Chapter 1

Narrativizing the Colonial Encounter

Introduction

Popular mythology conceived the Andamans as forbidding, ominous, and ill-omened islands that brought nothing but ruin to those who had the misfortune to step on their shores. The Andamans were the dreaded kalapani, the land of darkness and death. This popular imagery of the Islands persists till today, extolled and immortalized in fables, parables, grandmother's tales, literature, and cinematographic presentations. This chapter would explore the lineage of this popular representation of the Islands. The earliest references to the Andamans may be found in some South Indian inscriptions and the notes and memoirs of the travelers and adventurers crossing the Indian Ocean. All of them without exception characterize the Andamans as being inhabited by ferocious anthropophagous natives. The narratives generated in the moment of the colonial encounter further strengthened this portrayal. The colonial discourse drew upon the imagery conceived in a pre-colonial moment. Though devoid of any colonial intent, the pre-colonial narratives, given their cultural specificity and signification were quite similar in form and content to the colonial descriptions.1 This facilitated their usurpation and harnessing to the colonial wagon.2 However, besides the question of intent, there existed another crucial distinction in-between the colonial and the pre/proto-colonial narratives. The colonial narratives sought to bestow legitimacy and give


form to the relations of domination and subordination. Consequently, there was a continual reassertion of certain categories and assumptions although there existed evidence to the contrary. This chapter will explore the matrix of the political discourse, which eventually contributed, to the spatialization of the Andamans as not simply geographical but metaphorical 'islands' and the way this imagery hinged on a particular notion of 'Wild'. The wild islands were an untamed and uncultured space existing on the margins of the civilized world, possessing a character that was antithetical to rational and civilized life. By examining the politics of spatialization of the Andaman 'islands', this chapter, amongst other things, attempts to bring out the discursive power of spatial metaphors.3

The Pre-Colonial Moment

Ensconced above the 'ten-degree channel' and at a considerable distance from the compatriot peninsular landmasses, the Andamans had, for centuries, been ensured considerable isolation and subterfuge. Many a navigator, explorer, fortune hunter, and adventurer hungering after gold, god, and glory, had traversed the waters of the sea and the littorals surrounding the Andamans through the ages, without ever disembarking on the Islands. Except for some destiny willed otherwise and they did touch the shores of the Andaman, albeit only as shipwrecked, typhoon-hit, lost, and hungry sailors who never lived to tell their tale of sorrow.4 This had made the Islands and its inhabitants quite infamous since a very early period in history.5 Thus, inspite of lying on one of the world's most


4 Moti Chandra in his Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1977, cites references of sea travel between India and China from the Indian, and Chinese sources, all of which unanimously concur that the 'Indian ships had to encounter terrible storms in Bay of Bengal and in the South China sea which caused shipwrecks'. This shows that ship-wrecks were a common phenomenon in the Bay of Bengal, p. 93.

5 That the Andamanese society, as a whole, was characterized by an insular structure is even borne out by the archaeological investigations undertaken by Zarine Cooper. See her, "Analysis of the Nature of Contacts with the Andaman Islands During the last two Millennia", South Asian Studies, 5, 1989, pp. 133-147. Cooper's work does establish that there was much exchange between the Andamanese and the inhabitants of Nicobar Islands,
bustling trade routes connecting West Asia and India with Southeast Asia, the Andamans never appeared on the maps of international trade routes, except as a fleeting reference in the navigational charts.  

Further intensifying the isolation of these Islands from the rest of the world were the historical contingencies (off-shoots, yet again, of physical remoteness), the inhospitable tropical climate and the implacable hostility that its inhabitants were said to display towards strangers. The Andamans, as a consequence, remained at the social periphery of their compatriot Asiatic peninsula for centuries. These Islands, thus, far removed from the continent, continued to exist as a literal and a metaphorical island well into the eighteenth century.

The limited nature of contact that the Andamans had had with the world, besides other factors, perpetuated the myth of the Islands being inhabited by cannibals. In the accounts of Ptolemy, Marco Polo and Nicolo Conti, the Islands were supposed to be inhabited by a race of cannibals, formidable not only to their enemies, but to all who approached their coast, a sort of dreaded 'anthropophagi whose heads grew beneath their shoulders'. There is an

for example, the Andamanese acquired the knowledge of pottery-making through trade or barter with the Nicobarese.

7 The native Andamanese was of the Negrito stock, the kind that is also represented by the Semang of Malaya and the pygmies of Philippines. They lived by hunting-gathering and fishing, and used harpoons, nets and bow for the purpose. Their material culture was close to the Palaeolithic culture because it was said that they did not even know how to start a fire. E.H. Man, *Aboriginal Inhabitants of Andamans*, Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland by Trubner, London, 1883. (Sanskaran Prakashak, Delhi 1975).
8 A possible explanation for the Andamanese harbours remaining unexploited by seafarers could be that in the early historical period vessels, which drew very little water, were used for coastal and transoceanic voyages. Most of the sailing took place in good weather and ‘rudimentary shelter was enough to serve as a harbour’ and this ‘perhaps explains the rarity of harbour facilities and installations along the coastal fringe’. This view about the nature of vessels and the rarity of use of harbour facility by early seafarers has been put forward by Ray, H. P. in “Seafaring in the Bay of Bengal in the Early Centuries AD,” in *Studies in History*, New Series, Vol. 6, No.1, Jan-June 1990, pp. 1-14

account of two Mohammaden travelers of the ninth century, which has survived only as quoted in Pemberton's *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1811, Vol. 7). Similar is the description of Caesar Frederick in his *Indian Observations* (1567), where he calls the Islands the 'Islands of Andemaon' and confirmed that their people were called savage or wild because they ate one another. There also exists an inscription from the eleventh century found in the Tanjore temple, which refers to the Andaman Islands as Timaittivu, 'Islands of impurity', inhabited by cannibals. Clouded by visions of the natives being savages and cannibals, the stories of their physical appearance also assumed an unbelievable character. John Mandeville in his *The Book of John Mandeville* (1360) describes them thus:

In those isles are many manners of folk of divers conditions. In one of them is a manner of folk of great stature, as they were giants, horrible and foul to the sight; and they had but one eye, and that is in the midst the forehead.... There is another isle where folk are both men and women, and have members of both the tane and the tother, and ilk one of them has a pap on the ta side. And when they use the member of men, they get childer; and when they use member of women they bear childer.

