

THE TAMILS  
OF  
SRI LANKA

P. A. T. Gunasinghe

# THE TAMILS OF SRI LANKA

THEIR HISTORY AND RÔLE

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Dedicated to my teachers

of the then

University of Ceylon, Peradeniya.

Who taught me to write history without propaganda.

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The author wishes to further state that the views published in this work are his own, and do not reflect those of his colleagues, his associates, or the Government of Sri Lanka.

## PREFACE

This work is being published when a terrorist movement among the Tamil population in Sri Lanka is engaged in militant action to secure an independent state for the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has a population consisting of 71% Sinhalas, 11% 'Sri Lankan Tamils', 9% 'Indian Tamils' (who were brought into the country by the British during the 19th century to work on the coffee and tea plantations), the balance consisting of Moors and others. Of the the 'Sri Lankan' Tamils, approximately half live outside the areas claimed as their traditional homelands, i.e., the northern and eastern provinces of the Island.

In support of this claim for independence for the north and the east, the terrorists are carrying out numerous acts of sabotage against state property, and the murder of members of the security forces, and the murder of even members of the Tamil community who do not subscribe to their views. In addition, in order to obtain world sympathy for their cause, there has been published an extensive spate of literature, both abroad and in Sri Lanka, purporting to show that the original inhabitants of the country were the Tamil population, that the culture of the country was predominantly Tamil, and that the Sinhalas were later invaders who are now oppressing the original Tamil population of the country. A variant theory even claims that the Sinhala inhabitants of today were originally Tamil, who now speak an Indo-Aryan language (Sinhala) as a result of the influence of Buddhism.

It is to correct this distorted version of the history of the Island, written by so called 'academics', that this work is being published. No reasonable person can disagree that the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka, as a culturally distinct segment of the population, should be recognised and respected as such, politically, and economically. But to present fantastic claims of antiquity and predominance of culture

on their behalf is not only to vitiate the case for the Tamils of Sri Lanka, but has the effect of angering the feelings of the Sinhala population of the country, the overwhelming majority of the people. The events of July, 1983 are inexcusable; but a large portion of the blame for rousing these hatreds must to go to the 'scholars' who have presented the claims for the Tamil cause in their writings.

The present work attempts to give a more balanced version of the history of the Tamils of Sri Lanka, and their place and role in the culture of the country. As pointed out in the body of the work, the spread of one culture must always be studied, not in isolation, but in the background of the older culture it replaced, and this is precisely what this book attempts to do.

Many persons helped me to carry out the research necessary in the preparation of this work, and it is difficult to thank them individually. But my special thanks are due to the staff of the libraries of the Colombo Museum and the Department of Archaeology, who went out of their way to help me obtain the necessary sources and materials. A special word of thanks is due to Mr. N. Amerasinghe, Director of the National Library Services Board, for his active encouragements and assistance in getting this work published. Last but not least, this work could never have been written without the understanding, patience and encouragement of my wife, who urged me to sit down and write this book for the sake of our country.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A. R. E.	.....	Annual Report on Epigraphy.
C. A. L. R.	.....	Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register.
Cv.	.....	<i>Cūlavamsa</i> , Ed. Wilhelm Geiger.
C. T. I.	.....	Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions, Ed. K. Velupillai.
E. T.	.....	Epigraphia Tamilica, Ed. K. Indrapala.
E. Z.	.....	Epigraphia Zeylanica.
I. O. C.	.....	Inscriptions of Ceylon, Ed. S. Paranavitana.
Ibn Batuta	.....	Ibn Batuta, Tr. H. A. R. Gibb.
J.R.A.S. (C.B)	.....	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch)
Mhv.	.....	<i>Mahāvamsa</i> , Ed. Wilhelm Geiger.
Nks.	.....	<i>Nikāya Saṅgrahaya</i> , Ed. N. M. De Z Wickremasinghe.
Pathmanathan	.....	The Kingdom of Jaffna, S. Pathmanathan.
Queyroz	.....	The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, by Fernao De Queyroz, translated S. G. Perera.
S.I.I.	.....	South Indian Inscriptions.
U. C. R.	.....	University of Ceylon Review.
U. H. C.	.....	University History of Ceylon.
Velupillai	.....	<i>Yālpāna Vaipava Kaumudi</i> , K. Velupillai.
Ypvm. Tr.	.....	<i>Yālpāna Vaipavamalai</i> , Tr. Christopher Brito.

## NOTE FOR FOREIGN READERS

### THE MAJOR PERIODS OF SRI LANKAN HISTORY

#### The Anurādhapura Period

Sinhala chronicles trace back the original settlements of the Sinhala in Sri Lanka to 544 B. C., when Vijaya, a prince from Bengal, is supposed to have colonised Sri Lanka with a band of followers. The Sinhala kings who in subsequent periods of history ruled from various capitals, claimed descent from the brother of this prince, who himself had no children, but brought in his brother's son to succeed him.

The capital of this kingdom, which in time controlled the whole island, was Anurādhapura, a city in the North Central Province. From the 6th century, the practice arose of appointing the heir apparent (the Mahādipāda, Sinh. Māyā) as governor of the North Western Province, which was hence called the Māyārata.

