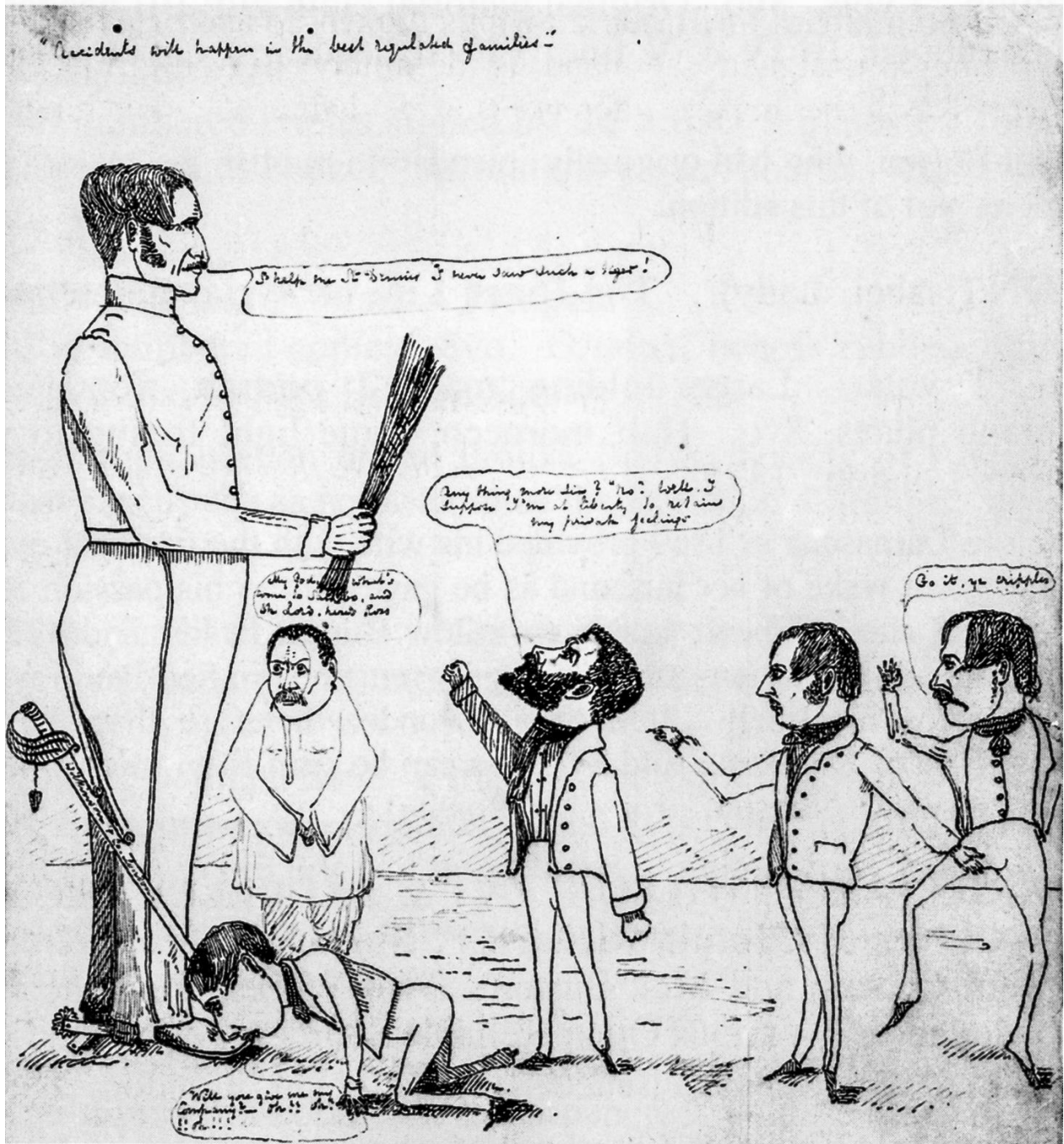


New Light on Richard Burton's Karachi Brothel Report

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“Accidents will happen in the best regulated families.”
[Far left] So help me, St Dennis, I never saw such a tiger!
[Burton] My God. What’s come to Sambo,
and Oh Lord here’s Ross.
[Third from left] Any thing more Sir? ‘No.’ Well, I suppose
I’m at liberty to retain my private feelings.
[Bottom] Will you give me my company? Oh!! Oh!! Oh!!!
[Far right] Go it, ye cripples.¹

In the “Terminal Essay” to the tenth volume of his translation of the *Thousand and One Nights*, Richard Burton included a remarkable passage which would over time develop into perhaps the most widely-known of all the many stories told about his early career. It is not unusual to come across people today who, though they have only the vaguest idea who Burton was or why he is worth bothering with now, know at least some variant of it. The incident it refers to has come to be known as the Karachi Brothel Report. Burton described it as a first-hand investigation into pederasty-for-hire in the town where he was stationed in Sindh in the mid-1840s.² Written up as an official document, this got him into trouble with the authorities, or so the story goes. Some sources even claim that it blighted his career in the Indian Army. The difficulty is that no such document has ever been found, leading some to doubt whether it ever existed, suggesting that Burton may have made the whole story up. New evidence is assembled here that provides persuasive corroboration for the existence of the original investigation and the report. Remarkably, it seems that this is the first time any attempt has been made to gather this information in coherent form.

Until now the only source for the Karachi Brothel Report has been Burton’s own description, which has been considerably altered and embellished over the years by his biographers and bibliographers. It is important then to pay close attention to his *exact* words, which occur in the context of a discussion of the practice of pederasty:

The “execrabilis familia pathicorum”³ first came before me by a chance of earlier life. In 1845, when Sir Charles Napier had conquered and annexed Sind, despite a fraction (mostly venal) which sought favour with the now defunct “Court of Directors to the Honourable East India Company,” the veteran began to consider his conquest with a curious eye. It was reported to him that Karáchi, a townlet of some two thousand souls and distant not more than a mile from camp, supported no less than three lupanars⁴ or bordels, in which not women but boys and eunuchs, the former demanding nearly a double price, lay for hire. Being then the only British officer who could speak Sindi, I was asked indirectly to make enquiries and to report upon the subject; and I undertook the task on express condition that my report should not be forwarded to the Bombay

¹ Cover image: caricature of Indian Army Officers, attributed to Richard Burton, second from left.

² Note that this alternatively referred to in sources as Sindh, Sind, or Scinde, whereas Karachi may be Kurachee, Kurrachee, or Karachee etc.

³ Execrable family of sodomites.

⁴ Brothels.

Government, from whom supporters of the Conqueror's policy could expect scant favour, mercy or justice. Accompanied by a Munshi, Mirza Mohammed Hosayn of Shiraz, and habited as a merchant, Mirza Abdullah the Bushiri passed many an evening in the townlet, visited all the porneia and obtained the fullest details, which were duly despatched to Government House. But the "Devil's Brother"⁵ presently quitted Sind leaving in his office my unfortunate official⁶: this found its way with sundry other reports to Bombay and produced the expected result.

A footnote identified the "sundry other reports":

Submitted to Government on Dec. 3', '47, and March 2, '48, they were printed in "Selections from the Records of the Government of India." Bombay. New Series. No. xvii. Part 2, 1855. These are (1) Notes on the Population of Sind, etc., and (2) Brief Notes on the Modes of Intoxication, etc., written in collaboration with my late friend Assistant-Surgeon John E. Stocks, whose early death was a sore loss to scientific botany.

In another footnote Burton clarified the "double price" fetched by boys who were not castrated, drawing Napier further in to the story.

This detail especially excited the veteran's curiosity. The reason proved to be that the scrotum of the unmutated boy could be used as a kind of bridle for directing the movements of the animal ...

