One of the most wide ranging collections ever to reach the Library of the East India Company is formed by the manuscripts, translations, plans, and drawings of Colin Mackenzie, an officer of the Madras Engineers and, at the time of his death in 1821, Surveyor-General of India. Mackenzie spent a lifetime forming his collection which is exceptional, not only for its size, but also for the fact that materials from it are to be found in almost every section of the India Office Collections including Oriental Languages, European Manuscripts, Prints and Drawings, and Maps. Including manuscripts in South Indian languages held in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Madras, the collection originally contained materials in English, Dutch, and, according to Mackenzie's own estimate, no fewer than fifteen Oriental languages written in twenty-one different characters. Altogether, according to a statement drawn up in August 1822 by the well known orientalist Horace Hayman Wilson who, after Mackenzie's death, volunteered to undertake the cataloguing of the collection, there were 1,568 literary manuscripts, a further 2,070 'local tracts', 8,076 inscriptions, and 2,159 translations, plus seventy-nine plans, 2,630 drawings, 6,218 coins, and 146 images and other antiquities. What manner of man was it that amassed this vast collection?

Colin Mackenzie was born about 1753 or 1754, the second son of Murdoch Mackenzie, merchant and Postmaster of Stornoway in the Isle of Lewis in the Hebrides. Little is known of Mackenzie's early life but he is probably the same Colin Mackenzie who held what was virtually the sinecure post of Comptroller of the Customs in Stornoway between about 1778 and 1783, which he probably obtained thanks to his father's connection with the Mackenzie Earls of Seaforth, proprietors of Lewis. In 1783 he somehow secured a commission in the East India Company's Madras Army, and arrived in Madras in September 1783. He was about thirty years old and was never to return home. His decision to seek a career in India was explained, half a century later, by Sir Alexander Johnston in evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company:

As a very young man he [Mackenzie] was much patronized, on account of his mathematical knowledge, by the late Lord Seaforth and my late grandfather, Francis, the fifth Lord Napier of Merchiston. He was for some time employed by the latter, who was about to write a life of his
Fig. 1. Colin Mackenzie, by Thomas Hickey, 1816. To Mackenzie’s immediate right is probably C. V. Lechmiah, and the older man to his right may be a Jain helper named Dhurmia. The figure on Mackenzie’s left is probably his peon Kistnaji. In the background is the colossal Jain statue of Gommata at Sravana Belgola. On the nearer hill is the pole and basket survey signal. IOL: F. 13
ancestor John Napier, of Merchistoun, the inventor of logarithms, to collect for him, with a view to that life, from all the different works relative to India, an account of the knowledge which the Hindoos possessed of mathematics, and of the nature and use of logarithms. Mr Mackenzie, after the death of Lord Napier, became very desirous of prosecuting his Oriental researches in India. Lord Seaforth, therefore, at his request, got him appointed to the engineers on the Madras establishment.  

Shortly after arrival in India, Mackenzie visited Hester Johnston, daughter of his former patron Lord Napier and wife of Samuel Johnston, an East India Company servant stationed at Madura in the Madras Presidency. Mrs Johnston introduced him to the Madura Brahmins who were supplying her with information on the Hindus' knowledge of mathematics for the projected biography of Napier. No more is heard about logarithms, but, according to Mrs Johnston’s son, Sir Alexander, it was Mackenzie’s contact with these Brahmins that fired his interest in Indian antiquities and led him to form

the plan of making that collection, which afterwards became the favourite object of his pursuit for 38 years of his life, and which is now the most extensive and the most valuable collection of historical documents relative to India that ever was made by any individual in Europe or in Asia.  

However, Mackenzie was able to do little immediately to pursue his newly formed ambition, and for many years his career followed the usual pattern for a hard-working army officer. He fought in the Third Mysore War of 1790–2, being involved as an Engineer particularly in the reduction of a number of forts. His efforts brought him to the notice of the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief Lord Cornwallis who, in 1792, proposed his appointment as Engineer and Surveyor to the Subsidiary Force in the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad ‘for the purpose of acquiring some information of the geography of these countries’. This appointment marks the beginning of Mackenzie’s major work as a surveyor, and it gave him more opportunity to collect Indian antiquities. But it was not until 1796 that the breakthrough occurred that enabled Mackenzie’s activities as a collector to take off in earnest. This was his meeting with Cavelly Venkata Boria, a young Brahmin who proved to possess a ‘happy genius’ for gathering information from Indians of all castes and tribes, and for organizing Mackenzie’s team of Indian helpers to do likewise. Mackenzie explains that he himself was ‘devoid of any knowledge’ of Indian languages, a circumstance which had hitherto severely circumscribed his efforts as a collector. Nor was this the only problem. Palmer & Co., writing many years later on behalf of Mackenzie’s widow, explained to the Bengal Government that:

The chief obstacles that the Colonel had to encounter were first the prejudice of the learned natives who were very averse that the ancient law of their country should be investigated by any European and were consequently very loth to communicate the knowledge they possessed and secondly [the lack of] fit emissaries who should by their conciliating manners be able to overcome these prejudices.
With Boria's help, these problems were now solved, and Mackenzie was enabled to take 'the first step of my introduction into the portal of Indian knowledge'. Boria was a very young man when he entered Mackenzie's service, and died only seven years later, but 'his example and instructions were so happily followed up by his brethren and disciples, that an establishment was gradually formed, by which the whole of our provinces might be analysed'.

In thus emphasizing his debt to Boria, Mackenzie may have somewhat understated his own efforts during the previous thirteen years, since he already had Indian helpers before Boria's appearance on the scene. The latter was, in fact, introduced to Mackenzie by a brother already on Mackenzie's staff. Nevertheless, it is clear that Boria's contribution was crucial. Between them, he and Mackenzie succeeded in building up a team of Indian assistants trained to collect historical and cultural data. A friend of Mackenzie's, Colonel Mark Wilks, himself a scholar of South Indian antiquities and author of the authoritative *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, for which Mackenzie supplied some materials, described the importance of Boria and his brother Cavelly Venkata Lechmiah:

Major Mackenzie has been particularly fortunate in the choice of his instruments, one of those ingenious natives whom he had the misfortune to lose [i.e. Boria], had the merit of first tracing the outline of the plan which has been so successfully pursued, and his surviving brother [i.e. Lechmiah] is a man of singular literary zeal and scrupulous research. The facility which Major Mackenzie has acquired in directing the operations of a large establishment maintained by him for this express purpose, and in seizing at once what is useful in the materials which they collect, is the result of long experience.

Unfortunately, as will be seen later, Wilks's confidence in the research capacities of Mackenzie's staff, and even in Mackenzie's own powers of discrimination, may have been somewhat exaggerated.

By 1796, Mackenzie had made sufficient progress with his work in Hyderabad to submit a general map of the Nizam's dominions to the Madras Government, together with an explanatory memoir of the materials on which it was based, and supplements were submitted in 1798 and 1799. In 1796, he also proposed the creation of a Surveyor-Generalship of Madras, his own appointment to the post, and an increase in his allowances. This was referred to the Directors in London, but their reply, when eventually received in 1800, was negative. He was, however, given 2,400 pagodas to reimburse him for his extraordinary expenses, and an earlier decision by the Madras Government to allow him an additional 200 pagodas per month besides his ordinary pay was approved. It has to be said that grumbles about his pay and allowances are a constant, and unattractive, feature of Mackenzie's correspondence, the cut in pay which he suffered in December 1801 being a particular grievance.

