"The shores of Asia have been invaded by a race of students with no capacity but for lettered relics; by naturalists, whose cruelty extends not to one human inhabitant; by philosophers expatriations of error, and the diffusion of truth. It remains for the artist to claim his part in these guiltless spoliations." So wrote Thomas Daniell, an artist who came to Bangalore with his nephew William in 1792 and "at the Hills to the Sd. [southward] of Bangalore," collected "several scenes."

The Daniells and other artists at the time were exponents of an emerging practice in England called picturesque art. It treated landscape as a subject in itself and it encouraged an aesthetic of irregularity, ruggedness, and variety. "Plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs," wrote one promoter of the art, "break the edges of the walk: give it the rudeness of a road; ... in a word instead of making the whole smooth, make it rough; and you make it also picturesque." Picturesque subjects could be found but they were as easily contrived as when ruins, carts and other 'rough' objects were inserted into scenes. Picturesque art, it is said, is not just a picture of what is real and therefore a representation; it is like a picture of what is real and therefore admits the possibility of misrepresentation.

On the tableland, however, an unfamiliar place or perhaps a place intrinsically picturesque, artists saw themselves as presenters of a new reality rather than representers or misrepresenters. As such picturesque art was the chosen mode not just of artists but amateur scientists who were recording the 'true' forms of plants, animals, buildings, places, people, etc.

But even as the picture was conveying 'facts,' it was constructing a tension between the detached view of the spectator artist and the embodied experience of rituals and everyday processes enacted behind the scene.
“Every traveler, who has ascended the Ghauts,” noted Captain Newbold in the 1880s, “is struck by the singular appearance ... of detached hills ... starting up abruptly from the surface of the flat plains spread before him, ... presenting a snap-dish which has caused the not inapt comparison of a table with tea-cups here and there revealed on its surface. These tea-cups, many of them made into fortresses or dervogs, attached artists in 1791-92. “This stupendous fortress,” writes artist Robert Town of one of these hills, “enjoys such advantages from nature, as to need little assistance from art.” These natural affairs made ideal picturesque subjects.

Beneath these hills, a gently undulating sand-surface. It is on a gathering of men on this surface “southeast of Banagalore” that the Daniele was upon objects which like the dervogs stood out as natural artifacts: two monolithic granite chasms, a granite trident, “a statue of a large Bull carved out of the solid rock” temples, etc. It was a landscape of rock that consumed a major portion of the Daniele’s two day stay in Bangalore.

This was also a landscape of water, a ridge dividing the deccan and south peninsular valleys. This ridge is not a simple line of high points, it is a line of the highest points of those hills which could be made to run one way or another with the smallest modification to the surface. It is, in other words, an ambiguous high ground and Rampegawadi (where begin Bangalore on it in 1377) a kilometre north of the Bull Temples, as if to take command of its ambiguity.
MANTAP

On the gently undulating surface of the tableland even low lands were covered places. They were sites for what British surveyors in the early 19th century called “lookout houses” – sentry-box shaped constructions of brick and mortar, on four pillars of grey granite on various hills, which were formerly Tipper’s Sultan’s military “lookouts.” To Lewis Bagot in 1827 these structures were “picturesque little temples, called Mantapam.” Archeologists would single out four of these structures as “watchtowers” built by Kempegowda II in the 1300s to mark the limits of his vision of the city.

Artists during Carnatic’s campaign chose the sites marked by these towers as vantage points to draw the “Mysore country.” It was the beginning of a trend of towers who came to India in search of the “picturesque” and were tried to “obtain some of the best glimpses of the magnificent surroundings of Bangalore, the visitor should first seek these lookout.

One manta however was not a lookout as much looked at. It was the only one drawn by artists during the 17th-18th century. When Bangalore was the capital of Mysore’s army. Yet it has eluded the myth of the “rock-hewn” Perhaps because it does not command the highest peak in its immediate vicinity. But it does command the trees upon which it stands, a 15 foot high rock-hewn with steps which was part of the artifact rather than its base. It confounds the architectural limits of the archeologist’s watchtower as "constructions of brick and mortar, on four pillars of grey granite."
OUTCROP

The "bare extensive surfaces of the granitic, trappean, and hypogene rocks" of the Mycro Tableland observed by an amateur geologist in the 1840s, "offend on a grand scale, expose, not to be surpassed in any other portion of the globe..." and the geologist anatomist of the earth's skeleton may, in the peninsula of India advantageously study a huge and disjointed mass of the naked formed rocks which constitute the framework of our planet."

