The Estate of Major General Claude Martin at Lucknow

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An Indian Inventory

Edited by

Rosie Llewellyn-Jones

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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PREFACE

The astonishing inventory of the possessions of Claude Martin was compiled in Lucknow in the six months following his death in September 1800. The range of goods and materials such as those painstakingly listed here embody many worlds of meaning and experience. As the objects of connoisseurship, tribute and purchase, they represent highly complex systems of later eighteenth century collection and display. These inventoried materials throw a fascinating and indispensable light on the world of an enlightened polymath of remarkably broad interests in erudition and experimental philosophy, much concerned with antiquarian and historical records and artefacts. They also chart the material culture of excessive display and conspicuous consumption characteristic of a master of south Asian trade and profit. The inventories have much to teach about artisan skill and erudite activity, the outputs of the range of workshops and studios that played such a vital role in later eighteenth century material cultures. Spectacular hoards catalogued in the inventory simultaneously represent the results of deliberate attempts by their owner to emulate the great cabinets and palatial showrooms of those Indian rulers whose high status and erstwhile power the ambitious Martin sought to mimic and, in key respects, rival.

Reaching India from Lyon at the age of sixteen in the employ of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales,* in 1760 Claude Martin defected to the British authorities as soldier and surveyor. In 1776 he ingeniously acquired the lucrative position of head of the Lucknow arsenal in the service of its ruler Asaf-ud-daula, new Nawab of Awadh. The energetic but ailing Martin died childless, but was exceptionally concerned with his legacy. He was an exemplary cross-cultural entrepreneur of the period, one of the very wealthiest Europeans in south Asia as a result of his wide-ranging activities as financier, landowner and dealer in commodities such as indigo and perfume, silk and guns. His enterprises as trader and collector were an integral part of existing and very extensive north Indian systems of commerce and exchange. These systems left traces that can now be clearly read in the catalogues made by the clerks

under the direction of Martin's adjutant and executor, the Spanish merchant Joseph Quieros. They also include a list of what was probably the largest European library in India, and an outstanding collection of astronomical, electrical and other philosophical instruments and handbooks. A striking aspect of these lists is the evidence they provide of materials of European origins gathered in Awadh, and of goods from across southern Asia assembled in what Martin also intended as a highly Europeanised setting. The results of deals in telescopes and chronometers, jewels and textiles, paintings and furniture, conducted with agents in London, Paris, Canton or Calcutta, can all be followed through the detailed compilations set out in the inventories. So, too, can the work that Martin commissioned from local artisans and fabricators whose work stocked his Awadh residences.

The pages of the inventory were compiled as lists of commodities to be sold off to realise the wealth of the Martin estate, to discharge his Will's detailed instructions, including bequests to his mistresses and companions, and endowment of schools in Lucknow, Calcutta and Lyon. Held in the India Office collections and unknown to scholars until 1975, the inventory is presented with detailed commentary by an eminent group of scholars under the editorship of Martin's biographer Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, distinguished expert on Lucknow's history and culture, and editor of Martin's correspondence. The notion of an empire of goods has been used to help make sense of material cultures in this period of early modernity and enlightenment. Thanks to the scholarship gathered here, that model can now be revised and redirected. Martin's inventory reveals important connexions between the ornamental, enlightened and material significances of such objects as clocks and weapons, paintings and textiles. This book's outstanding scholarship provides a crucial resource for making much better sense of these goods' provenance and character. With the guidance of its authors it reveals invaluable aspects of production and accumulation at a key moment in the functioning of worldwide systems of exploitation, knowledge and exchange.

Simon Schaffer FBA
Professor of History of Science
University of Cambridge

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Names, weights and measures

Indian words are generally noted in the text where they occur. Place names transcribed into English during the East India Company period often missed the subtle vernacular pronunciation (the city of Cawnpore is a particular example, with the long drawled out 'a', instead of the sharper Kanpur, as it is today), but 18th century spellings have been retained as Claude Martin and his contemporaries would have known them.

The various currencies and weights in use in different parts of India during his time can seem confusing, but the majority of Martin's goods were priced in Bengal *sicca* (newly minted) rupees, abbreviated to Sc. Rs, or just S. Rs. One sicca rupee was worth 2s. 4d (just under 25 pence in today's money). The Bengal current rupee, abbreviated to C Rs, was worth a little less (2s. or 20 pence) and this was because older silver rupees might have been clipped and therefore intrinsically worth less.