Mackenzie's connection with the survey of the Deccan largely ceased in 1799, though he retained a nominal responsibility for it until 1806. His departure was caused by the outbreak of the Fourth Mysore War in which he served as Chief Engineer to the Hyderabad contingent commanded by Colonel Arthur Wellesley, brother of the
Governor-General and later Duke of Wellington. Mackenzie compiled a journal of their march from Hyderabad to Seringapatam, part of which survives among the papers of the Governor-General. The volume includes water-colour plans of the siege batteries, many of which Mackenzie, as an Engineer, had been responsible for setting up, and a token of Mackenzie's antiquarianism in the form of a translation of an inscription on a stone found at Seringapatam. After the war, Mackenzie was employed to assist the Commissioners of the conquered Mysore, of whom Arthur Wellesley was one, with geographical information, and then the Governor-General appointed him Surveyor of Mysore. This, according to Mackenzie, required no prompting from him, the Governor-General being of the opinion 'that more complete knowledge of these countries was indispensably necessary for the information of Government'; unfortunately the Governor-General's commitment to surveying did not extend to providing Mackenzie with the number of staff he thought he needed: his establishment was, he felt, 'suited rather to an economical scale of expenditure, than to so extensive an undertaking.'

The years of the Mysore Survey lie at the heart of Mackenzie's career both as an official surveyor and as an antiquarian collector. He was engaged on it more or less continuously from 1800 until March 1809—in the field until 1807, and thereafter at headquarters collating and digesting his material. This is therefore an appropriate moment in the story to pause to describe his methods. From Boria's advent, and to some extent even before, Mackenzie's work should be viewed as a twofold activity: on the one hand there was the official topographical survey leading to the compilation of detailed maps of the areas covered, for which Mackenzie had an official staff of Assistants and Sub-Assistants; on the other, there was the collection of historical, literary and cultural materials of all kinds, for which Mackenzie had built up his own personal staff specially trained by Boria and himself. It is, of course, the work of this personal staff of Indian, mostly Brahmin, helpers which we see displayed in the Mackenzie collection. H. H. Wilson, in his Descriptive Catalogue, described the way in which Mackenzie deployed his historical staff:

The collection of books, papers and inscriptions went hand in hand with the survey...in the course of his surveying operations [Mackenzie visited] almost all the remarkable places between the Krishna [Kistna] and Cape Comorin [and was] accompanied in his journeys by his native assistants, who were employed to take copies of all inscriptions, and obtain from the Brahmans of the temples, or learned men in the towns or villages, copies of all records in their possession, or original statements of local traditions.

Wilson adds that 'when not himself in the field, Col. Mackenzie was accustomed to detach his principal native agents into different districts to prosecute similar enquiries', noting that these agents 'under his superintendence had learned to feel a lively interest in their task' and 'had acquired a knowledge of the leading results'. When, in 1808, the Mysore Survey was drawing to a close, Mackenzie became concerned for the future prospects of his Indian helpers, and put in a plea on their behalf to the Madras Government: 'this Establishment', he pointed out, had
been gradually formed since 1795, under the repeated approval of Government, in a branch of Service that was then less cultivated, and which was found really useful on repeated urgent occasions of service... I respectfully submit the case of these natives who were encouraged to engage with me and to persevere under uncommon difficulties with the hopes of advancement or provision. Some of them...dying in this Service have left families unprovided for and a burthen on relations who have been yet encouraged by me to persevere and whose merits have particular claims on my attention since by their assiduity I have chiefly been enabled to engage in those researches into the nature and state of the Country which have enabled me to collect the materials of this undertaking.22

All the same, Mackenzie did not rely solely on himself and his Indian helpers. A number of civil and military servants of the Company also sent him information. Some of these men, such as William Kirkpatrick, Alexander Read and John Leyden, clearly did so because they shared Mackenzie’s interest in the recovery of India’s past. Indeed, in a report to Government, dated 1 July 1807, Mackenzie acknowledged ‘the support and countenance of several private friends’ in various branches of Government service in the prosecution of his historical researches. Mackenzie evidently kept such friends informed of the progress of both the official topographical, and private historical, aspects of the Mysore Survey as can be seen from two files of papers relating to the Survey in the papers of Colonel William Kirkpatrick. The second of these in particular contains interesting progress reports on the Survey, as well as copies of letters written in 1807 from men such as Mark Wilks to the Chief Secretary to the Madras Government, and from John Malcolm to the Governor of Madras, both supporting Mackenzie’s case for more generous financial treatment.23 Besides receiving help from fellow enthusiasts, he, or the Madras Government on his behalf, also sent out letters and circulars requesting information. For example, on 19 April 1808, the Madras Council resolved to furnish to all their officers in the Diplomatic, Judicial, Revenue and Medical Departments a memorandum by Mackenzie on the kinds of historical materials which he was seeking.24

By 1807, the Mysore Survey was well on the way to completion. In March of that year, responding to a request from the Court of Directors for a progress report, Mackenzie submitted an ‘Abstract View’ of the state of the Survey, and reported that the provincial maps were virtually complete apart from the need for fair copying. He also reported that ‘the progress of Historical Investigations [has] been satisfactory’. In doing so, he was careful to note that such investigations had the implied approval of the Court of Directors, citing their Public Letter of 6 July 1803 to Madras in which they had reiterated their earlier instruction of 9 May 1797 that their servants in India should endeavour to transmit to their historiographer in London such information as they were able to collect on the ‘Chronology, Geography, Government, Laws, Political Revolutions, the progressive stages of the Arts, Manufactures, and Sciences...etc.’ Mackenzie stated that he had therefore procured several notices and documents that may be useful in elucidating the several objects there required, the revolutions of the former State of the Country, the institutions and customs of the inhabitants, and the nature of grants and tenures.25
Fig. 2. A Company officer about to sketch a ruined temple, perhaps at Vijayanagar, Madras. Servants carry a portfolio, ink and a chair. Watercolour by a draftsman working for Mackenzie, c. 1800–10. IOL: W.D. 586 (18)
By February 1808, Mackenzie had ready a ‘General Map of the Rajah of Mysore’s Territories’, and he also despatched a specimen volume containing some of the results of his historical researches, namely a ‘Register, Specimens, and Translations of Inscriptions, Grants, and ancient monuments, collected in the Ballaghat’. Then in October 1808 he submitted six ‘charts’, or detailed maps on the scale of 2 miles to the inch, with two more to follow, and six volumes of Memoirs [i.e. memoranda] on the District of Mysore plus a seventh containing ‘papers explanatory of the progress of the Survey from its Institution’, and finally he reported that he had despatched a Jain statue to the India Museum.

On receipt of Mackenzie’s ‘General Map’ in London, the Company asked the celebrated cartographer James Rennell to assess its merits. He replied that the Survey of Mysore by Major Mackenzie has very great merit, the execution having been conducted in a masterly manner. The discrimination of the different objects is such as to render an idea of the nature of the Country perfectly clear on inspection.

