COLONIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Please note this is an unauthorised translation of the original Dutch text of Recommendation SL-2023-3, Gouden Kastane

Object	Golden kasthāné (sabre)
Current owner	State of the Netherlands
Custodian	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Restitution request from	The Republic of Sri Lanka
Date of restitution request	4 March 2021, specified on 18 November 2022
Recommendation number	SL-2023-3
Date of recommendation	12 May 2023
Composition of Committee	mr. L.Y. Gonçalves-Ho Kang You (chair), Professor L.N.K. van Broekhoven, Professor R. Raben (members)
Secretary	J.A. van Ooijen MA

1. The object

The kasthāné is a ceremonial sabre made of iron and gold, and inlaid with precious stones, including diamonds and rubies. The kasthāné is richly decorated with a solid gold hilt, ornamented with four lion heads (simhas) and two deities (Saraswati and Sri Lakshmi).
The kasthāné has a gold-coated wooden scabbard. The shape and decoration are typical of kasthāné from the eighteenth-century Kingdom of Kandy. The kasthāné is registered in the Rijksmuseum collection under inventory number NG-NM-560.

2. The policy framework

The assessment in this recommendation has been made within the framework of the *Policy Vision on Collections in a Colonial Context* of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.[1] The policy vision is based on the *Colonial Collection and a Recognition of Injustice* report by the Council for Culture.[2]
A restitution request may be submitted by a State where the Netherlands exercised colonial power over an extended period of time.

The assessment parameters are summarized in the Policy Vision as follows:

The Committee first establishes whether the provenance research is sufficient.

The Committee then establishes whether an involuntary loss of possession has occurred. This entails an assessment of whether it can be established to a reasonable degree of certainty that the requested

[1] Policy vision, 29 January 2021, https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2021/01/29/rapport-beleidsvisie-collecties-uit-een-koloniale-context
[2] Report, 7 October 2020 Colonial Collection and a Recognition of Injustice | Advies | Raad voor Cultuur

cultural object was were involuntarily lost in a country where the Netherlands exercised colonial authority for an extended period of time. If it is established that this is the case, an unconditional return of the cultural object will be recommended.

If it cannot be established on the basis of the provenance that there has been an involuntary loss of possession, and the cultural objects and the cultural objects are of a particular cultural, historical, or religious significance to the country of origin, the Committee will make a considered judgement, based on the various interests involved. The importance of restitution to the country of origin should be weighed in reasonableness and fairness against other relevant interests.

Relevant interests may include the cultural significance of the cultural object to the country of origin, the communities concerned in the countries of origin and in the Netherlands, the significance for the Collection Nederland, the future conditions in which the items would be kept, and public accessibility. Items can be of great importance to national and regional traditions and the identity of a country, people, community, or individual. The importance of a cultural object will often be different to the Netherlands than to the country of origin. For Dutch persons with roots in the countries of origin too, cultural objects in Dutch museums may have a special meaning.

If the item whose restitution has been requested originates from a former colony of another power, the Committee also makes a considered judgement .The importance of restitution to the country of origin should be weighed in reasonableness and fairness against other relevant interests. However, the rectification of an injustice will have to be the starting point in the assessment. In this case, the injustice has not been caused by the Netherlands, but the Netherlands, as the current owner of the items, is the only party capable of rectifying this injustice.

If the Committee recommends that an item or items be returned to the State requesting them, account should be taken – in accordance with the Heritage Act and the *Policy Vision on Collections in a Colonial Context* of the State Secretary for Culture and Media – of the public collections disposal procedure; the recommendation by the Committee should also be regarded as a recommendation on the indispensability and irreplaceability of the item as meant in Section 4.18 of the Heritage Act.

3. The procedure

On 18 November 2022, the Republic of Sri Lanka submitted a request to the State Secretary for Culture and Media for the restitution of the golden kasthāné that was looted during the attack on Kandy in 1765. The State Secretary asked the Colonial Collections Committee (hereinafter, 'the Committee') to advise on the request.
The custodian of the object, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, has carried out provenance research and issued a report on the matter (Appendix 1).

The Committee discussed the restitution request and the provenance report at its meeting of 9 January 2023. The Committee heard Dr Alicia Schrikker in her capacity of provenance researcher. As she is also a member of the Committee, she did not take part in the Committee's substantive deliberations or decision-making on the object.
The Committee had no additional questions about the provenance research.

In January 2023, Committee member Dr Schrikker held talks in Colombo with various representatives of the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, the senior presidential advisor on security, the Director General of the Department of National Museums, and the Dutch ambassador. She discussed

with them how the restitution requests were being processed and consulted them on possible subsequent action.

On 24 March 2023, the Committee spoke with Taco Dibbits, General Director, and Dr Valika Smeulders, Head of the Department of History, in their capacities as representatives of the Rijksmuseum, the custodian of the collection. They stated their support for the restitution policy and their belief in the importance of working in partnership with the country from which the items originated.
An English translation of the provenance research was shared with the Sri Lanka representatives. The provenance research gave no rise to any additional questions.

On 24 March 2023, the Committee discussed the restitution request again and decided to make the recommendations shown below.

4. The provenance research

The provenance research was carried out by Dr Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart RMa, in partnership with Senarath Wickramasinghe of the National Museum in Colombo. At the time of the investigation, Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart were employed as provenance researchers on behalf of the PPROCE project and employed by the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

The report of the investigation is appended to these recommendations (*Appendix 1*). The contents of the report are regarded as part of this recommendation. In a summarized form, the researchers set out the following findings in the report.

"This highly ornamented Sri Lankan kasthāné, or sabre, has a hilt made of solid gold, shaped with four lion heads (simhas) and two female deities (Saraswati and Sri Lakshmi). It is decorated with 136 diamonds and 13 rubies. The wooden scabbard is coated with gold. The kasthāné is presented in the Rijksmuseum as a spoil of war, obtained by the VOC during the war with Kandy and its occupation of the palace in 1765. The object analysis indicates that this kasthāné was made in the royal Four Workshops of the Kandyan Kingdom (pattal hatara). Experts in Sri Lankan arms and armour further suggest that the kasthāné was the personal property of King Kirti Sri Rajasinha (r. 1747-1782). These conclusions are based on the material, art-historical features of the object and on information from scholarly literature.

The object most likely arrived in the collection of the Dutch Stadtholders (Willem IV and Willem V) prior to 1795 and was recorded first in 1816. However, it is not exactly clear what route the kasthāné took from Kandy into the collection of the Dutch Stadtholders. The eighteenth-century archival trails of this object are incomplete. Various scholars have suggested that this object was among the spoils of war, which Dutch East India Company Governor of Ceylon, Lubbert Jan van Eck (in office 1762 – 1765), collected after the siege of the palace in 1765 and which were sent to his heirs in the Dutch Republic in 1768. There is indeed a description on the list, which was drawn up in Colombo on 22 October 1765, of an object that could be identified as this golden kasthāné. However, this identification requires some qualification: minor inconsistencies were found in the way the object was described at the time.

We have found no documentation of the transfer of this object by any of the heirs of Van Eck to the collection of the Stadtholder. At the same time, we also have not come across evidence that would suggest another provenance. The exact moment of arrival of the golden kasthāné in the collection

simply remained unrecorded. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Kandyan provenance was forgotten, and the gold mounted kasthāné was described as Javanese as late as 1957. Since 1965, the kasthāné has been catalogued as spoils of the Dutch Kandyan war by the Rijksmuseum together with the golden pihiya, the silver kasthāné, and Lewke's cannon."

5. Assessing the restitution request

The restitution request was submitted by a State where the Netherlands exercised colonial power over an extended period of time, and therefore the *Policy Vision on Collections in a Colonial Context* is applicable.

The Committee is of the opinion that the investigation was conducted properly and provides a sufficiently solid basis on which to make a recommendation. A thorough source investigation has been carried out and existing knowledge has been critically evaluated. The report gives a good representation of the available information.

The Committee examined whether an involuntary loss of possesion was involved, as meant in the policy framework. In doing so, the Committee considered the following.

The report contains four key questions designed to clarify the matter of provenance. As well as the archive examination, material and art-historic research have played a major role. The report raises the following questions.

Is it apparent from the material investigation whether the kasthāné had a royal origin or owner?

Based on the material investigation and the decoration, it has been established that this kasthāné was made in the royal workshops at Kandy. From the quality, opulence and sophistication of the products from these workshops, it is possible to deduce the status of the commissioning party or recipient. In this case, it concerns a kasthāné with a solid gold hilt (not gold-plated), richly inlaid with 136 diamonds and 13 rubies. Decorative motifs on the kasthāné that specifically indicate royal origins are the heads of lions (simha) and the depiction of the goddesses Saraswati (goddess of wisdom) and Sri Lakshmi (goddess of prosperity), both of whom are also prominently depicted on the throne of the kings of Kandy. The gold-coated scabbard is also richly ornamented.
Experts in historic Sri Lankan weapons who have been consulted have concluded from the above that this must have been a royal ceremonial kasthāné, one of the symbols of the monarchy, or regalia.

What is known in the museum and in literature about the origin of the kasthāné?

In 1765, Kandy and the royal palace were attacked and destroyed by Dutch troops led by the Dutch governor of Ceylon, Lubbert Jan van Eck. Assuming the opinions of the experts are correct, that the kasthāné formed part of the regalia, it must have been the property of King Kirti Sri Rajasinha at the time of the attack, who ruled Kandy from 1747 to 1782.

What is known about the items looted during the attack on Kandy by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1765, and to what extent do the archives of the VOC and of the Van Eck family show that the kasthāné was among those items?

As Kandy and the palace were seized and looted, many objects were taken, including jewels and weapons. Van Eck died shortly after Kandy was taken. His successor, Iman Willem Falck, informed the executors of Van Eck's estate that ten items in the estate were spoils of war from Kandy. This included a "sword with a golden hilt and its gold-coated scabbard", that could be the golden kasthāné. These items were transferred to the VOC in Colombo. The "sword with a golden hilt" was released by the

board of the VOC in 1768 to Van Eck's estate and shipped to his heirs in the Dutch Republic. The Van Eck family archives list a weapon with the same description as that on the VOC list.

What route did the kasthāné take after it arrived in the Netherlands, and how was it presented?

