

ORIENTALIST REFLECTIONS: ASIA AND THE PACIFIC IN THE MAKING OF LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND

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As the wind was contrary we were obliged to make several tacks, so that we did not reach the Island until nine in the evening, [...] The inhabitants seeing us made towards them were collected on the shore and received us with open arms, and being warned by Mr Irwin to imitate him, we followed his example and embraced the females, who returned the civility with as much cordiality as if we had been their nearest relations, [...] to give you a compleat Idea of the goodness of heart of these Islanders, I shall mention the manner of our departure, which I think is but doing Justice to their Hospitality and benevolence.

Having finished our drawings and observations [...] we found all the Inhabitants, children included, standing [...], with grief painted on their countenances, we walked slowly to the harbour followed by all, where being arrived Mr Irwin made them sit on the grass in semi circular form, and opening a portmanteau distributed presents, consisting in Ribbons, Roll Tobacco and beads; [...] The ceremony of embracing the females was renewed, who returned the compliment with tears in their eyes, and with so much affection, that it seemed as if we were their nearest relations who parted never to return, we shook hands with the men who seemed notless concerned and we walked to the harbour and embarked, whilst the people spread themselves on the piers, uttering blessings, as soon as we unmoored we saluted them with cheers, which were

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answered from the shore, and both sides continued waving hands untill out of sight, there was something so affecting, in all this, that for a long time we continued in a thoughtfull silence...²

The explorations of Captain James Cook in the Pacific, from 1768 to 1779, were of immense importance in the creation of a new, Orientalised, form of European primitivism in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Informed by the 'enlightened' application of rigorous observation and scrupulous description, Cook's all-encompassing team of 'observers', including astronomers, naturalists and artists, set new standards in European overseas exploration and in the detailed reporting of environments, resources, flora and fauna, and peoples. This charting of the Pacific transformed empire, not just in the lands claimed for the crown, but at the heart of empire, in the distant North Atlantic. The rush to explore and chart, to categorize and to characterize, was as much a product of the enlightened moment in the third quarter of the eighteenth century as it was an impetus for that movement. It should come as no surprise that Europeans left behind, eager for news of exoticism and novelty, felt an inalienable right to seek out the foreign in the familiar, much closer to home. This rush of romantics, seeking 'noble savages' in ignoble corners of their own land, merged with corresponding contemporary interests in antiquarianism and Orientalism to create a new view of the *condition humane*, of the original state of nature. A new vision of the world was called for, and the rationalist tools of science would fashion the means of seeing that world.

The Orientalist visioning of Asia that came to dominate European views of that continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was indebted to the enlightenment explorations of the Pacific in the late eighteenth century. As recent studies have highlighted, the shifting expectations of, and ambitions for, empire in the late eighteenth century led to the emergence of a differentiated hierarchy for the understanding of racial and national groups. Based on European understandings and mis-understandings of culture, linguistics and political practice, and developed largely in often-exoticised portrayals of Asian life and society, Europe came to see Cook's 'discoveries' in the Pacific as redeeming factors in the palliation of Asian-Pacific society. Whereas many

² National Library of Ireland, MS 1415, fol. 61-73, 24 June 1779. Letter of Gabriel Beranger to Charles Vallancey. This 'voyage' is also recounted in Sir William Wilde, *Memoir of Gabriel Beranger, and his Labours in the Cause of Irish Art and Antiquities, from 1760 to 1780*, Dublin, 1880, pp. 44-46. Wilde quotes a slightly different account of the venture: 'there Mr. Irwin made them sit down in a semicircle on the grass, and having opened a packet, distributed one and a half yard of fine broad ribbond to every female, whom we embraced at the time; after that each male and female got four feet long of roll tobacco, and a pair of beads each...', p. 45, based on the 'lost Note Book of Berenger'; Peter Harbison, *Our Treasure of Antiquities. Beranger and Bigari's antiquarian sketching tour of Connacht in 1779*, National Library of Ireland and Wordwell, Bray (Co. Wicklow), 2002, p. 62. Research for this paper was carried out with support from Cycle 2 of the PRTL award to the Centre for the Study of Human Settlement and Historical Change, NUI, Galway. All spellings in quotations are contemporary.

parts of Asia remained distant, intriguing, complex, complicated and seemingly unknowable, the Pacific was now an enlightened relief – charted, classifiable, comprehensible and noble in its simplicity – in comparison. In the wake of Cook, the Pacific pushed Asia to the margins, taking the centre-stage in the European imagination.

For these reasons, it may not come as a surprise that the opening quotation does not come from the exploration of a Pacific island in the 1770s, but is rather extracted from the 1779 report of another English expedition of that decade, to the island of Ennismurray, off the coast of County Sligo in the west of Ireland. Writing to the military surveyor and self-styled Orientalist General Charles Vallancey in Dublin, and to the wealthy politician William Burton Conyngham, the Huguenot artist Gabriel Beranger portrayed his trip to the west coast of Ireland as a voyage into the unknown, where natives ‘...in the true State of nature, hospitable...inocent and merry’ abounded.³ Beranger continued to make direct references in his report to the similarities between the native Irish islanders and the Tahitian islanders, and specifically to the antics and actions of women on both islands:

I fancied to be at O-ttaheite, since we found here the same good nature, but accompanied by modesty in the Sex, who grants plenty of inocent Embraces, Since they could not Enjoy our Conversation.⁴

It is not that Beranger had any direct or personal experience of the Pacific, indeed he never travelled more than from his birth place in Rotterdam to Ireland. Beranger had however, like so many of his generation and background, been inspired and incited by the actions of Cook and other explorers to undertake his own scientific voyage of exploration, to peel back the layers of indigenous society and expose the contents to enlightened scientific criticism. These actions had been recounted in volumes published in Ireland and elsewhere in the 1770s – including the Dublin edition of Lewis [Louis] de Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, translated from the French by Johann Reinhold Forster, ‘the Ulysses of these regions [the South Pacific]’⁵ – where the new style of scientific exploration had been demonstrated in an exemplary manner, enabling trainee explorers such as Beranger to mimic these modes of action and description.⁶

³ National Library of Ireland, MS 1415, fol. 76, 25 June 1779. Letter of Gabriel Beranger to William Burton Conyngham.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ It is highly likely that Beranger had read the travelogue, published in Dublin seven years previously, of Lewis de Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World. Performed by Order of His Most Christian Majesty, in the Years 1766, 1767, 1768, and 1769, Translated from the French by John Reinhold Forster, F.A.S.*, Dublin, J. Exshaw, *inter alia*, 1772. J.G. Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, (trans. T. Churchill), London, 1803, 2 vols., here: vol. I, p. 275.