Rennell also pointed out the ‘great magnitude’ of the area covered, which was ‘considerably larger than the Kingdom of Ireland’. Rennell’s verdict is endorsed by Colonel Phillimore who adjudges the topographical results of the Survey to have been: a magnificent success [which was] entirely due to the sound planning, organization, and perseverance of its Superintendent. On this model he based the series of methodical surveys which were spread over the Madras provinces during the next 25 years.

The submission of the results of the Mysore Survey was accompanied by further pleas, supported by the Madras Government, regarding Mackenzie’s emoluments which had, indeed, been the subject of correspondence and wrangling ever since his appointment, the Madras Government generally recommending reasonably generous allowances and the Home Government usually acceding only reluctantly, or in part, to the Madras recommendations. A reply to the submissions and papers of 1807–8 was not received until 1810, but when it came, in a Despatch dated 9 February 1810, Mackenzie’s efforts did, for once, receive handsome recognition both in financial terms (he was awarded a present of 9,000 pagodas, about £3,150) and in the warm approbation accorded to his antiquarian activities. The Directors noted that he had extended his labours from the ‘leading object of his original appointment’, which was to obtain an accurate geographical knowledge of Mysore, to cover its statistics and history as well; and it went on to commend his ‘superadded enquiries into the History, the Religion and the Antiquities of the Country’. It remarked that Mackenzie had explored these subjects by recording the ‘remaining Monuments, Inscriptions and Grants preserved either on metals or on paper’, a method which, says the Despatch, with presumably unconscious irony, was ‘certainly...the most effectual...though one of excessive labour’.

On the final completion of the fieldwork for the Mysore Survey, Mackenzie persuaded the Madras authorities to send the remaining establishment of native surveyors to carry on their work in the Ceded Districts. By the time he wrote to Johnston in 1817 a total
of 70,000 square miles had been surveyed, 40,000 by the Mysore Survey, 30,000 by that of the Ceded Districts, thereby covering virtually the entire dominions formerly under the rule of Mysore. His antiquarian agents ranged still wider collecting materials 'throughout the whole of the provinces under the presidency of Fort St George'.

According to Mackenzie, his work on the Mysore Survey was finally completed in March 1809. In October of the previous year he had been appointed to a sinecure post, the Barrackmastership of Mysore, to enable him to arrange his historical materials. From this life of ease he was snatched away in October 1810 to take up the newly created post of Surveyor-General of Madras, the authorities having at last decided to adopt the organizational arrangements for surveys he had proposed fourteen years earlier. He embarked on a thorough overhaul of the Survey Department in Madras, but in March 1811 he found himself appointed Chief Engineer to the expedition to seize Java from the Dutch, at that time the involuntary allies of Napoleonic France. This is not the place to describe either Mackenzie's military exploits during the Java campaign or his activities on the island once it had passed under British rule. One point, however, may be worth mentioning, namely that the dual character of Mackenzie's activities again emerged in Java. On the one hand there was his appointment by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Stamford Raffles, a kindred spirit who made considerable use in his own writings on Java of materials collected by Mackenzie, to head an official Commission 'to investigate the state of the country'; and on the other there were his private researches resulting in yet another large collection, this time consisting of Javanese and Dutch manuscripts, records and books, and English translations, relating to the literature, history and geography of the island.

Mackenzie left Java in July 1813, his departure being marked by General Orders issued by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council commending both his topographical and antiquarian researches. Eight months previously he had married a Dutch lady, Miss Petronella Jacomina Bartels, about whose earlier history virtually nothing is known. He stayed at Calcutta to complete his official reports on Java, and he was also granted leave for a long tour of the Upper Provinces from December 1813 to September 1814, during which he visited Benares, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi and the Himalayan foothills, collecting antiquarian materials relating to that region of India. It was therefore not until March 1815 that he returned to Madras, where he at once resumed the task of reorganizing the Survey Department. His insistence on systematic organization of the work was an important factor in ensuring that topographical surveys in Madras usually proceeded more smoothly than in Bengal. Almost immediately, however, he found himself appointed as Surveyor-General of India, an office newly created as part of a general reorganization of survey work which also involved the abolition of the independent Surveyor-Generalships of Madras, Bengal and Bombay.

Mackenzie accepted the appointment, but gratifying though it doubtless was, he does not appear particularly to have welcomed it, remaining in Madras for another two years despite several attempts by the Supreme Government to hasten his arrival in Bengal. The chief cause of the delay appears to have been Mackenzie's concern for the future
welfare of his Indian helpers, and the effect of the loss of their services on his ability to organize and translate his materials. So worried was he by this problem, that he was moved to write for the first time to Charles Grant thanking him for his support in 1810. He went on to explain the difficulties caused by the prospective move: his collections were now becoming ‘very voluminous’ but

I am in doubt, and hesitating, whether I should carry them with me to Calcutta. Without this, my recourse to them would be shut up and as translations are continually in hand, their removal without having natives of this part near me would be equally inconvenient.

He added, and this was probably the whole point of the letter, ‘it is probable I may refer to Government on the occasion for some assistance’. He did indeed, but he was still without an answer when he came to write his letter of 1 February 1817 to Sir Alexander Johnston which has so frequently been cited in this article: a letter evidently written to provide Johnston, who was about to depart for England, with ammunition with which to fight Mackenzie’s case with the Directors. Mackenzie pointed out that, without the assistance of his Indian staff, ‘most of what I had proposed to condense and translate from the originals in the languages of this country, could not be conveniently, or at all, effected at Calcutta’. But they faced an uncertain future:

the attachment existing, and increased during the space of from eighteen to twenty years, leaves me no room to doubt that some will adhere to my fortune; but it is to be confessed that there will be some hazard in again exchanging a state of moderate comfort with their families for a state of dependance in a distant country; and this uncertainty of an adequate provision for these useful people renders my situation at present more uncomfortable than I wish to say.

Mackenzie’s affection for his Indian helpers and concern for their welfare is one of the most attractive features of his character. In the event, he appears to have been successful in securing either pensions or some employment for those of his staff who wished to stay in Madras, while the Bengal Government gave him almost carte blanche to ‘bring round in his suite’ such persons as he wished, and Lechmiah and some of his staff eventually arrived in Calcutta in May 1818. Mackenzie himself had arrived the previous July and had embarked on the organization of his new department while still retaining a tight control over activities in Madras. He was promoted a full Colonel in August 1819, but he was increasingly dogged by ill health and unable to cope with the burdens of office, writing for example in October 1819 of ‘the intolerable load of public business thrown on me here’. It is therefore hardly surprising if his activities as a collector at last began to slacken; but in any case, judging by his remarks to Johnston, it was now his intention to organize his collections rather than add to them. In fact, he seems to have been able to do little in either direction. He died on 8 May 1821. He was about sixty-eight years old, and if his querulousness about his health and allowances sometimes irritates, it is worth remembering that he had been continuously in the East for thirty-eight years, remaining there long past the age when most men retired to the comfort of the home country to enjoy their fortunes.
Mackenzie, on the other hand, had spent his fortune on the accumulation of his Collection, and it may be of some interest to examine the nature of the costs which he incurred in gathering his materials and how they were divided between himself and Government. At this point it should be noted that Mackenzie, especially after 1810, had reason to expect that the Company would ultimately ‘indemnify’ him for his collections in view of the terms of the despatch of that year, referred to above, in which his researches as well as his survey work received approbation. The Directors had then stated that after Mackenzie had been able to ‘digest and improve the materials he has collected’, they were to be transmitted to them for deposit in their Oriental Museum, and

in the meantime we wish to indemnify him for the disbursements he has made in procuring this Collection of materials, trusting that it will not amount to any large Sum; and we desire that he will state to us an account of it, which, from his character, we are persuaded will be correctly done; but not to suspend all payment till the arrival of such an account, we permit you, on receipt of the present letter, to make him a reasonable advance on this score.\(^{52}\)