Some of the auctioned items were measured in maunds and seers like the 9 maunds and 2 seers of broken window glass, which would have been melted down and refashioned into new glass objects. The Bengal 'factory' maund was 75 lbs, (34 kg), normally divided into 40 seers and the Bengal 'bazar' maund (the going rate) was 82 lbs (37 kg). Importing or exporting goods to other parts of India, China or the Arabian Peninsula meant complicated calculations had to be carried out to convert Bengal weights to that specific area. If Martin had wanted to export goods from Lucknow to Anjengo, at India's southern tip, for example, he would have found that the Anjengo maund was only calculated at 12.7 kg. Diamonds were measured in *rati,* based on the seeds of wheat, mustard or rice, but again this varied in different parts of India.

It was a shifting world in which Martin operated, made even more so as the Gregorian calendar slowly replaced the Julian calendar in British India. Sometimes it was not always clear which day of the week it was, nor how the Gregorian date aligned with the Islamic hijri year, that

itself depended on the sighting of the new moon. Nevertheless, Martin was able to juggle all these different factors to his advantage.

Abbreviations

These have been kept to a minimum. IOL&R is the India Office Library and Records, the official title of the East India Company's records housed in the British Library (BL) at St Pancras in London.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

ROSIE LLEWELLYN-JONES

No other inventory in the East India Company Records matches that of Major General Claude Martin either in length or in the sheer variety of household possessions. Page after page of clerical hands ramble on through the leather-bound volume of Bengal Inventories for the year 1801. There are just over 3,000 entries, but these include multiple items like '6 pocket books, 1 shaving box and 1 case of surgical instruments', '22 sword blades' and '8 glass windows for the chariot'. If every single item were counted the total might well reach a quarter of a million, if not more. So varied were Martin's goods that to make sense of them six experts on the eighteenth century were invited to examine particular items of interest in the inventory and I am grateful for the enthusiasm with which they took on this task and for the knowledge they bring to this book, enlarging our view of Claude Martin and his world.

Inventories are the poor relation of historical research. In Britain they are often compiled by local history groups or dedicated amateurs. The Institute of Historical Research in London has a little-known collection in its library and only one book on inventories from a medieval English household has been published recently.[1] It is curious that while the well-documented period of British rule in India has been minutely picked over by writers from both countries, no-one has tried to recreate the domestic life of East India Company employees and their wives from the inventories that begin in 1780 for the three Presidencies – Bengal, Madras and Bombay. Yet these can be a rich resource and an opportunity to visit, if only in imagination, these eighteenth century houses, to see how the inhabitants lived, what they ate and drank, what they wore,

1. *Household Inventories of Helmingham Hall 1597-1741* by Moira Coleman published in 2018. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge.

how they entertained themselves and their friends, what they read and what 'ventures' or enterprises they may have started to supplement their Company salaries.

It was the Company's Accountant General who was involved in all financial matters relating to Europeans in India and this included their Wills and estates, the latter often filed with detailed inventories because it was common practice for the possessions of a European to be auctioned at an 'outcry' after his death. There were several reasons for this; the dead man was frequently in debt (living beyond one's means was endemic) and his goods were sold to pay off his creditors, usually the local *shroffs* (bankers) but occasionally other Europeans. Secondly, European widows in India rarely had money in their own name so the estate needed to be realised to provide them and any children of the marriage with sufficient funds to return home or more rarely to stay on in India in the hope of a re-marriage. Lastly, there was a premium on imported European goods that took a minimum of six months to arrive by sea, and were consequently the more highly prized when they did. New arrivals were advertised in the *Calcutta Gazette* and other newspapers; anything from smart carriages by the best London carriage makers to patent medicines, alcohol or the latest fashions. Buying such goods at an outcry was to buy second hand, but to buy cheaper. Three fine chandeliers that Claude Martin had imported, possibly from Belgium, were bought from his estate at auction by Lord Wellesley's agents to furnish the great dining room in the newly built Government House, Calcutta, where they remain today.

The term 'estate' in this context means everything owned by Claude Martin at his death. It covers his houses, everything that was in them, his business concerns, the rents owed to him by people who were renting his numerous properties, money owed to him by his business partners, money he expected to receive from goods sent abroad and debts owed to him by people in India. All these are laid out in the inventory, as well as his household items. In Martin's detailed Will, completed on 1 January 1800, the year of his death, his fortune was divided between a number of beneficiaries, including the poor at Lucknow and Chandernagore, and European prisoners held in Calcutta jails but the bulk of his fortune went to establish schools in Lucknow, Calcutta and Lyon (his home town). Each school was to be called La Martinière and all three schools, now expanded, still flourish today. Money for the schools' foundation was to be raised by auctioning Martin's very extensive assets, which is

why his possessions were so meticulously listed. His fortune at the time of his death was estimated by the *Calcutta Gazette* to be around 40 lakhs, equivalent at the time to about £200,000, but today worth nearly £32 million sterling. We do not have an overall sum of what the inventoried items fetched at the auctions which took several years to complete, but it was certainly enough, with other assets, to establish the three schools with an endowment of 18 lakhs.[2] The terms of Martin's Will were argued in the Supreme Court for years, before the first school opened in Lyon in 1826, followed by Calcutta in 1836, and Lucknow in 1845.

