het Algemeen Rijksarchief, 's-Gravenhage, mei-sept. 1965* ('s-Gravenhage: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1965); Th.H Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Koninklijk Penningkabinet: herdenkingstentoonstelling in het Mauritshuis, 1966* ('s-Gravenhage, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar*, 75-76.

<sup>22</sup> Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, dossier objectdocumentatie NG-NM-560, D010291

<sup>23</sup> Roelofs Roessingh, *Ceylon-Nederland in het verleden*, 22-23.

<sup>24</sup> Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, dossier objectdocumentatie NG-NM-560, D010291

<sup>25</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, O.K.N., 114327, From Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 15 March 1965.

<sup>26</sup> So far we have not traced any correspondence regarding this matter in the Rijksmuseum archives

<sup>27</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, No. 1225/178, H.S. Hallo to Minister of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, dated 13 May 1766.

Hallo proposed this request to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and expressed his hope that at least this request could be fulfilled as it was not a restitution request. Hallo argued that it should be looked at it from a technical point of view.<sup>28</sup> A note from 1972 tells us that this request had been rejected as well, because it was thought to be too expensive.<sup>29</sup> The rejection to this request for a replica once more reflects an overall unwillingness to meet the Sri Lankan concerns and interests regarding the cannon.

### **1972 Proposal by ambassador Fredrik Calkoen for restitution**

Only six year after the formal rejection by the Dutch state, the restitution of the cannon once more became part of the diplomatic agenda: on 26 June 1972, ambassador Fredrik Calkoen wrote to Mr J. Rookmaaker (Director East of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that the president (presumably President William Gopallawa, who assumed office in May 1972) had seen the cannon in the museum when he had visited the Netherlands. Calkoen explained that it was thought that the cannon was captured before the peace contract by Governor Iman Willem Falck [with the Kandyan king] was signed in 1766.<sup>30</sup> Calkoen suggested that it would be a good idea to give back the cannon, like the Duke of Gloucester had done in 1934 ancient Throne and Crown of the Kings of Kandy. These objects had been captured by the British in 1815.<sup>31</sup> The Dutch Ambassador in New Delhi suggested that a similar gesture could also be made by the Netherlands, although the impact for the image of the country should be investigated. Therefore, the president had requested to hear more about the state of the cannon, the marking and how heavy it is. 'I think that the museum can miss it, the Rijksmuseum is not so interested in cannons lately.'<sup>32</sup>

The response to this request by the Ambassador Calkoen is not recorded in the dossier in the code-archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1965-1975, with inventory number 9284 being on handling of the request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ceylon for the return of a Ceylonese cannon that is in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. However, the introduction of the dossier made on 17 July 1972 repeats the information that was used in response to the request of 1965: again it argues that the cannon had been a gift from the Sinhalese administrator Lewke to the Dutch. Despite the fact that Calkoen had pointed out that it had been captured in Kandy before 1766 and that this knowledge was also available in the Rijksmuseum. The introduction to the file simply re-states that the cannon was 'probably gifted to Governor of Ceylon Julius Valentijn van Gollennesse (1743-1751) by Lewke, who had provided a ship for a Kandyan embassy to Siam to bring Buddhist Orthodox monks to Sri Lanka. The cannon came later in possession of Willem V.' It was also repeated that 'Because of this reason and other reasons has this cannon a national historical meaning and therefore can really not be missed in the Rijksmuseum.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Idem. Letter of McHeyser is attached, as well as the monography of historian R.L. Brohier.

<sup>29</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, Memorandum No. 119/'72, dated 17 July 1972. 'A part should still be made from wood by hand, this would have costed some thousands guilders. But this was turned down.'

<sup>30</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, No. 4205, Letter from Fredrik Calkoen to J. Rookmaaker, dated 26 June 1972.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Aldrich, 'The Return of the Throne', 150.

<sup>32</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, No. 4205, Letter from Fredrik Calkoen to J. Rookmaaker, dated 26 June 1972: 'Het museum zal het wel kunnen missen denk ik, het Rijksmuseum toont tegenwoordig slechts weinig kanonnen'

<sup>33</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, Memorandum No. 119/'72, dated 17 July 1972. 'Om deze en andere redenen heeft het nationale historische betekenis en kan het dus allerminst in het Rijksmuseum gemist worden.'