Note that Burton states that he was 'asked' only 'indirectly' to investigate, an ambiguous statement that could mean anything from Napier relaying an order through a subordinate, to Burton taking up a mere hint. Burton then suggests, somewhat cryptically, that his career was compromised by the report, even though he was not dismissed:

A friend in the Secretariat informed me that my summary dismissal from the service had been formally proposed by one of Sir Charles Napier's successors, whose decease compels me *parcere sepulto*.⁷ But this excess of outraged modesty was not allowed.

Here statements based on Burton's first-hand knowledge must be carefully distinguished from hearsay. Visiting the brothels and submitting the report would be first-hand knowledge, if true. The consequences hinted at are clearly hearsay (from a "friend in the Secretariat") as is the way in which the report made its way to the attention of hostile officialdom, and the reasons given for his selection—that he was the only British officer who could speak Sindi. Indeed the consequences would be very hard to establish definitely even with inside information, since they

⁵ Sir Charles Napier, the 'Great Devil's Brother' or *sheitan-ka bahee*.

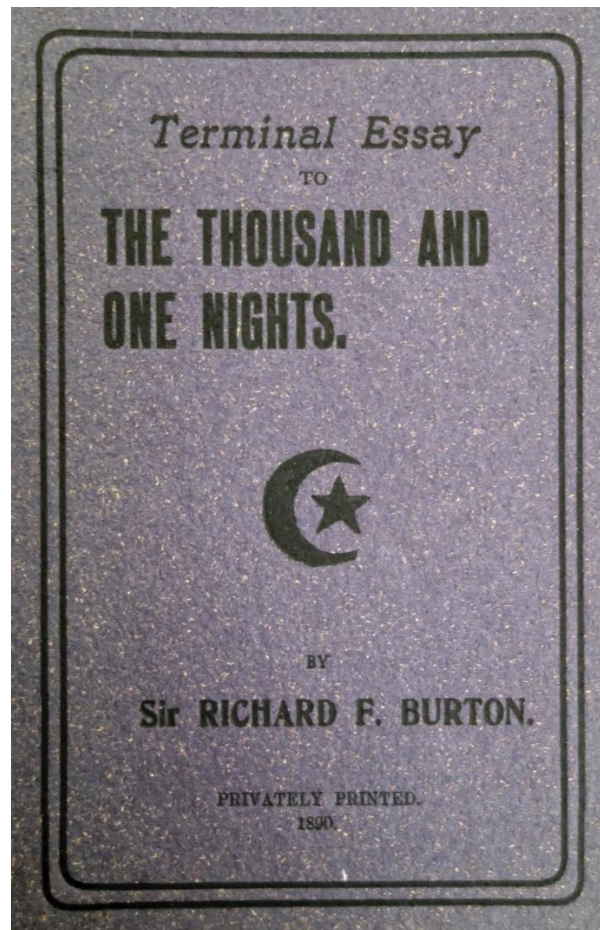
⁶ Official report, that is.

⁷ Spare the buried.

involve a causal inference in the presence of any number of confounding facts. There is also frustrating vagueness about crucial dates.

It should not be surprising that Isabel's voluminous biography of her husband, first published in 1893, makes no mention of this report—Isabel claimed that she never read the *Nights* in its unexpurgated form, which might actually be true. Nor is it mentioned in the only full-length biography published in Burton's own lifetime, by Francis Hitchman.⁸ Likewise, Burton's niece Georgiana is silent about it in her 1896 riposte to Isabel's *Life*.⁹

Figure 1. The Terminal Essay Pamphlet.



The first time the Brothel Report is mentioned outside of the *Nights* appears to be Thomas Wright's biography of Burton, published twenty years later in 1906. Wright coyly refers to "a particular and unspeakable vice which is said to be common in the East" and accurately paraphrases Burton's description from the Terminal Essay, but amplifies Burton's merely hinted-at consequences into the more definite "A little later ... Burton had to suffer very severely for this

⁸ Richard F. Burton: K.C.M.G. *His Early, Private and Public Life*. 2 volumes (Sampson Low, 1887).

⁹ Georgiana Stisted *The True Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton* (H. S. Nichols, 1896).

unfortunate occurrence.”¹⁰ Wright also presents as fact a speculation of his own, that “It was from him [Sir Charles Napier], to some extent, that Burton acquired the taste, afterwards so extraordinarily developed, for erotic, esoteric and other curious knowledge”.¹¹ A year later, Walter Phelps Dodge—who refused to accept Wright’s contention that Burton, “a most moral man”, could have lived with an Indian woman—vaguely alluded only to “notes obtained on an expedition to investigate certain customs of the natives” which were “afterwards incorporated in his ‘Terminal Essay’”.¹²

The next salvo in the war of biographers was Norman Penzer’s influential *Annotated Bibliography* of 1923, which devoted a lot of effort to attacks on the accuracy of Wright and others, but is responsible for introducing the first serious set of mutations in the story of the Karachi Report.¹³ “Sir Charles Napier’s successor was neither an anthropologist nor a man of the world, and in consequence Burton received his first serious reproval. Sir Charles Napier had given him a very unpleasant job to do, and he had done it well and thoroughly. His reports were found by Napier’s successor and Burton was removed”.¹⁴ He adds more details later in the text: “by mistake an earlier Report (*de paedicatione*), specially written at Sir Charles Napier’s request, was sent to Bombay with the other two. The result was that Burton was relieved of his duties and the report was in all probability burned.”¹⁵ Here Penzer has narrowed down “one of” Napier’s successors to exactly Napier’s successor, introduced the idea that Burton did not enjoy his task (given other career evidence, rather hard to believe and at the very least unsupported), elevated the *indirect* request to an *order* from Napier, inverted Burton’s statement that the report did *not* lead to his dismissal into the claim that it did, likely a promotion of the only hinted-at consequences, combined with contraction of the inferred time lapse for such consequences. There is also the invention that the report was “in all probability” burned, for which we have no evidence whatsoever.

After Penzer a succession of forgettable biographies before the Second World War muddied the waters further. In 1931 Fairfax Downey embroidered it all into “a dangerous mission”, dangling knives and scimitars in front of his readers.¹⁶ Again, it was “repulsive” but had been “ordered” by Napier, and now we learn that it led to Burton’s failure to be appointed to the post of interpreter on the Mooltan campaign of 1848/9. This is rather sooner than Penzer’s “dismissal” event, which can only refer to 1861, when Burton was dropped from the Army List, but is just another interpolation. Hugh Schonfield’s effort of 1936 mentioned merely that Burton “became acquainted not only with native virtues, but with some of their indescribable sexual

¹⁰ Thomas Wright *Life of Sir Richard Burton* (Everett, 1906), pp. 75-6.

¹¹ Wright (1906). p. 73. Burton had little personal contact with Napier.

¹² Walter Phelps Dodge *The Real Sir Richard Burton* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1907) p. 47.

¹³ Norman Penzer *An Annotated Bibliography of Sir Richard Francis Burton* (A.M. Philpot, 1923).

¹⁴ Penzer (1923), p. 11.

¹⁵ Penzer (1923), p. 198.

¹⁶ Fairfax Downey *Burton: Arabian Nights Adventurer* (Scribner, 1931), pp. 49-52.

vices” which his “cosmopolitan” nature allowed him to treat without giving up in disgust.¹⁷ A year later, Seton Dearden was less elliptical about specifics, but reached new heights of invention, describing the report as “a model of accuracy and detail”, giving the impression that he had read it himself, even citing it as the publication “Report on Karachi manners and customs”, R. F. Burton, 1855, Bombay.¹⁸ Alas, no. In his defence, Dearden at least did not make the dismissal claims that others had, and the general tone of his book would adequately warn any discerning reader that it should not be taken seriously.