Martin's inventory does not follow a conventional pattern. There are no details of the rooms in the Château de Lyon, Constantia and Najafgarh, the three houses inventoried, where his numerous possessions were listed. Both the Château and Constantia survive in Lucknow (Najafgarh, near Cawnpore fell into ruin) and it is clear, looking at the first, a modestly-sized four storey building on the south bank of the river Gomti that not everything inventoried could be contained within its walls. A pencil sketch of the Château[3] drawn by Thomas Daniell shows a sturdy wall at the rear with a couple of thatched outhouses and this might be a clue. We know that there was a steam-engine building some distance from the main house, which survived until at least 1858 and there would have been other detached structures that were swept away when the adjoining Chattar Manzil palace was constructed early in the nineteenth century. The various boats and pinnaces, described in Chapter Two would have been moored on the river and in boat-houses while the extensive stables, including a *feelkhana* for the elephants were situated beyond the moat that surrounded the Château. There was a separate zenana building for Martin's mistresses adjacent to the main house and probably attached to it by a covered passageway.

We can reconstruct a little of the Château's interior by looking at the furniture it contained. Items are scattered throughout the inventory, which may reflect the Château's eccentric yet productive atmosphere. There were certainly grand areas but in others a guest may have woken to find himself sharing the room with a stuffed monkey or an antique Roman bust. There was a 'large mahogany desk' where Martin wrote his

2. I am indebted to Sami Ahmad for providing this figure and other financial information by combing through the records of the Supreme Court at Calcutta.
3. In the author's possession, it was executed in 1789 when the Daniells were staying with Martin at the Château.

letters and kept his accounts. A billiard table took up one room, which may have had raised seating around the walls, so an audience could look down on the players. 17 beds and 124 chairs were distributed throughout the Château and there were seven couches or day-beds covered in kincob (gold fabric), chintz or rattan – the latter of woven cane. Bed clothes and *rezais* (cotton quilts) were kept in a chest, and there were at least three bookcases with glazed doors. The floors were covered with soft cane matting, and there were the usual *punkahs* (fans) and oil lamps. None of the furniture is listed as Europe made, but local carpenters, working from illustrations in Thomas Chippendale's *Director*y for 'The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker' would have constructed elegant copies of chairs and tables. Guests were particularly dazzled by the mirror-lined dining room with girandoles (wall-mounted lights) ablaze with wax candles endlessly reflected across the great riverside room. Humbler domestic details are missing but can be recreated from contemporary writers. The *ghuzal khana,* or bathroom was where showers were taken, with a servant pouring water over the bather's head. Sewage systems had already been installed in the nearby British Residency, discharging into a stream at the bottom of the hill, and it is likely, given Martin's expertise with hydraulics that there was something similar in place at the Château. The kitchen, the *bawarchi khana* would have been separate from the main building, both to minimize the risk of fire and to reduce the heat generated by cooking. Clay ovens were used, with smaller, portable *angutis,* metal stoves fuelled with wood and charcoal that could be placed in a corner of the dining room to warm up prepared food.

The much larger 'palace' of Constantia was unfinished at the time of Martin's death but he had already begun to move his possessions into it, including probably the library of around 4,000 books, most of the oil-paintings and the large number of textiles described in Chapter Six which may have been intended for export in the 1801 season. Martin had outgrown the Château, the first identifiable house he had built for himself in 1782 and had he lived longer he would have established himself at Constantia where his collections could have been shown off to better advantage. As it was, a substantial number of items that he considered of particular value remained with him in the Château; silver, gold, jewellery, watches, medallions, china, glassware, and firearms as well as his own clothes and personal items like toothbrushes and hair powder. It was here that he died on 13 September 1800, surrounded by his treasures.

Martin had instructed in his Will that the Château, like Constantia and Najafgarh were not to be sold and that at least two of his favourite mistresses, Boulone and Sally, were to remain there until their new zenana at Constantia was completed. In fact the Château was sold two years after Martin's death to the nawab (ruler) of Awadh, Saadat Ali Khan, who had pestered Martin's executor, Joseph Quieros for it, until the latter gave in. The nawab would have bought the house with its fixtures and fittings including the theatre and barrel organ installed there, which is why these items don't appear in the inventory.