Mackenzie himself never found the time to submit an account of his expenditure, but the despatch of 1810 provided the legal basis, as it were, for the claim which Palmer and Co. submitted to Government in 1822 on behalf of Mackenzie’s widow and executrix for reimbursement to his estate of the costs of forming his antiquarian collection.\(^{53}\)

In his letter to Grant, Mackenzie stated that ‘the whole of the Collection is made entirely at my proper expense, Government having afforded only the aid of franking my letters on these subjects’; and to Johnston he wrote that ‘the only burthen to Government’ had been postage, plus ‘the aid of some of the native writers’; while Wilson in the introduction to his Catalogue remarked that though the ‘personal expenses’ of Mackenzie’s Indian agents ‘were in general defrayed by the department to which they were attached...all extra expenditure, and the cost of all purchases, were defrayed by Col. Mackenzie himself’.\(^{54}\) It is clear from these statements that Mackenzie bore the actual costs of purchasing, copying or translating manuscripts,\(^{55}\) while Government allowed his agents to send them to him through the post free of charge. What is less clear is how the salary costs of the Indian helpers were paid. The problem is complicated by the fact that Mackenzie’s salary was sometimes expressed as inclusive, sometimes exclusive, of his establishment, and another ambiguity is the question whether that establishment included Mackenzie’s translators and interpreters employed on his antiquarian researches, as well as his assistants and sub-assistants employed on the survey work proper. Mackenzie was initially allowed a salary of 400 pagodas a month as Superintendent of the Mysore Survey.\(^{56}\) Out of this he had to find his incidental expenses, but not his establishment. It is not clear whether the latter included the antiquarian helpers. In December 1801 this salary was cut to 200 pagodas per month but he no longer had to pay his incidental expenses out of it. Put another way, his allowances now apparently amounted to 420 pagodas a month including establishment as well as salary. In addition he was allowed to submit bills for writers above his fixed
establishment. Possibly this latter concession was intended to cater for the antiquarian helpers. By 1808, however, we can achieve greater certainty, for in that year Mackenzie himself drew up a statement of expenses of the Mysore Survey as at 1 May. This shows conclusively that both the Survey assistants and the antiquarian helpers were now borne on the establishment since both groups are separately mentioned, and indeed the latter cost more (91 pagodas per month) than the former (70 per month). Mackenzie himself was drawing 554 pagodas per month (not, be it noted, 420), which covered his own salary of 200 pagodas, the pay of his two groups of staff, as just mentioned, the pay of lower servants, messengers and peons, cartage and tentage. The total cost of the Survey is shown at this date to have been 811 pagodas per month.\(^{57}\)

Certainly by 1808, therefore, and probably from the outset of the Mysore Survey, Government rather than Mackenzie was bearing the salary costs of his Indian helpers. Yet, on occasion, Mackenzie gave a different impression, as did Mark Wilks and John Malcolm writing to support his claims for improved financial treatment in 1807. The former, for example, wrote that Mackenzie had employed ‘numerous emissaries’ to gather historical materials ‘at a great expense for many years and particularly since 1796’.\(^{58}\) Furthermore, salary items are scattered throughout Palmer & Co.’s accounts and continue to occur even after 1808.\(^{58}\) The explanation of this contradiction may lie in several factors. Firstly, Mackenzie may at times have employed more Indian helpers than his allowances for establishment would cover, especially perhaps during the early years of the Mysore Survey and the preceding Deccan Survey. With his passion for collecting he was always liable to take on staff for this purpose, and indeed he rather naively said as much in a letter of March 1807 to the Madras Government:

My success in obtaining materials has induced me to increase the number of people employed with me, or detached at my private risk, which was even necessary from the variety of languages used in these documents, or prevailing through the Country.\(^{60}\)

Secondly, Mackenzie appears to have met out of his own pocket the travelling expenses of his Indian helpers when they were sent off on collecting expeditions.\(^{61}\) And thirdly, he certainly was generous to a fault in giving them extra gratuities and presents. Payments of this kind figure very largely in the accounts submitted by Palmer & Co., who evidently felt some nervousness about them, judging by the care with which they explained them. They began with the description, quoted earlier, of the difficulties which Mackenzie had to overcome to obtain his information and then went on to state that these considerations:

induced the Colonel to hold out every encouragement to the Native Agents that he employed to gather Literary materials by presents, gratuities and hopes of future reward... the object was by possessing their confidence to excite their ardour and abstract their attention from every other object, but that upon which they were employed.\(^{62}\)

H. H. Wilson, who was invited by Government to comment on the accounts, remarked that the gratuities were ‘part of the system purposely adopted by the Colonel to dissipate reserve and incite and reward zeal’, but he also added that

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it may be thought however that in some instances the system was urged to an unnecessary extent and it may be questionable how far donations made in a spirit of charity or affection [affection?] are entitled to reimbursement.63

As Wilson says, ‘many items of this nature pervade all the accounts’: a monument perhaps to Mackenzie’s kindliness rather than to his judgement.

At all events Mackenzie’s antiquarian staff eventually became quite large. At the beginning of the Mysore Survey, he had one Head Interpreter and Translator, Boria, on thirty pagodas per month, and three or four interpreters or translators each on five pagodas per month; by its close in 1808, Lechmiah had become Head Interpreter supervising a staff of about twelve, and a very similar establishment was still ‘borne on the strength of the Survey’ [of the Ceded Districts] in 1810. When Mackenzie transferred to Bengal in 1817 ‘about a dozen’ interpreters accompanied him even after some had been pensioned off.64 Following Mackenzie’s death, H. H. Wilson was allowed to take over this establishment to assist him in compiling the catalogue of the Collection that Mackenzie had never been able to produce. By this time, according to Wilson, the ‘fixed establishment attached to the Collection amounts…to Rs 620 per month’ and there was also a ‘contingent establishment’ amounting usually to about Rs 150 per month. All were apparently entitled to pensions on half pay when dismissed, except Lechmiah who was entitled to retire on full pay (Rs 300 per month). Provision was also made for the families of those who had died. Lechmiah stayed on for two years at least to assist Wilson with the cataloguing.65 Besides staff there were certain other incidental expenses necessitated by the work of organizing the Collection, and it should be noted that Government was to bear the costs of publishing the resulting catalogue.66 All in all, therefore, Government spent considerable sums of money, at any rate during Mackenzie’s later years and after his death, in supporting his antiquarian establishment.