The one-eyed giant of John Mandeville is strongly reminiscent of Homer's Cyclops. Other descriptions also seem to have been derived from the myths and stories prevalent on the European mainland. The descriptions of the natives of the Andamans were, thus, each more

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11 Their preposterous description of the natives ran thus, 'The food in which they chiefly delighted was human flesh, which they tore up almost like wild beasts, and, ignorant of even the simplest forms of cookery, devoured raw. It was believed that that they possessed no kind of vessel on which they could venture out to the sea.... This was considered fortunate circumstances for the voyagers in these remote seas, for the natives might otherwise have lain in wait for them like pirates, or rather like the most ferocious beasts of prey, to supply themselves with stores of human flesh for the horrid banquet of blood in which it was their delight to indulge.' Cited in Mouat, *Adventures*, pp. 7-8 and Portman, *History*, pp. 51.


fantastic than the other. These tales of adventure narrated by the odd traveler, shipwrecked sailor, and explorer, merely paraphrased the versions of the previous travelers and writers to the Islands and reconfirmed the descriptions of natives as cannibals. In most instances the narrator had never ever paid a visit or seen the Islands. The cannibalism parable was also nourished by the Malays, Burmese, Chinese sailors, and European privateers who engaged in slave-raiding and a trade in sea-slugs and birds’ nests on the Islands for centuries. These Asiatics in order to retain their trading and commercial monopoly perpetuated this myth. The veracity of the prevalence of cannibalism on the Islands was, thus, never questioned. It was taken as a fact, as an unquestioned reality.

_The Colonial Imagery_

Drawing upon these imageries a conception of the Islands being ‘wild’ was spawned in the context of the colonial encounter. It initially concurred with the establishment of a penal settlement on the Islands but was later resuscitated and given longevity by the building of the Cellular Jail. Its potency was evident in the transformation of the British imagination, which sired a matrix of political discourse, into accepted wisdom. The knowledge thus and so acquired became the guiding force behind the British actions for quite some time to come. It not only foregrounded colonial conquest but also became an apology for colonization. The conquest of the Andamans was thus narrativized by the colonial administrators as a

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15 The case of a Dr. Helfer, a Russian expert, who was in temporary service of the Government of India, in 1839, who went to the Islands to search for gold; and collected various botanical samples and was eventually killed by the natives.


17 Home, Judicial, 27 April, 1860, 6-7, A, National Archives of India (NAI).

project of 'reform' and 'civilization', the archetypal white man's burden. The controlled, bounded and uncivilized character of the Andamans was used as a justification for setting up a penal colony on the Islands. The natives of the Andamans and the convicts became the mirror image of each other. Both were seen as existing on the margins of civilization and this marginality merited their social exclusion and quarantining on an island. However, these were also groups that had to be reclaimed into the purview of civilization. The wild discourse thus became a justification for the disparate aims of distancing and reclaiming of the debased and the deviant.

The Islands, in the British official circle, were thus characterized as a 'perfect purgatory'. A space which was 'fit to be used only for such a purpose... a convict settlement, for punishment and torment, of the most profligate and abandoned criminals'. J.P. Grant, the President-in-Council, who was in favor of the establishment of penal settlement for purposes of colonization, felt that jails could nowhere be less costly than at a place where the convicts know that 'if they run away they will be eaten up'. Not very different was the opinion of Dr. F.J. Mouat, who saw in the idea of the establishment of a penal settlement 'a poetical retributive justice' that thus rendered:

The crimes of an ancient race the means of reclaiming a fair and fertile tract of land from the neglect, the barbarity and the atrocities of a more primitive but scarcely cruel and vindictive race, whose origin is yet involved in such a dark cloud of mystery.

The 'ancient race' in Mouat's view was that of the Indians and the ones belonging to the 'cruel and vindictive race were the inhabitants of the Andamans. The settling of the debased criminals who would cultivate and farm the lands hitherto inhabited by a diabolical and demonic race was seen as an impeccable method of not only punishing the criminals but also of reclaiming the Islands and their inhabitants, which deserved no better immigrants. Thus, the 'reformation' of the criminal and the 'civilizing' of the barbarian was to be
simultaneously achieved by colonizing the Islands. In this manner, the whole colonizing project was narrativized as a project of 'reformation' and as a 'civilizing' mission. The conquest of the Islands was consequently vindicated as a 'duty conferred upon' the British 'by providence'. As one official decried the fate of the Islands, unless they were colonized by the British:

In place of engaging enterprise, and furnishing subsistence to thousands of industrious colonists they should be left in the possession of a handful of degenerate negroes, degraded in habits and intelligence to a level little above the beasts of forest with which they dwell.

Indian convicts who had been taken as settlers to the Islands also operated with a particular notion of the Andamanese. The forest-dwelling and hunting-gathering tribals had many ancient and medieval incarnations who, in every age, had been treated with contempt by the State and were looked down upon as rukshasa, asura, narbhakshi, babarika, aranyakara, atavi, atavika or melcha. In relation to the Andamans, the fear of crossing the unholy waters, combined with an expulsion from their natal society and the latent horror of the unknown, led the Indians to give credence to the colonial discourse. A convict who had returned to India following his release just after arriving in the Andamans narrated the story of his journey and brief residence in the Andamans to the Superintendent of the Allahabad prison.

22 Perhaps this spatialization of the Andamans was the re-enactment of the socio-political boundaries, which the British government discursively invented about the Indian society in their attempt to justify their rule in India. The British writings on India were also marked by this peculiar phenomenon where the appropriation of Indian history and society and the self-distancing from it went on simultaneously, especially in the works of James Mill’s History of British India (1817), Mountstuart Elphinstone’s The History of India: The Hindu and the Mahometan Periods (1841), James Fergusson’s History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (1876).


The Superintendent presented the account of the convict’s narrative in an official report, stating:

There is, too, a wholesome dread of the man-eating natives, who are black, large, and strong, and have faces shaped like horses. They use the bow and arrow with great skill, and refrain from eating meat, fish, and no grain, but herbs and roots, their bodies do not putrify after death.25

In the initial years of the colonial presence on the Islands, the attacks on the runaway convicts and the skirmishes with the British further stoked the fear of the convicts. The British also saw it to their advantage to preserve these fears. However, with a greater interaction with the Andamanese, these fears and prejudices were watered down but not completely cast off.