In her 1941 biography of Isabel, *Sir Richard Burton’s Wife*, Jean Burton¹⁹ was less creative with the evidence. Rather than an order, she supposed an “oral instruction” from Napier, though that loses the sense of “indirect request”, and even if she did introduce an imaginary “War Office” (an echo of the times she was writing in?) to take offence at the report, she restricted herself to having Burton’s “hope of promotion ... shot to pieces” rather than dismissing him outright. She was able to conjure up an entirely new idea, the possibility that the “official mind was extraordinarily naïve” about pederasty, which might have led officialdom to suppose that Burton fabricated the details, a somewhat different idea to them being morally outraged—we will see later that this supposition of official naiveté is definitely mistaken.

Byron Farwell’s judicious study of 1963 grounded its treatment more cautiously in Burton’s own wording. Thus Farwell noted the “indirect request” and the possibility that the request was not ordered but merely hinted at by Napier. But his conclusions were much the same: the report “was to prove ruinous to his [Burton’s] reputation, and to his career in the Indian Army”. Like Fairfax Downey, and with as little evidence, Farwell linked the report to Burton’s failure to secure the post of interpreter in the Second Sikh War of 1848/9, but not to his retrenchment from the Army in 1861.²⁰

Fawn Brodie’s landmark biography, published four years later, offered a lot more adumbration and interpolation. The etiology of the investigation was revealed: “Napier was disturbed by rumours that certain homosexual brothels in Karachi were corrupting his troops and asked Burton to investigate”. We are told that Napier, who apparently experienced no “dismay” over the explicit details of Scindian pederasty, had placed the report, which he had now definitely ordered, “in his secret file”, where “it lay unnoticed for two years,” after which “Napier’s successor, or one of the officers under him” (not merely *one of* Napier’s successors) “maliciously pulled out of the secret file the two-year-old report on the Karachi brothels and sent it on to Bombay ... [with] a recommendation that Burton be dismissed from the service”.²¹ As a result, Burton was *not* dismissed, but certainly “his reputation in India was ruined”. The unsupported

¹⁷ Hugh Schonfield *Richard Burton Explorer* (Herbert Joseph, 1936), p. 59.

¹⁸ Seton Dearden *Burton of Arabia* (McBride, 1937), p. 20.

¹⁹ No relation.

²⁰ Byron Farwell *Burton* (Longmans 1963 [1988]), p. 35.

²¹ Fawn Brodie *The Devil Drives* (Norton, 1967), pp. 67-9.

details have merely been hatched in to flesh out the story and improve the flow. Some substantiation *is* at least offered for an additional claim that Napier shut the brothels down, but here Brodie confused a letter to Napier from one of his “most able” tax collectors with Napier’s own diary entries, though perhaps actions by Napier’s tax collectors can ultimately be attributed to his command.²²

Brodie also appended a footnote that suggested she had made extensive but fruitless efforts to locate the report itself, through the director of the India Office Records in London, who requested a search on her behalf; the Bombay Records Office in Delhi, which requested a similar search with no more luck; and the Records of the Government of West Pakistan (as it was then called) in Lahore, which found nothing either.²³ But those who have conducted research in archives will recognize how unlikely it is that this kind of ‘searching’—remote, delegated, at third-hand or worse, and not by specific subject domain experts—will ever turn up anything useful. No conclusions can be drawn from Brodie’s failure to find the report in this way, though it is striking that she appears to have been the first person to make any sort of effort at all.

Figure 2. Caricature attributed to Burton.



²² Brodie (1967), p. 66. The influential author of this letter, Anthony Blake Rathborne, is examined in more detail below.

²³ Brodie (1967), p. 347 note 29.

A decade later, as the legion of Burton biographers continually regenerated, Michael Hastings added in some new variations.²⁴ Now we learned that “Napier took umbrage” when discovering from Burton that homosexual brothels existed in Karachi. Apparently Burton also discovered that “the local Amirs were themselves customers and landlords of the brothels” possibly because “jaded amirate palates yearned behind their backs for something more exotic.” Hastings goes on elaborate on buggery in the sort of plain language that had finally become permissible in his era, but his information is difficult to evaluate since his entire book is citation-free. In 1990, Frank McLynn repeated a selection of the above themes and added more novelties: Napier had actually filed the report away in the “India. Most Secret” file; Burton had narrowly escaped being “ignominiously cashiered on grounds of moral turpitude”, but was definitely denied the post as interpreter, now *specifically* by Generals Auchmuty and Corsellis, who then contrived to banish him from India.²⁵ In the same year Edward Rice could only add an idea that his own imaginative storytelling demanded, which was that it was curious that Burton wrote down the Karachi Report at all. There is after all no mention of written reports for all the *other* secret missions he had been made to go on by Rice, as Napier’s undercover agent in the Great Game with Russia!²⁶

By now questions were being raised about the Report, given the lack of concrete evidence that is obvious from the summary above. James Casada’s “Biobibliographical Study”, which appeared in the same year as McLynn and Rice’s biographies, suggested that it was naïve of prior biographers to simply accept Burton’s word at face-value, given that he was “not ... the most veracious of men”.²⁷ Casada also stated that there was no mention of the report in Burton’s records at the India Office, that his service record contained no adverse comment at all, and that Brodie had failed to find the report. A year later, at a conference held at the Huntington Library in California, Casada concluded that “it is quite likely that the heralded Karachi report never existed”, and found some (unsubstantiated) agreement from the noted collector of Burtoniana, Quentin Keynes.²⁸ In her joint biography of Isabel and Richard Burton, published in 1998, Mary Lovell demurred, reporting that she too had searched for the Report, though without success, but had run out of time. Though she was confident that it might be found in some or other private collection of papers, she was not able to add any new details.²⁹ Then again, the most recent biographer, Jon Godsall, strongly signalled complete skepticism about the existence of the Report, but without bringing any new evidence or arguments to the table either—aside from remarks about the inconsistencies of the other biographers.³⁰

²⁴ Michael Hastings *Sir Richard Burton* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), pp. 55-7.

²⁵ Frank McLynn *Burton: Snow upon the Desert* (John Murray, 1990), pp. 41-5, 56.

²⁶ Edward Rice *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton* (Scribner, 1990), pp. 128-30.

²⁷ James Casada *Richard F. Burton: a Biobibliographical Study* (Hall, 1990), p. 6.

²⁸ See the published proceedings in Alan Jutzi ed. *In Search of Sir Richard Burton* (Huntington Library Press, 1993).

²⁹ Mary Lovell *A Rage to Live* (Norton, 1998), pp. 57-8, 88-9, 816 fn 32-fn 33.

³⁰ Jon Godsall *The Tangled Web* (Troubadour, 2008).

How much reason is there for skepticism? Casada's general impressions about Burton's veracity are not necessarily shared by others who have worked in this field. My own experience has now spanned a decade, during which the collected publications at burtoniana.org and the correspondence in the four-volume *The Book of Burtoniana* (2016) were produced, and has led from a position of relative skepticism about Burton's factual accuracy to entirely the opposite conclusion: where fact can be told from opinion, those claims which can be checked are unusually accurate—though I have not searched for the Report myself. Without some specific information directly relevant to the Brothel Report, Casada's impressions about Burton's veracity have no special weight. We have already seen reason to doubt another of his arguments, that the report has been extensively searched for by Brodie but not found, but even if the search had been impeccably thorough, even exhaustive, it only covered three possible locations. There are many more, as the corpus of Burtoniana is scattered all over. For example, the collection of Houghton Papers at Trinity College in Cambridge contains a complete manuscript version of the famous and much sought-after Appendix IV to *First Footsteps in East Africa* on female circumcision—though it is not in Burton's hand.³¹ Any number of collections of private papers may contain other manuscripts. Even if, somehow, all these collections are exhaustively and definitely searched, and we can state with a high degree of confidence that no copy of the Karachi Brothel Report exists today, that entails no more than the fact that, if it did originally exist, it now been lost or destroyed. That is hardly unusual, perhaps even highly likely, given the enormous volume of documents related to Burton that are known to be lost.