⁶ See the excellent: Clare O’Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations. Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c.1750-1800*, Cork, 2004, esp. Part II, ‘Ossian and

The islands of the South Pacific became so well known in 1770s and 1780s Europe, that the productions and peoples of the region became better known to many Europeans 'than the natural productions and peoples of many less distant regions'.⁷ Theatrical productions, which presented exoticised visions of the Pacific, were tremendously popular. One play, 'A Short Account of the New Pantomime called Omai, or, A Trip round the World' was not only performed in London but also in Dublin and Limerick, while texts of the play were published in London and Dublin to enable even wider performance.⁸ Even in the Irish countryside, Cook's voyages struck a cord, where they were seen as the height of novelty and the apogee of amusement; a means of showing that, even in the rustic wilderness of Ireland, a gentleman was *au fait* with events in the farthest reaches of the British world. One example, from 1776, will suffice:

The Marquis of Landsdowne, then Earl of Shelburne, being in Ireland, and intending to call on Sir James [Caldwell, of Caldwell Castle], he, with an hospitality truly Irish, thought of nothing night or day but how to devise some amusement to entertain his noble guest, and came home to breakfast one morning with prodigious eagerness to communicate a new idea to Lady Caldwell. This was to summon together the hundred labourers he employed, and choose fifty that would best represent New Zealand savages, in order that he might form two fleets of boats on the Lough, one to represent Captain Cook and his men, the other a New Zealand chief at the head of his party in canoes, and consulted her how it would be possible to get them dressed in an appropriate manner in time for Lord Shelburne's arrival. Lady C., who had much more prudence than Sir James, reminded him that he had 200 acres of hay down, and the preparations he mentioned would occupy so much time that the whole would now stand a chance of being spoiled. All remonstrances were in vain. Tailors were pressed into his service from the surrounding country to vamp up, as well as time would permit, the crews of men and fleets. The prediction was

the Irish Bards', pp. 97-124 and, after O'Halloran, Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan (eds.), *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800*, London, 1999, p. 247. It is quite possible that Beranger had also read the similarly titled, also marginally Ireland-related, but non-scientific: William Betagh, *A Voyage Round the World. Being an Account of a Remarkable Enterprise, begun in the Year 1719...*, London, T. Combes, 1728; and Capt. George Shelvocke, *A Voyage Round the World. By Way of the Great South Sea, performed in the year 1719, 20, 21, 22, ...*, London, 1726.

⁷ Bernard Smith, *European Vision of the South Pacific*, New Haven and London, 1985, p. 2.

⁸ Mr. [John] O'Keefe, *A Short Account of the New Pantomime called Omai, or, A Trip round the World; performed by the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden with the Recitatives, Airs, Duets, Trips and Chorusses; and a Description of the Procession*, London: T. Cadell, 1785. The 'Procession' mentioned in the title, which took place in the final act of the play, involved no less than 69 'Natives', including 'One Chief of New Zealand, Two warriors *ditto*, one common man *ditto*, one woman with a child *ditto*'; *ibid*; pp. 20-22.

fulfilled: the hay was spoiled, and what hurt Sir James much more, he received a letter from Lord S. to put off his coming till his return from Kilkenny, and that uncertain.⁹

It was not just in the artistic world that Cook's actions in the Pacific had such far-reaching consequences. The actions of both Joseph Banks and Captain Cook on the *Endeavour* exercised great influence on the actions of antiquarians, naturalists and ethnologists in Europe, too. Banks' friend Gilbert White clearly had the reported successes of the *Endeavour* in mind when he recommended to Thomas Pennant – a friend both of Banks and White – that he undertake a naturalist's tour of Ireland, along the lines of that undertaken by Banks:

Dear Sir, Some future faunist, a man of fortune, will, I hope, extend his visits to the kingdom of Ireland; a new field, and a country little known to the naturalist. He will not, it is to be wished, undertake that tour unaccompanied by a botanist, because the mountains have scarcely been sufficiently examined; and the southerly counties of so mild an island may possibly afford some plants little to be expected within the British dominions. A person of a thinking turn of mind will draw many just remarks from the modern improvements of that country, both in arts and agriculture, where premiums obtained long before they were heard of with us. The manners of the wild natives, their superstitions, their prejudices, their sordid way of life, will extort from him many useful reflections. He should also take with him an able draughtsman; for he must, by no means, pass over the noble castles and seats, the extensive and picturesque lakes and water-falls, and the lofty, stupendous mountains, so little known, and so engaging in a lively manner. Such a work would be well received.¹⁰

These words could just as easily have been from the mouth of Canon John Douglas who, when writing of the need for a more scientific examination of natives in the Pacific, pointed out that the '*manners, monuments, customs, practices, and opinions* of the present inhabitants of the Pacific...form the *strongest contrast* with those of our own time in polished Europe.'¹¹

Gilbert White's insistence that 'an able draughtsman' be taken along on such research trips, whether in the Pacific or in Ireland, also signalled a change in the mode and means of investigation undertaken at the close of the

⁹ M. Betham-Edwards (ed.), *The Autobiography of Arthur Young with Selections from his Correspondence*, London, 1898, pp. 69-70. Young reports this story as taking place in the summer of 1776.

¹⁰ Rev. Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selborne: with Observations on Various Parts of Nature, ...with Additions and Supplementary Notes by Sir William Jardine*, London, 1851, Letter of Gilbert White to Thomas Pennant, 9 March 1775, pp. 201-202.

¹¹ James Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, London, 1784, 3 vols., here: vol. I, p. lxx.

eighteenth century and how cartography and surveying were now understood as crucial tools for charting society. Artists were being paired with, when not entirely replaced by, draughtsmen on voyages into the unknown, in order to provide a more thorough and all-encompassing view of the site of investigation. Already in 1748, Richard Walter, in his popular edition of Anson's *Voyage*, had argued for the inclusion of skilled draughtsmen on such expeditions, drawing attention to Louis XIV's 1712 decision to send Amédée Frézier to draw plans of coastlines and fortified positions along the South American coast for potential use in smuggling and naval assault.¹² In a work which greatly influenced Banks, and in turn large numbers of explorers and amateur explorers in Europe and elsewhere, Walter argued for the combining of verbal and visual records.¹³

I cannot ... but lament, how very imperfect many of our accounts of distant countries are rendered by the relators being unskilled in drawing, and in the general principles of surveying; even where other abilities have not been wanting. Had more of our travellers been initiated in these acquirements, and there had been added thereto some little skill in the common astronomical observations, [...] we should by this time have seen the geography of the globe much correcter, than we now find it; the dangers of navigation would have been considerably lessened, and the manners, arts and produce of foreign countries would have been much better known to us, than they are. Indeed, when I consider, the strong incitements that all travellers have to acquire some part at least of these qualifications, especially drawing; when I consider how much it would facilitate their observations, assist and strengthen their memories, and of how tedious, and often unintelligible, a load of description it would rid them, I cannot but wonder that any person, that intends to visit distant countries, with a view of informing either himself or others, should be unfurnished with so useful a piece of skill. And to inforce this argument still further, I must add, that besides the uses of drawing, which are already mentioned, there is one, which, though not so obvious, is yet perhaps of more consequence than all that has been hitherto urged; and that is, that those who are accustomed to draw objects, observe them with more distinctness, than others who are not habituated to this practice. For we may easily find, by a little experience, that in viewing any object however simple, our attention or memory is scarcely at any time so strong, as to enable us, when we have turned our eyes away from it, to recollect exactly every part it consisted of, and to recall all the circumstances of its appearance; since, on examination, it will be discovered, that in some we were