The British, thus, exonerated themselves of having a conquest on their conscience. The British justification for the colonization was the degraded state of the inhabitants of the Islands compelled the British to step in and rescue their lot. In this way the deportation of convicts, the establishment of the penal settlement, and the wish to civilize the natives all got inscribed in the history as a story of reform.26 And the Islands simultaneously also became an anthropological laboratory with the aborigine Andamanese serving as the guinea pigs. The Islands, thus, transmogrified into a space for the marginal, the unincorporated, and the uncivilized. In this way the ideas of social exclusion and control worked themselves into the way the colonial regime sought to order spaces. The establishment of a penal settlement brought to full circle the politics of spatialization of the Andamans Islands.27

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25 T. Farquhar, Superintendent, Central Prison, Allahabad to W. Muir, Secretary to Government of the North-Western Provinces, 14 Jan 1859, in Home, Judicial, Proceedings Volume, July-Dec 1859, NAI.


27 For instance, the English translation of Ahmad Ibn Majid's text provides various charts compiled from statistics given by Arab navigational texts and all the maps thus produce give a South-east Asian location of the Andamans. See G. R. Tibbetts, Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese, being a
There were essentially three aspects of the Andaman's geography and environment, which were continually invoked to delineate the space as 'wild'. The hunting-gathering subsistence strategies, the lack of literacy and the absence of any codified laws were generally the constitutive elements of this ascription of wildness to tribes, communities and territories. However, in the case of the Andamans, besides these quintessential ingredients, three other features were essentialized in the invention of a 'wild' society. These were - the remote island character of the Andamans; a fearsome imagery of the jungle and climate of the Islands; and lastly the presence of cannibalistic inhabitants. The following is an examination of the manner in which these three ingredients created a heady brew, which kept the British, and the native imagination intoxicated for decades.

The Island Metaphor

Historians studying the relation between different geographical niches have established that a geographical island may not always be a metaphorical island because human intervention goes a long way in minimizing the effects of isolation, which geography imposes on island spaces. The works of Braudel, Sahlins, Eric Wolf, and K. N. Chaudhuri were the first to show that island societies, such as Melanesia, Polynesia, Papua New Guinea, and Mauritius, hitherto considered isolated, had always been involved in extensive networks of communication and exchange. The case of the Andaman Islands, however, differed. The

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28 T.H. Eriksen, "In Which Sense do Cultural Islands Exist?", in Social Anthropology, Vol. 1, No. 1B, 1993, pp. 133-147. This study quite conclusively establishes that in 'both biological, linguistic and socio-cultural respects, islands tend to be less isolated than, for example, mountain valleys'. This is because 'water tends to unite; mountains tend to divide'. Also see D. Venkatesan, "Study of Island Cultures and Ecology: A Perspective", in Man in India, Vol. 72, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 15-27 and K.S. Singh, "Island Anthropology Retrospect and Prospects", in Man in India, Vol. 71, No. 4, Dec 1991, pp. 545-569.

Islands had existed until the eighteenth century as metaphorical islands. And the mediation of conscious human agency from that time on, instead of minimizing the force of geography, had the reverse impact of reinforcing the spatial metaphor. By ascribing to the Andamans the epithet of 'wild' the British further relegated these Islands into isolation. This was because the British imagined the Andamans, from the very beginning, as 'islands', not simply in a geographical sense but in a metaphorical sense and also rendered them such with their polices.  

What was then this island metaphor and how did it surreptitiously work its way into Andamanese history? The island metaphor revolved primarily around the notions of boundedness, isolation, and self-sustenance. There was nothing inherently pejorative in the use of these images of boundedness, isolation, and self-sufficiency. This was because geographically isolated and bounded spaces, such as island societies, inadvertently gave rise to spatial metaphors of closed and excluded systems. However, the way these three elements were configured determined the place that a particular island space occupied on the civilizational scale. They could be concurrently applied to island spaces to envision them as Edenic, that is, uppermost in the civilizational hierarchy. Or applied depreciatively to locate them as Wild, at the bottom of the pecking order. The hierarchization of island spaces acquired a new cogency in the modern period. Islands came to be located not simply at the margins and extremities of the civilized world but also the knowable world. These spatial stereotypes were subsequently taken over by colonial administrators to vindicate conquests and were later worked into acquired wisdom by anthropologists studying islands and other primitive societies.

This interplay of the notions of Eden and Wild was not simply a mathematical inversion of binary categories. The island metaphor was deployed in a variety of ways to demarcate places.

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31 Unlike many other islands, which the British occupied, such as Singapore and Hong Kong.
33 Seymour Phillips, "The Outer World". Phillips shows that islands had a special place in the imaginative medieval literature that was later taken over by Shakespeare and Defoe.
on the civilizational heap. On the one hand was the British self-perception 'as an Island people'. The idea of being 'British/English' was intertwined with the idea of being inhabitants of an island.\textsuperscript{34} The British deployed the images of a controlled, bounded, and an isolated space to the British Isles to delineate them as a territory, which was protected by the sea against infection and unhappy barbaric neighbors. The idiom of self-sufficiency also worked its way into the discourse, where the self-reliance of the British Isles stemmed from it being a demi-paradise, a virtual Garden of Eden, symbolic of nature's bounty, which nurtured and nourished its inhabitants with its yields. There are innumerable instances in British history expressing this sense of security, and for some it was also a matter of national pride.\textsuperscript{35} The fact that they inhabited a territory which was rendered exclusive because of being girdled by the sea, produced and heightened their nation's sense of security.\textsuperscript{36} The liminal sea that surrounded and bounded the Islands into one physical entity was also conceptualized as a space, which divided the civilized realms from the uncivilized.

In this case, the island metaphor was employed to reinforce the geographical distancing of the British Isles not just from continental societies but also from other island spaces; especially the ones colonized by the British, and depicted as inhabiting the realm of the primitive and satanic. Therefore, while this psychological distancing made the British Isles a natural fortress, it instinctively relegated islands such as the Andamans to the realm of the


\textsuperscript{35} Shakespeare's John of Gaunt expresses this sense of pride to perfection when he calls England: 'This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle.... This earth of Majesty, this seat of Mars, This other Eden, demi-paradise, This Fortress built by Nature for herself, Against infection and the hand of war: This happy breed of men, this little world, This precious stone set in the silver sea, Which serves it in the office of a wall, Or as a moat defensive to a house, Against the envy of the less happier lands.' This small piece has, in a capsule, all the crucial ingredients of the romanticized island imagery. The three metaphors of boundedness, isolation and self-sustenance all find place in the above rendition. Cited in Richard II, in Wells, S. and G. Taylor, eds., The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Oxford, 1988.