It is thought that the golden kasthāné became part of the collection of Stadtholder Willem V and was displayed as war booty in his 'Cabinet of Curiosities' in The Hague. Eyewitness accounts state that weapons looted from the king of Kandy were among the items displayed in the Cabinet of Curiosities: "(…) unter den kunstsachen eine ganz silberne kanone mit golde ubersogen, graviert, und mit edelgesteinen besezt, welche die Hollander in ihren lesten kriege, met den koninge von Candi erbeutet haben, und viele andre sehr kostbare Waffen". Nonetheless, the kasthāné does not feature on the inventory of the collection of Willem V. However, it is known that the inventory is far from complete, and the possibility that the kasthāné was part of the collection cannot therefore be excluded.

The earliest mention in a Dutch collection registry that in all probability concerns this kasthāné is that in the Royal Cabinet of Rarities (Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, KKZ) under number A.154: "A hussar sabre with a solid gold hilt with brilliants and two rubies – in a gold-coated scabbard." This list concerns items that were transferred to the KKZ from the collection of King Willem I, the son of Stadtholder Willem V, in 1816. The reference to two rubies rather than 13 can be explained by the fact that the kasthāné has two rubies that are larger and more prominently positioned than the remaining eleven. Based on a reference by Jan van Campen, it is thought that the 1816 list corresponds to the 'Lists of gold and silver tableware, paintings, and clothing taken in January 1795' that Stadtholder Willem V took with him when exiled to England 1795 or had placed in safety at Schloss Oranienstein in Germany. This means the kasthāné must have been in the Netherlands before 1795.
In a description by the director of the KKZ from 1823, mention is made of the Sri Lankan origins of the group of objects in which the kasthāné was among the items displayed. A KKZ catalogue from 1824 lists "an Oriental sabre, with a solid gold hilt, inlaid with brilliants and two rubies, in a gold-coated scabbard".

From the KKZ, the kasthāné found its way to the collection of the Rijksmuseum in 1927, via the Netherlands Museum of History and Art (Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst). The provenance investigation showed that the fact that the object has Sri Lankan origins had been lost for a substantial period of time, certainly until 1965.

The Committee's deliberations

The Committee is of the opinion that the considerations of the provenance report make it likely that the golden kasthāné, inventory number NG-NM-560, does originate from the palace at Kandy and that the kasthāné was looted as a spoil of war in 1765. Although the description in the Willem V inventory lists is lacking and the description in the KKZ register refers to a "hussar sabre" and two rubies, the description is sufficiently similar to assume that the references do indeed concern this golden kasthāné. In the judgement of the Committee, the various witness statements and the 1823 and 1824 descriptions provide a sufficient basis to support this. The numerical listings of the museums also show that it concerns the same object. Nor are there any other similar objects in Dutch collections. Despite an active search, no indication has been found to suggest that the golden kasthāné was brought to the Netherlands in other circumstances.

The Rijksmuseum has itself assumed for decades that it was originally looted and there are no other indications that suggest anything else.

On the basis of the aforementioned reasons, contained in the provenance report, the Committee is of the view that it can be established to a reasonable degree of certainty that the requested cultural object was involuntarily lost in a country where the Netherlands exercised colonial authority for an extended period of time. On the basis of the foregoing, the Committee recommends that the kasthāné be unconditionally returned on account of the involuntary loss of possession.

The Committee has been asked to advise on the application of Section 4.18 of the Heritage Act if it recommends that the requested objects be returned. In the view of the Committee, the rectification of a past injustice prevails in this case and Section 4.19 of the Heritage Act does not therefore apply.

6. The recommendation

The Committee has assessed the restitution request and recommends to the State Secretary the unconditional restitution of the kasthāné with inventory number NG-NM-560 to the Republic of Sri Lanka.

This recommendation was adopted by the Colonial Collections Committee on 12 May 2023.

The chair	The secretary
Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You	Jo'anne van Ooijen

Appendices

1. Provenance report regarding Kasthāné with scabbard [Golden sabre] (A.F. Schrikker, D. van den Boogaart, March 2022)

Provenance report regarding Kastane met schede *[Golden sabre]*

Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart
In cooperation with Senarath Wickramasinghe (National Museum, Colombo)

Photo 1: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. NG-NM-560

Custodian	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Current possessor	Dutch State
Current location	Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Inventory number	NG-NM-560
Material/technique	gold (metal) diamond (mineral) ruby (mineral) wood (plant material) iron (metal) forging / casting
Measurements	length 78.5 cm length 65.5 cm × width 5.5 cm width 3 cm width 11 cm

Summary of findings

This highly ornamented Sri Lankan kasthāné, or sabre, has a hilt made of solid gold, shaped with four lion heads (simhas) and two female deities (Saraswati and Sri Lakshmi). It is decorated with 136 diamonds and 13 rubies. The wooden scabbard is coated with gold. The kasthāné is presented in the Rijksmuseum as a spoil of war, obtained by the VOC during the war with Kandy and its occupation of the palace in 1765. The object analysis indicates that this kasthāné was made in the royal Four Workshops of the Kandyan kingdom (pattal hatara). Experts in Sri Lankan arms and armour further suggest that the kasthāné was personal property of king Kirti Sri Rajasinha (r. 1747-1782). These conclusions are based on the material, art-historical features of the object and on information from scholarly literature.

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Reconstruction provenance

Seventeenth/ Eighteenth century

Made in the Paṭṭal Hatara. The Four Workshops of the King of Kandy.

P.H.D.H De Silva and Senerath Wickramasinghe, *Ancient Swords, Daggers, and Knives in Sri Lankan Museums* (Colombo: Dept. of National Museums, 2007).

[no date] – [1765?]

Kingdom of Kandy

1765-1768

Colombo, guarded by Governor Willem Iman Falck

[1768?] - 1816

Presumably stadholders' collections, Dutch Republic

1795-1816

Probably brought along in exile with Willem V to England and later (maybe) taken to Brunswick, Germany; Slot Oranienstein, Germany

Jan van Campen, De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer (1737-1807) en zijn verzameling Chinese voorwerpen (Uitgeverij Verloren, 2000), 215;Tom Quist PPROCE Report RV-360-6021.

1816 – 1875

Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, the Hague

NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 843, 'Lijst van voorwerpen op last van Koning Willem I overgedragen aan het Kon. Kab. v. Zeldzaamheden te 's-Gravenhage' [List of objects transferred to the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in The Hague on the orders of King William I], 1816.

Original document in: NL-HaNA, 2.04.01, inv.no. 4030, 'Bijlage 1. Degens, Sabels en Stokken' [Attachment 1. Swords, Sabers and Sticks], dated 6 July 1816, no. 37.

1875 – 1927

Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst

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

1927 – now

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Introduction and context

This provenance report focuses on NG-NM-560, a golden-hilted kasthāné currently displayed in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam in room 1.5: *The Netherlands overseas*. The current narrative adopted by institutions and researchers is that this kasthāné, together with a golden pihiya (NG-NM-7114), a silver-hilted kasthāné (NG-NM-7112), a cannon (NG-NM-1015), and two wall-guns (NG-NM-519 and 520) were spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war (1762-1766) and obtained during the violent, ruthless plundering of the Kandyan palace in 1765.

In this provenance report we assess the material and archival evidence that has been used to support the presentation of golden hilted kasthāné as part of the spoils of war and discuss the current gaps in our knowledge regarding this object. In the report we will therefore answer the following questions:

1) Which material elements support the thesis that the golden kasthāné was of royal origin?
2) What knowledge is available in the museum and the literature regarding the provenance of the object?
3) What is known about the objects that were looted during the siege of the palace and town of Kandy in 1765 by the VOC?

4) To what extent do the eighteenth-century archival records from the VOC, the family archive of Van Eck, and the Royal Archives (KHA) provide us with concrete evidence that connects the golden kasthāné to the Kandyan-Dutch war of 1762-1766?

5) What route did the golden kasthāné take through the Dutch collections?

The research was conducted in collaboration with experts from the Sri Lankan National Museum in Colombo and the conservation and science department of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Object information

The golden kasthāné was analysed in the Atelier of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam on 25 November 2021 together with colleagues from the conservation and science department. The metal measurements and analysis of the stones were shared with Senarath Wickramasinghe from the Sri Lankan National Museum. He further analysed the decoration on golden kasthāné with the help of a series of detailed photos that were made on 18 May 2021 and on 25 November 2021. Based on these and previous data, his earlier publications on Kandyan arms, Senarath Wickramasinghe provided us with his analysis of the object, which we have integrated in this overall object analysis.

Kasthāné were ceremonial swords or sabres and not used as fighting swords. The kasthāné came in different qualities, and can in general be divided into two categories: 'up-country' kasthāné (referring to the mountainous area of the Kandyan kingdom) and 'low-country' (referring to the island's maritime regions that were partially occupied by the Dutch) kasthāné. Kasthāné from the low country (i.e. the area under Dutch rule) were coarser, both in design and in material used.[1] The Rijksmuseum holds an example of such a low country kasthāné: NG-1982-18, in this case the hilt is made of carved wood.[2] For the Kandyan nobility, kasthāné were part of their formal custom when in function. Kasthāné were typical gifts from the Kandyan king to his highest nobles in reward for their service and on occasion were used as diplomatic gifts.[3] The king had decorative objects such as jewellery, swords, and chains made in the Four royal workshops (*pattal hatara*) for this purpose.[4] The craftsmen from the pattal hatara worked almost exclusively for the court and their positions were hereditary. The Four Workshops were divided, respectively, into the "jewel," "crown," "golden sword," and "throne" workshops. Kasthāné produced in the royal workshops were all high quality, yet the exact quality in terms of design, decoration, and material of the kasthāné signified the rank to whom the object was gifted: the more decorated (i.e. use of figures, gems, silver, gold), the higher the rank of the receiver.[5]

[1] P.H.D.H De Silva and Senerath Wickramasinghe, *Ancient Swords, Daggers, and Knives in Sri Lankan Museums* (Colombo: Dept. of National Museums, 2007): 162-167.
[2] Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, NG-1982-18, https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/NG-1982-18. Purchased by the Rijksmuseum on 21 September 1982
[3] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art (Being a Mongraph on Mediaeval Sinhalese Arts and Crafts, Mainly as Surviving in the Eighteenth Century, with an Account of the Structure of Society and the Status of the Craftsmen)* (Broad Campden: sn, 1908): 54-59.
[4] John Pybus, *Account of Mr. Pybus's Mission to the King of Kandy, in 1762* (W. Skeen, government printer, Ceylon, 1862): 105.
[5] Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, 58, 213, plate 23, figure 2, 7, 8.; P.E.P. Deraniyagala, "Sinhala weapons and armour," *Journal Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch* XXXV (1942): 95, 106-113

The ceremonial function of Kasthāné at the Kandyan court are described in travel reports and in drawings and paintings of Kandyan chiefs and noblemen by Dutch artists in the eighteenth century.[6] For example, in 1681 Robert Knox observed:

> When he [the Kandyan King] first promotes them [the Adigar] (…) he (...) gives them a sword, the hilt all carved and inlaid with silver and brass very handsomely, the scabbard also covered with silver — a knife, and halberd; and lastly, a town or towns for their maintenance.[7]

Dutchmen were also gifted with sabres or swords described as "silver-hilted" occasionally during their diplomatic embassies to the Kandyan king.[8] We do not know what these swords looked like, but we know that the king perceived the Dutch as vassals, and therefore may have treated the ambassadors the same as his chiefs and gifted them with the same kind of gifts, including kasthāné.[9]

Photo 2: Snapshot of NG-1985-7-3-124, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 'Ontvangst van gezanten van de koning Kandy, 1785, Jan Brandes, 1785 – 1786' [Reception of ambassadors of the King of Kandy 1785, Jan Brandes, 1785 – 1786].