Anurādhapura continued to be the capital till 992 A.D., when the kingdom was captured by the Colas, who by this time had risen to the position of paramountcy in Tamil Nāḍu in south India. However, during the rule of the Colas, southern Sri Lanka, called Rohana, remained outside the orbit of this empire.

#### Polonnaruwa Period

Vijayabāhu I, a scion of the Anurādhapura dynasty, ejected the Colas in 1070 A.D., and established his capital at Polonnaruwa, also in the North Central Province, and ruled till 1115 A.D. After his death, the country was partitioned into several warring kingdoms among his descendants, until it was re-united once more by Parākrāmabāhu I, (grand nephew of Vijayabāhu I), who established a powerful state which waged wars even in Burma and south India.

After his death, there was again civil war in the kingdom until a foreign invader, Māgha, (from Kālinga in India) established his rule in Polonnaruwa in 1215 A. D. But he could not control the country outside the North Central and a part of the Eastern Province.

#### **Dambadeniya Period**

A Sinhala prince, Vijayabāhu III, established himself in Dambadeniya, in the North Western Province, and his descendants (the dynasty itself being called in Sinhala chronicles the Dambadeniya dynasty) ruled the country as its principal sovereigns from various cities in this province, such as Yāpahuva, Kurunāgala etc. The death of the last ruler of this dynasty, Parākramabāhu IV, around 1320 A.D. again led to political confusion.

#### **Gampala Period**

Due to this confusion, another branch of the royal family, also claiming descent from the Anurādhapura kings, established itself in Gampala, in the Central Province, around 1340 A.D., and continued to rule with this as the capital till around 1410 A.D. One of the features of the Gampala kingdom was that from around 1360 A.D., the polity was dominated by a family called the Alagakkonāras, who were descended from a Kerala (a Malayālam speaking state in south India) family.

#### **Kotte Period**

Due to internal strife in the Alagakkonāra family, and after the last Gampala king, Bhuvēnabāhu V the capital was re-established in Kotte, in the Western Province, under Parākramabāhu VI, (1412-1467 A.D.) who reunited the country, even conquering the Tamil kingdom in Jaffna, which had come into existence by this time. The Kotte Kingdom continued till 1597 A. D., when its last ruler, Dharmapāla, bequeathed it to the king of Portugal, which had established itself in a dominating position over the maritime areas of Sri Lanka by this time.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **BACKGROUND AND SOURCES TO THE STUDY**

History provides plenty of examples of socially and technologically advanced civilisations overrunning and obliterating peoples less advanced than themselves. The colonisation of the American continent from the 16th century onwards, where technologically advanced European peoples occupied a geographical area inhabited by peoples at a primitive stage of culture, has been well documented and studied. But it is more rare to find the overrunning and obliteration of a civilised, advanced society by another society and culture equally advanced. The settlement of Tamil speaking peoples in Sri Lanka in a region once occupied by the Sinhala civilisation at its zenith, to the point where in that region the latter civilisation was almost completely obscured, is a rare example of this kind, and the merging and absorption of these two culturally advanced civilisations would have provided, if it was properly studied, a fascinating social and historical analysis.

The Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka (excluding the Muslims) consists of approximately 20% of the population, of which approximately half have settled down in Sri Lanka during the 19th century in the central hill country when this area was opened up for planting coffee. The balance of the Tamil speaking populace is settled down in concentrations in the Jaffna, Vauniya and Mullativu districts, and along the eastern coast down to Pottuvil, south of Akkaraipattu. While the Tamils in the hill country (the so called Indian Tamils) still preserve the consciousness of their ties with their homelands in south India, the Tamil speakers of the north and east of the Island possess legends and traditions purporting to show their settlement in the Island for a much longer period.



There have been a number of histories on the origin, settlement and spread of the Tamil people in the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. One of the first such works was the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai*,<sup>1</sup> written in 1736, which recorded the various incidents regarding the kings of the Āriyacakravarti dynasty, which ruled in Jaffna from the beginning of the 14th century till they were ousted by the Portuguese in 1619. Two of the earlier works written in more modern times were *Yālpāna Cārittiram*,<sup>2</sup> by S. John, in 1899, and *Yālpāna Vaipavam*, by V. V. Satasivapillai, in 1884.<sup>3</sup> In the 20th century the first comprehensive work was written by K. Velupillai, and published under the title *Yālpāna Vaipava Kaumudi*, in 1918.<sup>4</sup> These works, however, were written in the Tamil language, and thus have not entered the mainstream of historical studies in Sri Lanka.

In the 1920s, two works on the history of Jaffna were published in the English language. These were C. Rasanayagam's 'Ancient Jaffna',<sup>5</sup> and S. Gnanaprakasas's 'A Critical History of Jaffna'.<sup>6</sup> The publication of these coincided with a time when the agitation for separate representation in the Legislature of Sri Lanka for the Tamil speaking population in the country was gathering force. These histories were therefore written with the objective of proving that the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka, especially those resident in the north and the east, who had a culture distinct and different from the Sinhalese (the major section of the population of Sri Lanka) had settled down in the Island as early as the Sinhalese had done, and that these provinces were hereditary possessions of the Tamils. These works, especially that of Rasanayagam, had the motivation of proving a predominant Dravidian (Tamil) influence in the political and social history of Sri Lanka, which led them to reach conclusions based on evidence that was extremely flimsy from the point of normal standards of analysis of historical evidence.