## Discussion

For the PPOCE research, we investigated the statements made by the Dutch functionaries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science and searched for evidence that would either substantiate or refute the information that was provided. As can be read in the report on Lewuke's cannon we concluded that the VOC archives provide us with no indication whatsoever of the cannon being received by either Van Gollenesse or the Dutch Stadtholder as a gift from either the King of Kandy or Lewuke himself. Instead a new interpretation of the inscription showed that what the inscription refers to is that the decoration on the cannon was a gift from Lewuke disava to King Sri Vijaya Rajasinghe between 14 April 1745 and 14 April 1746. We have also confirmed that Lewuke's cannon was indeed the cannon that had been recorded as loot from Kandy in 1765. The weight of the cannon, which ambassador Calkoen had asked for in 1972, turned out to be an important indicator.<sup>34</sup>

We have been surprised by the fact that parallel tropes regarding the provenance of the cannon continued to exist, even after the Rijksmuseum explicitly catalogued the cannon as spoil from the Kandyan-Dutch war. We have wondered whether there had been any contact at all between the Ministry of Education, Arts and science and the Rijksmuseum at all during this episode, the files from the ministry of foreign affairs provide no indication that this has been the case. During the PPOCE research, staff from the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam searched for documentation in its archive, but so far no correspondence or notes regarding these restitution requests were found.<sup>35</sup> This does not necessarily indicate that there has been no contact between the two ministries and the Rijksmuseum, as the archive for this period is not complete. At the moment of writing this appendix the history department of the Rijksmuseum initiated a new search in their archives regarding the history of restitution requests. Hopefully it will clear up the question why certain knowledge that was at the Rijksmuseum was not known or partaken by the Dutch Government when restitution requests came in.

Moreover, this appendix has not mapped out all restitution request for this cannon made over the years. After all, in part this was already done by Jos van Beurden (senior researcher colonial cultural collections and restitution) In various publications he has discussed the restitution request made by the Sri Lankan government via UNESCO of a range of objects in Dutch museums.<sup>36</sup> His work informs us how these requests followed the list of objects in the Netherlands made by P. H. D. H. de Silva's *Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Abroad. Colombo: National Museum of Sri Lanka* of 1975.<sup>37</sup> In 1980 the Netherlands received via the UNESCO the Sri Lankan Claim for the "Restitution of Significant Cultural objects from Sri Lanka". This was done in response to the 1970 UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* as more former colonies became encouraged to claim colonial cultural objects.<sup>38</sup> Jos van Beurden has shown how UNESCO rejected the claim on procedural grounds. The question remains though what the position of the Dutch government at the time was

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<sup>34</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.05.313, inv. no. 9284, No. 4205, Letter from Fredrik Calkoen to J. Rookmaaker, dated 26 June 1972.

<sup>35</sup> Email correspondent Jan de Hond, Curator of History Rijksmuseum, February and March 2022.

<sup>36</sup> J.M. van Beurden, 'Treasures in Trusted Hand Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects' (PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, 2016); Jos van Beurden, *Ongemakkelijk Erfgoed: Koloniale Collecties En Teruggave in de Lage Landen* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2021): 54.

<sup>37</sup> P. H. D. H. de Silva, *A Catalogue of Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Abroad* (Colombo: Department of government printing, 1975). De Silva's catalogue contains over 300 listings for objects that are to be found in museums in the Netherlands, among others in the collection of Rijksmuseum Amsterdam and the National Museum of World Cultures.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Van Beurden, 'Treasures in Trusted Hand', p. 81



and whether any effort was made to research the provenance of the cannon. Jos van Beurden kindly shared a report with us from 1982 which he found in the archive of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation, Social work (1910) 1965 – 1982. In this report it is stated that the Dutch Government had rejected the claims for most of the Sri Lankan objects, as 'Sri Lanka did not have a right of ownership.'<sup>39</sup> At first sight this reaction that appears to be in line with the response towards the earlier restitution requests discussed above. The explicit reasoning of the Dutch government is not known, as far as we know now nor do we know the Rijksmuseum was not consulted when this request was dealt with.<sup>40</sup> Further research might give new insights.

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<sup>39</sup> NL-HaNA, 2.27.5215, Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Cultuur, Recreatie en Maatschappelijk Werk, Beleidsterrein Recreatie, (1910) 1965 - 1982 (1990) [Inventory of the archive of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation, Social work (1910) 1965 - 1982 (1990)], inv. no. 2051 'Eventuele overdracht van kunstschaten aan de landen van herkomst naar aanleiding van een resolutie van de United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1980 -1982' [On a possible transfer of the transfer of art treasures to the country of origin, based on a resolution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1980 -1982], Hetty Wilming, 'Restitutie of teruggave van cultureel eigendom Nederland versus Unesco,' Woerden, April 1982

<sup>40</sup> It is known that the director of Volkenkunde (now part of the Dutch National Museum of World Cultures), Pieter Pott, was consulted on the case, but he stated that the Volkenkunde museum did not house any objects 'taken out of the island during the Dutch occupation of the island'.