[6] Cf. Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-T-1904-18,2, https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/my/collections/28203--roel-kramer/eye-kandy/objecten#/RP-T-1904-18,2; NG-1985-7-1-8, https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/NG-1985-7-1-8; NG-1985-7-3-127 https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/NG-1985-7-3-127

[7] Robert Knox, *An historical relation of the island Ceylon, in the East Indies* (R. Chiswell, 1681), 53.

[8] T. B. H. Abeysinghe, "Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy: A Case Study from Sri Lanka in the first half of the eighteenth century," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka Branch* 86, New Series, Vol. 30 (1985): 17-18.

[9] At the last audience during the yearly ambassies by the VOC to the Kandyan Court, it was customary that gifts were also given back to the ambassador, his secretary, and the interpreter. The gifts depended on the rank of the VOC official. Ambassadors usually received silver swords [kasthāné?], golden chains, and golden rings set with stones. The secretary got a golden chain and rings and the interpreter only a chain. Sometimes, when the ambassadors pleased the king, they would also receive an elephant. T. B. H. Abeysinghe. "Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy: A Case Study of Sri Lanka in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka Branch*, 1985/86, New Series, Vol. 30 (1985/86), p. 17-18; In this Sinhalese account of a Dutch embassy to the court of Kandy in 1731-32 the word kasthāné is literally used for the sabre gifted to the Dutch ambassador: Paul E. Pieris, "The Dutch embassy to kandy in 1731-32." *The Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, vol. 21, no. 62, Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka (RASSL), 1909, pp. 187–220: 213.

Although silver kasthāné were more commonly gifted, golden kasthāné do also appear in the historical records. We have therefore considered the question whether the use of gold as such was indeed exclusively reserved for the royal household. For example, *maha mudaliyar* Nicolas Dias Abeysinghe Amasekera, the highest local official in service of the Dutch, also carried a golden kasthāné. Jan Brandes, who drew him in his formal attire (Photo 2), describes this kasthāné as a "golden sword."[10] But other than that, we do not get an impression of the quality of this kasthāné. We assume, however, that the kasthāné of the maha mudaliyar was gilded, rather than made of solid gold. In 1754, Governor General Mossel received a sabre (houwer) that was described as gilded ("een houwer met goud beslag").[11] The occasion was very special, as the gifts were meant to thank the Governor General in his assistance in reaffirming Kandyan-Siamese relations. In travel literature and reports from ambassadors, the swords of the kings of Kandy were often described as being made of gold, rather than gilded.[12]

If kasthāné were also used as ceremonial and diplomatic gifts, what then makes this golden kasthāné so special? Material analysis shows how this object stands out in various ways. Measurements made of the kasthāné's metal composition made on 25 November 2021 revealed that the hilt of the golden kasthāné is made of solid gold (rather than gilded). For that reason, the hilt is extraordinarily heavy and it was impossible to make an x-ray.[13] The hilt is inlaid with 136 diamonds and 13 rubies. In 2021 Dr. Hanco Zwaan of the Netherlands' Gem Laboratory in Leiden and the Conservation & Science staff of the Rijksmuseum closely analysed one ruby and identified it as Myanmarese (Burmese) in origin.[14] The wooden scabbard is coated with gold. Peter Dekker, an art dealer with extensive knowledge of Sri Lankan arms, was also present on 26 november 2021 and he agreed that the golden kasthāné was exceptional for its use of solid gold, precious stones, and motifs.[15]

Senarath Wickramasinghe concludes that this golden kasthāné was a royal ceremonial sword of rank.[16] The king's regalia indeed consisted of a crown, sword, and shield, among other things.[17] In the words of Wickramasinghe: 'The Sword was one of the weapons among the five auspicious objects of king/s of Sri Lanka called *"Magul Kaduwa"* (auspicious sword). Every king of Sri Lanka used

[10] "Gouden degen", Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 'Ontvangst van gezanten van de koning Kandy, 1785, Jan Brandes, 1785 – 1786' [Reception of ambassadors of the King of Kandy 1785, Jan Brandes, 1785 – 1786], NG-1985-7-3-124, https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/NG-1985-7-3-124

[11] "Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal En Raden Aan Heren XVII Der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie," Mossel XXI 31 December 1754, Ceylon, accessed 15 October 2021, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/generalemissiven/#page=473&accessor=search_in_text&accessor_href=http%3A%2F%2Fresources.huygens.knaw.nl%2Fretroboeken%2Fgeneralemissiven%2Fsearch_in_text%2Findex_html%3Fpage%3D0%26source%3D1%26id%3Dsearch_in_text&source=12&view=imagePane.

[12] P.E.P. Deraniyagala, "Sinhala weapons and armour," *Journal Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch* XXXV (1942): 95, 106-113;. H. W. Codrington, "The Kandyan Navandannó," *The Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, 1909, Vol. 21, No. 62 (1909), 225.

[13] Rijksmuseum documentation, Registratieformulier, NG-NM-560, 1984; XFR report 26 November

[14] Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Hanco Zwaan, Jan de Hond, Joosje van Bennekom, Ellen van Bork, Suzanne van Leeuwen, Report "Gemstones on the Cannon of Kandy" (June 2021). Based on the strong colour. Under UV light the left eye of the major lion, on the pommel, has a strong fluorescence and inclusions consisting of fine rutile needles "typical for stones from the Mogok district" of current Myanmar (Burma). Please note that this report will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

[15] Regarding the symbolic importance of solid gold we notice the following: the Kandyan envoys who travelled to the court of Siam in 1750 paid particular attention to the objects at the Siamese court and throughout this Sinhalese report explicit distinctions are made between objects the were gilded and objects made of solid gold, see: P. E. Pieris, 'An account of king kirti sri's embassy to siam in 1672 saka (1750. a.d.) Translated from the Sinhalese' in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, 2003, New Series, Vol. 48, Special Number: Commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Upasampadā in Sri Lanka (2003), pp. 111-148.

[16] Cf. Deraniyagala, "Sinhala weapons and armour," 95, 112.

[17] H. W. Codrington, "The Kandyan Navandannó," *The Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, 1909, Vol. 21, No. 62 (1909), 225.

its own sword when he became a king. This was also the case with Kirti Sri Rajasinha, who received his sword on 20 May 1749. It was an important occasion that was celebrated in Kandy with a feast, as the Dutch were informed on 12 May 1749:

> `On 20 May a party is to take place at the court of Kandy to celebrate the moment that the king was to accept the sword of state [goud swaart van staat]. He will be driven around the streets of Kandy in his horse carriage.'[18]

The "Magul Kaduwa" was worn on ceremonial occasions and was used to represent kingship of Sri Lanka.'[19] To substantiate this, he provided us with an analysis of the decoration of the gilt, hilt, grip, and knuckle guard:[20]

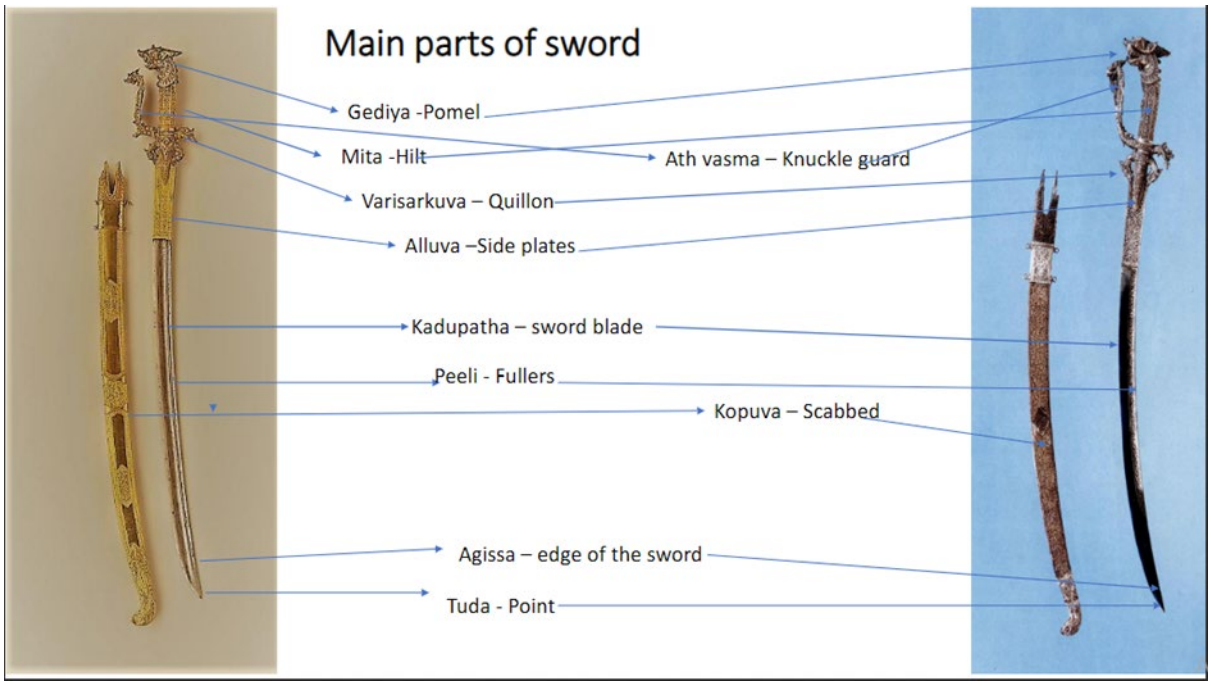

Photo 3: Infographic with an Explanation of the different parts of a kasthāné, by Senarath Wickramasinghe

He describes the typical Kandyan motifs on the kasthāné's hilt as follows: 'the pommel (Gediya) is an elegantly executed *simha* (lion) head with a prominent backwardly directed conical crest. A series of *liya-pata* (flowery) ornamentation continues for a short distance on the backside. The eyes of the simha (lion) are decorated with rubies. The grip is eight sided and has three finger grooves with three whorls of *liya–pata* (palapeti), and is set with diamonds. The grip surface is set in separate panels, each of which is chased with floral decoration, those on the right and left showing *sinamala* ornaments.