\textsuperscript{36} These notions had long been part of British psyche. Thomas Coventry, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in 1635, strongly articulated this national sense of security in these words: 'The dominion of the sea, as it is an ancient and undoubted right of the crown of England, so it is the best security of the land', cited in D. Yapp, ed., The Travellers' Dictionary of Quotation, Routledge, 1983, pp. 221.
uncivilized. However, not all islands colonized by the British were conceptualized as an anti-
thesis of the British Isles. The purpose that a particular island served in the colonial design
also had a bearing in demarcation of a particular island as ‘wild’ or ‘Edenic’. For instance, the
island of Mauritius, which became a botanical laboratory and a conservatory for the British,
as shown in Richard Grove's work, was idealized as an Edenic island. It was an island
which was not plotted on the contemporary time scale but on that of bygone times. In this
respect it was imagined as representing the infancy, the idyllic childhood of the British Isles
which had succumbed to the depredations of the modern industrial present.

In the case of the Andamans, the factors, which led to its colonization, the establishment of
a penal settlement, the belief that it was inhabited with man-eating ogres and covered with
diseased jungle fortified its portrayal as ‘Wild’. The very metaphors, which the British saw as
the basis of the paradise-like status of the British Isles, were determined to be the causes
behind the uncivilized and debased character of the Andamans. They were seen as being bounded by a ‘hostile’ sea, unlike the ‘silver sea’ that surrounded the British Isles. The self-sufficiency of the Andamans was not a boon granted by the Almighty nor was it because of the inherent goodness of the Islands and its people. It was occasioned, in the British perception, by the isolation imposed by providence and geography. The Andamans had remained isolated and untouched by civilizational influences and, therefore, evidently had to rely on whatever nature yielded. And whatever it lacked it had to make up through practising


38 The Andaman Committee, formed in 1858 to survey the Islands for their suitability for establishment of penal or other settlement reported: ‘There is an abundance of good water, much culturable land, and judging by the luxuriance of vegetation, a generally fertile soil. There is an excellent clay for the manufacture of bricks, an inexhaustible supply of sand-stone for building purposes, and large forest trees for timber.’ In Home Public, 16 Aug, 1858, NAI.
cannibalism. The existence of cannibals, as we shall see later, was resultanty seen as 'natural', and the practice of cannibalism a necessity, an unquestioned reality. This self-sufficiency of the Islands was circumspect because the British were defining it in terms of the Islands' suitability to serve as a place where a settlement could be establishment and where no extra expense would have to made in procuring foodstuffs or building material. 39 However, this self-sufficiency proved to be illusory. Well into the 1900s, and, in fact, till today, much of the Andaman's grain and essential items were procured from the mainland. 40

While the spatialization of the Andamans, had initially been a result of unintentional historical contingencies, under the colonial rule its spatialization was a consequence of a human agency consciously seeking to transform and re-invent the Islands. This premeditated marginalization aimed at imposing, on the Islands, repressive forms of social, political and economic ideologies that, while not cutting off the cluster from the centre, kept the subcontinent and the Islands tied in an unequal binary relationship. In an attempt to mark themselves off from the 'other', the British fabricated their cultural boundaries by incriminating those outside the boundary of the very notions on which the self-definition of British society was based. 41 The 'Wild' island character of the Andamans, thus, became a very convenient instrument in cutting off and demarcating the space inhabited by the 'other', yet it was a space that had to be reclaimed into the ambit of civilization. The 'isolated' and 'self-sustaining' Islands were at once re-invented as a piece of marginalized territory fit only for the rejects, the rabble and the waste of the civilized world. The best means of excluding the unwanted social excreta of the civilized society was to quarantine them on an isolated, spatially segregated island.

39 The quantity of fish adapted for the food of man he [Dr. Playfair] ascertained to be inexhaustible and the stock of small sweet oysters large enough to replenish the exhausted beds in every part of the world... we could depend on an abundant, unintermittent supply of excellent water during the whole year', from the report of the Andaman Committee, cited in Mouat, *Adventures*, p. 195.

40 It was as early as 1870, at the behest of Lord Mayo, that the question of making Port Blair self-supporting by the expansion of agriculture was taken up by the Government, see *Census Report of the Andaman and Nicobars*, Government of India, 1931, p. 31.

Dreaded Tropicana

Another aspect of the geography of the Andamans, which was spotlighted, were its jungles and climatic conditions. The Andamans for centuries, and for many years even after its colonization, remained a terra incognita for the British and very little was known to them about its tropical climate and its forests.\(^2\) Two very striking and contrasting images of the Andamans come across in the various colonial travel and survey accounts. The Islands are simultaneously celebrated as grand and picturesque or reproached for being covered with 'death-like' and 'disease-ridden' jungles infested with 'dreaded anthropophagis'. Michael Symes, who wrote a narrative of a diplomatic mission to the Kingdom of Ava, happened to visit the Andamans and gave a wonderful description of the Islands:

A situation more picturesque, or a view more romantic, that that which Chatham Island and Cornwallis harbor present, can scarcely be imagined... The scenery of nature, in this sequestered spot, is uncommonly striking and grand.\(^3\)

On the other hand, the gloom and, one traveler described, the darkness pervading the forests thus:

The trees were of a great height, in many places thickly interwoven with rattans and bushrope. The sunbeams being unable to penetrate the entangled foliage, the atmosphere, in consequence, bore the semblance of twilight. The broad boughs hung rich with heavy dew-drops, and the air was loaded with a damp and pestilential vapour, occasioned by the rotting twigs, leaves and fruit, with which the swampy ground was thickly strewed. The death-like stillness was occasionally interrupted by a solitary parrot winging its noisy flight overhead.\(^4\)

\(^2\) 'To this belief may in all probability be also attributed the fact that these islands were avoided by most voyagers, and hence no records exist with reference to their history prior to the close of the last century', in Man, Aboriginal, p. xiv.