The establishment of the University of Ceylon in the 1940s led to a high level of development of historical studies in Sri Lanka. Under the guidance of a distinguished Indian historian, Professor H. C. Ray, the academic staff of the University developed techniques of examining and evaluating evidence contained in various literary and epigraphic sources, and arriving at a balance of probability in regard to the happening or non happening of any event. This fresh approach to the study of the history of Sri Lanka was paralleled by the work of Dr. S. Paranavitana of the Department of Archaeology of the Government of Sri Lanka. In editing and publishing the inscriptional and other records of the Island, and in a series of scholarly papers, he brought out hitherto unknown source material of the history of the country, which led him to critically examine and reach new interpretations of the various aspects of Sri Lankan history. In one such paper published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch),<sup>7</sup> in 1960, he refuted many of the arguments of Rasanayagam, and attempted to correct the distorted picture of the history of the Tamil population of Sri Lanka which the latter had propagated, and whose views, till then, had been uncritically accepted.

The next scientific study, untainted by the motivation of assisting a political movement, was made by a lecturer of the University of Sri Lanka, Dr. K. Indrapala, in 1966, in his '*Dravidian Settlements in Ceylon and the beginning of the Kingdom of Jaffna*'. He showed that the kingdom of Jaffna, as a separate political unit, did not commence functioning from earlier than the middle of the 13th century A.D.<sup>8</sup> This unbiased and unprejudiced work, however, has still not found a publisher.

The latest important work published on the subject has been '*The Kingdom of Jaffna*', by S. Pathmanathan,<sup>9</sup> also a lecturer in the University of Peradeniya. Though the work professedly deals with the period c. 1250-1450 A.D., the first three chapters analyse Tamil settlements

1. *Yālpāna vaipavamalai*, Ed. K. Sabaratnam, Col. 1953, See also *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai*, translated Christopher Brito, Col. 1879. (Ypvm. Tr.)
2. *Yālpāna Carittiram*, S. John, Jaffna, 1889.
3. *Yālpāna Vaipavam*, V. V. Sabhapati Aiyar, Madras, 1884.
4. *Yālpāna Vaipava Kaumudi*, K. Velupillai, Vasilivan, 1918. (Velupillai).
5. *Ancient Jaffna*, C. Rasanayagam, Madras, 1926.
6. *A Critical History of Jaffna*; S. Gnanaprakasas, Gnanaprakasas Yantralai, 1928.

7. *The Āriya Kingdom in the north of Ceylon*, S. Paranavitana, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, New Series (J.R.A.S. (C.B.) (N.S.)), Vol. VII, 1961, PP 174-224.
8. *Dravidian Settlements in Ceylon and the beginning of the kingdom of Jaffna*, K. Indrapala, Unpublished Thesis, University of London 1966 (Indrapala).
9. *The Kingdom of Jaffna*, by S. Pathmanathan, Ceylon Newspapers Ltd. 1978, (Pathmanathan). I have refused to consider, as serious historical studies, the various pamphlets put out for propagandist purposes, by various terrorist organisations presently residing abroad.

in the Anurādhapura kingdom, the incidence of the Cola conquest in Sri Lanka, and the question of Tamil settlements in the Polonnaruva kingdom, all of which provide a background to the period reviewed in the book. With the present knowledge and techniques available to the scholars of the various Universities of Sri Lanka for scientific evaluation and impartial interpretations of various aspects of Sri Lankan history, it could have been expected that this study of the settlement of Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka, which is relevant to many burning political, social and cultural questions that are at issue today, could have been an impartial academic work. Regrettably, however, this book is a retrograde step in historical writings on this subject, as it seems to have been written with the same motivation possessed by the historians of the 1920s. Pathmanathan too seems to have been obsessed with the objective of proving that the influence of south India had been pre-dominant on historical developments in Sri Lanka, and that certain provinces of the Island had been populated by Tamil speaking people for many centuries. This underlying theme has led him to reach many conclusions, often with no evidence at all, and sometimes with the weakest of evidence, and his failure to adhere to the basic tenets of historical analysis can result in a non specialist readership being misled and misinformed.<sup>10</sup>

The weakness of all the works published on this subject so far has been that the spread and history of the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka has been studied in isolation. But a study of the impinging of one culture on another has necessarily to be analysed in reference to both; otherwise a totally misleading picture can arise. For example, the inscriptions of Gajabahu II of Polonnaruva are in the Tamil language; but no realistic conclusions can be drawn on the extent of the Tamil population and its influence in the country by this one fact considered in isolation, without considering other data such as this ruler being a non Buddhist in religion and therefore his probable inclination to use the language used by Saivite Hinduism, and the probable normal language of the people in whose area the inscriptions were indited.

In other words, the spread of one culture must always be studied, not in isolation but in the background of the culture it replaced. Thus a prime necessity in the study of the extent and spread of Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka is an analysis made with reference to the extent, spread and even the retreat of the Sinhala culture which it ultimately replaced in certain parts of the Island.