[18] NL-HaNA_1.04.02_2735, f. 952r: 'Translaat Singalese ola door de dessave van de drie en vier korles en Batticaloa'12 mei 1749: "[…] de 20e deze maand mei staat een feest aan het hof gevierd te worden wanneer den koning het goud swaart van staat zal aangarden [aanvaarden] en med den wagen door de straaten zal rijden'.

[19] Report Senerath Wickramasinghe, Director (Cultural) Department of National Museums, Sri Lanka, 'Assessment of the draft provenance report of the three objects' 10 February 2022. Please note that documentation on this will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022. In addition, we found the following information: Pybus, *Account of Mr. Pybus's Mission to the King of Kandy,* 77,78. In 1762 John Pybus visited the court of Kandy as ambassador of the British East India Company's and he described the king's attire as follows: 'Kirti Sri Rajasinha was wearing a golden dagger with a golden hilt, set with gold and precious stones and next to him, leaning against his throne was a large broad sword of gold with a hilt richly set with precious stones.' Although this description leaves some room for interpretation, it confirms the importance of gold and diamonds.

[20] Presentation Senerath Wickramasinghe, "Ancient swords, daggers, and knives in Sri Lankan museums," *Expert meeting Sri Lankan objects Rijksmuseum*, 27 August 2021. Please note that documentation on this will be available via the Documentation folder of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from April 2022.

The knuckle guard (Ath Vasma) has two short quillon terminating in the *simha* head. The outer and inner surface of knuckle guard is elaborately decorated and holds two seated female figures that are integrated with a *liya-pata* design. The inner surface seated female figure can be identified as goddess *Sarasvathi* (goddess of knowledge). The outer surface seated female figure can be identified as goddess *Sri Lakshmi* (goddess of prosperity). Crucially, the presence of these deities signifies royal ownership, as they are also prominently depicted on the Royal Throne of the Kings of Kandy. This throne was made in 1692 as a present for King Vimala Dharma Suriya II (1687-1707).

Photo 4: Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, on the inside of the knuckle guard of the golden mounted kasthãné. NG-NM-560. (Photo by authors).

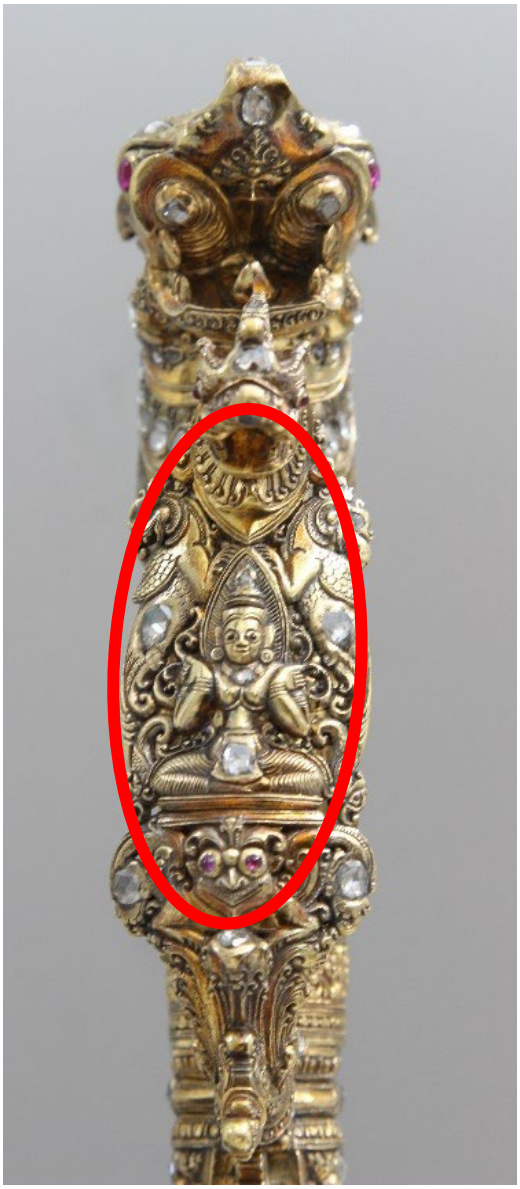

Photo 5: Sri Devi Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, on the outside of the knuckle guard of the golden mounted kasthãné. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. NG-NM-560).

Photo 6: the Kandyan throne, courtesy Colombo National Museum

The quillon (Varisarkuva) is shaped in the form of a *makara* (dragon's) head. The rectangular ricasso is embossed with an overlay of gold floral ornamentation. The blade (Kadupatha) is slightly curved with an upturned cutting edge meeting the reverse edge of the blade's tip. A distinct fuller (peeli) is present.

Photos 7 and 8: Details of quillon and blade of golden mounted kasthāné. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. NG-NM-560).

The *kopuva* (scabbard) is made of wood, its upper end is V-shaped and is made of gold covered with floral designs and is followed by two gold lockets in between the three shorter golden bands. The edge of the scabbard is curved backward with *hamsa* design (i.e. with an *agissa* [edge] and *tuda* [point]) at the end. In comparison to the scabbards of other kasthāné kept in the National Museum in Colombo, this scabbard stands out as quite distinctive with its intricate and elegant ornamentation.[21]

Photos 9 and 10: Scabbard of golden mounted kasthāné. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. NG-NM-560).

The kasthāné has an European blade. The practice of using European blades for the kasthāné was common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These blades often bear the mark of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The blade of the golden kasthāné is party overlaid with gold, but it does show the faint remains of an inscription: on one side the remains of the inscription starts with an 8 and a C, there might also have been a V and Z or 72 or 78. The other side shows a D and E. As we could not further decipher this inscription, we cannot date the blade.

On the basis of the analysis of the motifs and the material used, Senerath Wickramasinghe's suggested that the golden kasthāné might have been made at the same time as the Kandyan throne, which would be in the late seventeenth century. So far, we have not found other information to date the kasthāné, and the similarity in style and motifs between the throne and the golden kasthāné remains the only lead.

To conclude, the object analysis shows that the exquisitely decorated golden kasthāné is an unique object and the technique, motif and material used attest to its royal origin. The similarities to the Kandyan throne suggest that it indeed once belonged to the king of Kandy and that it might have been made in the late seventeenth century. The specific identification of this object with King Kirti Sri Rajasinha has been based on literary and archival evidence from curators of the Rijksmuseum and other researchers who have proposed that the object was part of the spoils of war in 1765. This will be further discussed in the following section.

[21] Report and assessment Wickramasinghe, 27 August 2021 and 10 February 2022.

Present knowledge regarding provenance available in the Rijksmuseum and literature

The golden kasthāné is a well-known object and is described in various Rijksmuseum catalogues and specialist publications on Sri Lankan and South Asian arms and armours.[22] The various authors consistently suggest that the kasthāné was part of the spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war and that it was presented as a gift to the Dutch stadtholder Willem V by the executors of Governor van Eck's estate. Where does this information come from?

The golden kasthāné, together with the silver kasthāné (NG-NM-7112) and the golden pihiya (NG-NM-7114), first became the objects of research in the 1960s when two near-simultaneous exhibitions were being prepared: one in the Dutch National Archives (then called Algemeen Rijksarchief) on the history of the VOC in Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) (*Ceylon-Nederland in het verleden 1602-1797*,), and one memorial exhibition on the Dutch royal collections, *Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek en Koninklijk Penningenkabinet*.[23] Professor Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, who was affiliated with the Rijksmuseum, worked on the latter.[24]

Correspondence between the Rijksmuseum and the Dutch National archives in 1965 show how both parties were looking for archival evidence on the provenance of these three objects, in addition to their search for extra information on Levke's cannon, which had already been the object of research.[25] The National Archives provided the museum with copies from the VOC archives regarding the spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war of 1765, dated 22 October 1765 (though misread at the time as 22 December 1765).[26] Copies from the estate of Governor van Eck from his family archives were also added as evidence of the objects' provenance. It was on the basis of this documentation that the curators concluded that together with the cannon, the golden kasthāné, and the two other objects, the golden knife (NG-NM-7114) and the silver kasthāné (NG-NM-7112) were spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war. It was subsequently described as such in both exhibition catalogues.[27] Curiously though, Lunsingh Scheurleer connected the golden kasthāné to the golden 'belly-dagger' (buiksteker) from the list (which we ascribed to the golden pihiya, see PPROCE report NG-NM-7114).[28]

[22] Among others: Lodewijk J. Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants: Sri Lanka and the Netherlands from 1600, Rijksmuseum Country Series* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2016): 121-123; P. H. D. H De Silva, "The Sword of State of King Sri Vickrama Raja Simha of Kandy, Sri Lanka;" *Arms and Armour: Journal of the Royal Armories* 7 (2002): 94–97.

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

[24] Lunsingh Scheurleer had already traced back NG-NM-1015 to the collection of Stadtholder Willem V and the *Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden* as a spoil of the 1765 Kandyan-Dutch war, Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden en zijn beteekenis voor het Rijksmuseum," *Oudheidkundig Jaarboek* 13 (1946): 50.