It is impossible now to determine exactly how much in total Mackenzie spent on gathering his Collection and indeed even at the time Palmer & Co. found the task impossible. Apparently Mackenzie left his accounts in much the same state as his collections. In both cases, it had always been his intention to put them in order, and in neither case had he done so, and the accounts were in ‘considerable confusion’. Palmer & Co. were able to provide detailed accounts for the expenditure going back to 1800 of Rs 61,452.6,11 and they claimed that, given the disarray of the accounts, Mackenzie had almost certainly spent much more. Many items were noted down with the actual amount spent never filled in, and they suggested that, on the oral testimony of Mackenzie’s native assistants, he had expended Rs 14,000 in the form of ‘donations’ to them which were not included in the accounts. As regards his coins, drawings, images and minerals, Mackenzie had left virtually no record of his expenditure, and his widow thought that he probably treated these materials as a purely private collection for which he had no expectation of official reward. However, she now offered them for sale to the Bengal Government, tentatively suggesting a price of Rs 20,000. With these arguments, Palmer & Co. arrived at a final figure of a lakh of rupees (Rs 100,000) as a ‘reasonable
reimbursement'. H. H. Wilson, in his commentary on the accounts, while refusing to be drawn on the actual market value of the collection, entertained ‘no doubt that it has cost fully a Lac of rupees’ in view of ‘the expensive method adopted in its accumulation’, i.e. by means of gratuities to Indian assistants and informants, adding, however, that the actual prices of the articles charged for were for the most part ‘very moderate’. Sir Alexander Johnston went even further, suggesting that the true total was upwards of Rs 150,000.

The Bengal Government accepted the arguments of Palmer & Co. and purchased Mackenzie’s entire collection of Indian antiquarian materials for Rs 100,000. It is difficult to resist the feeling that they accepted Palmer & Co.’s claims on behalf of Mrs Mackenzie somewhat too readily. Certainly the Directors thought so, berating them for their undue generosity: ‘We strongly disapprove of the... disbursing so large a sum for such a purpose without our previous sanction’. Palmer & Co.’s initial figure of Rs 61,452 was perhaps reasonable in that there was hard evidence for it; but their arguments for increasing this to a total of Rs 100,000 are not entirely convincing, despite Wilson’s endorsement. For example, inclusion of the figure of Rs 14,000 for unrecorded ‘donations’ to Mackenzie’s assistants seems particularly dubious in view of the fact that such items ‘pervaded’ the accounts. And the Bengal Government should certainly have deducted from the Rs 20,000 for coins, drawings, images, and minerals, the sum of Rs 3,048 for which Palmer & Co. had found detailed evidence and accordingly had included in the account for Rs 61,452. In addition, it should be remembered that Mackenzie had received a reward of 9000 pagodas in 1810, and he had also in 1820 solicited an advance of Rs 12,000 (£1,200) on the strength of the 1810 despatch, which he had been granted, and which his widow was allowed to retain over and above the Rs 100,000 payment, and ‘at the same time, bills submitted by him for translations &c, amounting to rupees 5,393,,12’ (c. £540), had been passed. Finally, Mrs Mackenzie was also paid Rs 3200 (c. £320) for the private collection of Javanese materials. In the end, one cannot but feel that Mackenzie, or at any rate his relict, was handsomely rewarded for his antiquarian endeavours.

The sums mentioned in the previous paragraph are very large. The rupee was worth about two shillings (10 new pence) at the time and thus the Rs 100,000 paid to Mackenzie’s widow was worth about £10,000. Is it credible that a military officer of the East India Company, almost certainly without private means, would have been able to find a sum of this order, albeit spread over a lifetime, simply out of his pay and allowances? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, seems to be ‘yes’. The accompanying table indicates Mackenzie’s pay and allowances from 1794/5, when information becomes readily available, until his death. It shows that, over the whole period, he received about £65,000. This should of course be treated only as a rough estimate. For example, the figures do not show how much of his income Mackenzie had to spend on additional staff or incidental expenses of his survey work. Nor, on the other hand, do they include any prize money he may have received from the military campaigns in which he participated, for example from the Fourth Mysore War or the Java campaign. However, a total of
Mackenzie's Income, 1794/5 to 1820/1
(in pagodas unless otherwise stated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ending April</th>
<th>Regimental pay</th>
<th>Other Survey pay</th>
<th>Rank/appt./remarks</th>
<th>Monthly total</th>
<th>Annual total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>308 Regt. and H.S.F. pay. Separate totals not given</td>
<td>£37½</td>
<td>Capt./Eng., Hyderabad Subsidiary Force and Supt., Deccan Survey</td>
<td>£346</td>
<td>£4,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>334 do.</td>
<td>£37½</td>
<td></td>
<td>£372</td>
<td>£4,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>figures not available</td>
<td>£37½</td>
<td></td>
<td>£372</td>
<td>£4,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>£37½</td>
<td></td>
<td>£372</td>
<td>£4,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>Becomes Supt. of Mysore Survey Sept. 1799</td>
<td>£487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>£200/400</td>
<td></td>
<td>£587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td></td>
<td>£687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>£400/200</td>
<td>Pay cut Dec. 1801</td>
<td>£536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td></td>
<td>£448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td></td>
<td>£448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td></td>
<td>£448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loses post as Eng., H.S.F.</td>
<td>£296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>150⁹</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3,816 arrears⁹ Barrack Master, Mysore/addl. survey allowance Sept. 1808 9,000 reward Feb.1810 received next financial year Maj./ceases to be Barrack Master/becomes S.G., Madras Oct. 1810</td>
<td>£437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>200/300</td>
<td></td>
<td>£410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>nil⁴</td>
<td></td>
<td>£358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
<td>nil/400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Lt.-Col./Chief Eng., Java</td>
<td>£851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>77⁴</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>£727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>£851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>250⁹</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>£851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>77⁹</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs 1,500 S.G., India</td>
<td></td>
<td>£77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs 1,500</td>
<td>Rs 17,026⁹</td>
<td>£77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs 1,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>£77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Rs 271</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs 1,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>£77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Rs 271</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs 1,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>£77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Rs 271</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs 1,500</td>
<td>Rs 2,000 advance; Rs 5,393 bills paid by Govt.¹</td>
<td>£77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>142,452 pags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£49,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ £15,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£65,075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes to Table


Rates of Exchange: All figures are in pagodas, the currency of South India, unless otherwise stated. The pagoda has been taken to equal 7 shillings (£0.35); the rupee 2 shillings (£0.10).

¹ Totals estimated on basis of figures for 1796.

² Averaged to take account of pay changes in mid-financial year.
£65,000 does suggest that a man whose main interest in life was collecting could at any rate have spent the lower figure of Rs 61,452 (£6,145, or just under ten per cent of his total income) mentioned in Palmer & Co.'s accounts, and possibly even the £10,000 which Mrs Mackenzie was paid. The table also brings out the fact that, despite Mackenzie's length of service, the years from 1801 to 1807, i.e. the period of the Mysore survey when he was spending freely on collecting, were among his leanest, the two years from April 1805 to April 1807 being particularly dire. His complaints about his allowances at this time thus become all the more understandable, and the remark of the Governor of Madras, Lord William Bentinck, writing in 1807 to support Mackenzie's claims for some financial recompense, that he had sacrificed 'all his own private fortune' may have been no more than the truth. To sum up: at times Mackenzie's passion for collecting probably took all he had, but with the receipt of the reward of 9,000 pagodas, and then while holding the posts of both Surveyor-General of Madras and Chief Engineer in Java, Mackenzie became comparatively well off.