Unlike Martin's 'Last Will and Testament' which was published in Lyon in 1803, the inventory has never been published and in fact it remained unknown until 1975 when it was discovered in the British Museum (which then housed the present British Library). Almost simultaneously Professor Jean-Marie Lafont, who has contributed Chapter Seven and I found it, although at the time we did not know each other and were on different quests. The inventory is in fact composed of several different documents bound together, written in different hands and whimsically numbered.[4] It was compiled in the months following Martin's death and before the Calcutta auctions of his property began on 8 January 1801. (There were also local auctions in Lucknow of goods that wouldn't easily travel to Calcutta, including Martin's animals.) This seems a remarkably short time in which to prepare such an extensive inventory, to get the items packed up, to arrange boats to carry the valuable cargo down river to Calcutta, to get everything unpacked and into the auction rooms there, to place advertisements, to print a thousand copies of the auction catalogue and to allow at least one day for viewing the lots. The answer to how all this was arranged so quickly may lie with two men in Lucknow: Joseph Quieros, Martin's Spanish-born steward, estate manager and executor and Zulphikar (James) Martin, the adopted son of Martin's favourite mistress, Boulone. Quieros had been an auctioneer in Calcutta before being employed in Lucknow and after Martin's death he continued to buy and sell furniture and luxury items. Zulphikar became an auctioneer too, probably encouraged and inspired by Quieros, with whom he was on friendly terms.

The inventory is extremely detailed, which adds to the idea that it was compiled by someone familiar with Martin's household. Although it

4. See page 199 for a description of the inventory.

looks quite random at first glance, it can be broadly divided into two main parts: firstly, specific areas of the estate including the stables, the boat-house, the cellar, the armoury, the kitchen with storage for silverware, chinaware, glassware and cutlery, the library, the picture gallery and the store rooms for clothes and fabrics. Secondly, there was a joyous mix of the things that intrigued and delighted a man of the Enlightenment, as Martin was. Orreries, magic lanterns, shells, fossils, stuffed animals, 'electrical' equipment, rare coins, Chinese figures, antique busts, specimens of Sanskrit writing and everything that made up an eighteenth century 'cabinet of curiosities'. Further items were goods ready for export and sale in India including muskets and army supplies. The Château de Lyon was described by a guest as a 'perfect musæum' [5] and this is the picture we should bear in mind while reading the inventory. The closest we come to it today is at Sir John Soane's house in London, or through Zoffany's painting of the Westminster drawing room in Sir Charles Townley's house. The Château's curious structure gave onlookers the impression of a gothick castle, with its moat and drawbridge (long since vanished), its airy rooftop pavilions where Herschel's telescope was installed, and its extensive basement rooms purposely designed to flood during the monsoon season. It had a delicacy of touch in its design that aligns it with Strawberry Hill House near London, although at the same time it was a building that could be defended during the troubled eighteenth century.

Although Martin didn't specifically state that his household goods were to be auctioned, he did refer to an inventory being made after his death (Article 19 of his Will). Inventories had to be registered at the Supreme Court, Calcutta and the India Office Library & Records (now part of the British Library, London), hold a number of these 'Bengal Inventories', as they are called. The people who drew up Martin's inventory were conscientious. Nothing was too small for their attention, even if it was a few broken items in a drawer. Someone sat down and counted out over a thousand screws and 2,648 pieces of bamboo. It is clear from the detailed list of textiles that the inventory clerks, guided by Quieros, had a working knowledge of the many different fabrics at Constantia, naming them correctly and able to distinguish foreign made items from those locally produced.

5. Hastings Miscellaneous Correspondence 1775-1818. Mr Turner to Warren Hastings, 25 November 1792, f. 51, Add. Mss. 39, 871. IOL&R

Where they fell down was on Martin's scientific items: '1 philosophical instrument, purpose unknown' and '1 drawer with things belonging to the electrifying machine' were the best they could do. They were also fairly unlettered when it came to cataloguing Martin's large library. Book titles were ruthlessly abbreviated and often mis-spelled, although the number of volumes to a title were invariably correctly recorded. As an example, Jaunshind's 'Travels in Hungary' was a challenge to identify. It turned out to be a book by Robert Townson and we catch an echo of the clerk's accent as he shouted down the name from the library steps to his companion seated at the table below compiling the titles and authors. It has taken much time to identify the majority of books from the scant information provided, but we now have an unparalleled glimpse into the mind of Claude Martin from his library that enhances too our understanding of some items in the inventory.

Towards the end of his life, Martin's extravagance seemed to surprise even himself. He had commissioned a friend, Colonel Patrick Hay, to buy a silver dinner service for him in London, allocating £2,000 for its purchase. When it arrived in Lucknow it had cost over £3,000 (more than a quarter of a million pounds in today's money). Martin told his friend General Benôit de Boigne that 'a silver service that I got from Europe…is also an excess of vanity, but as I say, it doesn't matter, *après moi la fin du monde'*.[6] But it wasn't the end of the world after Martin's death because he had left careful instructions on how his fortune was to be used for charitable purposes, an enduring legacy seen today in La Martinière schools in India and France.