The tropical islands in the early centuries of European conquest had been eulogized as Edenic remnants of a hoary past. However, a less charitable construction of the Tropics began to gain currency from the late eighteenth century onwards. David Arnold has questioned the 'monolithic construction of Tropics as Edens'. David Arnold, in his work on the discourse surrounding the Tropics, has examined a number of travel writings that provided the grist for the mill characterizing the Tropics as violent, with lethal diseases and death lurking everywhere. In his view, Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness expressed the 'abiding sense of alienation and repugnance' inspired by the Tropics, which became more commonplace from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. What the historiography suggests is that with a rise in a notion of 'Tropics', where tropical exuberance came to be seen as a curse, there was a shift in the conceptualization of the tropics.

What is important for the discussion here is that most of these travel writings related to the visits of the colonial officials to the various tropical island colonies. For instance, Alexander Bryson, a naval surgeon and a medical statistician visited, the island of Fernando Po, off the west coast of Africa, and Henry Marshall, a surgeon in the British Forces was stationed in Ceylon. Both had a similar opinion about the tropical forests that behind the sublimity and the grandeur of the tropical forests prowled death and disease. Thus the idea of the 'tropic' got tied to a particular notion of the 'island'. The Andamans also came into the colonial

45 This is concurrent with the shift in the characterization of island societies. Death and disease were the two main features of this discourse on the Tropics. See David Arnold, Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies, Manchester, 1998. Also see Daniel R. Headrick, The Tools of Empire, Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981.


47 Phillip Curtin, The Image of Africa, British Ideas and Action, 1780-1830, London, 1965. Also see Henry Reynolds, "Racial Thought in Early Colonial Australia", in Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. XX, No. 1, pp. 45-53. Reynolds argues that the 'frontier' life was not conducive to the idealization of the tribal life, and while the concept of Noble Savage might have been popular amongst the elite, 'it may have not penetrated very deeply amongst the illiterate masses'.

picture at this very juncture of history when the general opinion regarding the tropical islands was beginning to slide. The abandonment of the Settlement in the late eighteenth century because of high mortality and sickness further confirmed this particular view of the Islands. It became a matter of belief that behind their magnificence, the Islands harbored morbid miasmas and intertemperate climate.

Thus, the principal geographical niche to be embroiled in this misanthropic conception, in the case of the Andamans, were the tropical jungle. The Islands had a number of huge swamps with rotting wood and vegetable matter which were believed to be emitting deadly gases that caused fever and death. These swamps were in reality the breeding grounds for malarial mosquitoes. The crew stationed on the vessel anchored on the coast would remain healthy even in the worst weather, whereas, in the Settlement, sickness would begin with the onset of the southwest monsoon. Furthermore, the Andamans experienced only four months – December, January, February and March – as clear weather. The rest of the year, the Islands experienced violent rains. The moist weather also brought with it disease, especially dysentery, scurvy, and fever. The British, therefore, by force had to maintain a regular medical establishment in the Islands and had to deal with the high turnover of labourers, most being in a debilitated state of health after a few months of work on the Islands. This high rate of mortality was attributed by most to:

This extraordinary fatality was of course chiefly due to circumstances incidental to the establishment of a penal settlement in an isolated tropical region peopled by hostile savages and covered by dense jungles largely fringed with mangrove, and rendered extremely malarious by numerous salt and fresh water swamps which are found throughout the group.49

An obvious corollary of this discourse was that, if, the Islands had to be reclaimed, its jungles would have to be done away with. Although the inhabitants of the Islands were

49 *Man, Aboriginal*, p. xvi.
forest dwellers, it was not possible for the British, or the settlers, to set up habitation without clearing of the forests and underwood.\textsuperscript{50}

Were the Jungles set fire to in the dry season, and gradually cleared away from the beach inwards, and clearances made in the forests so as to admit the passage of light and air, it is reasonable to suppose that the unhealthiness of the Andamans would in time become a matter of past.\textsuperscript{51}

As a result, in the initial years of the Settlement, the clearing of the jungles was a task taken most seriously. It was believed that 'reclamation of land for cultivation will always be an important industry in the Settlement'.\textsuperscript{52} Removal of jungles for the improvement of the health and the climate had its antecedents in the colonial medical topography. Its pioneer in India, James Ronald Martin, had suggested the clearing of the entire forested tract of the Sunderbans in the 1830s.\textsuperscript{53} Wherever the jungles were left intact were either place in the interiors, inaccessible to the British, or those, near terraced fields and required to ensure water-supply. It was only later that the commercial value of Andaman timber was determined and then greater care began to be taken in felling and classification of the trees.\textsuperscript{54}

The British sought to replace the 'wild' jungles with grass, kitchen gardens, and agricultural land, to create an aestheticized and disease-free landscape, which was a product of human

\textsuperscript{50} Jacques Pouchepadass, "Colonialism and Environment in India, Comparative Perspective", in Economic and Political Weekly, August 19, 1995, pp. 2059-2067.

\textsuperscript{51} Foreign, 22 May 1857, 133, NAL.

\textsuperscript{52} C.J. Lyall and A.S. Lethbridge, The Report on the Working of the Penal Settlement of Port Blair, Home, Port Blair, June 1890, NAL.

\textsuperscript{53} Arnold, The Problem, p. 153.

\textsuperscript{54} Although the inhabitants of the Islands were forest dwellers, it was not possible for the British or the settlers to set up habitation without clearing of the forests and underwood. These Islands have some of the world's best decorative timbers - Padauk, Silvergray, Chikrassy, Koko, Marblewood. Until the 1880s, the local timber was seen as 'useless', and teakwood from Burma was being imported. In fact, till as late as 1929, the Dhup and Papita would which was later most 'useful' as Matchwood, were 'bring thrown away after making use of them as floats to raft sinker logs'. See Census of India, 1951, Report of B.S. Chengapa, Conservator, Working Plans, Port Blair, Andamans.
exertions and labour. As F. J. Mouat urged, 'through the application of some means of modern agricultural industry the festering mass of vegetal compound could be transformed into a material with inexhaustible fertility'. The fact the jungles represented a landscape, which grew on its own without any intervention of civilization in the form of human labour was a sufficient reason for them to be replaced by 'productive' and an 'aesthetic' landscape. This notion of wild jungles was also tied up with the Andamanese who were hunter-gatherers and did not practice cultivation. This fact was continuously harped upon and was later reflected in the British policy towards the Andamanese whom they tried to settle down in one place, and impart knowledge of various forms of agricultural, though quite unsuccessfully, as a project of taming 'wildness'.