In such a study, presently attempted in this book, the greatest obstacle noted by any scholar is the lack of reliable source materials. The developments on the Sinhala side of this cultural inter action has been comparatively well documented in the various chronicles in Pali and Sinhala, written regarding the history of the Sinhala. The *Māhavamsa* was written in the 5th century, A.D., but was based on earlier works.<sup>11</sup> The first part of the *Cūlavamsa*, the continuation of the *Māhavamsa*, was written immediately before, or immediately after, the death of Parākramabāhu I in 1186 A.D.,<sup>12</sup> but its account, starting from the reign of Sirimeghavanna (301-328 A.D.) also seems to have been based on earlier sources,<sup>13</sup> and in regard to the events of the 12th century, the author would have been either a contemporary of the events, or would have been depending on the memory of those who lived during the events recorded. The second part of the *Cūlavamsa* was completed at the end of the reign of Parākramabāhu IV of Kurunāgala,<sup>14</sup> in the second decade of the 14th century. Of the Sinhala chronicles, the *Pūjāvaliya* was written around 1265 A.D.<sup>15</sup> and the *Nikāya Saṅgrahay*

11. *University History of Ceylon* (U.H.C.), Ceylon University Press, 1959, p. 50

12. *Cūlavamsa* Ed. Wilhelm Geiger, P.T.S., 1925 & 1929, (Cv), ch 79, fn to verse 84. Geiger points out that at this point, many manuscripts carry the words *namo tassa bhagavato*, indicating the beginning of a new section. Further, in the 3rd verse to ch. 80, there is reference to Parākramabāhu I, the hero figure in the *Cūlavamsa*, having tortured and imprisoned his subjects. This sudden change from adulation to criticism also shows that a different author was writing from this point on.

13. U. H. C., pp. 51-52.

14. *The Political History of Yāpahuva, Kurunāgala and Gampala*, P.A.T. Gunasinghe, Unpublished thesis, University of Peradeniya, 1980. (Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, 1980).

15. *Pūjāvaliya*, Ed. Kirialle Gnānavimala Thera, Gunasena Press, 1965 p. 768. where it is said that the work was written in the 1954th year of the Sambodhi of the Buddha, i.e. 1265 A.D.

10. A comprehensive criticism of this work, by the present writer, has been published in the Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities, Vol. IV, p. 99. Pathmanathan has replied to this article in the fifth volume of this same Journal; but in my opinion has not met the main criticism that his work has as its main theme propaganda and not history.

in 1386 A.D.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in regard to the period from the 12th century onwards, which, as the sequel shows, saw the major waves of Tamil immigration to Sri Lanka, we have the help of recorded histories whose authors were generally contemporary to the events recorded. Apart from these literary sources, we have the information given in the large number of epigraphic records indited by the Sinhala kings from the 8th century onwards and even earlier. While the information given in all these sources have to be compared and evaluated, and while there are gaps in the records, the details given, as compared to Tamil sources available, are fairly plentiful.

Such plenitude is not available for a study on the expansion of the Tamil culture in Sri Lanka. The only document available in the nature of a chronicle is the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* which is of comparatively recent origin. It is mentioned in this work that it was written by Mail-vākanam at the request of the Dutch Governor Makkara, out of materials collected from the *Kāyilayamalai* and other works.<sup>17</sup> According to its own statement, therefore, the chronicle was composed no earlier than 1736 A.D., when Jaan Maatsuyker, identifiable as the governor Makkara, was administering Jaffna. Thus, in regard to the period covered by the work, it is a source that was compiled over 400 years after the events it was recording.

Even the sources that it utilized do not seem to have been of very great antiquity. Paranavitana points out that the *Kāyilayamalai* must have been written after 1604 A.D. as it mentions the Setupati kings of Rāmnād, the first of whom began to rule in that year.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, though it may be conceded that the original *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* was completed around 1736 A.D., and was based on previous sources even if these themselves were not very old, the text seems to have been added on to at a later time. For example, the work carries predictions

on the arrival of the British, which shows that some portions were incorporated after 1796 A.D. This makes us unsure as to what the original text was.

The work is entirely unreliable in regard to dates. For example, it is said that the construction of the Kandasamy temple at Nallur took place in the 870th year of the Saka era, i.e., 948 A.D.<sup>19</sup> But a ceremonial recitation in this temple attributes its founding to a Sri Sangabo Bhuvēnakabāhu, who is traditionally identified in Jaffna as Sapumal Kumāraya the adopted son of Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte, who governed Jaffna for twenty two years in the middle of the 15th century.<sup>20</sup> While it gives a list of twelve kings of the Āriyacakravarti dynasty who had ruled Jaffna, this list does not contain all the names of the kings of Jaffna, nor is it arranged in the correct order of rulers. Thus it gives only two more rulers, i.e., Pararāsasekeran and 'Cankily, after Kanakasuriya who fled to India after the conquest of Jaffna by Parākramabāhu VI in the middle of the 15th century. But, since the Jaffna dynasty ruled on till 1619 A.D., there would obviously have been more than two rulers in the interim period. In regard to the order of rulers, it gives an incident occurring in the reign of Jeyavira Singaiāriyan which quite clearly corresponds to the invasion of Yāpahuva in 1284 A. D. in the time of Bhuvēnakabāhu I of Yāpahuva.<sup>21</sup> But Jeyavira is mentioned as the eighth ruler of the dynasty, which is a clear impossibility, as it was the first ruler of this dynasty, i.e., the General Ariyacakravarti, acting on the orders of the kings of Pāndya, who attacked and destroyed the kingdom of Yāpahuva.<sup>22</sup>

The other literary sources have a similar wide gap between the event and the writing of it, and there is no evidence, unlike in the case of the Pali and Sinhala chronicles, that they were based on older sources. The antiquity of the *Kāyilayamalai* has already been commented on. Another source, the *Vaiyaapātāla*, according to tradition, was written

16. *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*, Ed. N.M. De Z Wickremasinghe (Nks), Col. 1890, where it is stated that the work was written to cover the period between the *Pārinirvāna* of the Buddha and the 15th year of Bhuvēnakabāhu V of Gampala, which it says corresponded to the 1929th year of the Buddhist era, i.e., 1385/86 A.D.