Claude Martin's life

Who was the man whose extraordinary collection of possessions form the subject of this book? For those unfamiliar with his story, it is summarized here.[7] Martin was the fourth child born to Fleury Martin and his wife Anne Vaginay on 4 January 1735 in Lyon. Fleury was a master vinegar maker, as his forefathers had been. It was a solid, important profession and young Claude was initially expected to follow in the family tradition. Following his mother's death from tuberculosis

6. Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie *A Man of the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century India: The Letters of Claude Martin 1766-1800* Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003 p371.

7. For a full biography see the author's book *A Very Ingenious Man: Claude Martin in Early Colonial India* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992.

ten months after Claude's birth, his father remarried a younger woman, Jeanne-Marie Martinet and nine half-brothers and sisters were born from this second marriage. The boys had a simple education at the local parish school, taught by Catholic priests. Claude was apprenticed in February 1749 to a silk manufacturer. Lyon is still noted for its silk, though only one atelier remains today. 1750 saw a bad silk harvest and over-speculation by traders and what may have seemed to young Claude a more attractive occupation than that of vinegar maker, now offered far fewer prospects. By the end of September 1751 he had broken his apprenticeship contract with the silk maker and visited the local army recruiting office of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales,* the French equivalent of the English East India Company.

The only family legend to survive among Martin's descendants, relates how Claude persuaded his half-brother Louis to enlist in the army as well, to the horror of his stepmother Jeanne-Marie who

> ran after the recruiters, and by powerful supplications, got the engagements annulled. The younger boy gave in. But Claude Martin, unshakeable in his resolution, declared that he would go and seek his fortune in a foreign country. At which, his step-mother, in tears, gave him a purse of 24 coins, boxed his ears and said "Go, you obstinate one, but don't ever come back unless you are in a carriage." [8]

There is a certain poignancy in this when we learn that at his death Martin owned nineteen wheeled carriages, some imported from the finest London coach makers, though he never returned to Europe.

Claude left Lyon the day following this incident for L'Orient, where he spent three months training and embarked on *Le Marchault* on 9 December 1751 for French-held Pondicherry, in southern India. Arriving there with his fellow recruits in July 1752, they were met on the quayside by General Joseph François Dupleix, governor general of French India, who described them witheringly as 'a collection of the vilest rabble', not a very auspicious beginning to Claude's Indian career. Nevertheless, he became a dragoon, a cavalryman, and his horse-riding skills remained with him throughout his life. By December 1755 he had risen to become of member of the bodyguard for the governor of Pondicherry and the following year he is mentioned in a troop review at Porto Novo, south of Pondicherry. Two recently

8. ibid pp5-6.

discovered letters[9] written by Martin to an unknown recipient in 1757 and 1758 show that he was stationed at Guntur, a district inland from the Bay of Bengal which had been ceded to the French by the Nizam of Hyderabad. The letters indicate that Martin was already acting as an entrepreneur, sending 24 buffalo to the recipient and organising a group of army suppliers. In the second letter he praises the local women, especially a particular female friend 'who people say embellishes each day and whose admirers can only increase in number'.

There is no doubt that Martin stood out among the 'rabble' of his fellow recruits. He was literate and wrote a good hand, he was handsome, with no criminal past and above all, he was a born entrepreneur, always at hand to supply items needed by the officers in his unit. He must have thought very hard about deserting the French army where he had clearly forged for himself a good position, but the truth is that France's power in India was declining, while that of England was in the ascendant. On 9 May 1760, Martin, with a fellow countryman, rode through the hedge of prickly pear surrounding Pondicherry into the English camp which was besieging the French-held town. Sir Eyre Coote, commanding the English troops greeted the two deserters sympathetically and five days later, described them as 'men of spirit. They have already been of service to me and are willing to go upon any desperate Action.'[10] Martin was given an ensign's pay of Rs3.10 annas a day, though he was not formally commissioned as ensign until 1763.