¹² Smith, *European Vision of the South Pacific*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*; Joseph Banks certainly took copies of Amédée Frézier's *Round the World* with him aboard the *Endeavour*.

mistaken, and others we had totally overlooked: But he that is employed in drawing what he sees, is at the same time employed in rectifying this inattention; for by confronting his idea copied on the paper, with the object he intends to represent, he finds in what manner he has been deceived in its appearance, and hence in time acquires the habit of observing much more at one view, and retains what he sees with more correctness than he could ever have done, without his practice and proficiency in drawing.¹⁴

In his recent work, Alan Frost singles out three groups who, during this period, greatly influenced the formation and re-formation of the British Empire: explorers and geographers with enlightenment appetites and a desire for the exotic; politicians armed with new maps and aware of the new, global, possibilities of trade and empire; and traders who ventured forth into new seas.¹⁵ The remainder of this paper will concentrate on the career of one individual who was an explorer, cartographer and a geographer with enlightened pretensions and a hunger for the exotic and who charted a landscape while pronouncing on the novelty of his actions *en route*. Trained for service within the empire, he spent his life in the shadow of Great Britain, yearning for a life of adventure in distant Asia and, when unable and perhaps unwilling to engage on such a far-flung venture, he invented Asia from afar and fashioned an Asian heritage for his own land. With Pacific Islands on stage and farm-hands playing Maori warriors, the theatrical-exotic had come to him; now he needed to bring an element of scientific rigour to the field.

A self-styled naturalist, explorer, philologist, antiquarian and Orientalist, General Charles Vallancey (1725-1812), Chief Engineer of Ireland, surveyor and cartographer, was the product of his age; a worshipper of the new scientific and rational age of discoveries, who read Bougainville and De Brosses, Cook and Jones, and who mapped his less-than-pacific Atlantic homeland. Building on the works of Joseph Banks, in particular, the cartographer and surveyor Vallancey championed the taking of skilled surveyors and artists on his scientific voyages into the Irish countryside, and of collating verbal and visual observations which were recorded in his itineraries.¹⁶ Through a wide correspondence with leading scholars, Vallancey created a reputation as Ireland's leading Orientalist and philologist, forging links between philology, antiquarianism and surveying. The links he enthusiastically cultivated with respected scholars, and his acknowledged position as a military officer and surveyor, meant that he became an influential, if highly contentious, figure in the fields of philology and Celtic Studies.

Borrowing ideas born of the British enterprise in India, the Pacific and elsewhere, Vallancey strove to locate the Irish as both subordinate and

¹⁴ G. Anson, *A Voyage Round the World*, (compiled by R. Walter), London, 1748, Introduction.

¹⁵ Alan Frost, *The Global Reach of Empire: Britain's Maritime Expansion in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, 1764-1815*, Melbourne, 2003, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ Smith, *European Vision of the South Pacific*, p. 7.

dominant¹⁷ actors in the British Empire in a mosaic ethnology which saw him marry the new and the old 'to assert the antiquity and sophistication of Irish culture'.¹⁸ This coloniality of knowledge, evident throughout the empire at the end of the eighteenth century, naturalised and privileged British philologists and Orientalists over native Irish thought systems and practices.¹⁹ Vallancey, like many of his peers, played an important role strengthening British identity, while also insisting on the separateness of Ireland's 'spiritual empire' within the larger imperial structure.²⁰

This nurturing of indigenous knowledge, and that knowledge's refraction through the lens of imperial ambition, can be seen as part of a process which translated aspects of the imperial enterprise from one region and applied them to another, reducing imperial diversity to a controllable and classified structure.²¹ In this way, actors like Charles Vallancey can be seen as an agent of the imperial civilizing mission, one of many agents who have their parallel in most, if not all, imperial contexts, and not just in the British Empire at the turn of the eighteenth century. The transformation of these agents' roles from an elitist or semi-elitist position to a more professionalised role within the imperial venture is an important consideration to bear in mind; we see such transformations taking place, for example, amongst learned Persians in India up until the 1770s and amongst Germans in Dutch overseas service. In the mid- to late eighteenth century an intrinsic relationship between knowledge of territory and the ability to control that space developed, marking a significant shift in colonial thinking. It was deemed necessary to reduce information and observations to standardized techniques, and this information was then relayed to the metropole where it could be classified and stored in the 'imperial archive'.²² Mapping and surveying became central to this

¹⁷ Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples 1600-1850*, London, 1999, p.5. See also: C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge, 1996.

¹⁸ Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race. Aryanism in the British Empire*, London, 2002, p.36.

¹⁹ After Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, Ann Arbor, 1995.

²⁰ C.A. Bayly, 'The British and indigenous peoples, 1760-1860: power, perception and identity', in: *Empire and others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples 1600-1850*, p.20. Also see Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*, Cambridge, 1999 and also Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds.), *A union of multiple identities: the British Isles, c.1750-1850*, Manchester, 1997.

²¹ 'The British created an imperial space defined by European principles which enabled them to reduce [here: India's] immense diversity to a rational and ultimately controllable structure'. Matthew Edney, 'The Patronage of Science and the Creation of Imperial Space: The Mapping of India, 1799-1843', *Cartographica Monograph*, vol. 30, 1, 1993, pp. 61-67, here: p. 61.

²² Thomas Richards, *The imperial archive: Knowledge and the fantasy of empire*, London, 1993; William J. Ashworth, 'John Herschel, George Airy, and the Roaming Eye of the State', *History of Science*, xxxvi, 1998, pp. 151-178, especially pp. 152-3.

exercise of power; the approach to empire was derived not 'from the acts of war but from the country house, slips of paper rather than shot and cannon, slide-rulers rather than the blades of swords'.²³

At this same time, knowledge, professional reputation, and political influence were increasingly interwoven as the amateur antiquarian was increasingly displaced by the disciplined scholar. The emergence of comparative philology, anthropology and the new natural and military sciences were the result of this shift.²⁴ As Sir James Macintosh, Recorder of Bombay, told an audience of the Bombay Literary Society in 1804 when asked what the European motivation and role for being abroad was, 'all Europeans who visit remote countries...are detachments from the main body of civilized men sent out to levy contributions and knowledge as well as gain victories over barbarism.'²⁵ Territories governed by Britain 'could be known and represented as a series of facts', as 'an imperial space'.²⁶ As Warren Hastings, the Governor General of Bengal and one of the great patrons of British Orientalism in India, wrote in 1784:

every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the State...it attracts and conciliates distant affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection; and it imprints on the hearts of our countrymen the sense of obligation and benevolence.²⁷

Ultimately this project of mastering indigenous knowledge naturalized certain names and privileged certain occasions and events over others, leading to a transformation of western forms of hegemony and an application of western models of science, philosophy and religion in varied parts of the empire. This process was not necessarily new; it is reminiscent of much older forms of confrontation between epistemologies and knowledge systems. In Barthelomé de las Casas epilogue to the *Historia Brevisima (Narratio regionum Indicarum per Hispanos quosdam deuastatarum verissima)* from the 1560s, he presented a typology of four types of barbarism: Faith; Language; Government, and

²³ John Brewer, 'The eighteenth-century British State: Contexts and issues', in: Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An imperial state at war: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, London, 1994, pp. 52-71, here: p. 61.