To pick just one example, consider the first published paper by Burton. It may surprise some to discover that this is *not* any of those listed in the bibliographies by Penzer, Casada, Casari and any other of the known bibliographers, the earliest of which dates to late 1847.³² It is instead the little-known paper on "Canal Irrigation in Scinde" published in early 1847, included in a report from Captain Walter Scott on "Economic Condition of Sind".³³ I know of only a few surviving copies of the *printed* report. But where is the manuscript for this? As far as we know it has not survived, though we do know that the report existed. Without getting into disputes about whether published papers are more likely to survive in manuscript form or not, it should be obvious that loss of manuscripts written as long ago as 1845 is entirely believable, and that the failure of even the most thorough search imaginable is a poor reason for supposing that it never existed. The elliptical way in which the original story is told by Burton also has no necessary bearing on the question of whether or not the report *existed*, it just forces us to take more care when determining what exactly we should be looking for, and what it was really about.

³¹ Needless to say, I photographed the MS. Monckton Milnes may have supplied the Latin translation that Burton used as a disguise but did not fool the printers with.

³² See the contribution by Casari in Jutzi (1993).

³³ *Selections from the Records of the Commissioner in Sind*, Vol. 7, 1844/7 (Karachi, 1847). Burton's note is dated Camp Kurrachee, 30th October, 1846.

Finally, Casada's statements about Burton's service record, which are echoed by Godsall, are highly misleading. It is certainly true that those records do not contain negative references, either to the Report or to any other other conduct by Burton. The records are uniformly positive, which appears to be *by design*—they are almost exclusively concerned with the dry and routine details of enlistment, promotions, stations, exams passed and so on, to which praise is added where available—for an example, see the record reproduced in full in the first volume of *The Book of Burtoniana*.³⁴ The service records also contain no references whatsoever to episodes in which we know for sure, from other sources, Burton fell into disfavour. For example, in 1844 he was initially refused transfer to Major Walter Scott's Scinde Survey because he was, according to Napier's Aide-de-Camp, being "bumptious" to his senior officer, an affair which took some time to blow over.³⁵

Private

19th August

My dear Scott

The General says he is sorry that he cannot appoint Burton at present to the survey, because he is under a cloud, which has not yet been cleared up.

He has been behaving rather bumptiously to his Commanding Officer, and the matter is not yet settled. Until it is it is impossible for the General to give him an appointment. It is a great pity, for he evidently would be very useful to you. Perhaps it may come right in time.

Yrs sincerely
Wm Napier³⁶

We have no reason to expect displeasure about his conduct, which could always be handled discreetly by denying him promotion or postings, to make it into writing in his *official record*, which appears to have been a highly unusual step—in the service records I have seen of other officers, no such references appear either.³⁷ Absence of criticism there does not imply much. In any event, this concerns the *consequences* of Burton's Report, about which he only had hearsay knowledge. Suppose then that his information about this was entirely inaccurate. That does not imply he did not submit the Report or that it did not exist, only that at worst he merely misunderstood its actual effect on his career.

Without considering any more information, this appears to be a very uneven contest between Burton's detailed published description of the Report, based on his own first-hand

³⁴ <http://burtoniana.org/burtoniana/index.html>.

³⁵ See *The Book of Burtoniana*, Vol. 1.

³⁶ William Craig Emilius Napier (1818-1903).

³⁷ See for example the service records of John Steinhauser and John Hanning Speke. Though I have not made a general survey of these records their format suggests that negative comments about an officer would have been highly unusual.

knowledge and indirect information from his personal contacts, and ineffectual skeptics with no persuasive arguments or new information. As It happens, we can now do much better, but before turning to entirely new evidence we must first consider one more skeptical account.

The first careful treatment of this question was by the Orientalist Simon Digby, in his excellent but little-known monograph on Burton's Indian period, which was first published in 2006.³⁸ Based on Digby's "Burton Lecture" to The Royal Asiatic Society in 1999, it included an illuminating examination of Burton's statements about the Brothel Report, weighing the claims against other information that we know from Burton himself. Digby's most significant argument is that Burton's claim to have been selected for the job because he was the only officer who could speak Sindi is open to question. When Burton arrived in Sindh he did *not* start to learn Sindi at once, according to his own description. He only learned Sindi later, and passed his exam in it as late as September of 1848, by which time Napier had left the region. There is reason to believe that he would have passed the exam as soon as was able to, since he earned an additional allowance for doing so, and we know that he aggressively pursued allowances. Digby also points out that the need to speak Sindi at all is dubious, since the *lupanars* would surely have catered for diverse clientele in an active port town.

Figure 3. Burton in Native Dress in the 1840s.



³⁸ Simon Digby *Richard Burton: the Indian Making of an Arabist* (Orient Monographs, 2006).

Digby speculates that, based on Burton's other descriptions of bordellos from that period and region, there might have been as little as three or four residents per *lupanar*. Thus they "may have been places of infamy, but hardly of lavish entertainment". He too wonders if the whole Report may have been a hoax, but a much simpler explanation is possible. Rather than confess to a well-developed personal interest in the subject matter at the time, it may have been more palatable to describe the job as one he just happened to be qualified for, doing it for the sake of duty because no-one else could. From what we know of Burton now, we can be sure that he needed no such excuse, but it may have suited his purposes to couch it that way. There may even have been an element of self-deception involved. But it is a very big step from uncertainty about the ostensible reasons for his selection to the conclusion that was no investigation or Report at all.

With this background, we can now consider new evidence that throws a great deal of light on the context and likely genesis of the Brothel Report and corroborates Burton's description of it. Although some elements of this have been partially glimpsed, others have remained out of sight, and the full import is only clear when it is all assembled coherently. The key role, apart from Burton's own part, was not played by Napier himself, but rather by his surrogate Anthony Blake Rathborne (1811?-1885).

Rathborne was one of Napier's most influential and successful protégés in Sindh. The family was originally Anglo-Irish and associated with the Royal Navy—his father Captain Wilson Rathborne (1748-1831) was present at Trafalgar—but at age sixteen Anthony Blake had enlisted instead in the 24th Bombay Native Infantry. When Sir Charles Napier annexed Sindh in 1843, Rathborne, though still only a Lieutenant, had come to his notice. Napier soon appointed him tax "Collector" and Magistrate at Hyderabad, after being impressed by a series of anonymous letters that Rathborne had been writing to the newspapers, signed "Lucius Junius", about military policy in the Afghan Campaign. Rathborne, who had organizational talent, flourished in his new role as magistrate of Hyderabad, and was soon drawn in to the public controversy attracted by Napier's annexation of Sindh.

The annexation of Sindh was not popular among members of the Board of the East India Company, or in the Bombay Presidency, and had its critics in England too. Major (later General Sir) James Outram (1803-1863), who was under Napier's command in Sindh and had been intimately involved in some of the events that led to the annexation, publically criticized Napier's actions and attracted a substantial following. Aside from concerns about whether the previous rulers had been treated fairly, there was the question of expedience—the acquisition looked to some like yet another expense rather than an asset. The newspapers in Bombay—especially the *Bombay Times*, edited by the accomplished Dr. George Buist—sided with Outram's faction.

