This water-color sketch over a pencil drawing by Jan Brandes was completed on the occasion of the reception of an embassy from Kandy to the Dutch fort in Colombo. Brandes, a Lutheran minister, was allowed the special privilege of attending the audiences between Dutch Governor Willem Jacob van de Graaff and the Kandyan officials. The artist writes, “I witnessed the game from start to finish because I was in the good graces of the Honourable sic Governor.” This illustration, although unfinished, provides a detailed account of the meeting between the two groups in an audience hall. George Sanders extrapolates that the scene we see here depicts the beginning of the first meeting which would have been held on November 26, 1785 (De Brujin, 306). One legend of this meeting notes a cultural oversight on the part of the Dutch, neglecting to place white linen coverings over the chairs as an obligatory sign of welcome in Kandy culture. Brandes takes care to represent rank in this image, identifying Governor Van de Graaff in a formal red coat with gold trimming and standing in a prominent place in the sketch. The three Kandyan dignitaries are dressed to befit their station in red hats embroidered in gold, a color scheme repeated in their jackets. Each man wears a mantle (tippet) over his shoulders to protect his white robe from the oil applied to his hair. The labels inserted by Brandes have been essential in allowing scholars to interpret this image and others with similar content, clarifying the identity of the Kandyan officials and the rank and identity of many of the VOC officers.

Consulted Sources:


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