²⁴ Matthew H. Edney, 'British military education, mapmaking, and military 'map-mindedness' in the later Enlightenment', *The Cartographic Journal*, vol. 31, June 1994, pp. 14-20, esp. pp. 17-18.

²⁵ William J. Ashworth, 'John Herschel, George Airy, and the Roaming Eye of the State', p. 157.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 151; Edney, 'Patronage of Science', p. 63; see also: C.A. Bayly, 'Knowing the country: Empire and information in India', *Modern Asian Studies*, xxvii, 1993, pp. 3-43.

²⁷ Governor General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, writing in 1784 to Nathaniel Smith, Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company; William J. Ashworth, 'John Herschel, George Airy, and the Roaming Eye of the State', p. 151.

Civility. These varieties of barbarism, identified by European colonizers in those peoples they encountered in the sixteenth century, were all forms of 'lacking', of *barbaria contraria* or oppositional barbarism. To these De las Casas added a fifth kind: all those of European origin or descent who could be termed enemies of the true Christian faith and therefore barbarous. These people were in some sense civilized, but in a certain sense remained barbarous; for De las Casas, Protestants and Jews belonged to this group. The ability of the civilizing mission to metamorphose in order to deal with groups within, or close to, the metropole was already taking place in the sixteenth century. Just as for De las Casas, who viewed Protestants and people of mixed-race as belonging to this 'fifth variety', the Irish would become, for Charles Vallancey, 'Scythians', having strayed from the direct descent of civility yet capable of being re-saved and returned to the 'true Christian faith'. Vallancey, like many before and after him, used analogy (classifying others as Phoenicians, Carthaginians, etc.) and classification (whether racial, linguistic or religious) to privilege certain European thought processes for the historical legitimization of the civilizing mission. In this way, culture, science and empire merged to offer a new face to the civilizing mission which would help lead to an imperial identity. Charles Vallancey's actions in Ireland contributed to this mission.

Charles Vallancey was most likely born in 1725²⁸ to French Huguenot parents in Flanders,²⁹ although both date and location are debated. Vallancey most likely studied at Eton, where he would have been a contemporary of, the later, Lord Townshend, before becoming a 'gentleman cadet' at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in the 1740s, where he read of Asia and the Americas and trained as an engineer and surveyor. Vallancey was commissioned as an Ensign in the Tenth Regiment of Foot in 1747 and served

²⁸ The *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Vallancey gives his date of birth as 1721, as does H.F. Berry, *A History of the Royal Dublin Society*, London, 1915 and Alfred Webb, *Compendium of Irish Biography*, Dublin, 1878. But *Memorials of the Dead. Proceedings of the Society for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead*, vol. 3, Dublin, 1895-1897, p. 68, notes that the inscription on Vallancey's tombstone reads 'Here lieth the body of General Chas. Vallancey, who died on the 8th day of August 1812, in the 88th year of his age', thus making Vallancey's year of birth 1725. And writing in 1802, Vallancey, in RIA Ms. R 26 6, gives his age as 76 years, which would place his birth in 1725 or 1726 (depending on his month of birth and month of writing). In November 1809 Vallancey wrote that he was in his eighty-third year; British Library, Add. MS 35648, f. 218. These details, together with the fact that Vallancey was commissioned as a Lieutenant in June 1760, make it seem likely that his year of birth was in the mid-1720s: the most likely year being 1725.

²⁹ Berry, *History of the Royal Dublin Society*, and others, give Windsor at Vallancey's birth place, but there is no record of Vallancey in either the Windsor Parish Church, in the register of St. George's Chapel, or in the Berkshire Records: Monica Nevin, 'General Charles Vallancey 1725-1812', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians of Ireland*, vol. 123, 1993, pp. 19-58, here: p. 19. It is most likely Vallancey was born in Flanders, as stated in J. Warburton, J. Whitelaw and R. Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, vol. 2, Dublin, 1818, p. 918.

in, and charted, Gibraltar in 1750.³⁰ Again, exact details to his family life are scant, but he married four times and had eleven children by three of his wives (two sons saw service in the British Army during the American War of Independence).³¹ His large family caused him on-going financial concern and Vallancey would frequently petition the government for money, bemoaning that as the only man of science in Ireland he should be ‘starving with a large family’.³² ‘I find myself struggling with poverty and languishing under neglect and obscurity’, he wrote, and even considered entering the service of Catherine the Great of Russia to alleviate his miserable financial state.³³

Vallancey’s connection with Ireland began when he arrived in the country, in or after 1750, as a Military Engineer, being promoted to the rank of Engineer-in-Ordinary in 1762.³⁴ During his career as a military engineer he was involved in the fortification of Dublin and Cork and embarked on the ambitious project of creating an inch survey map of Ireland.³⁵ To keep solvent, Charles Vallancey worked as an engineering consultant on private and civic constructions, and additionally worked in translating texts from French. The now Chief of Engineers became involved in Dublin society and seems to have sought advancement through membership of clubs and societies in the city; he read widely and was eager to become involved in any groups that promoted Celtic language, culture and identity.³⁶ He wrote that his interest in the language and antiquities of Ireland was first stimulated by his survey work, which caused him to visit ‘the most unfrequented recesses of Ireland.’ With these interests to the fore, Vallancey canvassed for membership of Dublin’s clubs and societies. He was elected a member of the Dublin Society in 1763

³⁰ PRO London, Indexes. 5438; J. Warburton, J. Whitelaw and R. Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, Dublin, 1818, pp. 918-19. Vallancey appears to have first served in Gibraltar, as a plan of the fortifications there executed by Vallancey survived, dated 1750; British Library Add. MS. 21576, 3B.

³¹ Monsieur le Comte de Tournaye, who visited Vallancey at Cobh, is responsible for the exaggerated claims of Vallancey’s large family size; J. Coleman, ‘The Story of Spike Island’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archeological Society*, vol. 2, 1893, pp. 1-8, here: p. 5.

³² PRO London, State Papers Ireland 63/432/30 B; PRO London, T 1/477/95-96, Lord Townshend, for £75 per annum to be paid to each of Major Charles Vallancey’s daughters, dated 17 November 1770. These payments, to Vallancey’s daughters Mary Elizabeth, Frances, Letitia and Elizabeth, were dowries to enable the women marry.

³³ PRO Northern Ireland, D 572/2/73, 509.

³⁴ J. Crooks, ‘The Corps of Engineers, Ireland’, *Royal Engineers Journal*, vol. 23, 1916, pp. 13-15.