A Codicil to Mackenzie's will dated January 1816 may offer some clue to his financial situation. His wife is left Rs 60,000 and apart from minor legacies the residue of his estate is bequeathed as follows: one half to his brother, one quarter to his sister, five per cent to Lechmiah, and Rs 12,000 to his sister-in-law. If it can be assumed that this latter sum equates roughly with the twenty per cent of the residue not disposed of to his brother, sister and Lechmiah, then the total of the residue would be Rs 60,000 and the total estate Rs 120,000. It is unclear how much of this total depended on the reimbursement Mackenzie hoped to receive from the Company for his Collection, but the fact that the total of Rs 100,000 asked for it, plus the advance of Rs 12,000 received by Mackenzie in 1820, approximate fairly closely to the Rs 120,000 apparently bequeathed in the will, does perhaps suggest that Mackenzie may have left very little apart from his Collection; and hence Palmer & Co.'s anxiety to maximize the price they put on it.

The Mackenzie Collection has had a chequered history following its creator's death.
The Javanese materials were the first to reach this country, sent home in two batches in 1822 and 1823, to be followed by the main Collection despatched in three instalments between 1823 and 1833. However, on Wilson’s recommendation, most of the materials in the languages of South India were sent in 1828 to the Madras College Library where it was thought they would be of more use than in Europe.\(^79\) They were subsequently transferred to the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras. The materials sent to London remained for the most part in the Library of the East India Company, later the Library of the India Office and now a part of the British Library’s Oriental and India Office Collections. They did not, however, remain as a single Collection, but were allocated to different sections of the Library according to language, or type of material, and the ‘Mackenzie’ provenance of some materials has probably been lost. Mackenzie’s coins and sculptures were deposited in the Company’s India Museum, but when that institution was abolished in 1879 the sculptures were distributed between the South Kensington Museum, now the Victoria and Albert, and the British Museum, while the coins went to the British Museum.\(^80\)

One final question to be discussed is the research value of the collections. Possibly the first person to express a considered opinion was Major Mark Wilks in 1807. Noting that Indian historical studies were ‘so deformed by fable and anachronism’ as to be ‘an absolute blank’, he argued that the most promising avenue of progress was to make copies, as Mackenzie was doing, of the many thousands of grants inscribed on stone or copper plates which were found all over South India, and which would provide a sound chronological and genealogical framework and much ancillary information besides.\(^81\)

H. H. Wilson remains perhaps the only scholar ever to have examined the Mackenzie Collection in its entirety,\(^82\) and his judgements are therefore worthy of respect. At the outset, he was sanguine about the Collection’s value and, like Wilks, he picked out the grants and inscriptions as being of ‘the highest interest to historical discovery in India’.\(^83\) By 1826, however, doubts had begun to surface: for example, the catalogues of the Sanskrit books had proved to be ‘so full of errors that they were utterly useless’, while ‘the rough and uncorrected translations... are so undecipherable and so unintelligible, that it is scarcely worthwhile to transcribe them at all’.\(^84\) By 1827 his more critical view had become known in London, for the Directors writing in that year to register their indignation at the one lakh payment to Mrs Mackenzie noted that:

> it appears from a private letter addressed by Mr Wilson to our Librarian... that the opinion which Mr Wilson at first entertained of the value of the collections has been materially lowered on a more minute examination of them

and for their own part they added that

> the character of that portion which has been received in this Country does not lead us to form any favourable opinion of the value of the remainder.\(^85\)

In 1828, Wilson’s *Descriptive Catalogue* was published, and its introductory comments can perhaps be taken as his most considered view of the Mackenzie Collection. He
repeats his earlier criticisms regarding the uselessness of the catalogues and the unintelligibility of the unbound translations. On the other hand, he considers the manuscripts ‘in the original languages, constituting what may be regarded as the literature of the South of India’ as of great potential value, since South Indian literature had hitherto been almost unknown in Europe. He again noted the value of the inscriptions, drew attention to Mackenzie’s original contribution to an understanding of the Jains, and summed up the Collection as a whole:

Its composition is of course very miscellaneous, and its value with respect to Indian history and statistics remains to be ascertained, the collector himself having done little or nothing towards a verification of its results.

The failure to verify is an important point. Mackenzie and his agents certainly collected a wide range of materials. Not the least of their contributions was to set down in writing a large body of oral tradition which might otherwise have been lost. In this category were the ‘Local Tracts’ now in Madras. These, as Wilson explains, were short accounts in the languages of the Dekhan of particular places, remarkable buildings, local traditions, and peculiar usages prepared in general expressly for Col. Mackenzie by his native agents, or obtained by them on their excursions.

But Mackenzie’s inability, since he did not know the original languages, to check the authenticity of these stories is a serious drawback. He provided a mine of historical and ethnological information in which scholars continue to quarry to this day, but his materials have to be used with great caution and for the most part cannot be relied on without some corroboration from other sources. And it has to be said that Wilson’s strictures on the inaccuracy of the work by Mackenzie’s staff on the catalogues of the Collection do nothing to inspire confidence in the reliability of the materials which they had earlier procured or transcribed. Professor T. V. Mahalingam, who has published summaries of many of the Mackenzie manuscripts at Madras, remarks that his collections are generally based on secondhand traditions and unverified reports... Their testimony may be used as circumstantial evidence calculated to supplement the results arrived at from other sources.

However, Mahalingam, like Wilks and Wilson before him, notes the great importance of the inscriptions collected or copied by Mackenzie and his agents. These have been published, and their editor T. N. Subramanian also pays tribute to Mackenzie’s ‘indefatigable labour of love’ in preserving these materials which but for him ‘would have been lost for ever’.

Mackenzie was always hoping to organize, sift, and perhaps publish an epitome or catalogue raisonné of his materials but of course he never did. Nor did he ever publish more than a few articles based on them. Lack of time was certainly a problem, but a deeper reason, one suspects, was that he was really happiest as a collector and lacked the
cast of mind required to impose intellectual order on the chaos of his materials. Perhaps the last word on Mackenzie and the value of his Collection can be left to the judicious Phillimore:

Mackenzie has preserved for countless students of history an immense mass of interesting and valuable material, which otherwise would surely have perished. It is doubtful, however, whether his enthusiasm for collecting was tempered with sufficient discrimination, or whether he could have dealt with very much of it even had he lived to examine it more thoroughly himself.97

A somewhat longer version of this paper will be included as an introduction to a Catalogue of Manuscripts in European Languages Belonging to the Library of the India Office, vol. i, pt. ii. The Mackenzie General and Miscellaneous Collections to be published in 1992 by the British Library. A shortened version was read at the 45th South Asia Library Group Conference on 21 June 1991.