[25] Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Documentation folder NG-NM-560. [Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, dossier objectdocumentatie NG-NM-560, D010291]. The documents then referred to were: National Archives The Hague. 1.04.02. Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC). Inv.nr. 3143 Ceylon. Resolutien genomen in raden van politie zeedert 5 Januarij tot 31 December 1765, 22 October 1765, 2882.; NA (NL), 1.10.65.01. Inventaris van het archief van de familie Van Panthaleon van Eck, 1398-1946. Inv. nr. 60, 1. Brieven betreffende overlijden en regeling der nalatenschap van Lubbert Jan van Eck, heer van Overbeek, gouverneur van Ceylon, door de executeurs van diens testament te Colombo aan de erfgenamen gericht. Met bijlagen. 1765.; NA (NL), 1.04.02, 3138 Ceylon, Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden in dato 10 November 1765, f. 367.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Lunsingh Scheurleer, *150 Jaar: Herdenkingstentoonstelling*, 74.

[28] The description in the catalogue read as follows: "176 Singalese sabel (Kasthāné). Sabel met massief gouden gevest ingelegd met 136 diamanten en 13 robijnen. Houten schede geheel bekleed met goud. Het gevest, dat in zijn hoofdvorm aan Europease voorbeelden herinnert, is versierd met een grote en vier kleine leeuwenkoppen. De gouden bekleding van de schede is in twee delen uitgevoerd, verbonden door een overeenkomstig met beide delen versierde ring. De kling, zeer eenvoudig voor een dergelijk wapen, is ten dele belegd

Here Lunsingh Scheurleer was clearly mistaken. The word *buiksteker* (lit. belly-dagger) refers to a waist-knife, rather than a sabre or sword. The word buiksteker was not commonly used at the time in the Dutch Republic, but we found a reference from Bengal in the same period, explaining that a buiksteker was a dagger carried around the waist. [29] Historically, the word *houwer* (sabre) or sword would have been used to describe a kasthāné.

In 1975 the director of the National Museum in Colombo, P. H. D. H. de Silva, undertook the laborious task of identifying all Sri Lankan objects and manuscripts that were kept in collections outside Sri Lanka. His overview was published under the title *Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Abroad.* [30] This has become a classic reference work and in 1980, De Silva's catalogue formed the basis of a large restitution request of the Sri Lankan government, which was unsuccessful. [31] Among the described Sri Lankan objects in the Rijksmuseum we also find NG-NM-560, De Silva stresses the royal origins and uniqueness of the object:

> N.M. 560 – A kasthāné sword, probably belonging to King Kirti Sri Raja Sinha, King of Kandy […] sword with a massive golden hilt inlaid and with 136 diamonds and rubies. Wooden scabbard encased in gold covering with exquisite ornamentation. […]

And following Lunsigh Scheurleer, he added:

> "described in the daily register of Colombo on December 22nd 1765 as a 'handsomely worked belly-stabber with gold overlay.'" [32]

In the registration form of NG-NM-560 made in 1984, J.B. Kist summarised the attributed provenance of the kasthāné as a Sinhalese sabre, with historical associations with the VOC, Ceylon, and Kandy. He further mentioned that it was said to be a state jewel of Kandy due to the following provenance:

> Presumably captured during the confiscation of Kandy and described in the daily register of Colombo of December 22, 1765 and in the inventory of Gouverneur van Eck, drawn up after his death. [33]

It was presented at the time in the "Ceylon vitrine" of the Rijksmuseum, a show case with objects from Sri Lanka.

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met goud. De Kasthāné is meer een waardigheidsteken dan een wapen. Het is mogelijk, dat dit zeer kostbare wapen aan de Koning van Candia heeft toebehoord; l. 81 cm.
Herkomst: vermoedelijk buitgemaakt bij de inneming van Canida – en beschreven in het dagregister van Colombo 22 december 1765 als: "Fraay gewerkte Buijksteker met goud beslag" getaxeerd op 129 rijksdaalders. In de boedelbeschrijving van L.J. Baron van Eck, opgemaakt na zijn dood in 1765, beschreven als: "Een fraije gewerkte Buijk-Steker met goud beslag en dies scheede met steentjes beset." In 1816 (lijst nr 5) door Koning Willem I overgedragen aan het Kon. Kab. v. Zeldzaamh.; in 1883 overgebracht naar Amsterdam."

[29] J. Stavorinus *Reize van Zeeland, over de Kaap de Goede Hoop, naar Batavia [...] in de jaaren MDCCLXVIII tot MDCCLXXI. Deel V Aanmerkingen over Bengalen*. (Leiden 1793): 58.

[30] P. H. D. H. de Silva, *A Catalogue of Antiquities and Other Cultural Objects from Sri Lanka (Ceylon) Abroad* (Colombo: Department of government printing, 1975).

[31] Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart, PPROCE report NG-NM-1015, Appendix 2.

[32] Silva, *A Catalogue*, 376.

[33] Rijksmuseum documentation, Registratieformulier, NG-NM-560, 1984; 'Vermoedelijk buitgemaakt bij de inneming van kandy en beschreven in het dagregister van Colombo van 22 december 1765 en in de boedelbeschrijving van Gouverneur van Eck, opgemaakt na zijn dood.'

Researchers who published on this group of objects more recently, such as Lodewijk Wagenaar, Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, and Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, did not question the assigned provenance of the golden kasthāné, the golden pihiya, and silver kasthāné.[34] In the most recent publication*, Cinnamon and Elephants,* Lodewijk Wagenaar writes that these three objects were gifted, together with the cannon (NG-NM-1015) to Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, who transferred them to Stadtholder Willem V. The golden kasthāné, as well as the golden pihiya and the silver kasthāné would have been taken by the Dutch army in Kandy.[35]

Since 2015, the Rijksmuseum label has described this group of objects as follows:

> Following an unsuccessful invasion of Kandy in 1764, the VOC troops nevertheless succeeded one year later in penetrating the king's centre of power. Peace negotiations failed and the troops plundered the palace and the city. The booty included many costly jewels and arms, including these three ornate weapons that were probably the king's personal property.[36]

What we want to highlight here is that the information gathered in 1965 has circulated ever since as unquestioned fact. It appears that subsequent researchers have not looked up the original documentation in the Van Eck estate, nor in the VOC archives. This is evidenced by the recurring references in the literature of 22 December rather than 22 October 1765 as the first date when the looted objects collected by Van Eck were listed.[37] The documentation gathered in 1965 requires further scrutiny. How were the objects from the lists in the VOC archives and the Van Eck family archives identified? Where the objects indeed gifted to stadtholder Willem V (via the Duke of Brunswick) in conjunction with the cannon? How and when did these objects, including the golden kasthāné, arrive in the collection of the Rijksmuseum in the first place? And what was known about them at the time? We will start with answering this last question first.

The Kandyan-Dutch war 1762-66 and the spoils of war

The association between Lewke's cannon and the golden kasthāné, the golden pihiya, and the silver kasthāné is very strong. This was also the ground on which they were connected with the Kandyan-Dutch war in the 1765 and to the estate of Governor van Eck. What exactly is known about the objects that were obtained in the war? What information is provided in the VOC archives and the family archives of Van Eck? And can we indeed identify the golden kasthāné in Van Eck's estate?

The Kandyan-Dutch war of 1762-1766 is commemorated in both Sinhala and Dutch primary sources, and in both cases the looting of objects plays a prominent role. A royal historical chronicle from Sri Lanka, the Cūḷavaṃsa, describes how the king of Kandy decided to support popular resistance against the VOC. "[His] dignitaries set forth with the people living in Lanka, fought the fearful battle with the Olanda people, destroyed the foe, burned down the strongholds and terrified him in every

[34] Lodewijk J. Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants: Sri Lanka and the Netherlands from 1600, Rijksmuseum Country Series* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2016), 121-123, Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Een Pronkmes Uit Ceylon', *Aziatische Kunst*, 1996, 52–58, Jan van Campen and Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, *Aziatische Weelde: VOC-Kunst in Het Rijksmuseum* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2011), 86.
[35] Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants,* 123. Lodewijk Wagenaar adds though that it is not certain if they were taken from the palace of the king of Kandy.
[36] Collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, NG-NM-560, NG-NM-7112, NG-NM-7114.
[37] Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, file with object information NG-NM-560, D010291; NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3143 Ceylon, 'Resolutien genomen in raden van politie zeedert 5 Januarij tot 31 December 1765' [Resolutions taken in the boards of Police, from 5 January to 31 December 1765], dated 22 October 1765, f. 2882.

possible way."[38] Conflicts between the Dutch and the local inhabitants of the Dutch occupied areas had started in 1759/60 but in 1761 the restrained relations between the Dutch in Colombo and the king of Kandy led to open warfare.[39] VOC Governor Lubbert Jan van Eck got hold of the Kandyan lowlands in 1762 and 1763, whereupon he decided to invade the town and palace of Kandy up in the mountains. The first campaign of early 1764 failed completely.[40] Even after the Dutch VOC troops invaded the city of Kandy on 19 February 1765, the Kandyan defence used guerrilla tactics, by retreating fast after an attack and using the rainy season to their advantage.[41]

During the days before the invading of Kandy, the king brought to safety his family and the treasures of the Kandy Palace and Temple of the Tooth.[42] An eyewitness, a Dutch soldier who worked as surgeon in Kandy, described the situation as follows: "The King, with tears in his eyes, had caused the most precious objects to be removed from the Palace, and had then given leave to his troops to take what they wished of the remainder [treasures]."[43] This was not in vain as the Temple of the Tooth, the most important Buddhist shrine on the island, was targeted by the Dutch army and when they forced their way into the town, the palace and temple were razed by the troops and they "destroyed the sacred books and everything else."[44] The court was desecrated due to the slaughtering of the holy cows and the destruction of the Buddha statues and the palace was set on fire when the Dutch troops eventually retreated from the city due to strong resistance and a lack of food on 31 August 1765.[45]

The troops invading the city on 19 February 1765 were explicitly instructed not to plunder, but upon arrival in Kandy, the Dutch troops had found the warehouses partly emptied by the retreated Kandyan troops, who were allowed to do so by the king.[46] The looting that followed spread from the warehouses to even the apartments of the king himself.[47] Among the objects taken were linen, fabrics, furniture, some silverwork objects, curiosities, and copper coins.[48] Officers, soldiers, and slaves alike went looting. For instance, it is recorded that back in Kandy one officer had taken "silverworks, diamonds, and rings with and without stones".[49] This officer had defended himself later