³⁵ On the inch survey, see: PRO London, State Papers Ireland, 63/432/30 B. On the Grand Canal project, see Vallancey’s letter of 27 March 1769 to George Lord Macartney of Lissanore; Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), d.572/1/55. For Vallancey’s involvement in the building of a pier at Dún Laoghaire harbour, see: Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company, *The Construction of Dun Laoghaire Harbour*, Dublin, 2003, esp. p.3.

³⁶ The extent of Vallancey’s wide and varied reading can be best judged by examining the *Catalogue of a valuable collection of books, manuscripts, and Irish history, the library of the late celebrated Irish historian, General Charles Vallancey, which will be sold by auction...the 18th of February...by Thomas Jones, bookseller and auctioneer* [Dublin, 1812], National Library of Ireland, PP 1394(1). Most of Vallancey’s library was purchased by the Royal Irish Academy at sale on 18 February 1813.

and became one of the principal activists in the Committee of Antiquities within the Dublin Society, which was established in 1772 to investigate the polity, manners and literature of the ancient inhabitants of Ireland.³⁷ A Freemason, Vallancey was also elected a member of the American Philosophical Society and was elected a fellow of the Antiquarian Societies of London, Perth and Edinburgh. He was a founding-member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1782, having the previous year received an LL.D. from Trinity College Dublin. In 1784 Vallancey was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and two years later a Fellow of the Royal Society.³⁸

Vallancey's wild theories, that the Irish were descended from the Phoenicians, were already being sarcastically rejected by his peers within the Dublin Society; worse would follow in the succeeding decades.³⁹ Vallancey was not the first to advocate such origins for the Irish, but he was the most determined in pronouncing his theories. He had certainly been influenced by the work of Anthony Raymond, Vicar of Trim, who saw the Irish as descended from the Scythians, and held Irish to be a learned and sophisticated language.⁴⁰ Vallancey's reputation as a Celtic scholar was such that he was championed as 'the only person, perhaps in Europe, at this time capable of treating the subject [of the Irish language] with propriety.'⁴¹ Vallancey was the established English-language authority on all matters Irish, corresponding with the eminent Sir William Jones, amongst others. In September 1787 Jones wrote from India to Joseph Cooper Walker: 'When you see Colonel Vallancey, whose learned work I have read through twice with the greatest of pleasure, I request you to present him with my best remembrance.'⁴² The previous year, Charles Vallancey's *A Vindication of the Early History of Ireland* had been published and sent to Jones in India by Walker. But as Jones's letter to Joseph Cooper Walker sped to Ireland, another, written but twenty-four hours earlier, was en route to the Earl Spenser, William Jones' former student:

Have you met with a book lately published with the title of *A Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland* [sic]? It was written by a friend of mine, Colonel Vallancey; but a word in your ear – it is very stupid... I... am certain that his derivations from the Persian, Arabick, and Sanscrit languages, are erroneous. According to him, when silly people gave me the surname of *Persian*, they in fact

³⁷ C.C. Ward and F.E. Ward (eds.), *The Letters of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare*, 2 vols., Washington, 1980.

³⁸ Monica Nevin, 'General Charles Vallancey 1725-1812', p. 30.

³⁹ Vallancey was well aware of such criticisms of his work, and referred to his critics as 'twittering swallow[s]'; *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*, vol. III, no. XII, p. 232.

⁴⁰ Dr. Johnson called the Gaelic language 'the language of Japhet, spoken before the Deluge, and probably the Speech of Paradise.' Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor Ghael*, p.420.

⁴¹ 'On the origin and Language of the Irish; and the Learning of the Druids', in *Collectanea De Rebus Hibernicis*, vol. II, no. 7, Dublin, 1781, p. 231.

⁴² G. Cannon (ed.), *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, Oxford, 1970, vol. II, pp.770-1.

called me *Irishman*. Do you wish to laugh? Skim the book over. Do you wish to sleep? Read it regularly.⁴³

Vallancey's frequent pronouncements on Irish philology and on the Phoenician Scytho-Celtic connection were dismissed by Jones and other serious philologists.⁴⁴ Yet Vallancey helped to create a forum for the study of antiquarianism in Ireland which was open to Irish Catholic scholars as well as to Ascendancy Protestants and, 'at a time when it [the Irish past] excited little interest', influenced and inspired many to study Irish antiquities.⁴⁵ He was an admirer of the Irish language, but it is never quite clear if this was primarily an antiquarian interest which saw the language as 'an obstacle to trade and commerce'⁴⁶ or also a means of drawing the Gaelic Irish into a cosmology which excused them as different, as lost, yet redeemable. Vallancey fell victim to frequent criticism; his *Prospectus of a Dictionary of the Language of the Aire-Coti, or Ancient Irish, Compared with the Language of the Cuti, or Ancient Persians, with the Hindoostanee, the Arabic, and Chaldean Languages* (Dublin, 1802), was reviewed negatively by Alexander Murray, who wrote: 'Few philological theories are totally destitute of truth and information. In abundance of error, there are commonly two or three particles of useful science. This is the only publication in which there is none.'⁴⁷ Historians today have been no less kind. 'Amateur rubbish' and 'hokum' have been used to describe his work, while one author refers to Vallancey as reaching 'rare heights of absurdity.'⁴⁸

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 768-9.

⁴⁴ See, *inter alia*, Charles Vallancey, 'An essay on the antiquity of the Irish language, being a Collation of the Irish with the Punic Languages', in *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*, 1772; *idem.*, *A Grammar of the Ibero-Celtic, or Irish Language*, Dublin, 1773; *idem.*, *A Grammar of the Ibero-Celtic or Irish Language to which is prefixed an essay on Celtic Language; shewing the importance of the Irish dialect, to students of history and the classics*, Dublin, 1782; *idem.*, *A Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland*, Dublin, 1786; *idem.*, 'Japanese [sic] Language collated with Irish', *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*, no.10, 1782; *idem.*, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation*, Dublin, 1763. Vallancey's Irish was not terribly good; '...Vallancey, to judge by his performance, had a knowledge of the language which was peculiar and of far less extent than he pretended.' George A. Little, *Dublin before the Vikings*, Dublin, 1957, p. 83.

⁴⁵ Particularly Charles O'Connor and Theophilus Flanagan. Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1986, p.403. Hubert Butler, 'Lament for Archaeology', in Roy Foster (ed.), *Hubert Butler, The Sub-Prefect Should Have held His Tongue*, Dublin, 1990, p. 171.

⁴⁶ Eoin Magennis, 'A Land of Milk and Honey': The Physico-Historical Society, Improvement and the Surveys of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. 102C, no.6, 2002, pp. 199-217, here: pp. 213.

⁴⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. II, 1803, p. 126.

⁴⁸ P. Brown, *The Chathamites: A Study in the Relationship Between Personalities and ideas in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1967, p. 351; R.F. Foster, 'History and the Irish Question' in *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, Harmondsworth, 1993, p. 10; J.H. Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor Ghael*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1986, p. 420.