1 Mackenzie to Sir Alexander Johnston, 1 Feb. 1817. Johnston (1775–1849) was the grandson, through his mother, of Mackenzie’s early patron Lord Napier. In 1799 Johnston became Advocate-General of Ceylon and in 1805 Chief Justice. Mackenzie’s long letter to him, which gives a systematic account of his researches, and on which all accounts of Mackenzie’s career depend heavily, was written when Johnston was about to return to England. As will be seen, one of its chief purposes was to provide Johnston with information with which to persuade the Company to offer Mackenzie financial assistance to return to England in order to arrange his Collection. Nothing was done before Mackenzie’s death, however, in the event of which he had instructed Johnston to publish the letter as giving ‘a detailed account of all his literary labours in India’ (Johnston in evidence to House of Commons). The text of the letter used here is that printed by Johnston in Asiatic Journal, xiii (1822), pp. 242–9, 313–25 (cited hereafter as ‘Letter to Johnston’). He reprinted it with small alterations, in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, i (1834), pp. 333–64. Much of it is also reproduced in the introduction to Wilson’s Catalogue (see n. 2). See also Parliamentary Papers, vol. ix, pt. i (1831–2), pp. 254–7, containing Johnston’s evidence of 19 July 1832 to a Commons Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, which was considering the renewal of the Company’s Charter. Johnston proposed to the Committee that steps be taken to complete the Mackenzie Collection by further acquisitions.


3 Enclosure to Wilson’s letter to Charles Lushington, Chief Sec. to Government of Bengal, 6 Aug. 1822. India Office Records (IOR): Board’s Collections (BC), F/4/867, Coll. 22924, ff. 115–39. In this letter, Wilson proposed the publication of the Catalogue cited in n. 2, in which a printed version of this statement will be found (pp. 14–15). There are minor variations between the figures cited above from the manuscript letter to Lushington, and those in the printed version.

4 W. C. Mackenzie, Colonel Colin Mackenzie, first Surveyor-General of India (Edinburgh, 1952), pp. 2–9. This is the only full length biography of Mackenzie ever written. It is generally reliable, but rather uncritical. It depends in large measure, as does the present writer, on the detailed information on Mackenzie scattered through the first three volumes of the invaluable R. H. Phillimore, Historical Records of the Survey of India, 3 vols. (Dehra Dun, 1945–54).

5 Mackenzie had petitioned the Company ‘for a passage to Fort St George to join the 78th Foot as a Volunteer, or for an appointment in the Company’s Military’. The 78th Foot, or Seaforth Highlanders, had been raised and commanded by the Earl of Seaforth until his death in 1781. Possibly he had already nominated Mackenzie before his death, but more probably it was his brother, who became Baron Seaforth in 1797, who was now Mackenzie’s patron. In fact, on 15
Jan. 1783 the Directors refused Mackenzie's petition, but three days later relented and allowed him to proceed to Madras where he was gazetted an Ensign of Infantry (not the Engineers). In 1786, again following an initial rejection, he was allowed to transfer to the Madras Engineers. Phillimore, vol. i, p. 349; G. E. C[okayne], The Complete Peerage, vol. xi (London, 1949), pp. 586–8.

6 Evidence to Commons Select Committee, 1832, p. 254.

7 Ibid.


12 Ibid.

13 See Biographical Sketches of Dekkan Poets (Calcutta, 1829), pp. 154–61. The author, C. V. Ramaswami, was another of Boria's brothers in Mackenzie's service.


15 IOR: MSS Eur Mackenzie General Collection 60, 4. For a report, dated 5 Feb. 1798, and entitled 'Remarks and Observations made on the Survey on the Nizam’s Dominions in 1797 by Colin Mackenzie' (which includes some small watercolour sketches) see BL, Add. MS. 13582. Interestingly, this manuscript is among the papers of the future Governor-General Lord Wellesley.


17 Add. MS. 13663.


20 Details of these men, who were mainly Anglo-Indians of mixed European and Asian blood, will be found in Phillimore, vol. ii, pp. 156, 303, 343–6.

21 Wilson, op. cit., pp. 9–11. For a specimen of one of their reports, see ibid., pp. 599–621. Numerous letters and reports from Native Agents employed to collect Books, Traditions, &c, in various parts of the Peninsula are contained in IOR: MSS Eur Mackenzie Translations, class xii.


23 Add. MS. 14380, f. 36v; IOR: Kirkpatrick Collection, MSS Eur F 228/19 and 39. The chief purpose of Mackenzie's information exercise may well have been to support his campaign for improved allowances. In fact, a number of the letters and papers on this file are duplicates of ones to be found among Mackenzie's official submissions on the subject: see n. 25.

24 BC, F/4/280, Coll. 6426, ff. 155–67. See IOR: MSS Eur D 562/1 for a very similar version of this document with marginal annotations, almost certainly by Mackenzie, showing progress down to June 1813 in the collection of the various types of materials. IOR: MSS Eur Mackenzie Miscellaneous Collection 108 includes drafts of circulars requesting historical information, as well as memoranda and instructions on the collection of topographical data; and MSS Eur Mack Misc 171 contains examples of Mackenzie's personal correspondence on historical and antiquarian topics.

25 Mackenzie to George Buchan, Chief Sec. to Madras Government, Mar. 1807, in BC, F/4/280, Coll. 6426, ff. 99–124, which is an official Collection of the Board of Control relating to the progress of the Mysore Survey and which also includes papers relating to the thorny question of Mackenzie's emoluments. For earlier reports on the progress of the Survey submitted by Mackenzie in July 1803 to the Governor of Madras Lord Clive, and in May 1804 and June 1805 to the Governor-General Lord Wellesley, see a volume in the latter's private papers: Add. MS. 13660.


27 MSS Eur Mack Gen 18A.


29 Rennell to Samuel Johnson, Examiner of Indian Correspondence, 4 Mar. 1809, ibid., ff. 209–10.

30 Phillimore, vol. ii, p. 112. Chapters vii and viii of this volume provide a detailed account of the official topographical work of the Mysore Survey, and Chapter xi, pp. 152–6, provides an account of the Survey of the Ceded Districts
which followed. Similar details of Mackenzie’s other surveys will be found in other volumes of Phillimore. Some of Mackenzie’s maps were published by Aaron Arrowsmith in his *Atlas of Southern India* (London, 1822), 18 sheets, 4 miles : 1 inch.


32 Public Despatch to Madras, 9 Feb. 1810. IOR: Madras Despatches, E/4/904, pp. 603–712. W. C. Mackenzie, pp. 92, 96, suggests that the encouragement given to Mackenzie by the Directors on this occasion was largely due to the influence of a fellow Scot, Charles Grant, then Chairman of the Company. See MSS Eur D 562/1 for a copy of this despatch with marginal annotations which, though not in Mackenzie’s hand, are evidently by him or at least authorized by him since he has appended his initials and the date: 27 Jan. 1817. The notes are somewhat bitter in places on the question of Mackenzie’s salary. They were almost certainly written for the benefit of Sir Alexander Johnston and their wording is often similar to passages in Mackenzie’s letter to Johnston of 1 Feb. 1817 (see n. 1).

33 Letter to Johnston, p. 247; Mackenzie to Charles Grant, 7 July 1815, in which he refers to the collections carried on by his Brahmins throughout the Madras Presidency ‘unremittingly’ for the last five years. Printed by W. C. Mackenzie, pp. 223–6. Cited hereafter as ‘Letter to Grant’.