Napier's brother William Francis Patrick³⁹ acted as his proxy in the propaganda war that ensued, as accusations and counter-accusations were traded about the rights and wrongs of the annexation, Napier's conduct, and whether or not the colony would pay for itself.⁴⁰ The controversy was partly about the Amirs—sometimes called Mirs or Ameers—the former rulers who had been deposed by Napier after he had defeated them on the field of battle at Miani in 1843.

Figure 4. Bust of General Sir Charles Napier.⁴¹



³⁹ Not to be confused with the ADC to Sir Charles, Captain William Craig Emilius Napier, who was also his nephew, or Captain J. M. Napier, his Chief of Staff.

⁴⁰ Sir William Napier *The Conquest of Scinde* (1845) was immediately rebutted by James Outram's *The Conquest of Scinde—a Commentary* (1846). Many books and pamphlets followed.

⁴¹ Photographed by the author in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Napier's critics charged that the Amirs had been treated unfairly, and that Napier had no authority to overthrow them and annex the province. Napier's argument was that the Amirs were treacherous and posed a military threat to British interests, especially in light of the unstable situation in neighbouring Afghanistan, but he paid an indirect tribute to the criticism by devising additional moral and pragmatic justifications for the annexation. Napier asserted that the subjects would in any event be better off under British rule, which would be more just and promote economic prosperity. This conclusion relied not only on the stated virtues of British rule itself, but also on unflattering descriptions of the rule and personal conduct of the Amirs, who were Belochi Muslims governing over Hindu and other subjects. Napier's case was always made indirectly, through a coterie of Army officers in Sindh who were fiercely loyal to their Chief, and his own relations, like his brother Sir William Napier. This pro-Napier coterie included both Rathborne and Burton. In response to the criticism levelled by the *Bombay Times* and the other papers, a bi-weekly lithographed newspaper was issued in Kurrachee, called the *Kurrachee Advertiser*, to act as Napier's surrogate. According to the indignant *Bombay Times*, the *Advertiser* was ostensibly owned by one "Ardaseer Rustomjee", who was "to be heard of" at "Pestonjee Hormusjee's shop"—a transparent front. Apparently founded in 1845 with funding from Napier's administration, the paper was used by Rathborne and others to attack the Amirs anonymously. Rathborne had come by very detailed information about the Amirs through his job as Magistrate. Burton, who kept in touch with Rathborne throughout his life, later recalled these letters and their contents:⁴²

Sir Charles Napier's friends also determined to start a newspaper, in order to answer the Enemy in the Gate, and reply to the "base and sordid Bombay faction," headed by the "Rampant Buist," with a strong backing of anonymous officials. The Kurrachee Advertiser presently appeared in the modest shape of a lithographed sheet on Government foolscap, and, through Sir William Napier, its most spicy articles had the honour of a reprint in London. Of these, the best were "the letters of Omega," by my late friend Rathborne, then Collector at Hyderabad, and they described the vices of the Sind Amirs in language the reverse of ambiguous. I did not keep copies, nor, unfortunately, did the clever and genial author.⁴³

However, Rathborne did not limit himself to the *Advertiser*, but tried to circulate his anonymous letters through other newspapers too, including the Bombay papers themselves, on or around September and October of 1845. His pseudonym "Omega" appears to have been chosen in response to a letter of the period criticizing Napier, which was published in the *Bombay Times* and signed "Alpha". The "vices of the Sind Amirs" that Burton alluded to appear to have been very explicitly described. Rathborne apparently charged that the Amirs had protected and

⁴² Isabel Burton *Life* Vol. 1 (1893), p. 145. See also the letters between Burton and Rathborne in my [Book of Burtoniana](http://burtoniana.org) (2016).

⁴³ According to Matthew A Cook *Annexation and the Unhappy Valley* (Brill, 2015) there are copies of the *Kurrachee Advertiser* in the British Library India Office Records, e.g. IOR/MssEur/E293/171.

profited from the pederast brothels of Karachi, and had also patronized them.⁴⁴ Some of this information emerged directly from Rathborne's role as tax collector and his reorganization of revenue collection and disbursement: he alleged that the Amirs had paid the brothels partly in cash and partly through participation in the *battai*—the division of the harvest. He appears to have acquired other details from sources with inside information.

*Figure 5. General Sir Charles Napier.*⁴⁵



The paper which printed Rathborne's bombshell letters to greatest effect was the *British Indian Gentleman's Gazette and Bombay Daily Advertiser*,⁴⁶ in late September or early October of 1845. The frank statements in it about the Amirs and the brothels started a furor. The counter-attack was led by the *Bombay Times*, which had been fulminating about the *Kurrachee Advertiser* in general for some time, but was now driven to florid indignation, curiously qualified by some hedging about the guilt of the Amirs:⁴⁷

It is a fact not undeserving of mention, that the entire Press of India, without a solitary exception, has declined defiling its columns with the disgusting letter of "Omega," which appeared some

⁴⁴ Copies of the letters could be located as of this writing, so the content has been inferred from multiple references, as will become apparent below. Copies might exist in the India Office Records in the British Library.

⁴⁵ From Isabel Burton *AEI* (1879). Attributed to Richard Burton.

⁴⁶ Renamed more snappily as the *Bombay Gazette* in 1849. It seems that the same letter was printed in the *Kurrachee Advertiser* of 27th September 1845 (Editorial in the *Delhi Gazette* of 1845-10-11, reprinted in the *Bombay Times* of 1845-10-22. The *Delhi Gazette* refused to print the letter, strongly condemning it in similar terms to those used in *Bombay Times*).

⁴⁷ Editorial, *Bombay Times* 1845-10-08.

time since in the *Gentleman's Gazette*. No better proof can be afforded of the vileness of the composition itself, and the guilt of its publication. Of the papers which have noticed "Omega's" calumnies, the Bengal ones alone have entered on the subject at any length ... they all agree as to the revolting nature of the communication, and the glaring wrong done to the unfortunate ex-Ameers by the promulgation of such a statement anonymously, and without a particle of proof on which to base the charges it contained. ... With respect to the authorship of "Omega," we need hardly say that the origin of that disgusting and iniquitous document still remains shrouded in mystery. Our more recent information, it is but fair to state, does *not* strengthen the suspicion that it came from Sir Charles' own pen. The real writer of course dares not step forward and declare himself, since his so doing would, without doubt, lead to his speedy dismissal from the Company's Service. The general impression, we may remark, is that "Omega" is identical with the author of a scurrilous letter signed "A True Friend," rejected some months ago by both the *Bombay Times* and *Bombay Courier*. It is possible that the authorship of the libels may in a short time be satisfactorily established, and if so, we may assuredly publish, without ceremony, the name of the writer. He has shown no mercy, and he deserves none. He has diffused the most brutal calumnies against innocent men—for that some, if not the whole, *are* completely innocent, there can be no doubt ... Who would acknowledge himself the friend of "Omega"? The publication of the letter will hereafter appear as an unsightly blot on the page of Indian history; and the stain which it casts on the character of the man who wrote it, not all the perfumes of Araby could sweeten, nor all the waves of the ocean wash away. We doubt not that "Omega" will read this article. Let him ponder over it well, and ask himself whether the simple fact that only *one* journal in India has been found willing to promulge⁴⁸ his slanders, be not a convincing proof of their baseness and brutality?