While Vallancey may not have distinguished himself as a linguist and philologist, he was certainly an insightful commentator on aspects of eighteenth-century Ireland. A skilled cartographer, he employed topographic, cadastral, graphic and textual aspects in his work, and he was influential in synthesising earlier indigenous attempts at qualifying and collating knowledge in Ireland. In short, Vallancey was central in creating a model of linguistic and topographical mapping that would later be applied to other parts of the British Empire.⁴⁹ Just as his earliest efforts owed much to the actions of those engaged in the exploration of Asia and the Pacific, Vallancey's cartographic efforts in Ireland, from the early 1760s down to the end of his life, would significantly impact on the proponents of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, which looked to the Ordinance Survey of Ireland as the epitome of what they hoped to achieve. Drawing on the concrete example of the Irish survey, they were in the late 1830s finally victorious over the advocates of general surveys made elsewhere.⁵⁰

In 1776, with open animosity between him and several Dublin intellectuals over matters philological, Vallancey left Dublin to begin work on his military survey of Ireland, a survey which proposed to value the defensive capabilities of, principally, the coastal regions of Ireland from Dublin to Galway Bay on the west coast. In 1787, Vallancey proposed to bring the survey full circuit around the entire Irish coastline, but for financial reasons this proposal was rejected by the commander-in-chief, General Pitt. Vallancey's plans for such a survey began under his tenure with Lord Townshend and it was his intention to illustrate the dispatches, or itineraries, with maps.⁵¹ What began in 1776, and has survived in early sectional reports, continued until the completion of the Itinerary.⁵² The itineraries are impressive, detailed, accounts of Irish geography; 'whatever [Vallancey's] deficiencies as an antiquarian or linguist, his cartographic achievements were far from negligible.'⁵³ It is far from natural that Vallancey should have been charged with such an ambitious and immense task. Before 1700, civilian personnel undertook the general mapping activities of the European states. By the end of the eighteenth century, civilian and contracted labour was still very common, but European states increasingly expected specially trained military officers to organise and lead mapping projects. The manifest results of this militarisation of cartography are the national systematic surveys initiated throughout Europe after 1790. The militarisation of cartography was a fundamental element in

⁴⁹ Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, p.23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.35.

⁵¹ J.H. Andrews, 'Charles Vallancey and the Map of Ireland', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 132, 1966, p. 50.

⁵² Earlier, much shorter, sections of these itineraries survive, as in Royal Irish Academy Ms. 12.S.6, 'Military Survey and Itinerary of Ireland begun in the year 1776 by command of his Majesty',

⁵³ J.H. Andrews, 'Charles Vallancey and the Map of Ireland', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 132, 1966, p. 48.

the state's increasing ability to marshal and control its resources.⁵⁴ This was the case of Britain in the eighteenth century; Britain acquired, for the first time, a large standing army and embarked on substantial military mapping programmes similar to those of topographic engineers in France and the German States.⁵⁵ These changes resulted in what has been called a 'map-mindedness' amongst senior army officers in a trend towards the 'cartographisation of the military'. General officers needed to appreciate and understand the use of maps for military purposes; even at the end of the Seven Years' War, map use by field officers was limited, and military reformers began to promote maps as essential documents of war. This occurred at the same time as the first central army staffs were established throughout Europe. Military cartographic reforms of this period include William Roy's 1763 and 1766 proposals for a 'General Military Map' of England.⁵⁶ Another example is Robert Orme's *Essay on the Art of War* (1765), written for the benefit of his friends in the East India Company's army, in which he stressed the utility of maps for the field commander.

This relationship is also apparent in the military academies established in Europe during the eighteenth century. The first such institutions were specialised schools designed to educate engineers and artillerymen in their increasingly complex professions. Britain was no exception to this trend: the Board of Ordnance founded the Royal Military Academy (RMA) at Woolwich and Vallancey was a student of this Academy (after leaving Eton), which also served the East India Company. The Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, known as 'the Shop', was established in 1741 near the Royal Artillery Depot to educate the military branch of the Board of Ordnance to produce officers for the Artillery and Engineers and with the aim of producing, in the words of its first charter, 'good officers of Artillery and perfect Engineers'. The RMA provided the high level of scientific education required by these two corps, while at the same time ensuring that their officers had the same level of military training as those serving in the Line.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Sven Widmalm, 'Accuracy, Rhetoric, and Technology: The Paris-Greenwich Triangulation, 1784-88', in, Tore Frängsmyr, J.L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider (eds.), *The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century*, Berkeley, 1990, pp. 179-206, esp. 200-1.

⁵⁵ Edney, 'British military education', pp. 14-21.

⁵⁶ See General Roy's *Military Description of parts of England and Ireland*, 1765, PRO London, WO 30/55 and PRO WO 30/115, *Defence of England: Observations by Colonel Roy made on a tour of Ireland, with suggestions as to suitability for movements of an Army, providing for citadels, vulnerability of towns and harbours in the event of an invasion – defence projects, etc.*, 1766; *ibid.*, *An account of the trigonometrical operation, whereby the distance between the meridians of the observatories of Greenwich and Paris has been determined*, *From the Philosophical Transactions*. London, 1790; *ibid.*, *The military antiquities of the Romans in Britain*. By the late William Roy, The Society of Antiquaries of London: W. Bulmer and Co, 1793.

⁵⁷ The Royal Military Academy (RMA) at Woolwich was the older and more senior of the two establishments from which the present RMA School (RMAS) was formed. The Corps of Royal Engineers, originally an all-officer corps, was not formally separated from the Royal Regiment of Artillery until 1787. Both remained under the control of the Board of Ordnance until 1856, and were collectively referred to as the Ordnance Corps.

It was while at the RMA that Vallancey perhaps began his blending of Orientalism, Celticism and ethnology. It was most likely while a student at Woolwich that Vallancey encountered the reports of India, the Indian and Pacific oceans, and first discovered the variety and extent of language and society at the distant margins of empire. And while at the RMA, Vallancey broadened his knowledge in other ways. As with so many of his peer gentlemen cadets, Vallancey's military training and career allowed him undertake his cosmographical studies.⁵⁸ Vallancey's military work, and particularly his 'Military Itinerary of Ireland' (1796), illustrates the centrality of surveying and mapping to late Enlightenment concepts of 'military science' and thus their centrality to the education of junior officers beyond the rudiments of military lore and drill.⁵⁹ British administrators and surveyors promoted the *ideal* of systematic mapping in an attempt to both reinforce and legitimate the conceptual image of their empire. By creating an imperial space, in whatever local context, surveyors enabled a process whereby diversity was reduced to a rational and ultimately controllable structure.⁶⁰ Enlightenment scholars positioned the map at the heart of 'mathematical cosmography', the broad conceptual fusion of astronomy, geography, and their point of contact, cartography. This positioning, for Matthew Edney and other scholars, reflects the way in which the map and the mapmaking process was conceived as a key trope of knowledge and knowledge-production.⁶¹ Cartography and map-making crossed disciplines, facilitating a charting of various forms of knowledge today held to be insurmountably different.