His career is now easier to trace through the English Company records and included an escape from a sinking ship, the *Fateh-i-Islam* during a voyage to bring other French deserters to Bengal. He became a lieutenant in 1764 and was stationed in Lucknow the following year, his first visit to the then small town that was to become his permanent home. Rising through the ranks, he was made a captain in 1766, but his support later that year for the 'white mutiny' at Monghyr over soldiers' salaries was a serious, almost fatal, blow to his career. He was dismissed from the army, and was due to be deported to England (not to his own country), when his skill as a surveyor saved him and he was employed

9. Published in full in *Le Major General Claude Martin 1735-1800* by Barale, Georges, Lafont, Jean-Marie & Yon-Calvet, Marguerite (eds.) Académie des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Lyon: Lyon, 2019 pp35-3.
10. op cit *A Very Ingenious Man* p2.

by James Rennell, the cartographer who was compiling the *Bengal Atlas*. This included two views that Martin had made in the early 1760s, while on military duties in Bengal. Rennell sent Martin to north east India where he surveyed the Teesta river and subsequently the city of Calcutta. Two years after his dismissal from the Company army, he was reinstated, along with his fellow mutineers, in a general pardon. By 1773 Martin starts to appear in the letters of a fellow Frenchman, Antoine-Louis Polier, with whom he remained good friends until the latter's murder after his return to France. Polier was living in Faizabad, then the capital of nawabi-ruled Awadh and Martin was based here for a couple of years, at one point surveying the newly captured fort at Agra[11] at the request of Warren Hastings, the governor general of India.

When the fourth nawab of Awadh, Asaf-ud-daula, decided to transfer the capital ninety miles west from Faizabad to Lucknow, Martin saw an opportunity to leave his peripatetic life and apply for the post of Superintendent of the nawab's arsenal, which was situated in old Lucknow at Golaganj. After 'much solicitation' and no doubt expensive gifts to the right people, Martin's job at the arsenal was confirmed and he was able to settle down in Lucknow and begin exploiting his talents for money-making and collecting that were to lead to his enormous fortune and the great number of items inventoried in his house. His rank was increased to major and at the same time he was exempted from further military duty. The years following Martin's appointment in 1776 were immensely profitable for him. On his arrival in Lucknow he had bought a young girl called Boulone Lise, who had fled from her well-born Muslim family after her father had killed one of her sisters. It was a charitable act, as Martin recounts it (we have no independent information) and he had Boulone properly educated. She subsequently became his mistress, one of seven young women whom he kept in luxury and who shared his bed. He invested in property, then as now, a sensible move. He bought the Château Barthélémy at Charbonnières, near Lyon in 1780 and two years later completed the building of his own Château de Lyon in Lucknow. He also bought houses in the vicinity of the British Residency in Lucknow which he rented out to Europeans and established Captain Bazaar, a row of shops, below the Residency hill.

11. see *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I'jaz-i Arsalani (Persian Letters, 1773-1779) of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier* ed. Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi, Delhi 2001, pp196-7.

Although Martin complained that the arsenal job paid poorly and that he sometimes had to purchase equipment out of his own pocket, there is no doubt that it was extremely lucrative in other ways. The British Resident to the nawab's Court, Nathaniel Middleton, mentions Martin's perquisites (and his own), which were enhanced by providing iron and steel to the nawab, no doubt at a premium. After Martin's death it was suggested by Viscount Valentia (George Annesley) and others, that Martin made his fortune by selling European trinkets and trifles to the nawab Asaf-ud-daula. He certainly provided the extravagant nawab with some items, but at the same time Martin was loaning him money, at one point as much as 25 lakhs, which he eventually got back, though without the anticipated interest of 12%. It may be through Martin's other money-lending ventures (for nearly every European of note seemed to owe him money), that he became such a wealthy man, buying more properties in Calcutta, Cawnpore and Chandernagore but there must have been some good stroke of fortune that provided the initial capital, something that has not yet been teased out.

Freemasonry gave Martin the opportunity to mix with the highest Company officials, although he remained an outsider, someone who tried too hard to buy friends and influence with his over-costly, extravagant gifts. To many of the well-born British, with the acute snobbery and class consciousness of the era, exacerbated by the distance from home, he was seen as a funny little Frenchman who burbled on with a notable accent, often pausing for the right English word. To the French he was a deserter, something which has never quite been acknowledged, even today. His closest friends were fellow countrymen or other Europeans, men like Antoine-Louis Polier, General Benôit de Boigne, and Johann Zoffany. His extraordinary achievements of installing hydraulic systems to cool his houses or using the latest technology to send hot-air balloons up into the Lucknow skies were reported as amusing curiosities, with no acknowledgment or appreciation of the skills behind them.

As a man who practised the Enlightenment virtues of treating his servants decently, believing in female education, examining and recording the natural world around him and remaining uncowed by outdated religious beliefs, none of this was put to his credit during his lifetime. His interaction with men of learning like Tafuzzal Hussain Khan has not been acknowledged and it was only the recent chance find of a painting in a Scottish country house that confirmed these two men had met each other at the nawab's durbar (a formal occasion at

Court).[12] Martin thought highly of Tafuzzal and aligned him with the 'good clever men' that Asaf-ud-daula's government so badly needed. Tafuzzal, who spoke idiomatic English, and knew Latin and Greek, translated some of Sir Isaac Newton's books and it is possible that he used the copies in Martin's library to do so. Certainly the two men shared a deep interest in science and mathematics.