17. Ypvm Tr. (preface)

18. J. R. A. S. (C.B.) (N.S.), Vol. VII, p. 174 ff.

19. Ypvm Tr. p. 17

20. U. H. C. p. 682.

21. Cv. XC; vv 43-47.

22. Ibid.

in the 16th century by the court poet of Sekarāsasekeran I.<sup>23</sup> Nor is the actual antiquity of regional chronicles such as the *Konecār Kalvēttu* and the *Mattakkalappu Mānmiyam* known; or even whether they were based on older records.

This factor of most of the sources having been written long after the events had occurred has to be always remembered in analysing any data regarding the settlement and spread of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. In evaluating any factual statement regarding history, one must always ask oneself the questions: who first said so, and what opportunities had he of knowing it? On this standard of analysis, most of the literary sources concerning the spread of the Tamil population do not rank as of high value; the authors first said it long after the event, and the opportunities they had of knowing it are mostly unknowns.<sup>24</sup>

The next main source available is the epigraphic records in Tamil, found in the north-central, north-western and eastern provinces of the Island. Even these have little value in comparison with Sinhala epigraphic records. The majority of the latter are documents containing royal grants, and while unlike the *prāsastis* of south India, the individual histories of the kings are rarely given, a wealth of information is obtainable regarding the institutions of the time, such as the bureaucracy and the Saṅgha. On the other hand, except the Koṭagama inscription,<sup>25</sup> the Āriyacakravartis of Jaffna have left no epigraphic records, and the only inscriptions recording royal grants are a few records belonging

to the Cola period.<sup>26</sup> Even these do not provide much additional information, in the sense that most of the *prāsastis* in them have already been found in south Indian inscriptions. The balance consists of private grants, such as the offering of lamps to temples, made by individuals as well as organisations such as the south Indian mercantile corporations, who were operating in Sri Lanka during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. The other main source for inscriptional evidence is the the inscriptions of the Cola, Pāṇḍya and Vijayanagara Empires, which mention mostly the various conquests made by these rulers, and include Sri Lanka as among their conquests, from which, after comparison with other records, one can draw some conclusions on the political history of the Island.

In evaluating the data obtainable from these inscriptions, several factors have to be remembered. Great emphasis is sometimes placed by editors of these records on the shape and curve of the letters in these inscriptions, from which conclusions on the dates of the records are reached. This is an exercise full of pitfalls. An inscription is indited after the carver has first written the text of the record on the rock or pillar on which it is to be indited. The handwriting of each of these individuals who wrote in this fashion would have differed, and consequently, the forms of the letters subsequently indited on the hand written script also would have differed. Thus, the differing shapes of letters that are seen in different inscriptions may well have arisen because they were written by persons with different handwritings who lived in the same period, and in this context, the dating of inscriptions on the basis of script and the curve of a letter, unless they are sharply different from each other, can be a misleading exercise.

The second factor that has to be borne in mind is that few conclusions can be drawn from the private records on the numerical strength and social importance of the donors of these records, unless such conclusions are supported by evidence from other sources. For example, two Tamil inscriptions found at Anurādhapura among a dozen semi isolated shrines connected with the Hindu religion, between the path from Jetavanārāma to Vijayārāma, and the path from Pankuliya to the Kuttam-pokuna, refer to the members of the village assembly constituting the

<sup>23</sup> Pathmanathan, p. 209.

<sup>24</sup> On this standard, many of the Sinhala sources regarding this period of history are of a high value. The *Pijāvaliya* was written in the time of Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya, who publicly exhibited it, showing the close relationship he had with the author. The *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* was written by the *Saṅgharāja* of the time, Devarakshita Jayabāhu, who was himself the pupil of Dhammakitti, the chief monk of the Gaḍaḷāṇṇava temple, who had received the patronage of Bhuvenekabāhu IV of Gampala. Thus these authors were not only contemporaries of the events recorded, but by their eminent position in society, had good opportunities of knowing their facts.

<sup>25</sup> See *Report of the Kegalle District of the Province of Sabaragamuwa*, H.C.P. Bell, Sessional Paper ix, Col. 1892, p. 85, and J.R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. XXXII, p. 214.

<sup>26</sup> *Epigraphia Tamilica*, Ed. K. Indrapala, Vol. I, pp. 25:31. (E.T.)