A week later, the editor overcame his disgust for long enough to notice that Omega had published a defense circulating in Sindh, stating that officers in Sindh would back up the allegations, and that "Omega justifies his publication of the alleged vices of the Ameers on the ground that descriptions of similar enormities are to be found in the Annals of Tacitus, in Gibbon's Decline and Fall, and in the *Bible!*"⁴⁹—references suggesting Burton's hand. The *Times* was not convinced, and now provided additional details about the original letter:⁵⁰

a copy of 'Omega's' letter has reached us by post, and we observe that the *Gentleman's Gazette* has not dared to publish the whole of it. It concludes with a paragraph so utterly loathsome and disgusting that even our daily contemporary has shrunk from the pollution which its publication would have entailed on his columns! What can we say more in condemnation of such an atrocious production.

⁴⁸ That is, promulgate.

⁴⁹ Thus Rathborne had specially accused the Amirs of pederasty.

⁵⁰ Editorial *Bombay Times*, 1845-10-15. Italics in the original.

Indignant letters were printed from two officers in Sindh protesting that *they* definitely had no knowledge of the alleged crimes of the Amirs, disavowing Omega's "shameful and heartless production". A letter also appeared from Omega's original target, the Outram ally "Alpha", protesting that one of the Amirs known personally to him certainly did not betray the marks of a "sensualist and beast", contrary to "Omega", showing instead "all the freshness of youth and abstinence in his appearance." The letter closed with some unintended bathos, "Omega's plea for taking Scinde, if admitted and adopted, would leave few Governments standing, for none are perfect."

By early November Omega's second letter had made it to Bombay and the *Gentleman's Gazette*, provoking the *Bengal Hurkaru* to editorialize:

He can, he says, produce hundreds, nay thousands, of testimonies to the veracity of his accusations; among whom are the Officers now serving in Scinde ... Instead, however, of producing these ... he will, he says, dispose of the matter in a more summary way by calling forward a witness whom the *Times* will, certainly, not object to. 'Step forth then,' says he, 'honest JAMES OUTRAM in this just cause—tell the truth, and shame this devil'. Very dramatic this ... but, unfortunately for OMEGA, conclusive the wrong way. James Outram has already come forward;— he has declared the atrocious charges against the Ameers to be 'unfounded calumnies'.⁵¹

Napier, of course, was well aware of these letters, writing to a friend that "There is a very able officer who has attacked the Bombay Times. He began with a letter signed Omega, and has gone on with a series of facts, to every one of which every officer in Scinde would swear: he is putting the Indian public right."⁵² Rathborne seems to have been widely known as the real author. Napier's own Judge Advocate Keith Young had opposite sentiments to Napier's, "There is little doubt of Rathborne being the author of those letters signed Omega and true or false he has not much to pride himself on, in having written them."⁵³ The controversy had spread to England by the following year, where *The Foreign Quarterly Review* remarked:⁵⁴

the Scinde controversy is still raging in India, where scarcely a week passes without giving birth to numerous articles for or against the Talpoor family.⁵⁵ Very recently an officer, serving under Sir Charles Napier, drew up in form an accusation against the Amirs, enumerating their crimes, public and private, and contending that they are wholly unworthy of the slightest sympathy. This communication, signed Omega, and printed in the 'Gentleman's Gazette,' has imparted fresh vigour to the contest, which will probably be carried on at intervals for years to come.

⁵¹ Reprinted in the *Bombay Times* 1845-11-05.

⁵² Sir William Francis Patrick Napier *Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier* Vol. 3 (1857), p. 357.

⁵³ Keith Young *Scinde in the Forties* ed. A F. Scott (Constable, 1912) p. 94.

⁵⁴ 1846, p. 489.

⁵⁵ One of the Amir families.

Outram certainly followed the pederasty controversy with interest. Writing to John Jacob later that year about Napier, he asked “Is the man who sanctioned (if he did not himself aid in them) those anonymous attacks upon my character, and still worse, upon the defenceless Ameers, in the ‘Curachee Advertiser’ and ‘Gentleman’s Gazette’, deserving of sympathy?”⁵⁶

Figure 6. General Sir James Outram (1803-1863).⁵⁷



It is certain then that the interest shown by Napier and Rathborne about the Karachi Brothels was driven by the question of the Amirs and their involvement, as part of the intense propaganda war about the annexation of Sindh, and not by the kind of concerns about the morals of British officers that Brodie and other biographers have supposed. Surely Rathborne, who we

⁵⁶ James Outram to John Jacob, Nov. 1846, cited in H. T. Lambrick *Sir Charles Napier and Sindh* (Oxford, 1952), p. 266.

⁵⁷ Photographed by the author from the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

know was on very friendly terms with Burton, was the source of the “indirect request” for a report on the brothels, given that Rathborne was driving the reports about the pederasty of the Amirs. It is unclear whether Burton conducted his undercover investigation before or after the letters from Omega were published—one suspects before, when Rathborne was gathering ammunition. It is also evident now why such an investigation and report would arouse considerable controversy at that time, and that the role of the brothels in the war between Napier and Outram meant that anyone associated with it could anticipate trouble from Napier’s numerous enemies, but *also* expect some support from Napier’s allies.

The controversy over Napier, who died in 1853, kept on simmering until 1860 and beyond, with Rathborne regularly entering the lists on behalf of his former commander.⁵⁸ But long before that an important official enquiry into the state of Scinde was held, shortly after Napier’s departure from Scinde in 1847. The final report was delivered in 1848 and has now largely been forgotten, but it provides additional clarification of these events and corroboration for Burton’s description of his role in them. This was the official forum in which Burton’s “sundry reports” were first presented—those were only *reprinted* in 1855, shorn of important additional detail.

The enquiry was started by Robert Keith Pringle (1802-1897), the civilian administrator who had replaced Napier’s martial-law administration.⁵⁹ It was eventually published for consumption by Westminster and forwarded there in 1854, as the *Report of Sir George Clerk on the Administration of Scinde*. The Indian administration preferred to delay releasing information to Westminster as long as possible.⁶⁰ The Clerk Report was misnamed, since it was almost entirely the work of Pringle. The inquiry was initiated on 9th October 1847 and completed at the very end of December that year by Pringle. Clerk only added a preface to the report, with some appendices, and issued it in 1848. It is not stated whether the report was actually published in printed form that year for internal use—it ran to over 800 pages—but it seems to have become generally known in Indian government circles since that date.

The Pringle/Clerk Report was an exceptionally thorough and wide-ranging enquiry into all aspects of the state of Scinde, covering its economy, population, crime, law, and even *moral* state. Officials in the province, including the police and the army, were sent lengthy questionnaires, and supplied very detailed answers. Among these was Major Walter Scott, Superintendent of Canals and Forests—Burton was of course under Scott’s command.⁶¹ Scott sent in information about the canals and their ramifications, as well as details such as the men

⁵⁸ See Lambrick (1952) for a full account.

⁵⁹ His first name is sometimes given as Richard, but it is Robert in *The Dictionary of Indian Biography* (1906) ed. Buckland.

⁶⁰ *Accounts and Papers* (XLIX) 11th Volume. East India: Scinde: Copy of Report of Sir George Clerk on the Administration of Scinde; with the Appendices thereto; and all Reports of Mr. Pringle and Mr. Frere on the same Subject, not already before Parliament. 31st January—12th August 1854.