Intellectually, mapmaking was held to epitomise the 'scientific spirit' that military reformers desired to inculcate in the young ensigns. It combined mathematical and logical thought (theory) with concrete military results (practice). Eighteenth-century Europe was intellectually rooted in an *esprit géométrique*, the desire to order both nature and human society through laws and formulations.⁶² That the British undertook surveys was held as proof of the scientific rationality and liberalism of their rule when contrasted with the seemingly inadequate conceptions of space held by indigenous peoples.⁶³ Equally, by presenting Ireland as worthy of research, mapping and description, Vallancey was following in the footsteps of the earlier Physico-Historical Society of Ireland (1744-52), which had hoped to reveal the extent of improvement in Ireland since the first English wars of the sixteenth and

⁵⁸ Matthew Edney, 'Mathematical Cosmography and the Social Ideology of British Cartography, 1780-1820', *Imago Mundi*, vol. 46, 1994, pp. 101-116, here: p.110.

⁵⁹ Three copies of the *Military Itinerary of the South of Ireland (1796)* exist; one is held at the Institute of Royal Engineers' Library at Chatham, having been donated to the Institute by the War Office on 27 August 1923; a second copy is held at the Public Records Office, London, PRO WO 30/63; and a third copy is held at the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, APS 941.5/V24i.

⁶⁰ Matthew H. Edney, 'The Patronage of Science and the Creation of Imperial Space', p.61.

⁶¹ Edney, 'Mathematical Cosmography', p.101.

⁶² Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, New York, 1990, p.116; after: Edney, 'Patronage', p.63.

⁶³ Edney, 'Patronage', p.63.

seventeenth centuries.⁶⁴ Corresponding societies' of ten or more members in each of Ireland's counties would undertake the work of collecting local descriptions and subscriptions for new county maps.⁶⁵ The founding members chose to follow the examples of the Royal Society in England and the academies of Leipzig and Paris, so that 'the great part of its materials are to be sought for in the field; and every place visited, to make proper enquiry into its antiquities, and its civil and natural history.'⁶⁶ Interestingly, this Society was active as Vallancey was a gentleman cadet at Woolwich and he would, undoubtedly, have been aware of its activities. Indeed, the title of the Physico-Historical Society's publication, 'Collectanea de rebus Hibernicus', was later used by Vallancey for his own publication.⁶⁷

Vallancey, then, had an opportunity to merge his professional and military life (as a surveyor and Chief Engineer of Ireland and as a military officer) with his other interests (exploration of Asia and the Pacific, philology, antiquarianism and Orientalism) in his military itinerary writing and his mapping. By so doing, he legitimized his extra-professional writings under the cloak of his professional work. And like his peer surveyors in India, Vallancey was motivated by a healthy interest in self-advancement.⁶⁸ Indeed, his promotion to chief engineer, with an attendant increase in pay, came after he threatened to take his services abroad if he were not favoured with advancement.⁶⁹ And it was in his capacity as director-general of engineers, not as antiquary, that Charles Vallancey accompanied his old Etonian school friend George, Viscount Townshend, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1767-1772), on personal tours of inspection of barracks and fortifications across Ireland.⁷⁰ Irish military surveying and cartography under Vallancey might be seen as

⁶⁴ Eoin Magennis, 'A Land of Milk and Honey', pp.199-200.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.203.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 'A Land of Milk and Honey', p.209.

⁶⁷ While it seems highly likely that Vallancey was influenced by the work of William Roy, in his *Essay on Military Surveys* written in 1779 and presented to the King, Vallancey refers to French and Prussian surveying practice and does not mention Roy's work in Scotland or elsewhere. This paucity with the truth, or at least reluctance to expand on his sources, has been pointed to by Christine Casey, *Books and Builders*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1992, p. 225, ff., when she draws attention to Vallancey's neglect in tells his readership that his *Practical Treatise on Stone Cutting* was a translation of J.B. de la Rue's work of a similar title. See also: Monica Nevin, 'General Charles Vallancey, 1725-1812', p. 23.

⁶⁸ J.M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England*, London, 1986, esp. pp. 85-110; Edney, 'Patronage', p.63.

⁶⁹ PRONI D.572/2/109, 31 March 1770, Letter from Major Charles Vallancey, Dublin, to Macartney: '...Honour and riches are the universal pursuits of men...yet how little of either can fall to the share of the Irish engineers! What prospect of honour and rank can a man have who engages in this profession here!'

⁷⁰ Alan J. Guy, 'The Irish military establishment, 1660-1776', in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge, 1997, pp.211-230, here: p.229.

both European and colonial, moving from the local to the imperial and back again.⁷¹

Just as in other parts of the British Empire, surveyors such as Vallancey were the point men of British imperialism.⁷² Vallancey's surveys of Ireland in the 1770s, '80s and '90s, and the 'Military Itinerary' which he produced in 1796, anticipated in ideal and practice Colin Mackenzie's important work in South India. Just as Mackenzie's subordinates were directed to collect information about religious practice, languages, scripts, ancient remains, local histories, genealogies, wild and tame animals, and medicines, so were Vallancey's assistants. The surveyor in Ireland did not restrict himself to the measurement of topography, but also commented on forests, soils, manufacturing, on commerce and on the general population.⁷³ In the 1760s Vallancey had the services of one of William Roy's junior Engineer officers, Charles Tarrant, at his disposal and learnt much from him.⁷⁴ Indeed, it seems likely that Vallancey had Tarrant train new Irish draughtsmen so that 'sketches [might be] taken in books chiefly on horseback – not laid down to scale, but the nature and appearance of the country proportioned by the eye only.'⁷⁵ His training at Woolwich and his reading of texts on Asia influenced both his professional and private interests and subsequently led to his work bearing an influence on surveying in India, the imperial home of his model and hero, William Jones. Vallancey's 'cartographic memoirs', just as those of colleagues in India, detail a wide variety of textual, itinerary, historical, and cartographic materials which were routinely combined into single map images and highlight the substantial amount of time which surveyors such as Vallancey personally spent in the field.⁷⁶

⁷¹ To paraphrase Thomas Bartlett, 'The Academy of Warfare': Military Affairs in Ireland, 1600 to 1800', 30th O'Donnell Lecture 2002, Publication of the National University of Ireland 2002, pp.1-27, here: p.11.

⁷² As in India, with Colin Mackenzie's survey of Mysore (1799-1808); Edney, 'Patronage', p.62.

⁷³ See: J.H. Andrews, 'Charles Vallancey and the Map of Ireland', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 132, March 1966, pp. 48-61; *ibid.*, 'Exhibition of Irish Maps at Trinity College, Dublin', *Geographical Journal: Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 127, December 1961, p. 554; *ibid.*, 'Charles Vallancey and the Map of Ireland', *An Cosantóir*, vol. 34, 1974, pp. 367-370; *ibid.*, 'Charles Vallancey's Maps of Ireland; A new reference', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 146, 1980, p. 150.