*Kumāraṇam* making arrangements for the burning of a lamp.<sup>27</sup> Indrapala points out that *Kumāraṇam* is a term which occurs in contemporary south Indian inscriptions, and means a group or corporation holding trusteeship of single shrines. It is clear that this *Kumāraṇam* referred to one of the Hindu shrines, and the membership presumably consisted of Tamil speaking people. It is perhaps possible that the assembly of this village (the word *perurom* of the phrase *kumāraṇattu-perurom*) consisted of the assembly of Tamils who would have lived around this area at Anurādhapura. But it must be remembered that in the 9th century (to which this inscription is ascribed) Jetavanārāma, Vijayārāma, Puliyankulama etc., which were in this area were flourishing Buddhist monasteries, with hundreds of Sinhala servitor populations, and the above assembly may have consisted of some Sinhalas as well. In any case, the inscription by itself cannot yield any valid conclusions on the number of Tamils living in the area, and the extent of their influence.

This lengthy discussion on the value of the source material available for a study of the extent and spread of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka has been necessitated by the fact that none of the published books on the subject contain an analysis of this aspect of the subject. It is on such weak source material that sweeping generalisations and facile conclusions, some of which have been spotlighted in the present work, have been made by some historians. Any conclusions or interpretations based on such materials must be regarded as tentative only, and a comprehensive idea of this subject can only be built after a careful examination of the Tamil sources, the sources pertaining to the Sinhalas, and the south Indian records.

27. E. T. Vol. I, Pt. 1, pp. 1-6.

## CHAPTER II

### SETTLEMENT AND SPREAD OF THE TAMIL POPULATION OF SRI LANKA (I)

There is no doubt that man did not evolve in Sri Lanka, but arrived in the Island from the main sub continent of India. Little is known of the arrival and development of man in the pre-historic period in Sri Lanka. But the traditional accounts of the Sinhalas, the major community in the Island today are to the effect that they are a group speaking an Indo-Aryan language who had migrated to Sri Lanka from India. There is some controversy as to whether the original settlers came from the north-west or the north-east of India; but there has been, so far, no dispute that the earliest Sinhalas were Indo-Aryans.

However, this point has been contested recently, in a view put forward by S. Pathmanathan, that the Indo-Aryan language presently spoken by the Sinhalas was not native to the original inhabitants from whom the Sinhalas are descended, but that they had adopted this language as a result of the rise of Buddhism, (the language of communication of which was Prakrit, a branch of the Aryan group of languages) to a dominant position in the Island. This view, which is stated insidiously rather than explicitly and unequivocally, is put forward along the following lines.<sup>(1)</sup> An important development in the transmission of Indian culture to Sri Lanka was the spread of the megalithic culture into the Island. The ancient people of the Deccan who buried their dead in megalithic tombs, and used iron implements have been identified with the Dravidian speaking people who subsequently rose to a predominant position in parts of south India. "The urns discovered at the proto historic sites in Sri Lanka are remarkably similar to those found at Adicchanallur and other related sites in south India where the urn burial

1. Pathmanathan, pp. 1-8.

culture was in fact part of a larger megalithic culture."<sup>2</sup> "The megalithic people may have introduced into the Island iron and paddy cultivation by means of irrigation".<sup>3</sup> "The spread of Buddhism among the various communities at different levels of development led to their integration. With the adoption of Prakrit, the language of Buddhism, they tended to become Indo-Aryans in speech."<sup>4</sup> "No clear evidence of a large scale migration of Indo-Aryans to the Island has hitherto emerged".<sup>5</sup> These statements imply that the original people of the Island came from a section of the Dravidian people of south India, who, as a result of the introduction of Buddhism, became speakers of an Indo-Aryan language. Since this theory implies that the arrival of the Dravidians on a large scale into Sri Lanka can be put back to proto-historic times, it is necessary to examine its validity in detail.

It may be said straightaway that this view, which seems to be pro-pounded to suit the general theme of Pathmanathan's work, is supported by no evidence whatsoever. North Indian and Sri Lankan traditions,<sup>6</sup> as well as the inscriptions of the Emperor Asoka, who is known to have lived and ruled in India in the 3rd century B.C., are to the effect that the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka took place during this century. The earliest Sri Lankan epigraphic records are dateable to the 3rd century B.C.,<sup>7</sup> and hundreds of these records, in the earliest known Sinhala script (Brahmi) record the grant of caves as residences to the Sangha, the Buddhist Order of Monks. *Without a single exception*, they are in an Indo-Aryan language. If Pathmanathan's view that the Sri Lankan populace at the time of the introduction of Buddhism spoke a Dravidian language is correct, then at least some of the records, commemorating the granting of caves, not by royalty or the nobility but by ordinary folks such as weavers and carpenters, may fairly be expected to have been in the Tamil language. But there is not a single

record in this language, which shows that the language of these donors was a form of Indo-Aryan and not Dravidian.

If the original language of the people of Sri Lanka was Dravidian, the appearance of epigraphic records, in Indo-Aryan only, from the time of the introduction of Buddhism, logically suggests that within a few years of its coming Buddhism took such an absolute and complete hold on the population in general that they forgot their original language in their fervour to adopt Buddhism. It is certainly not correct that Buddhism took such a deep and immediate hold on the country. Even as late as the 1st century B.C., i.e., two hundred years after the coming of Buddhism, a prince who can be identified as the royal personage who subsequently came to the throne of Anurādhapura as king Mahādāthika Mahānāga expressed his happiness in an inscription that he had abandoned false beliefs.<sup>8</sup> Another inscription refers to the destruction of false beliefs at the village of Asatisa,<sup>9</sup> and still another inscription refers to *Dhammasabhāva* eliminating false beliefs among the people. The above records show that the spread of Buddhism, especially in Rohana (where the above inscriptions were found), even among the ruling classes, was slower than the *Mahāvamsa* would have us believe. Its spread among the ordinary people of the Island would have been slower still, and if this was so, they are more likely to have retained their original language (if indeed Pathmanathan's theory is correct) rather than to have given it up in favour of a religion they did not profess.