34 Letter to Johnston, p. 247.


36 Ibid., p. 424.

37 W. C. Mackenzie, chs. xiii–xxi, provides a good account of the years in Java.


40 Letter to Grant, p. 225, where he refers to ‘the collection made in Hindostan last year’.

41 Phillimore, vol. ii, p. 426; vol. iii, pp. 94–5, 474; see also p. 103 for Mackenzie’s views on how a survey should be conducted.

42 Orders for the reorganization had reached India in Nov. 1814, but the Governor-General’s nomination of Mackenzie to the new post was not made until Apr. 1815. Phillimore, vol. iii, p. 300.

43 Ibid., pp. 300, 474.

44 W. C. Mackenzie, pp. 79–84.

45 See n. 32.

46 Letter to Grant, p. 225.

47 Letter to Johnston, p. 248.

48 Ibid., p. 243.

49 Phillimore gives a number of instances of Mackenzie’s care for his servants, e.g. the pension obtained for Sooba Row’s widow, vol. ii, p. 357. It is also worth noting that Lechmiah was left a tenth of his property in a will dated 3 Aug. 1811. Mackenzie’s marriage necessitated a series of codicils in which he first made, and then successively increased, provision for his wife, but in a codicil, dated 21 Jan. 1816, Lechmiah was still left 5% of the residue plus (incredibly) ‘all my native books and manuscripts’! Possibly Mackenzie, since he did not speak the languages, set greater store by the translations. A further undated codicil changed the bequest to Lechmiah to 5% of whatever Mackenzie’s Collection was sold for. IOR: Bengal Wills and Administrations, L/AG/34/29/33, ff. 249–53.

50 Phillimore, vol. iii, pp. 311, 390, 475–81. Their caste precluding a journey by sea, they had marched overland and, inevitably, had been instructed ‘to prosecute during the journey the various historical researches of which he [Lechmiah] has so long had the chief management’.

51 Ibid., pp. 475–9.

52 Public Despatch to Madras, 9 Feb. 1810, E/4/904, ff. 603–712. Even before receipt of this despatch, Mackenzie could claim that his antiquarian researches had official approval (see n. 25). As the Directors remarked, such researches were ‘objects pointed out indeed in our general instructions to India, but to which if he had not been prompted by his own public spirit his other fatiguing avocations might have been pleaded as an excuse for not attending’.

drawn up by Palmer & Co. are Coll. 22926 in the same volume. MSS Eur Mack Misc 177 contains fragmentary accounts of his expenses for 1809 and 1817-18.

54 Letter to Grant, 7 July 1815, p. 226; Letter to Johnston, 1 Feb. 1817, p. 247; Wilson, op. cit., p. 11.

55 See also Palmer & Co.'s accounts.

56 For full details of Mackenzie's emoluments see Table.


58 See n. 23.

59 BC, F/4/867, Coll. 22926. Given the confusion in which Mackenzie left his accounts, it is just conceivable, though on balance unlikely, that Palmer & Co. included some salary items which had in fact already been met by Government.


61 Palmer & Co.'s accounts.


65 Phillimore, vol. iii, pp. 390-2; also pp. 311-12; Wilson to Lushington, 3 Jan. 1822, paras 10 and 17 and Lushington's reply of 18 Jan. 1822, BC, F/4/867, Coll. 22924, ff. 46, 55-6, 109-12. Wilson annexed to his letter of 3 Jan. 1822 lists of the names and salaries of both the fixed and contingent establishments totalling fourteen persons in all. The highest paid after Lechmiah received only Rs 80 per month, ff. 108-9.


69 Evidence to Commons Select Committee, 1832, p. 255.


72 See above. Strictly speaking this was for the excellence of his official work, rather than his antiquarian researches. Despatch of 9 Feb. 1810, p. 702.

73 Extract from Bengal Public Letter to Directors, 15 Feb. 1821, paras. 126-7, BC, F/4/867, Coll. 22924, f. 38. Palmer & Co. justified this on the ground that interest on the sum 'owed' to Mackenzie for his Collection would have exceeded this advance.

74 Because the rate of inflation for different commodities or services has varied so greatly, it is not really possible to suggest a single factor by which all monetary values should be multiplied to give their late twentieth century equivalents. Derek Beales, From Castlereagh to Gladstone (London, 1969), p. 10, notes that in 1829 a policeman could be recruited in London, then as now an expensive place, for £1.1s per week (£5.46 p.a.). The present writer would suggest that Mrs Mackenzie's £10,000 should possibly be multiplied by fifty.

75 There is little evidence that Mackenzie enjoyed any substantial private income outside his pay, other than the fact that he was said to have left his sister £30,000 or even £44,000 (see W. C. Mackenzie, p. 198).

76 Phillimore, vol. ii, pp. 112, 422-3; Kirkpatrick Collection, MSS Eur F 228/39. Bentinck was no doubt influenced by the representations of Wilks and Malcolm on Mackenzie's behalf already mentioned. It is also evident that Mackenzie believed that hopes of eventual advancement and reward had been held out to him which had not been honoured.

77 Bengal Wills, L/AG/34/29/33, ff. 249-53.


81 Wilks to George Buchan, Chief Sec. to Madras Government, 4 Mar. 1807; Kirkpatrick Collection, MSS Eur F 228/39.
82 Even Wilson did not cover the materials relating to Java in the ‘1822’ and ‘Private’ Collections.
84 Wilson to Lushington, 17 Apr. 1826. MSS Eur Mack Misc 179.
86 Wilson, op. cit., pp. 12-13; unintelligible or not, and some are undeniably difficult to decipher, the translations are still occasionally consulted by scholars.
87 Ibid., p. 15. Wilson’s verdict appears to have been based partly on the fact that other, and better, copies were then widely available. This may no longer be so; at any rate scholars still consult Mackenzie’s Sanskrit manuscripts.
88 Ibid., pp. 13, 16-17.
89 Ibid., p. 11.
90 It was a recurring problem. In 1950, the Mackenzie manuscripts at Madras were inspected by an official committee which found that, because of their deteriorating physical condition, about twenty pundits were being employed to make transcriptions of them and about 20% had been transcribed, but little was being done to check their accuracy. Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, xxviii, pt. 1 (Dec. 1951), pp. 146-57.
91 Ibid., p. 13.
92 Mackenzie’s supervision of his Indian helpers may, indeed, have been rather lax. Thus Wilson, explaining in 1826 the slow progress in arranging the Mackenzie Collection, blamed it on the fact that the work was being largely done by Mackenzie’s staff and he had ‘not been able always to enforce that alacrity and assiduity which were requisite for its prompt execution’, Wilson to Lushington, 17 Apr. 1826, MSS Eur Mack Misc 179.
94 T. N. Subramanian (ed.), South Indian Temple Inscriptions, 3 vols. (Madras, 1953–7); the quotation is from vol. ii, p. xv.
95 Letter to Johnston, p. 248.
96 Wilson, op. cit., p. 8, gives a list of his writings, to which should be added a paper which remained unpublished until 1844, but which he submitted to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Apr. 1815, entitled ‘View of the principal Political Events that occurred in the Carnatic [1564–1687]…compiled from various Authentic Memoirs and Original MSS’, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, xiii (1844), pp. 421–63, 578–609. Mackenzie also contributed to the Transactions of the Batavian Society during his stay in Java.
97 Phillimore, vol. iii, p. 483.