⁶¹ Scott was a nephew of the historical novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832).

under him, with Burton listed as a “second class executive canal officer”, receiving a handsome *monthly* salary of 300 pounds.⁶² We also learn that “Lieutenant Burton levelled 152 miles of canals” in field-work during “the cold weather of 1844—45”. Scott’s submission was summarized by Pringle as follows:

Major Scott has separately submitted a voluminous series of documents, exhibiting in a tabular form much valuable information on the statistics of the province generally, and more especially as bearing on its fiscal resources; those yet received are only for the Hyderabad collectorate, but similar documents are stated to be in progress for the other collectorates, and those for Kurrachee may be soon expected. In the detailed form in which these papers are now submitted, and unaccompanied as they are by any general abstract of their results, it would answer no purpose to forward them in full, or to attempt to draw from them any practical deductions; but I have appended Major Scott’s explanatory letter, together with an extract of one set of the statements, which will convey an idea of their nature and objects. A valuable map is also in process of construction under Major Scott’s superintendence, a large portion of which will, I hope, soon be completed.

Scott submitted his promised additional material (“those for Kurrachee may be soon expected”) in batches, beginning at the end of December 1847 (too late for the initial report, which had apparently been concluded before the end of 1847) and again in February of 1848

Since the above report was written a letter has been received from Major Scott, the Superintendent of Canals and Forests, submitting supplementary documents illustrative of the subjects which come under the cognisance of his department. Of these the following have been inserted in the Appendix, along with the other documents connected with the subjects to which they relate, viz.:

In Appendix (D.)

1. Memorandum on the works and system of irrigation in the Shikarpore collectorate.
2. Memorandum on the forests of Scinde, with abstract showing their extent.
3. Return of the proceeds from forests and establishments entertained exclusively on account of them.
4. Statement of the strength of the Scinde survey, Canal and Forest Department, showing the charges from August 1843.

⁶² In later years Burton would have to make do with a Consul’s *yearly* salary of 700 pounds or less.

In Appendix (N.)

A paper, by Lieutenant Burton, of the Canal and Forest Department, on the population of Scinde.

Besides the above, Major Scott has submitted some documents which, though useful for reference in points of detail, are not inserted in the Appendix, as they would add to its bulk without contributing to its general objects.

The report from Lieut. Burton was accompanied by the following covering letter:

To the Superintendent of Canals and Forests, Scinde, Sir,

I have the honour to submit to you, in obedience to your directions, the following remarks upon the subject of the population of Scinde. I could have wished that the information contained in the report were more complete; but besides the scantiness of my materials, I am unable at present to search for or procure any more details.

I have, &c.

(signed) R. F. Burton,
Lieutenant, 18th Regiment N. I.,
Camp, Kurrachee

29 December 1847.

This was the paper that later became known as "Notes Relative to the Population of the Sind", but here it was simply called "Memorandum by Lieutenant Burton, Scinde Survey Department, on the Population of Scinde". The content is almost identical, with some clearer use of headings in the later printing.

More material was submitted on 24th February, 1848. Burton had co-authored a paper with Dr. John Ellerton Stocks, "Division of Time, and Articles of Cultivation, and Modes of Intoxication in Sindh". (Stocks, who was an Assistant Surgeon and Vaccinator in the Sukkur Collectorate, wrote an additional report of his own, "Practical Remarks on the Flora of Scinde".)

From the Commissioner in Sind to the Honourable George Russell Clerk, Governor and President in Council, Bombay.

Honourable Sir,

As supplementary to the documents submitted with my report, No. 3886, dated the 31st December last, I have the honour to transmit the papers noted in the margin received from Mr. Assistant Surgeon Stocks, vaccinator in Sind, and Lieutenant Burton, Assistant Superintendent of Canals, with a letter, dated the 24th ultimo, from the former officer. These papers will be found

to contain some interesting and valuable information regarding the climate and vegetable productions of this province.

I have, &c.

(signed) R. K. Pringle,
Kurrachee, 2 March 1848.

Commissioner in Scinde..

Pringle had also noted (see above) that Scott had submitted *far more additional material than could be used in the report*. It is *possible* that among this was the material by Burton covering his investigation (or more plainly, knowledge) of the pederast brothels of Kurrachee, though it may well have been kept elsewhere.

As stated above, the report prepared by Pringle was unusually far reaching, and explicitly included *moral* aspects of Scinde society. Thus one of the questions posed in Pringle's prospectus was

Is any notice taken of offences against morality, such as adultery, drunkenness, &c., &c., and what, and by whom?

At least one of the respondents, none other than Captain Rathborne, the Magistrate of Hyderabad, supplied a frank answer, which was included in the final printed report, and shows that the full implication of the question was well-understood.

No notice is taken of ordinary offences against morality, as adultery, unless the husband or relative whose honour is wounded, complains; or of drunkenness, unless the party is, in addition, disorderly. Public women formerly paid a tax to Government, and were encouraged; they are now not molested, as long as they abstain from disturbing their more respectable fellow townspeople. But the purchase of girls for purposes of prostitution has been put an end to; and the bands of Sodomites who formerly infested the country, and received, some pay from the state, and others grain at the battai⁶³, were some four years ago, under a futwah to the cazee, publicly whipped and expelled the district; that is, such as fell into the hands of the authorities, for the greater part fled, or gave up their profession, and resumed male clothing.

So according to Rathborne, in Hyderabad the brothels had been officially closed as early as 1843. Notice that Rathborne is not speaking for Karachi here. Later, in a letter written to Napier in 1853 summarizing the benefits of the annexation, Rathborne included the closure of the brothels as one of Napier's own achievements, and revealed some of his sources: "There is public morality

⁶³ Division of the harvest.

supported, by putting down the infamous beasts who, dressed as women, plied their trade in the Meers' time openly; and there is this fact to record, that the chief of them were recipients of stipends from the Ameers, as the government records I became possessed of as collector testified."⁶⁴ Other respondents in the printed report referred more guardedly to 'debauchery'.

Taken together, this makes a plausible case that, in addition to the extensive notes supplied by Burton on the population of Scinde, detailed information from him about pederasty may have been included in a supplementary report which was received by Pringle, as part of the larger collection of material from Major Scott, but not immediately used. It is not certain why Pringle did not use it. The answer from Rathborne shows that the parties involved in this inquiry were not as squeamish as might be supposed; they were obviously quite prepared to confront the issue of pederasty explicitly. That does not mean that the sort of detail described by Burton would have been thought necessary, and it should be noted that there is no specific allegation in Rathborne's submission against the Amirs themselves—at least, not in the official version as printed. So the original material gathered for Pringle's report is the most promising place to search for whatever might survive today.

A definite forum existed then which was interested in the sort of information that Burton may have gathered previously for Rathborne's use, and a path whereby it could have been linked to the "sundry other reports" which he had submitted through the commission, and possibly retained among the unused material submitted by Scott, or elsewhere, only to emerge later. There is no indication that Burton's submissions produced any surprises at that time (1848) as the Bombay Government returned a highly complimentary letter acknowledging the work of both Burton and Stocks.

From A. Malet, Esq., Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay, to
R. K. Pringle, Esq., Commissioner in Scinde.

Sir,

I. I am directed by the Honourable the Governor in Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 528, dated the 2d March last, forwarding the papers noted in the margin from Assistant Surgeon Stocks and Lieutenant Burton, containing information regarding the climate and vegetable productions of Sind.

⁶⁴ Sir William Francis Patrick Napier *Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier* Vol. 4 (1857), p. 28. Godsall (2008), who incorrectly dates this letter to 1850, suggests that this may refer to events which happened after Napier's departure. That is unlikely, as Rathborne was specifically flattering Napier. Of course, suppression of brothels could only be an *ongoing* achievement.

2. In reply, I am desired to request that you will be pleased to communicate to these officers the acknowledgments of Government for these interesting and useful reports, and at the same time ascertain from them whether they would wish the Government to publish any portion of them.

I have, &c.
(signed) A. Malet,

Bombay Castle, 1 May 1848. Chief Secretary.