It may sometimes be argued that the appearance of inscriptions in an Indo-Aryan language, even from the earliest times, may mean nothing, as it may have been the language of communication of the Buddhist religion, while the language of the ordinary folk remained Dravidian, at least in the early stages. But it must be remembered that the purpose of these inscriptions on caves, unlike in the case of the more elaborate records, of later date, was not to promulgate regulations but to gratify the normal human weakness of advertising and perpetuating the memory of one's good deeds. In other words, the donors wanted

<sup>2</sup>. Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>. Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>. Pathmanathan, p. 15, fn. 4.

<sup>6</sup>. U. H. C. p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>. S. Paranavitana, "Inscriptions of Ceylon" Vol. I, Govt. Press, 1970 (I.O.C.) p. liii.

<sup>8</sup>. J.R.A.S. (C.B.) No. 98. p. 58.

<sup>9</sup>. Ibid, Vol. VIII, *Archaeological discoveries at Tissamaharama*, by H. Parker

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid, no. 98 p. 58.

their inscriptions to be read, which would only have been possible if the language of the persons reading them was the same as the language of the inscriptions, and not some other language.

Further, there is no evidence that the megalithic culture, which is identified as Dravidian, was older than the beginning of the Indo-Aryan speech in Sri Lanka during historical times. Archaeological investigations of sites containing these megalithic monuments, with super-imposed strata of later dateable cultures, have indicated that these megalithic culture people made their first appearance in the Deccan around 500 B.C., and spread to certain areas in the region after the withdrawal of the Mauryan power in the Deccan in the third quarter of the 3rd century B.C.<sup>11</sup> The existence of Brahui, the language of a tribe which lives in Baluchistan, and belonging to the Dravidian group of speakers, shows that the Dravidians (Tamils) themselves came from West Asia.<sup>12</sup> Thus the people of the megalithic culture, if they were Dravidians, were spreading out in south India after, according to Pathmanathan himself, the people of Sri Lanka started using an Indo-Aryan language in their inscriptional records, clearly eliminating the possibility that the Dravidians were the earlier settlers of the Island.

Finally, there is known no other instance of an entire people adopting a language introduced by religious developments in their country, to the extent that they completely forgot their own original language. The nearest parallel one can think of to the missionary momentum of Buddhism in the 3rd century B.C., is the similar momentum of the spread of Christianity to Europe in the 3rd century A.D., and the spread of Islam, in a large part of Asia and Africa, after the 7th century A.D. Though the language of transmission of the religion was, in the one case, Latin, and in the other case, Arabic, and indeed, these became sometimes the language of the learned classes, the language of the ordinary folk was not assimilated into Latin or Arabic. Local languages such as English, Spanish, German, Urdu, Brahui and Bengali survived. It is impossible to believe that in Sri Lanka alone, a process unique to world history, i.e., an entire people forgetting their language and erasing

it from the popular memory, occurred within a few years after the introduction of Buddhism to the country.

It is clear, therefore, that the people who indited the old Sinhala inscriptions from the 3rd century B.C., were not Dravidians of the megalithic culture, who had adopted an Indo-Aryan language, but were a separate stream of Indo-Aryan immigrants. This is not to claim that the mass migration of Indo-Aryans shown in the legend of Vijaya in the *Mahāvamsa* was the method by which those Indo Aryans first came to the Island. The account in the *Mahāvamsa* of the landing of Vijaya seems to have been clearly influenced by traditions in the Jātaka stories, such as the Valahassa Jātaka.<sup>13</sup> But the accounts of the origin of the Sinhala as given in the *Divyāvadāna*<sup>14</sup> and that of the Chinese traveller Fa Hien shows that the original settlers came by way of trade, and probably established a gradual domination over the neolithic people of Sri Lanka. It may be that this process of settling by Aryan speaking people took place over a period of centuries; but certainly there is no evidence that they spoke a Dravidian language.

It is quite probable that Tamil speaking merchants also arrived in Sri Lanka after the Aryan speaking people had settled down, also for purposes of trade. Pathmanathan correctly points out that the similarity between Tambapanni, the ancient name given to Sri Lanka, and the river Tāmraparni, which entered the sea at Cape Comrin, and also drawn attention to Ilankai, a name given to a region in the north Arcot district, as evidence of close cultural contacts from early times.<sup>15</sup> But it cannot be concluded from this that the names Tambapanni and Lanka as applied to this Island were derived from Indian rivers and regions of a similar name. It is equally possible that Tamil speaking traders, who, from the evidence adduced above, came to South India after

13. U.H.C. p. 101.

14. See *Divyāvadāna*, Ed. E.B. Cowell and R.A. Neill (Cambridge, 1885), p. 523 and Fa Hien, *A record of Buddhist kingdoms*, Ed. J. Legge, Oxford, 1886, p. 101-102. The *Divyāvadāna* has the tradition that Vijaya was the son of a merchant, while Fa-Hien says that many merchants of foreign countries came to trade in the country, and, as a result, many groups came from other countries as well, and thus was formed a large kingdom.