The application of the yardstick of 'labour' in determining the civilizational status of a particular people, community or space was nothing unique to the Andamans, it had been practiced and worked out in various other context. Until the late eighteenth century the non-intervention in the rhythm of nature by labour, and survival only on what nature yielded on its own was epitomized in European thought. However, the late eighteenth century, following the efflorescence of the Scottish Enlightenment, marked a shift in this view and the spontaneous production from earth without labour and industry came to be looked down upon. Labour came to seen as 'the mother of civilization and all progress'. The hunter-gathering societies in the tropics were the first to be incriminated as lazy and indolent

55 Mouat, Adventures, p. 95.
58 H. N. Fairchild, The Noble Savage, New York, 1928. He quotes Walter Raleigh's description of a particular non-cultivating community, 'They never eat of anything that is set or sown; and as at home they use neither planting nor manurance, so when they come abroad, they refuse to eat ... but that which nature without labour brings forth', p. 21.
and their savagery being a product of the bountifulness of their nature. Thus, nature, labour, and civilization were distilled into an untidy concoction, which incriminated the tropical environment of the Andamans.

*Landscaping Cannibalism*

What further gave credence to the representation of the tropical islands as 'wild' was the conceptualization of its inhabitants as cannibals. It was long believed that areas located beyond the pale of Europe were the lands inhabited by savages, barbarians, and cannibals.\(^{60}\) Regarding the location of the discourse on cannibalism in European psyche, historians hold divergent opinions. According to Charles Zika, cannibalism was a metaphor located 'threateningly at the centre of European psyche'.\(^{61}\) He cites the liturgical practice of 'sacrificing and eating one's God' in Christianity as an example. Gananath Obeyesekere also, in his work on Captain Cook and the Hawaiian natives, attributes British pre-occupation with Cannibalism to 'childhood fantasy', where the British were 'socialized in their nurseries' in the belief that 'witches and ghosts ate human flesh'; and any questions regarding cannibalism 'provoked a terrible anxiety' that tapped the 'latent wish' and 'resurrected a childhood dread'.\(^{62}\) Peter Hulmes', much closer to Obeyesekere's thesis, locates cannibalism a bit differently. In his view, it is a term that has no application outside the discourse of

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61 The lineage of the discourse on cannibalism in Europe goes back to the earliest times. The ancient Greek myth of the cannibalistic father of the Olympian god Zeus, and the Cyclops in Homer’s *Odyssey*, directly informs the cursed character of Atreus in Aeschylus’ famous play *Agamemnon*. Such portrayals took on a distinctive graphic hue following the xenophobic delirium of the Crusades. For instance, there is a miniature of a Tartar eating a human leg and roasting a body on the spit, from the thirteenth Century found in Matthew of Paris’s *Historia Maiora*, cited in Charles Zika, “Cannibalism and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Reading the Visual Images”, in *History Workshop Journal*, issue 44, 1997, pp. 77-105.

European colonialism, because the word itself is derived from 'Carib', the inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands who were colonized by the Europeans in the fifteenth century.63

Perhaps cannibalism had elements of both – fears of moral disorder and destructive impulses within European society; and the anxieties regarding the non-European 'other'. Both these fears converged to give the discourse on cannibalism its ferocity and frequency. The fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, in this regard, marked a significant juncture in the cultural manufacturing of cannibals with the emergent internal fears of loss of Christian community and identity; and the conquest of the New World by Christopher Columbus. Following the European encounter with the non-European savages, the term cannibalism, as Hulmes rightly points out, no longer remained a 'neutral' one.64 Impelled by the fears of cannibalism within European society, the Europeans began to project these fears on to the non-European societies in an attempt to distance themselves from them. This became most evident in the shipwreck narratives. One such case of the shipwreck of Meduse, in 1819, had a strong impact on the contemporary European imagination. Some of the survivors of the wreck were said to have eaten human flesh which they cut into strips and dried in the sun, and claimed that it was quite palatable. Another such immensely popular narrative was an 1838 publication, Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle by John Curtis.65 Further, Brian Simpson has shown in the case of Mignonette, in 1884, that the public opinion, surprisingly, was sympathetic towards the survivors who had eaten a young man.66 This was the beginning of obsession of the colonial writing for the encounter.

64 For a detailed discussion see Hulmes, Colonial.
65 Lynette Russell, "'Mere Trifles and Faint Representations': The Representations of Savage Life Offered by Eliza Fraser", in Ian J. McNiven, L. Russell and K. Schaffer, eds., Constructions of Colonialism, Perspectives on Eliza Fraser's Shipwreck, Leicester University Press, London, 1998, pp. 51-62. Eliza Fraser was the only shipwreck returnee and her story received international attention. John Curtis' book on her story represented the aborigines as cannibals as 'cannibalism was culturally prefigured'.
With time, cannibalistic imageries began to appear in European literature, providing sustenance to the discourse and adding new nuances to it. Cannibalism, in literary works, was no longer merely associated with the consumption of human flesh. Instead, it involved an imagery of ferocious consumption, blood-thirsty savagery, in which the reader or the viewer could experience the horrors and the ferocity of the act of cannibalism. In Shakespeare’s Tempest, first performed in 1611, the ‘canibal’ of the earlier century was cast as ‘Caliban’ – an anagrammatic twin. Caliban, in the play, is the colonized native, a ‘primitive’ who is enslaved, made to do dirty work and forced to learn the language of the colonizers. Caliban’s mother is a witch, a referral to the medieval practice of casting witches as cannibals (as in the children’s tale of Hansel and Gretel), linked to the fears of moral disorder based on aggressive female sexuality. The appearance of anagrammatic Caliban in the Tempest became a metaphor for the age. It was later picked up and developed by Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) in Robinson Crusoe, written in 1719. The construction of a simple and moral economy by a man alone on a desert island presided over by a benevolent sovereign, in the tale of Crusoe, inadvertently foregrounded the ‘colonial alibi’ for conquest as a means of civilizing the ‘savages’. The encounter of the ‘civilized’ world with the ‘savage’ later made appearances in the stories of Pocahontas, Inkle and Yarico and the very famous Captain Cook and also in children’s stories such as Jack and the Bean Stalk and, last but not the least, in the Andamans. Thus, cannibalism, detached from its moorings in actual practice, became ‘a collection of linguistically based practices’ deployed in the service of Europeans for the ‘production’ of the non-European world. Therefore, for the British, cannibalism was not merely something being practised by the non-Europeans but very much a European cultural self-definition.