Martin was appointed major general in 1795, a rank which gave him enormous satisfaction and is inscribed on his tomb. This was after his participation in two military expeditions, the first to accompany Lord Cornwallis as ADC in the third Mysore war of 1791 and the second against the Rohillas, a troublesome group on the border of Awadh in 1794. A minor expedition in 1798 ended when Martin fell ill and this was to be his last military adventure. For years he had suffered from the effects of venereal disease, as he believed, first contracted in the early 1770s, not the last boy to do so, as he remarked, and for which he paid 'pretty dear'. He also began to suffer from bladder stones, as he diagnosed it, and by 1782 was in such constant pain that he took the unorthodox step of treating himself by inserting a thin polished steel wire into the urethra through a catheter and filing doggedly away until small fragments of stone were discharged in his urine. He described this auto-operation in detail to the Royal College of Surgeons in London[13] and he also detailed the effects of what was probably an enlarged prostate. The problems of his urinary tract rendered him infertile. Martin never fathered any children of his own and thus had no immediate family in India. He remained active almost until his death, continuing to correspond with interesting people. His last extant letter was to the President of the Board of Agriculture in London, dated 5 September 1800, a week before his death, in which he admitted he was not well 'having been attacked with the liver, and now free; but the urinary passage is still very painful….'[14]

Instructions had been left in the Will that Martin's body was to be embalmed and placed in a leaden coffin (there is some sheet lead in my godown, he added helpfully), then to be placed in a thick coffin of shisham wood. The first attempt at embalment by Dr Reed, the

12. see my forthcoming article 'Indian Treasures from a Scottish Country House' in the Hong Kong art magazine, *Orientations,* 2020.
13. op cit *Le Major General Claude Martin* pp65-67.
14. op cit *Man of the Enlightenment* pp398-9.

local man who had attended Martin in his last hours, was evidently unsuccessful for two more doctors had to be called in on 24 September, one of them probably J.H. Boutflower, the assistant surgeon in Bengal, who was paid 25 gold mohurs.[15] Martin was laid to rest in the centre of the octagonal basement room at Constantia, where he was guarded by four life-size wooden sepoys, their arms reversed in mourning.

The Households

Claude Martin was a gregarious man to the end of his life. He told his friend Benôit de Boigne that he could not enjoy a more agreeable moment than 'when my house is full of good company, who, to tell the truth, are not the sort of people of such high rank as those whom you noted, but of generals, colonels, majors, Residents, captains etc. etc. and the more I have company that does honour to my table, and the more often that I can have it, the greater my happiness becomes and my house, I can say, is never empty'.[16] He is writing about the Château de Lyon here, and not only was this never empty, the attached zenana was pretty full too. His seven mistresses lived here, Boulone with two of her sisters and fourteen year old Sally, the illegitimate daughter of a former Resident. Two of Antoine-Louis Polier's abandoned mistresses were here, Jugnu and Zinat, for whom no provision had been made, plus a third woman, Durdanna, who was the widow of Martin's clerk, Matthew Michael. It is possible that Durdanna had been another of Polier's mistresses before her marriage and also possible that she was the mother of a 'little Polier'. Everyone was provided for in Martin's Will, his favourites with extremely generous life pensions and clothing allowances. Zulphikar (James), Boulone's adopted son, who had been 'a sickly forlorn boy' when Martin bought him as an infant from his Georgian father, was part of the household too and may later have married Sally.

Martin's mistresses had their own female servants, five in all, who would have had rooms in the zenana, and there were two eunuchs named Mahboob and Amber, almost certainly African, brought to India by Arab slave traders. Other African slaves, whom Martin freed on his death were the oddly named Sans Chagrin, Dick, Anee seed (sheedi) and Dyoh Coffice (probably kaffir). There was also 'a woman that has

15. see Bengal Inventory for 1802. Post-mortem accounts of Martin's estate. IOL&R
16. op cit *Man of the Enlightenment* p393.

always been wearing mans cloths and pass for eunuque under the name of Myan Jawar'. The head servants were the Qadir brothers, Matchow, Chhota, and their elder brother Rajabally. The Qadir's relatives were employed too, including Didar Baksh, Karim Baksh, Ramjan, Jumma and Amdow. Pir Ali and his son Faizal Ali were further 'good servants'. Joseph Quieros has already been mentioned, and it was Joseph's wife, Theresa, who was Martin's cook, assisted by kitchen staff. Martin's willingness to employ families of servants indicates not only his generosity to those who might have struggled to find employment, but his wish to have family structures around him too, with their unlimited capacity for gossip and chit-chat. Tucked away in corners or working in the Château's outhouses were temporary residents including artists painting botanical specimens and the diamond cutters. It was a mark of Martin's wealth that not only could he afford superb diamonds, but the workmen to cut them too, something that even the nawabs did not have. Stable hands lived on site to tend to the horses, elephants and camels and in a well-run household, as this was, there were dairy hands, carpenters, gardeners and boatmen as well as armed security guards and *chowkidars* (watchmen).