[38] Wihelm Geiger and C. Mabel Rickmers, *Culavamsa: Being the More Recent Part of the Mahavamsa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996): p. 266, line 115
[39] R. Raven-Hart, *The Dutch Wars with Kandy, 1764-1766*, Ceylon Historical Manuscripts Commission. Bulletin. No. 6. (Nugegoda, 1964), 3.
[40] Wagenaar, *Cinnamon and Elephants*, 121.
[41] Raven-Hart, *The Dutch Wars with Kandy*, 114; Prof. Gananath Obeyasekere, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, "The Many Faces of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1591-1765: Lessons for our Time?" 23rd April 2014, Colombo, Princeton University lecture, p. 36-37. http://www.thesapri.org/pdf/lecture.pdf
[42] *Culavamsa*, p. 267, line 122-126. The King had sent two Uparajas with his treasures and the sacred Tooth Relic to "a province which was scarcely passable owing to mountains, forest and difficult roads."
[43] Raven-Hart, *The Dutch Wars with Kandy*, 98-99; Sri Lanka National Archives, Colombo (SLNA), Lot 1: Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon, inv.no.4881, "Report of the military campaign." Transcription kindly shared with us by Chris Nierstrasz, author of *In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Its Decline* (1740-1796) (Brill, 2012).
[44] *Culavamsa*, p. 267, line 122-126.
[45] Ibid; Lorna Dewaraja, "Thailand's Sublime Gift to Sri Lanka: The Services rendered by UPĀLI MAHĀ THERA and his associates," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* 48 (2003): 88.
[46] SLNA, Lot 1, inv.no. 4881, "Report of the military campaign," f. 223
[47] NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden in dato 10 November 1765 [Copy of the secret letter from the Governor [Falck] only to the general and boards, dated 10 November 1765], f. 363.
[48] NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van de leeden van het geheime committe aan generaal en raden in dato 31 Maart 1765 [Copy of the secret letter of the members of the secret committee to the General and boards, dated 31 March 1765], f. 463b-464.
[49] NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, 3138, Copia secreete brief van den gouverneur alleen aan generaal en raden in dato 10 November 1765 [Copy of the secret letter from the Governor [Falck] only to the general and boards, dated 10 November 1765], f. 366b-367: "De kannekappel van La Baume die hier voor een ordentlijk man te boekstaande schillie Christoffel fernando, waar op La Baume zich, als zijnge slaagen vijand, beriep heeft verklaard, dat hij veele gouden ringen met en sonder steenen, zoo ook veel ander klein zilverwerk bij La Baume gezien had, waar van de kostbaarste ring aan den Her Kommandeur Mooijaart, toen ter tijd op Kolombo zich bevindende, voor 80 Rijkst door hem kannekappel verkocht was."

in Colombo by saying that he had bought the objects from two soldiers, just as Governor Van Eck himself had done. In fact, Van Eck had also bought several valuable and rare objects from the spoils. "Those objects might have been sold for give-away prices to Moors who were waiting to buy it,"[50] he wrote. Indeed, a great deal of the booty was sold or left behind by the soldiers in Kandy or during their trip back to Colombo after the retreat of the troops from Kandy at the end of August 1765.[51]

Governor van Eck died some weeks after the conquest of Kandy and in his estate ten Kandyan objects were identified as spoils of war. These ten objects were described as follows:

- A golden container with a golden ola as well as a small bag with small golden balls attached
- A Buddha statue made of tombac
- An ivory machine with underneath a metal disk, that has an engraving in it
- A small canon piece inlaid with silver
- A fine decorated bow with golden mounting, together with an equally decorated quiver and arrows.
- A sword with golden grip and its sheath with golden mounting together with a part epee [sword knot] with silver mounting
- A red-lacquered baton of command with on both ends golden studs
- A fine decorated belly-knife with golden mounting
- A silver gold plated machine as a clock with underneath a fitting bottom piece
- A kind of palate/canopy with pillars of gold but overlaid with gold and silver.[52]

Of these ten objects we propose that the 'sword with golden grip and its sheath with golden mounting' could possibly be identified as the golden kasthāné. The ten objects were delivered to the big cash register [groote geldkas], which was commissioned by Hoofdadministrateur Daniel Burnat. By then, the decorated cannon had already been shipped to the Netherlands (on 15 November 1765), as the late Governor Van Eck had wished. It was sent as a gift to Duke Louis Ernest of

[50] Ibid, f. 366b.
[51] Ibid, f. 369.
[52] 'Zegge een goude koker daer in een goude ola benevens een zakje met goude bolletjes daaraan
1. '' Een Boedoes beeld van Tambak
1. '' Een ijvoore machine van onder met een metaale schijff, waar in gegraveert is
1. '' Een kleen kanonstuk met zilver ingelegt
1. Zegge een fraaij gewerkte boog met goud beslag, benevens gelijke pijlkoke en pijlen
1. '' Een zwaart met goude greep en dies scheede met goud beslag mitsgaders part epee met zilver beslagh
1. '' Een staff van kommando met rood verlakt en aan beide enden met goud beslag
1. '' Een fraai gewerkte buijksteeker met goud beslag
1. '' Een zilver vergulde machine bij wijze van een klok met een daar onder passend onderstuk
1. '' Een soort van verhemelte met pielaaren van goud dogh overhouts met een goud en zilver overtoogen.'
NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3138, "Copia berigt van de Candiasche raritijten die in de groote geldkas overgebragt zijn" [Copy of message about the Kandyan curiosities that has been handed over to the big cash register], f. 875.

Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, the guardian of Willem V. On 13 May 1766 the headquarters of the VOC in Batavia gave permission to send the Kandyan objects that were left of Van Eck's estate to his heirs, provided that court in Kandy would not demand restitution.[53] Two objects from this list, namely, the Cover of the Tooth of Buddha (the silver-gilded machine) and the accompanying howdah (the canopy) were indeed returned in 1767 to the king of Kandy as a result the peace negotiations.[54] The golden container with golden ola was returned to the 'owner' from whom Van Eck had taken it, because he had never paid for it as he had promised.[55] In 1768 there were six objects left described as "curiosities that were found [gevonden] during the conquest of the Palace of the King of Kandy and looted [buitgemaakt]." These were sent to the heirs of Van Eck on the ship Vrouwe Petronella Maria in a box with the initials VE.[56]

In the family inventory of Van Eck's estate, the objects are described once again and in more detail. Although the cannon is also on this list, it is explicitly referred to as not among the objects received from Colombo, because it was sent directly to the Duke of Brunswick. The inventory states: "It is now part of the cabinet of rarities of the Stadtholder in The Hague."[57] The estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck indeed mentions the "swaart met een gouden greep en dies scheede met goud beslag" (a sword with a golden grip and a scabbard overlayed with gold).[58] The description is the same as in the inventories made in Colombo immediately after his death.[59] Curiously, it was appraised in Colombo at the time at 30 rixdollars (comparable to ca. 700 euro's today)[60], which seems low for a sword with a hilt of massive gold, and decorated with 138 diamonds and 13 rubies. As referred to in the PPROCE provenance report of NG-NM-1015, it appears that other objects in that list too were under-appraised at the time.[61] At this point it is relevant to mention that none of these lists of spoils of war confiscated by Van Eck describe this "sword with a golden hilt" as being ornamented with precious stones, nor are its other decorative elements mentioned. Moreover, the sword with golden grip and its sheath with golden mounting recorded on Van Eck's list are described as having an accompanying *port-épée* (leather or cloth that is attached to the belt to support a sword or scabbard) with silver mounting. We have not yet been able to identify this port-épéé in the collection of the Rijksmuseum collection or its predecessors.

[53] SLNA, Lot 1, inv.no 2232, "Correspondense with Batavia and Holland 1766-1767," dated 13 May 1766.
[54] NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3174, "Instructie voor den oppercoopman en secretaris van politie Van Angelbeek in dato 28 Januarij 1767 gaande als gesant naar 't hof van Candia" [Instruction for the chief merchant and the secretary of the police Van Angelbeek dated 28 January 1767, who went as an ambassador to the Kandyan court], f. 1454b-1455.
[55] NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 66, "Inventarissen van de nagelaten goederen van Lubbert Jan van Eck etc." [Inventories of thee state of Lubbert Jan van Eck etc.], dated 20 March 1769.
[56] NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3200, "Origineele missive van den gouverneur Falck en den raad
aan de vergadering van 17 in dato 27 Januarij 1768" [Original letter from the Governor Falck and Boards [in Colombo] to the Council 17, dated 27 January 1768], f. 262. '[V]an de Hooge indische Regeering, bij sekreete Missive van den 13 Mai
1766 voor de erfgenaemen afgegeeven de volgende Rariteiten bij het veroveren van het Palijs des konings van kandia daar in gevonden en buit gemaekt.'
[57] Idem. 'Een kleijn Canon stuk met zilver ingelegt, was door den overleeden gedefineert te senden als een present, aan den heere hertogh van Brunswijk Woeffenbuttel Veltmarschalk van den Staat en is dienvolgens voor de Heere Exectuteuren over gezonden, en staat nu op de Rarieteits Camer van den Heere Erfstadhouder in S'Hage.'
[58] NL-HaNA, 1.04.02, inv.no. 3138, "Copia berigt van de Candiasche raritijten die in de groote geldkas overgebragt zijn" [Copy of message about the Kandyan curiosities that has been handed over to the big cash register], f. 875. "Een swaart met een gouden greep en dies scheede met goud beslag"
[59] NL-HaNA, 1.10.65.01, inv.no. 66, "Inventarissen van de nagelaten goederen van Lubbert Jan van Eck etc." [Inventories of the estate of Lubbert Jan van Eck etc.], dated 20 March 1769.
[60] See the historic currency converter for the Dutch Republic: https://iisg.amsterdam/nl/onderzoek/projecten/hpw/calculate.php
[61] The cannon was appraised at 20 Rix-dollars, see Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart, PPROCE report NG-NM-1015.

The unrecorded arrival of the golden kasthāné in the collection of the Dutch Stadtholder

Our analysis of the history Van Eck's estate showed that the golden kasthāné arrived in the Dutch Republic in 1768, separately from Lewke's cannon. This means that it could not have followed the same trail into the stadtholder's collection. We have therefore tried to reconstruct the moment of the kasthāné's arrival in the collection of the Stadtholders: first through an analysis of the eighteenth century inventories of this collection and second by searching for correspondence with the heirs of Van Eck in the years after the arrival of the kasthāné and the other objects from his estate.

Our search through the eighteenth-century inventories of the collection of Stadtholders Willem IV and Willem V did not yield any result.[62] In fact, none of the other five Kandyan objects were found in these eighteenth century inventories either, including the Lewke's cannon. Nor did we find any letters from the heirs of Van Eck relating to golden kasthāné or the pihiya. A better understanding of the collection history and archives might help explain the silence with regard to the golden pihiya and the other Kandyan objects.