In the eighteenth century, when the British finally began surveying the Islands, doubts began to be cast on the authenticity of these accounts. Captain Forrest, the first to survey the Islands around 1783, arrived at the Islands full with premonitions regarding the cannibalistic natives. Contrary to his expectations, Forrest was pleasantly surprised when he did not find the natives as fierce. He thought them to be ‘coffrees’, the descendants of some slaves, whose ship was wrecked in 1682. His account of the natives ran thus:

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67 I am thankful to Alice Mathers and Tristram Stuart for the reference.
68 Zika, “Cannibalism”, pp. 78-79.
69 G. E. Bruce, Tom in the Andamans, Whitcombe and Tombs, Melbourne, 1930.
It is thought that the inhabitants of these islands are horrible to strangers in general. There were, however, reasons to doubt the account because of recent information from certain Captain Lennox with whom the inhabitants behaved very well and ate beef and biscuits with the sailors.  

Later in the same decade, when Blair and Colebrook surveyed the Islands, in 1788, they also found ample reasons to modify their conjectures regarding the notoriety of the natives as cannibals and, on occasions Blair did voice his altered opinions. In Blair's view the 'bad qualities' that the natives displayed were not the foundation of their character but, in a great measure, the result of the cruel treatment, which they had experienced, and particularly from the 'malicious and vindictive' race of Malays who used to capture them for slavery. Blair's report differed substantially from all the previous accounts of the Islands since it described the inhabitants in a manner that left a much more favorable impression on the mind of the reader. However, he did let it slip in towards the end of his report that the Andamanese might be cannibals 'out of necessity, if not from choice'. That is, impelled by hunger and deprivation, given the limited means of subsistence, they took to cannibalism. His survey showed that there were no animals in the forests 'to supply them with food' and neither did the Islands have a 'wholesome and nutritious' vegetable diet. Here was a paradox in Blair's report which sought to establish that the Islands had enough natural resources, pigs, fish and water to sustain a colony; on the other hand he was supposing the Andamanese to be resorting to cannibalism as a result of hunger!

Col. Alexander Kyd, who was appointed Superintendent of the Andamans after Captain Blair, in 1793, was amongst the few officials who actually interacted with the Andamanese. 

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70 Home, Public, 28 April 1783, 44, A, NAI.
71 Mouat, Adventures, pp. 22. Also see the section on 'piracy' in the next chapter.
72 Mouat, Adventures, pp. 17.
73 Home, Public, 6 Aug 1858, 76-98, NAI and Foreign, 22 May 1857, 133, NAI. This was the view of many of the visitors to the Islands such as Colonel Symes and J. H Quigley. Colonel Symes argued that the desire to eat human flesh arose 'more from the impulse of hunger, than from voluntary choice', in Foreign, Political 22 May
He was also of the opinion that nowhere on any part of the globe, was the human race discovered in a more ‘degraded or savage state’. Regarding the prevalence of cannibalism amongst the natives, he felt that:

Although we have not had any proof against it, yet many circumstances have concurred to make us imagine that it is not the case, but we have had repeated proofs that they are most hostile to all strangers, never failing to lay wait for and attack the crew of any boats that may land.... Unfortunate crews of many vessels have perished by the savage hands.\(^7^4\)

Lt. Colebrook also published an account of the lives of the Andamanese in *Asiatic Researches*, in 1794, which betrayed their doubts and conjectures concerning the ubiquity of cannibalism in the Andamans. Colebrook, in his report, gave an exposé of the insides of a small solitary native hut that he had chanced upon on the Chatham Islands:

The floor was also strewed with a numerous collection of the shells of oysters, muscles, cockles, and other shellfish, on which the inhabitants had probably *banqueted*, for these form their principal articles of food when they can no longer procure *that luxury in which they are reported to delight*.\(^7^5\)

Even though Colebrook took pains to show that the Andamanese were not man-eaters, the colorful language of his text, instead of dispelling, reanimated, and invigorated the cannibalism imagery. The use of the words such as ‘banqueted’ enthralled the minds nursed on the classics of Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe. It contrived a powerful imagery of a grand communal Thyestean feast. The mental picture projected by the text belied its general tone, which was, in vain, seeking to dismiss the existence of cannibalism. The luxury that Colebrook alludes to was suggestive of none other than human flesh. This shows that, although Colebrook had doubts with respect to the custom of cannibalism amongst the Andamanese, he couldn’t bear to distance himself from the received compendium of

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1857, 134, NAI. Most probably these people had read and were influenced by Blair’s account of the Andamanese in his survey report.

\(^7^4\) Home, Public, 23 March 1795, 1, A, NAI.

\(^7^5\) cited in Portman, History, pp. 68-69, emphasis my own.
knowledge. Not only did the non-existence of cannibalism make his essay a less spicy and libidinous reading for the British public, it also meant the giving up of cultural categories which had hitherto served as a distinguishing line between the civilized and uncivilized worlds. The distancing from, and questioning of, the inherited wisdom for the colonial officials signified a complete obliteration and annihilation of their own cultural superiority and exclusivity. Therefore, while claiming to unequivocally establish the absence of any practice of cannibalism, the report was couched in a language that left much to imagination.

This reassertion of the misogynic cultural categories, inspite of evidence to the contrary, could be found even in the reports of the survey team, the Andaman Committee, which called on the Islands in the year 1858. The head of the Committee was Frederic John Mouat, who later rose to the status of Inspector General of Jails. Mouat took some Goanese musicians with him on his voyage to the Andamans. The reason that he gave for doing this was:

The Andamanese would no doubt be able to appreciate the melody he produced from his favorite instrument, and we anticipated wonders from the war-dance with which we intended to gratify the natives on the celebration of our fete of fraternization with that interesting race of cannibals.