In 1975 this dimension of the tableland -- the neothermally formed rocks -- was declared a national monument. The site chosen to present this monumentality was the Lallagh Rock. Called "Perinsala" by Willam J. Shaw, in 1916, this rock is "among the oldest rocks of the earth dating back to 3000 million years." With increasing evidence of events that did not just rework the substance of the rock but introduced new material from the earth's mantle, geologists today prefer to call it the Caernarvon Complex. It signifies a rock that has undergone "several plutonic, volcanic, and sedimentary cycles which have telescoped together more than once through deformation and metamorphism."

One gets a glimpse of this hyperactivity on the surface of the Lallagh Rock. A maze of foliations -- flows of material under high stress -- reveal the many times this rock reached the high temperatures and pressures necessary for the recrystallization and reworking of its mineral matter but not high enough to return it to magma. Besides foliations, the surface features islands of green, flows of granite, and fields of pegmatite. It is a complexity that is multiplied at the scale of the tableland where geologists see a maze of enclaves, belts, suture, seams, fissures, and collisions.
Geologists speak of a gradual increase in metamorphism from north to south of the Bay of Islands. At some point near the K.teacher and the green mellow gneiss rock, a visible in the Labeck Hill, gives way to a “darkness” more mellow gneiss, a “greenish-looking” rock called Charnockite. Flowing from west to east, the It is the fascinating rock on a journey through gorges. The point of transition is the island of Sivasamudram. Here, Buchan notes in 1600, the It precipitates its waters over a perpendicularly rock. The pencil of an artist might be well employed in imitating its magnificent scenery, and would convey a better sense of its grandeur than my power of description can venture to attempt.

In 1760, however, it was occupied rather than the scene than drew people to Sivasamudram. They were seeking protection from Cornwallis’s army. “Every human being on the north” writes Mark Wilks, “was, as completely removed beyond the reach of the English army, that they appeared to be traveling a country of which no population had been distinctly shown by some recent convulsion of nature... In fact they were all collected with their cattle and movable on the island of Sivasamudram.”

Protection situated Sivasamudram in a more extensive trajectory between the islands of Sivasamudram and Sivagangai. Called Adhikara Medhcganga and Anurangac (Sivagangai, medhcganga and anurangac) (begumkand, medhcganga and anurangac) are dedicated to Gangarama, the protector worshiping on a five-headed serpent whose coils indicate the cycles of time.
WATER

Rivers, geomorphologists say, move from youth to maturity in alluvial plains. The Kaveri, however, reverses this trend momentarily when it falls dramatically at Snasamudra, cutting its way through the rocky terrain of the Biligirirangan hills.

Moments before it begins a new life at Snasamudra, a mature Kaveri is celebrated in the Panchalinga tunda at Talakad. Here a meandering Kaveri carries a remarkable power. It cuts the outer bank of a bend while depositing sand on the inner bank, changing course like a moving snake. At Talakad, however, the sand collected on the inner bank developed into delta that buried the once-famous capital of the Ganga. People withdrew in the face of this phenomenon, believing it to be the curse of Nangrama, the consort of the Vajrayana governor of Seringapatam. Betrayed by Raja Whikpier of Mysoor in whose care she had left the reigns of government while she attended her husband cremating at Talakad, she threw herself into the Kaveri, damning the place: ‘Let Talakad become sand, let Mysoor become wilderness, let the Mysoor rajas fall to beggar heirs.”

Today even as archaeologists uncover temples, people have situated there four of these temples in a manner that follows, perhaps suggests, the rendezvous, a site determined by oriental elements people gather at Talakad. Beginning in Yellapaessa Temple—the temple that escaped brutal—and the adjacent tank, they visit four temples, each associated with a cardinal direction of the flow of the Kaveri as it winds around Talakad.