Because the descriptions of the objects in the estate of Van Eck are quite generic, and because of the longstanding tradition in Kandy of bestowing diplomatic gifts to governors and governor generals, we also looked more broadly into the Stadtholder's correspondence regarding objects arriving from Asia. The cabinet consisted of the collection that Willem V and his wife, Wilhelmine of Prussia, inherited from Willem IV and his wife, Anna van Hannover. The acquisitions made subsequently reflect their personal tastes, while the objects they received as gifts reflect their relations, networks, and socio-political positions. A considerable part of Willem V's cabinet was formed by gifts from the territories exploited by the West India and Dutch East India Companies.[63] Indeed the archive of Willem V does show several instances of donations of art-historical and natural-historical objects, as well as weapons and other personal belongings to the stadtholders. Several letters from or about Governor-General P.A. van de Parra (1761-1775) inform us for example that he donated a great variety of objects, including weapons, to the collection of Willem V and also

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

[63] Edwin Van Meerkerk, "Colonial Objects And The Display Of Power. The Curious Case Of The Cabinet Of William V And The Dutch India Companies," in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen, Elmer Kolfin, and Jan L. de Jong (Brill, 2010): 415-416: 422.

to the family of the stadtholders themselves.[64] Yet, there was no golden kasthāné among them or anything that might resemble it.

As a final step in our search for evidence regarding the arrival of the kasthāné in the collection of the Stadtholder, we looked at contemporary descriptions of the display at the Cabinet for Curiosities. The cabinet can be considered as the first public museum in the Netherlands. The cabinet attracted many visitors.

Indeed we found that Kandyan objects do appear in a written account from the German traveller Carl Heinrich Titius from 1777. When Titius visited the Cabinet of Curiosities of Willem V, he explicitly mentioned that he saw a silver cannon with gemstones, and noted that the cannon was taken by the Dutch in their last war with the king of Kandy. No doubt this refers to NG-NM-1015 (see PPROCE report). Titius further remarked that other weapons are exhibited in that same room.[65] He did not further elaborate on those other weapons. Nevertheless, a guide from 1785 on the museum of with the collection of Stadtholder Willem V, described yet another room that was filled with armour, clothing, and other ornaments from inhabitants of the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), other Indian countries, and China.[66]

To conclude, the estate of Van Eck indeed lists an object ('a sword with a golden grip and a scabbard overlayed with gold') that could possibly be identified as the golden kasthāné. Yet, we have not been able to find direct evidence of the transfer of this object to the collection of Stadtholder Willem V. We have explained though that this by no means excludes the option that it was gifted by Van Eck's heirs to the Willem V for the simple reason that the archival recording of objects in the possession of the Dutch stadtholder was incomplete. The eyewitness accounts reveal that the curator of the Cabinet made explicit reference to the Kandyan-Dutch war and that besides Lewke's cannon, other armour from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was at display at the time.

When was the object first recorded and what route did it make through the Dutch collections?

The archival silences regarding the arrival of golden kasthāné in the collection of the Dutch Stadtholder urged us to further scrutinize the museum documentation. In this section we focus on two questions: when was the object first recorded as part of a Dutch collection? And what route did it take through the collection? Our method was to work backwards in time through the museum documentation, this exercise included the decoding of the somewhat complex historical numbering of the object.

The Rijksmuseum as it exists now was built in 1885 and it incorporated the collections of various national museums that had been established over the course of the nineteenth century. These predecessors of the Rijksmuseum were in turn founded on older collections such as the eighteenth

[64] See for example, NL-KaHV, A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), Inv. No. 1798, P.A. van de Parra 1767-1775, dated 27 July 1772; NL-KaHV, A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), Inv. No. 1799, J. van Riemsdijk 1776-1777.
[65] Carl Heinrich Titius from 1777 cited by Johann Jacob Volkmann, *Neueste Reisen durch die vereinigten Niederlande* (Den Caspar Fritsch, Leipzig, 1783). "In zweeten saale ist unter den kunstsachen eine ganz silberne kanone mit golde ubersogen, graviert, und mit edelgesteinen besezt, welche die Hollander in ihren lesten kriege, met den koninge von Candi erbeutet haben, und viele andre sehr kostbare Waffen." See also, Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer "Het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden en zijn beteekenis voor het Rijksmuseum," Oudheidkundig Jaarboek, 13 (1946).
[66] *Guide ou nouvelle description de La Haye et de ses environs* ('s-Gravenhage, 1785), 257 https://www.delpher.nl/nl/boeken/view?coll=boeken&identifier=dpo:5469:mpeg21:0250.

century Cabinet of Curiosities of the Dutch Stadtholder Willem V.
The inventory cards of the golden kasthāné (NG-NM-560) consist of five sides full of notes and references. The card originates from the Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst (Dutch Museum for History and Art, or NM as in "NG-NM-560"), which became integrated in the collection of the history department of the Rijksmuseum in 1927. The first entry read as follows:

> Malay sabre with golden hilt and scabbard, completely overlaid with ornaments and fantastic heads. Decorated with 136 diamonds and 13 rubies.
>
> See Van de Kasteele's booklet p. 132. Attributed to Michiel Adriaansz. De Ruyter. Damaged on several places. Marked A. 154, catalogues Mauritshuis number 27.[67]

Clearly in 1927 the Sri Lankan origins of the kasthāné was forgotten, and in fact in the nineteenth century somebody had connected the kasthāné to Michiel de Ruyter. Most of the notes on the card relate to confusion about its origin. Below we disentangle this information.

The number A. 154 cited on the card leads to a description of a list of objects that have been transferred by King Willem I from his collection to the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden in 1816. On this list, number A. 154 is a described as "Hussar sabre with a solid gold hilt set with brillaints and 2 rubies – in a gold guilted sheath."[68] The original version of this list is in the National Archive, but a copy in the dossier in the Noord-Hollands Archief that holds the archive of the Koninklijk Kabinet, some interesting notes with pencil are made next to A. 154: "That means Turkish-eastern? NM-560."[69] That it was described as hussar apparently confused this anonymous reader, while "Turkish-Eastern" reflects that the golden hilted kasthāné was not recognised at the time by this person as Kandyan or Sri Lankan. As the NG part of the object number is not mentioned in this note, we might conclude that the anonymous author of the notes could have written this between 1875 and 1927, when the collection of Nederlandsch Museum was not yet integrated with the Rijksmuseum. It was after 1927 that the Rijkmuseum added the NM objects to the Dutch History (Nederlandse Geschiedenis – NG) collection in 1927.[70]

[67] Inventory card Rijksmuseum Amsterdam NG-NM-560: 'Maleijsche sabel met gouden gevest en schede, gehele gedreven met opgelegde ornamenten en met fantastische koppen. Versierd met 136 diamanten en 13 robijnen.
Zie het boekje van Van de Kasteele p.132. Toegeschreven aan Mich. Adr. de Ruiter. Hier en daar beschadigd. Op een perkamentje gemerkt A.154, cat. Mauritshuis No. 27.'
[68] "Een husaren sabel met gevest van massief goud met brillianten en 2 robijnen bezet – in een met goud gekleede schede," NL-HaNA, 2.04.01, inv.no. 4030, 'Bijlage 1. Degens, Sabels en Stokken' [Attachment 1. Swords, Sabers and Sticks], dated 6 July 1816, no. 37.
[69] "Een husaren sabel met gevest van massief goud met brillianten en 2 robijnen bezet – in een met goud gekleede schede," NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 843, 'Lijst van voorwerpen op last van Koning Willem I overgedragen aan het Kon. Kab. v. Zeldzaamheden te 's-Gravenhage' [List of objects transferred to the Royal Cabinet of Curiosities in The Hague on the orders of King William I], 1816.
[70] Jan van Campen et al., *Aziatische kunst* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2014): 8-11.

It is striking that only a mention of two rubies is made in this first possible description of the object. The golden kasthāné has 13 rubies. However, we observe that two are larger than the other eleven, and these two stand out as eyes of the simha head on the pommel. This might explain a misinterpretation of the smaller rubies, perhaps they were also unclean, overlooked, or identified as brilliants (elaborately cut gemstones). This description, however, was not questioned in the subsequent years. Ca. 1824, in the guide of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden op het Mauritshuis by its director, R.P. van der Kasteele, desk 14 in room 4 is described as housing "Asiatic objects." One of these is an "Eastern sabre, with a hilt of massive gold, set with brilliants and two rubies, with a gold-coated sheath."[71]

The golden kasthāné, the golden pihiya, and silver kasthāné, were not the only Kandyan/Sri Lankan objects in the collection of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden. In fact, it appears that these objects belonged to a group of objects from Sri Lanka in the KKZ collection. Over the course of the nineteenth century, their Sri Lankan provenance was forgotten, but in 1823 this was not yet the case: in 1823, the contemporary director of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, R.P. Van de Kasteele, described that desk 13 in the fourth room presented a range of Asiatic objects. Among them were a treatise in Sinhalese and a decorative belt with a snake motif, 'worn by the people of Ceylon'.[72] Van der Kasteele explicitly stated that these objects originated from the cabinet of Stadtholder Willem V. On desk 15 in the same hall, the objects were exhibited which we now identify as the golden kasthāné, together with the silver kasthāné, the golden pihiya, and another Kandyan knife which is now in the Wereldculturen collection (or: NG-NM-560, 7112, -7114 and RV-360-6017). In addition, two olas (palm leaf manuscripts) with Tamil and Sinhalese script were exhibited together with a copper plate with Sinhalese letters and an "Eastern writing pen," presumably a stylus, used to write on the palm leaves.[73] A conclusion we can draw from these records is that the golden kasthāné was exhibited as part of a group of objects that originated from Sri Lanka.

The myth of Michiel de Ruyter

Over time, however, the knowledge about this group of objects had faded, and furthermore, for a period the golden kasthāné was separated from the other Sri Lankan objects: it was identified as a relic of the Dutch national hero Michiel de Ruyter.