⁷⁴ Charles Tarrant, no. 18 on the List of the Corps of Engineers of Ireland, joined from the British List (no. 128), Regimental Rank of Captain awarded one day after Vallancey, on 27 January 1762; Major, 1 October 1789; Lieutenant-Colonel, 14 November 1793; Colonel, 1 April 1796; Army Rank of Major on 29 August 1777; Lieutenant-Colonel, 19 February 1783; Colonel, 1 March 1794; Major-General, 3 May 1796; Lieutenant-General, 25 September 1803. Tarrant saw war service at St. Malo in 1758; he retired on full pay upon disbandment of the Corps on 1 April 1801 and died at Idstow, Berkshire on 21 March 1818. See also General Roy's *Military Description of Parts of England and Ireland*, 1765, PRO London, WO 30/55.

⁷⁵ PRO Ireland, Townshend Papers, PRO Maps and Plans 169. Vallancey mentions Tarrant in his 'Military Itinerary', on page 64 of the Itinerary.

⁷⁶ Edney, 'Mathematical Cosmography', p.104.

Charles Vallancey, ‘distinguished Sapper map-maker’,⁷⁷ kept extensive notes on the topography, geography and possible utility of the land through which he passed, and added notes on the loyalty and occasional animosity of the residents. These notes, running in his hand to over one hundred pages, form the basis of the ‘Military Itinerary of the South of Ireland 1796’. In his ‘Itinerary’, Vallancey shows he is more than a narrow topographical determinist; terrain was subordinate to logistical considerations and one sees the influence of his linguistic and anthropological interests in his professional work. There is a real intelligence in his observations and Vallancey presents a multi-layered analysis; he is concerned with much more than the depth of rivers or the narrowness of passes, but rather takes into account the presumed loyalty of local peasants and logistics, and he offers tantalizing treats of information concerning the social and political landscape of Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century.

It is difficult to evaluate Vallancey’s work in the light of contemporaries’ itineraries and related maps, and to know just how accurate and comprehensive such military surveys were intended and expected to be in the eighteenth century.⁷⁸ What can be certain is the dedication that Vallancey gave to the task in hand; a man in his sixties, he insisted on travelling to Paris to supervise the copying of the seventeenth century Down Survey maps of Ireland and continued to spend substantial periods of time in the field surveying and supervising charting.⁷⁹ As an aside to his professional work, he continued to observe and detail items of archeological and topographical interest and to collect, albeit unscientifically, Irish vocabulary.

Just as William Jones in India held conflicting views concerning his role in the imperial project and his empathy for the subjects of empire, so too did his self-appointed protégé in Ireland. Charles Vallancey saw no discrepancy between championing the study of the Irish Celtic language and culture while at the same time serving within an army that guaranteed an Ascendancy in Ireland.⁸⁰ This treading of the middle ground helps to explain why Vallancey’s work was much respected by elements of Anglo-Irish, and wider

⁷⁷ PRO, OS 3/55, 104650. See also: T.W.J. Connolly (Quartermaster of the Royal Engineers), *History of the Royal Sappers and Miners, from the Formation of the Corps in March 1772, to the date when its designation was changed to that of Royal Engineers, in October 1856*, 3 vols., Chatham: Royal Engineers Library, 1992.

⁷⁸ The only analogous map is William Roy’s map of Scotland. While no direct connection between Roy and Charles Vallancey can be illustrated, Vallancey’s work with Roy’s former surveyor, Tarrant, and the fact that Roy visited Ireland in his capacity of Surveyor General of Coasts for three weeks in August 1765, producing in that time a number of town plans and a sketch map of the relief features of southern Ireland, makes it highly likely that, as senior professional Engineer officer, Vallancey would have met with Roy and discussed experiences and practices of surveying.

⁷⁹ Y.M. Goblet, *La transformation de la géographie politique de l’Irlande au XVIIe siècle dans les cartes et essais anthropogéographiques de Sir William Petty*, Paris, 1898, vol.II, pp. 21-43.

⁸⁰ See Norman Vance, ‘Celts, Carthaginians and Constitutions: Anglo-Irish Literary Relations, 1780-1820’, in *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 22, 1981, p. 226

British, society and why at the same time his philological and archeological work (beyond the fact that it was largely spurious) was seen by many others as dubious and suspect. That fact that Vallancey was not Irish – his marriage to Julie de Blosset was licensed in her name, as he was not an Irish subject – yet felt such an affinity with the land and language, allows an insight into the conflicted aspects of a personality that sought acceptance by, and simultaneously distance from, the land which he subjected to such minute surveying.

New, rigorous, science was emerging to challenge the spurious methods of men such as Vallancey; ‘antiquarianism became politically incorrect and was quietly abandoned.’⁸¹ While surveying and mapping certainly did not constitute the entirety of military science, they did embody that knowledge for Vallancey and many others. Many professional men of science acquired extra income, obtained the notice of their superiors thereby advancing their military careers, and could eventually attain the status of gentlemen through their cartographic work.⁸² In Ireland, Charles Vallancey did the opposite. He used his cartographic surveying position to justify his extra-scientific interests and to justify his philological, Orientalist and antiquarian theories. Like many of his peers, he played an important role in both strengthening British identity and also in emphasizing separateness for the Irish language and for the Irish within a greater imperial structure. His stature among peer surveyors and cartographers was unquestioned and Vallancey consciously used this elevated status to buttress his philological and antiquarian theorizing. Charles Vallancey certainly attempted to merge his personae as cartographer and philologist just as many of his peers had done in India and elsewhere in the empire. Yet Vallancey’s significance was inestimable in locating both the Irish language and Ireland more generally within an empire then in the process of re-classification, by more firmly drawing Ireland and her past into the web of empire.⁸³ As a member of the ascendancy, Vallancey facilitated collaborative work with a variety of scholars and drew them into the increasingly significant Royal Irish Academy, thereby advancing the study of language and culture in Ireland and also hastening the correction of his own, incorrect, theories.⁸⁴ Only his position as a military officer and his importance as a surveyor and cartographer permitted this use of patronage. As a ‘mathematical cosmographer’ Vallancey traded on the late eighteenth-century’s respect for cartography as an intellectually coherent discipline to justify his pivotal role in the British civilizing mission in Ireland.⁸⁵ Yet his attempt to create an enlightened, civilized ‘cosmopolis’, to give a comprehensive account of the world by binding Ireland to the empire in Asia in political-theological, as well

⁸¹ Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fior-Ghael*, p. 376.

⁸² J.M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England*, London, 1986, pp.85-110; after: Edney, ‘Patronage’, p.63.

⁸³ Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race. Aryanism in the British Empire*.

⁸⁴ Walter D. Love, ‘The Hibernian Antiquarian Society, a forgotten predecessor to the Royal Irish Academy’, *Studies*, vol. 51, 1962, pp. 419-431.

⁸⁵ Edney, ‘Mathematical Cosmography’, p. 101.

as in scientific terms, failed.⁸⁶ ‘The celebrated Antiquary and Engineer of Ireland’, as Dr. Samuel Johnson called Charles Vallancey, strove to be a citizen of the world, but only of a rose-tinted world viewed through Orientalist spectacles.

⁸⁶ Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, p. 116.