Constantia remained unfinished at the time of Martin's death although he may have hosted some dinners here, anxious to show off his oil-paintings in their new setting, the mirrors and busts lining the walls and of course the extravagant silver table ware. Some of the items listed at Constantia in the inventory were waiting to be installed, like the marble slabs which were later laid as flooring and the plaster medallions, inventoried as 'earthen beads' that line the door frames today.

Najafgarh, the *jaghir*[17] on the west bank of the river Ganges, some seventeen miles south of Cawnpore was a centre of light industry. At the right season the indigo makers would arrive and the rose-maker too, distilling the perfumed flower heads into attar. Potatoes, newly introduced from the Americas via Europe, and unknown to Mughal cuisine, were being grown and tried out in the local markets. Silk and other fabrics woven locally in the workrooms built by Martin were

17. a *jaghir* was a piece of land often given as a gift to someone who had the right to collect the land revenue tax from it, but not outright ownership. Najafgarh had been given to the Mughal official Najaf Khan (hence the name) and on his dath, the revenue rights passed to two of Martin's friends, Antoine-Louis Polier and Alexander Hannay Martin bought the revenue rights from them in 1785 and greatly improved the estate.

collected and baled here, ready for the journey downriver to Calcutta. A decent table was kept for Martin's visits and some of his clothing too, including shoe buckles. On the river was a 24 oar pinnace and on land 21 brass cannons because this was an isolated area, enclosed by two enormous brick gateways.

Returning to the Château where Martin lived for the last twenty years of his life, we can, with a little imagination, conjure up a typical day in the late 1790s. The morning has been busy dictating letters in English and Persian to his clerks, taking a bag of rupees out of the large treasure chest, cemented into the floor of an upper room, as a loan to someone and making sure he signs the receipt confirming the 12% interest to be charged. A simple luncheon prepared by Mrs Quieros is on the table, 'mainly fishes' as Martin preferred and a selection of green vegetables. There is no alcohol, because he had found that it did not agree with him and exacerbated his urinary problems. Later in the afternoon, the talking newspaper arrives, a man primed with news from the nawabi Court, not quite a spy, but certainly someone who knows what is going on, and Martin's knowledge of local and wider events is acute. The evening sees the usual large dinner for friends and acquaintances, as described to de Boigne, with entertaining demonstrations of the toy theatre, music from the barrel organ, pictures projected by the magic lantern and perhaps a fleeting glimpse of electricity, captured for a moment in a jar. When the guests have gone, a mistress may arrive from the zenana. If she doesn't, there is enough to entertain Martin in the library where he can choose books on travel, history, contemporary events, and recent scientific discoveries. Portfolios of paintings are ready for inspection. The familiar but unnerving howling of jackals comes from the opposite bank, while the river's constant ripples are reflected by the wall mirrors on to the elaborate ceiling. For the moment, all is well.

CHAPTER TWO

TRAVELLING WITH CLAUDE MARTIN

JOHN FORD

The artist William Hodges wrote of the years in the last quarter of the eighteenth century: 'The mixture of European and Asiatic manners, which may be observed in Calcutta, is curious: – coaches, phaetons, single horse chaises, with the pallankeens and hackeries of the natives….. form a sight perhaps more novel and extraordinary than any city in the world can present to a stranger.'[1] It was at this time that the inventory of Claude Martin's effects recorded that he possessed nineteen wheeled carriages which included a variety of European-designed and built carriages and also Indian palankeens (palanquins) and hackeries. Such a collection combining style and utility was of course to be expected of Martin.

The revolution in carriage design in the latter half of the eighteenth century, first in France and then in England, persuaded Martin to acquire the latest designs of carriages available in the London market. Unfortunately these beautifully engineered vehicles proved impractical in India outside the great cities for a number of reasons. For the traveller in Europe in the later eighteenth century the post-horse system allowed long distance journeys by carriage to be made in continuous stages of approximately ten miles. Fresh horses would then be introduced to the public stage or mail coaches or hired to the coaches, chariots, phaetons or other private carriages. The stages could thus be continued throughout the day and the hardy traveller might hope to journey up to a hundred miles in a day on improving road surfaces navigable for twelve months of the year.

The demands made upon Martin and the traveller in India over and above his contemporaries in Europe were of a quite different order.

1. Hodges, William *Travels in India, during the years 1780, 1781, 1782 & 1783* London: Printed for the author, 1793, p16