Mouat actually believed that he could appease the Andamanese by a rendition of a mellifluous jig! Mouat resolutely debunked the characterization of the Andamanese as cannibals in his book. However, he leaves the reader unconvinced because his text is strewn with imageries immortalized by Robinson Crusoe such as the ‘race of cannibals’, ‘dreaded anthropophagi’ and ‘footmark on the sand’. In one place he positively expressed his fear that the Andamanese would ‘chew us all up’.

76 Even Portman, too, attests that he ‘had evident doubts as to their alleged cannibalism, but is loathe to break with former traditions,’ in History, pp. 75-76 and Phillips, “The Outer World”.

77 Mouat, Adventures, pp. 66.

A constant slippage of the ideas of the 'uncivilized other' and the 'savage' into a discourse of cannibalism is discernable in the writings of the colonial officials. The hostility and the ferocity of the Andamanese made the British imagine them as people no less than cannibals. The resistance proffered by the Andamanese also gave rise to cannibalistic characterizations. As one official of the Andaman Committee stated, 'From first to the last they rejected every attempt at conciliation, and either avoided or forcibly opposed all attempts to hold communion with them'. And every time a collision occurred 'the aggressors were the savages'. The failure to conciliate the Andamanese and their use of violence also strengthened this belief and, in turn, became a justification for the colonial violence. Therefore, whenever the interface between the British and the Andamanese occurred, what the British described as the practice of cannibalism by the natives was nothing more than a projection of the fears roused, by their own practice, on to the actions of the natives. The natives of the Andamans, much like the island space, were out of the ambit of normative civilized behavior by virtue of being imagined as cannibals. The European society, which had long found, in the fear of cannibalism, a means of confronting and thereby controlling the extremities and margins of normative social interaction, characterized the Andamanese as such in order to be able to control them.

The strength of the European discourse and practice of cannibalism was such that it prevented the British from moving away from it. The 'cannibal', for the British, was the marker of the distinction between the civilized and the non-civilized. Inspite of having no hard evidence and deep doubts, there was an excess of affirmation of the prevalence of cannibalism amongst the Andamanese – as if repeated endorsements would enable them to create the image. Thus, there was a constant slippage of the fantasy of cannibalism into the reality of the savage. In this way the European discourse and practice of cannibalism had

79 Thomas C. Patterson, "Early Colonial Encounters and Identities in the Caribbean: A Review of Some Recent Works and Their Implications", in *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1991, pp. 1-14. Patterson shows, drawing upon the work of historian Jalid Sued Badillo, that Columbus engaged in slave raiding as a mode of sustenance until he found gold. He divided the Antillean society into two – peaceful Taino and the Cannibalistic Caribs. The difference between the two was that the Caribs offered resistance, and the accusations of cannibalism were used to justify violence, enslavement and colonization.

80 Home, Judicial, 15 Jan 1858, 14-27, NAI.
become a method employed by the colonialists to 'produce' parts of a non-European world for the Europeans and, in the case of the Andamans, it helped in its location as a 'Wild' space. However, such a location did not simply involve a process of self-distancing but also one of reclaiming. As early as 1790, an account of the Andamans in the Calcutta Monthly Register announced that, 'these people... are probably destined by the hand of providence to come under our protection, and to participate in the blessings of civilization'.

With time, attempts were made to bring in the aborigine Andamanese into the fold of civilization. Stations called 'Andaman Home' were set up for the Andamanese adults and orphanages for their children in various parts of the penal settlement in the 1860s 'with a view to establishing more cordial relations between the aborigines and ourselves, and reclaiming them, if possible, to some degree of civilization'. The establishment of the Andaman Home had been preceded by a series of low-grade conflicts between the Andamanese and the British. It had involved killing and general distrust on either side. With time they were co-opted by the state for capturing the runaway convicts. The Andamanese who visited the settlement in order to obtain food were lured with the promise of bigger quantities if they joined the 'recapture expeditions'.

**Conclusion**

The attempt here has been to demonstrate the power of the discourse generated in the moment of the colonial encounter. Inspite of repeated evidences that gave the British enough reason to move away from the use of certain cultural categories, they continued to employ them. After some years of living on the Islands, and with a greater familiarity with the geography and the inhabitants of the Islands, the discourse of the Andamans being 'wild' Islands began to get diluted but was never completely discarded. The Robinson Crusoe imagery also continued to be strongly at work amongst the British officials. For instance, two Andamanese men who were captured by the British were sent to Moulmein in 1862 for...
linguistic experiments. They were nicknamed 'Crusoe' and 'Friday'! With the beginning of anthropological studies and the return of convicts to India with favorable accounts of life in the Settlement, the ferocious imagery of the islands began to wane. But the building of the Cellular Jail and the incarceration of the socially articulate and publicly-visible political prisoners therein, with gory tales of torture and deprivation flowing back to India, gave this discourse a new innings for a few more decades. The Islands, by the early twentieth century, metamorphosed into a 'hell on Earth', bringing to full circle the imagery of a 'perfect purgatory'. The latter imagery became a justification and a reason for the conquest and the establishment of a penal colony, and the former was used for the abolition of the penal colony.

85 J.C. Haughton, *The Report on Intercourse with the Aborigines*, in Home, Public, 21 Feb 1862, 50 A, NAI.
The Above is a map of Southeast Asia compiled from the statistics given by the Arab Navigational Texts. It locates the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a segment of the Southeast Asian littorals. Following British colonization, the Andamans began to be plotted on the maps of the South Asian subcontinent.

The Andaman Islands remained untouched by the Ancient Sea Route from the West to the Southeast Asian Littorals. The ships travelling eastwards mostly touched the Nicobar Islands as they went through the Ten-Degree Channel.

All sea routes went through the Bay of Bengal without ever touching the Andamans. Only the wind-swept ships would reach the Andamans, giving rise to gory tales of the inhabitants of the Islands.

Above: A map of Indian Ocean, which shows the routes, taken by Arab Navigators. All routes flank the Nicobars without ever touching the Andamans.


Below: A map of Bay of Bengal showing the Arab Navigational Routes.
Map accompanying a nineteenth-century edition of Herodotus which locates the Androphagi according to the original text—on the fringe of known civilization in the fifth century B.C. (upper center).
The Chief of the Rutland Island and his wife, both smoking pipes. The tribals appear relaxed in their attitude but the photo has an exotic and voyeuristic tone, attempting to capture them as lazy, indolent and primitive.

The Onge Greeting Ceremony