Next we must consider who it was that Burton believed had taken exception to his Brothel Report. Who was “one of” Napier’s successors, who had already died by the time that Burton wrote the Terminal Essay, leading Burton to omit his name? Pringle, who had been replaced in 1851, and had retired by 1854, can be ruled out since he outlived Burton, only dying in 1897. Pringle’s successor was Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere (1815-1884) who would have died only shortly before the Terminal Essay was written, and left the office of Governor of Sindh as late as 1859.

Figure 7. Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere in 1881.⁶⁵



⁶⁵ National Portrait Gallery.

It is significant that Burton had a long history of making critical comments about Frere. He seems to have disliked him intensely, as numerous remarks in his correspondence and published works show, even though he rarely set foot in India during Frere's tenure, which coincided with Burton's most active period of exploration.⁶⁶

So that cunning ... Frere didn't get a peerage!⁶⁷

You see Frere is Botany Bay'd to the Cape—lucky for Bombay.⁶⁸

I wish the Cape joy of Frere who will build the usual Frere Town, Frere Hall and Frere Roads.⁶⁹

Do you know Ali Akbar, old Sir Chas. Napier's Munshi, of whom I spoke to you? I wish you could get at him & tell him that I am waiting for the biography which he promised me. Probably the fear of Sir Barter before his eyes kept him silent but now he may speak out.⁷⁰

The main use of Frere Hall is to serve the shipping as a landmark: from the offing, the tower and spirelet of this portentous and pretentious erection in crumbling sandstone suggest an honest Moslem Idgáh. Mr. Commissioner, indeed, seems to have proposed for himself three main objects in life: (1) building Frere towns; (2) building Frere halls; (3) building Frere roads, which have a truly Imperial look—on paper.⁷¹

Surely a colony with common sense would have drained the Bombay Flats before building Frere Town, and would have dug the Thatha Canal instead of wasting money upon Frere Halls in this City of the Sterile Plain.⁷²

In some autobiographical fragments about his early days in Sindh, which turned over to Francis Hitchman in the late 1880s, Burton's suspicions about Frere became explicit. Recalling his old language teachers:

Mirza Dáud died of indigestion and Holloway's Pills at Karachi, and he⁷³ last saw Mirza Ali Akbar in 1876 at Bombay, where he deceased shortly afterwards. The Mirza had been unjustly and

⁶⁶ Since these references first appear in 1876 or later, Burton may have suspected Frere only after his own trip back to India in 1876 put him back in touch with old associates. It may also be significant that Burton believed that his long-lost manuscript of *Zanzibar* had also passed through Frere's hands: "Mr. Frere's memory is unusually short. I intrusted the MS. to the Eurasian apothecary of the Zanzibar Consulate, and I suspected (Lake Regions of Central Africa, vol. i. chap, i.) that it had come to an untimely end." See *Zanzibar* Vol. 1 (1872) p. x.

⁶⁷ 1876/07/02: Richard Burton to Henry Walter Bates. *Book of Burtoniana* Vol. 2 (2016). Frere was made a Baronet and a GCB in 1876.

⁶⁸ 1876/12/08: Richard Burton to Grattan Geary. *Book of Burtoniana* Vol. 2 (2016).

⁶⁹ 1876/12/15: Richard Burton to Grattan Geary. *Book of Burtoniana* Vol. 2 (2016). Frere was made High Commissioner for Southern Africa in 1877. Several places in South Africa were indeed named after him, e.g. Mount Frere.

⁷⁰ 1877/03/08: Richard Burton to Grattan Geary. *Book of Burtoniana* Vol. 2 (2016).

⁷¹ *Sind Revisited* Vol. 1 (1877) p. 73.

⁷² *Sind Revisited* Vol. 2 (1877) p. 316.

⁷³ Burton.

cruelly treated by Bartle Frere, who, in order to please the Court of Directors, systematically persecuted all Sir Charles Napier's friends and favourites, the moment after the old Conqueror set sail from Sind.⁷⁴

Since the Pringle/Clerk Report only made its way to Westminster in 1854, it is possible that the supplementary information associated with it lay dormant, and was only forwarded to Bombay circa 1854 when Westminster requested a copy of the Pringle/Clerk Report. Or alternatively, the report may have been kept elsewhere but forwarded later for consideration since it was relevant to the aims of the Commission. Malice could certainly have been involved, given what we now know about the controversy surrounding the use of the brothels against the Amirs, and the sharp political divisions about that. Burton's own statement that the Report "found its way" to Bombay, "along with" the other papers, is ambiguous, possibly reflecting his own uncertainty about the details. Once Frere was in office, he may have discovered the Report and arranged for it to be forwarded to Bombay, which would mean that the Report found its way separately to Bombay, only joining the other papers there later than 1848. If Burton believed or was told that Frere was involved, it would explain his marked hostility toward Frere, someone he could only have had the slightest contact with otherwise. The only other candidate would be Frere's own successor Jonathan Duncan Inverarity (1812?–1882) who was deceased before the Terminal Essay was written, but makes no appearance in Burton's letters or correspondence, unlike Frere, and surely came on the scene too late to make any difference to Burton's career. Inverarity only took office in 1859, and by then the Indian Army has been absorbed into the British Army proper.⁷⁵

None of this implies that Burton's suspicions about the role played by Frere were necessarily *accurate*, which is impossible to determine. For a long time Burton was hostile to the eminent Arabist the Rev. George Percy Badger, "who had gained for himself the honourable epithet of *Shaytan Abyaz*, or 'White Devil'.⁷⁶ Burton mistakenly believed that Badger had helped to void his examination in Arabic interpretation at Aden in 1855.⁷⁷ After Badger wrote him to point out that he was not involved and cleared the matter up, the two became close friends and kept up a friendly correspondence.⁷⁸

The controversy and division surrounding the Amirs and their links to the brothels is also relevant to the question of Burton's military records. If a faction in Bombay held Burton's investigation and Report against him, they would have had difficulty in censuring him officially—

⁷⁴ Hitchman *Richard F. Burton* Vol. 1 (1887) p. 159. This passage was not repeated in Isabel's *Life*, even though almost all of the material given to Hitchman was reproduced there. Whereas Napier "set sail" from Sindh in 1847, Frere only took over in 1851.

⁷⁵ A consequence of the Indian Mutiny ("Revolt of the Sepoys").

⁷⁶ *Zanzibar* Vol. 1 (1872) p. 9.

⁷⁷ The examination was declared contrary to rule since it was not held in Bombay.

⁷⁸ 1872/02/21: George Percy Badger to Richard Burton. *Book of Burtoniana* Vol. 2 (2016).

a very unusual step anyway, as pointed out above—given the enduring presence of substantial support for Napier and his associates. This is directly implied by Burton’s own statement than an attempt to dismiss him was “not allowed”, but now the source of his support can be seen to extend beyond his own reach to a much more influential sphere. Long after the death of Napier in 1853 his supporters zealously defended his legacy. To be effective, hostility to Burton required far more subtle instruments.

The evidence presented here provides substantial corroboration for Burton’s description of his Karachi Brothel Report. It provides a context in which the investigation could have occurred, good reasons why figures like Sir Charles Napier might have been interested in it, and ways in which it could have been used by Napier’s ally Rathborne. We have also seen a plausible path by which the information could have made its way in official form to Bombay after a delay. Taken together with Burton’s own description, especially those parts clearly based on his own direct involvement, and his lasting links to the prime mover in the use of the brothels as propaganda, the evidence heavily favours Burton’s veracity. The fact that the corroboration presented here has been lying around unused for so long is also a powerful argument that previous research in this area has been far from thorough, and that little weight should be given to supposed efforts to find the Report—it may well survive somewhere to this day.