In the inventory of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden made in the period 1878-1882, number 6020 is once more described as "Hussar sabre with a solid gold hilt set with brilliants and 2 rubies – in a gold covered sheath."[74] This inventory was reconstructed in 1966 by Professor Lunsingh

[71] R.P. Van de Kasteele, *Handleiding tot de bezichtiging van het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden op Maurtishuis, in 's Gravenhage* (The Hague, n.d. [1824]): 104. "Een Oostersche sabel, met een gevest van massief goud, bezet met briljanten en twee robijnen, in eene met goud bekleede schede." However, in this catalogue, this description is found on page 104, not 132, that the inventory card indicates. A mention of a sabre on page 132 is not found. It could be possible that another edition was consulted.
[72] Van de Kasteele, *Handleiding tot de bezichtiging*, 97-101. ''Eene onbegrijpelijk kunstige van zilverdraad gevlochten slang, de kop en de staat schijnen daar naderhand aangemaakt te zijn; zonder deze is het een versiersel van een volk op Ceilon, wordende als een gordel om het lijf gedragen, wanneer aan de einde sluitingstukken zijn. Weegt 5 ons, 16 eng. Of 268,411 wig." We have not yet identified this object in the collection.
[73] Ibid.
[74] NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 1092, "Inventaris van kunstvoorwerpen, door het Nederlandsch Museum van Geschiedenis en Kunst ontvangen van het Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden" [Inventory of art objects, received by the Nederlandsch Museum van

Scheurleer and the Director of the Rijksmuseum van Volkenkunde (NMvW Museum Volkenkunde), P.H. Pott. Regarding the numbers 6014-6029 in the collection of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, Pott noticed that these numbers were (almost) completely copied from the list of the objects King Willem I had transmitted to the KKZ from his father's collection. Some of these ended up in the museum Volkenkunde, while others went to the Nederlandsch Museum. Pott was able to trace back almost all of the numbers from the list in the two museums. In the Rijksmuseum these were renumbered in between NM-7053 and -7121.[75] However, NM-560, the golden kasthāné that is discussed in this report, is not part of that number range, although it was number 6020. An explanation for this is that the object was transferred earlier to the Nederlandsch Museum. On the record of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden of 1878-1882, number 6020 (NM-560) is said to be "absent."[76]

The kasthāné was among the first objects from the collection of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden that were transferred to the Nederlandsch Museum for its Dutch national history exhibition.[77] Michiel de Ruyter played a large and triumphant role in this exhibition. The reason why the golden kasthāné became separated from the other Asian objects in the KKZ and was transferred to the Nederlandsch Museum at this early moment is because it was mistaken for a "Turkish sabre of Michiel de Ruyter." Curiously, it was not the only Sri Lankan object that was assigned to Michiel de Ruyter; the same happened to the cannon of Kandy as well as the wall guns.[78]

On the museum inventory card, a further connection is made between the golden kasthāné and an auction of the estate from one of De Ruyters descendants, Cornelis Steengracht, in 1782. At this auction Stadtholder Willem V bought two sabres from Michiel de Ruyter.[79] One of these sabres might be presented in 1795, together with the cannon of Kandy (NG-NM-1015) as two of the five most important pieces in the history of the newly established Batavian Republic. It was described as "sword of the famous Dutch sea hero and admiral De Ruyter."[80] In 1800 the five objects were displayed in the Nationale Konst Gallerij at Huis ten Bosch. The description of the first relic reads: "de Zydgeweren [sabres/daggers] van den Admiraal de Ruyter, benevens deszelfs Staf van Commando."[81] A year later, the swords of de Ruyter are again described, now in a catalogue of the Nationale Konst Gallerij again in plural, as well as his staff of command.[82] The objects from the Nationale Konst Gallerij, found their way to several (royal) museums, and eventually were transferred in 1825 to the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden.[83] Clearly there has been a mix-up

Geschiedenis en Kunst from the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden], 1875. "Een husarensabel met massief gouden gevest met brillanten en twee robijnen bezet. In een met goud overtrokken scheede."

[75] Museum Volkenkunde (NL-LdnRMV), Archive series 360, letter from P.H. Pott to T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 9 September 1966.

[76] NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.nos. 876-877, "Inventarissen van kunst- en andere voorwerpen, 1878-1882 876" [Inventories of art pieces and other objects], no. 6020.

[77] R. van Luttervelt, "Herinneringen Aan Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter in Het Rijksmuseum," Bulletin van Het Rijksmuseum 5, no. 2 (1957): 28–70

[78] See Alicia Schrikker and Doreen van den Boogaart, PPROCE report NG-NM-1015 and reports NG-NM- 519 and 520.

[79] Koninklijke Verzamelingen [Royal Collections] (NL-KaHV), archive access A31, William V Batavus, Prince of Orange-Nassau (1748-1806), inv.no 184, "Inventaris van de kostbaarheden van Willem V" [Inventory of the valuable goods of Willem V], dated 1784.

[80] *Nieuwe algemene konst- en letter-bode, voor meer- en mingeöeffenden. Behelzende berigten, uit de geleerde waereld, van alle landen.* (Loosjes Pz, Adriaan Haarlem, 1783-1803, 1795), https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dpo:8171:mpeg21:0103.

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

[82] "Zijdgeweer - WNT (Woordenboek Der Nederlandsche Taal)," accessed 21 January 2022, https://gtb.ivdnt.org/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&id=M089041&lemma=zijdgeweer&domein=0&conc=true.

[83] NL-HlmNHA, 476, inv.no. 476 Rijksmuseum en rechtsvoorgangers te Amsterdam, 'Stukken betreffende de overdracht van kunst- en andere voor werpen door personen en overheidsinstanties' [Pieces about the transfer of art and other objects by private or public institutes], 1821-1827.

here of different sabres. After all, we know with near certainty that the golden kasthāné was transferred to the KKZ from the Stadtholders Cabinet of Curiosities in 1816. This is also what R. Luttervelt, curator of the Rijksmuseum history department from 1946 to 1963, concluded in an article in 1957. Yet he described the sabre as Javanese rather than Kandyan or Sri Lankan.[84] What this whole episode signifies, beyond the curious anecdotal information, is that over the course of the nineteenth century the Sri Lankan past of these objects, including the golden kasthāné, was totally forgotten. This situation lasted well into the twentieth century.

But if it did not arrive in the collection via the auction of Steengracht's belongings in 1782, how then do we know it had been part of the stadtholders' collection? The list of 1816, where it was recorded as a "hussar sabre," appears to have been a copy of an original list kept in the National Archives, which contains objects that were handed over by King Willem I to the Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden. Van de Kasteele, its director, received these from de hofraad Hoffman. According to Jan van Campen, this list referred to the objects that Willem V took with him to England when he was exiled in 1795.[85] However, Tom Quist has suggested that this list is a copy of Hoffman's inventory on the weapons and walking sticks, written in German. In Tom Quist's view, the listed remained at Oranienstein Castle.[86] This was the residence of Willem V since 1801. (See Provenance report RV-360-6021, Tom Quist). We have not been able to obtain further information on this question, but it is in any case very likely that the golden kasthāné and other objects on the German-language list were transferred to England or Germany or both, and returned to the Netherlands in the period 1813-1816 when the monarchy was established, with Willem V's son, Willem I. From the museum documentation we can thus conclude that the golden kasthāné must have arrived into the collection of Willem V, at any moment prior to his exile in England and Germany in 1795.[87]

[84] Van Luttervelt, "Herinneringen Aan Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter," 34.
[85] Jan van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer (1737-1807) en zijn verzameling Chinese voorwerpen* (Uitgeverij Verloren, 2000), 215.
[86] See PROCCE report Staatsiekris [Ceremonial kris] RV-360-6021
[87] This stay rejects the thesis of in the Rijksmuseum documentation that NG-NM-7112 as well as NG-NM-560 were the two weapons that, like NG-NM-1015 (Cannon of Kandy), were presented as one of the five objects, the "vaderlandsche gedenkstukken" to the new Batavian Parliament, as symbols for a new Netherlands in 1795. Among them was the sabre of Michiel de Ruyter and a cannon ascribed to the Ruyter. The cannon can be identified as NG-NM-1015 (see report), but the sabre presented there cannot be linked to NG-NM-7112. See also: Van Luttervelt, 'Herinneringen Aan Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyter', 36.

Discussion

The object analysis clearly showed that the golden kasthāné originates from the Kandyan Kingdom. This object being one of the most exclusive examples known of this era was made in the royal Four Workshops (pattal hatara) and will have belonged to the king of Kandy. The motifs and the use of solid gold, diamonds and rubies attest to this. Most probably it was owned by king Kirti Sri Rajasinha. From Dutch and Sinhalese records, we know that the palace and temple of Kandy were looted in 1765, during the Kandyan-Dutch war. The VOC archives recorded objects of the spoils of war such as royal decorated arms, including a sword with a golden grip- and a gold mounted sheath. This sword was also recorded in the estate of Governor Van Eck, and we know that this object was sent together with other objects to the heirs of Van Eck in the Dutch Republic. Here the direct archival trail from Colombo stops. We know that the objects from the estate of Van Eck were allotted among his heirs, but it was not specified which object was sent to whom, nor whether it was gifted to the Dutch stadholder afterwards. The museum documentation and old inventories however showed that it is most likely that the golden kasthāné arrived in the collection of the Stadtholders prior to 1795.

As it is well known that kasthāné were occasionally used as diplomatic gifts, we have looked for archival traces before and after the war to see if such gifted kasthāné were donated to the stadtholder at other moments. But so far we have not found any evidence that would support this hypothesis.[88] For that reason and because of its obvious royal connotation it seems most likely that the golden kasthāné is indeed the “sword with a golden grip” from the estate of Van Eck. When and how it was transferred to the stadtholder remains unknown.

A final point that bears emphasis is that for over fifty years now the Rijksmuseum has maintained that the golden kasthāné was part of the spoils of the Kandyan-Dutch war. Together with the cannon, the silver kasthāné, and the gold mounted knife, they have come to symbolise the moment of plunder and destruction of the Kandyan palace. This in itself has thus become an important part of the object’s history.

[88] During the PPROCE research a start was made with mapping the culture of gift-giving between the VOC and Kandy in the 1740s and 1750s, as well as to what happened to the objects after they were in VOC hands. A draft document ‘Gift giving, Embassies and Collections’ will be available in the documentation folders of this object from April 2022. An elaboration on this research went beyond the object of the PPROCE research, but future elaborate research on the practice of gift giving, flows of gifts, as well as the afterlives of these Kandyan gifts in Sri Lanka, the Netherlands and the rest of the world could provide more insight. The draft documents can be consulted as a starting point for future research.