Pathmanathan, p. 17.

11. *Indo Asian Culture*, Vol. II, pp. 238 ff.

12. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 593 ff.

the Aryan speaking peoples came to a predominant position in Sri Lanka, named the river and the region in South India after the ancient names by which the Indo-Aryans called Sri Lanka.

In this context, it is significant that one of the earliest inscriptions using the word *Dameda*, i.e. Damila or Tamil, is found at Anurādhapura, and dateable to the 2nd century B.C.<sup>16</sup> It refers to the son of a Tamil ship captain. Two inscriptions at Periyapuliyankulama, also dateable to the same period, records the grant of a cave to the Saṅgha by Visākha, a Tamil merchant.<sup>17</sup> Yet another inscriptions, found at Kuḍuvil in Akkaraipattu of the Ampāra district, is the grant of a cave by the merchants of Dighavāpi, and the wife of Tissa, the Tamil, (who may have been a member of this particular mercantile group).<sup>18</sup> The first Tamil adventurers to conquer a part of Sri Lanka, Sena and Guttika, are recorded to have been the son of a freighter who brought horses to Sri Lanka.<sup>19</sup> These references show that in the earliest period of the Island's history, Tamil settlers in Sri Lanka seem to have been predominantly merchants, who had come to the Island as individuals, and that there is no evidence of concentrations of Tamils having settled down in the Island as social groups.

But even this number of individual Tamil speakers who had settled down as merchants could not have been very numerous. It is significant that early Tamil works such as the *Tolkappiyam*<sup>20</sup> and the *Silappadikāram*<sup>21</sup> give the boundaries of the Tamil land as Venkata mountain (Tirupati) in the north Kumāri (Cape Comorin) in the south, and the sea on the east and the west. The Tamil population of Sri Lanka was not regarded by the authors of these works as sufficiently numerous or important to merit mention of Sri Lanka as a portion of Tamil land, a contemporary view which is at variance with that held by modern historians who live two thousand years later.

A movement of the Tamil population of south India, in the form of military concentrations, seems to have commenced with the invasions of various adventurers who came and conquered the Island from time to

time. The first two invasions were by Sena and Guttika, already noted, and the next by Elāra,<sup>22</sup> also in the second century B.C. Sixty years after Elāra there came another invasion by five Tamil adventurers in the reign of Vattagāmani Abhaya.<sup>23</sup> It is doubtful, however, whether the Tamil troops brought in by these adventurers formed a distinctive segment of the population, as culturally, they seem not to have been much different from the Sinhālas.<sup>24</sup>

The real immigration of a culturally distinct Tamil population seems to have commenced only after the 1st century A.D. From this time onwards, various contenders for the Sri Lankan throne brought in Tamil troops to eject the reigning kings, and capture the State. The first such recorded instance is by Ilanāga, (33-43 A.D.) who brought in troops "from the opposite coast" to defeat the Lambakāṇṇas who had rebelled against him.<sup>25</sup> Abhayanāga, (231-240 A.D.) brought in Tamil troops to overthrow his brother Vohārika Tissa.<sup>26</sup> In the 5th century, six Tamil adventurers ruled one after another for twenty five years, until they were overthrown by Dhātusena. (455-473 A.D.)<sup>27</sup>

It was during the 7th century A.D., that the bringing in of Tamil troops to the Island to settle dynastic quarrels in Sri Lanka became intensified. In the reign of Silāmeghavanṇa (619-628 A.D.) a general named Sirināga brought in Tamil troops but was defeated.<sup>28</sup> Aggabodhi III (628 A.D.) fled to South India, hired Tamil troops, and attacked his rival Jetthatissa III.<sup>29</sup> Dāthāsiva, minister to Jetthatissa III, in his own turn, brought in Tamil troops,<sup>30</sup> defeated Aggabodhi III, and established himself as Dāthopatissa I. He himself later fled to South India, and again brought in Tamil troops, but was defeated.<sup>31</sup> Hatthadātha, nephew of Dāthopatissa I, landed with a Tamil force, and captured the throne.<sup>32</sup> Mānavamma (684-718 A.D.) brought in an army from the Pallava country and captured the throne,<sup>33</sup> though

<sup>22</sup> Mhv. XXI, v. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, XXXIII, vv. 56-61.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter IX.

<sup>25</sup> Mhv. XXXV, v. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. XXXVI, vv. 45;49.

<sup>27</sup> Cv. XXXVIII, vv. 11; 29-34.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. XLIV, vv. 70-73.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. vv. 94;105.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. v. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, v. 152.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, XLV, vv. 18-19.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, XLVII, v. 44 ff.

<sup>16</sup> I.O.C. No. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Nos. 356 & 357.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, No. 480.

<sup>19</sup> *Mahāvamsa*, Ed. Wilhelm Geiger, P.T.S. London, 1908, (Mhv), XXI, v.10.

<sup>20</sup> *Tolkāpiyam, payiram*, 11, 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Silappadikāram*, Canto VIII, 11, 1-2.



in his case it is not specifically said that the troops he brought in were of Tamil origin.

Thus, during the 7th century, there seems to have been a large influx of Tamil speaking people into the country, and, for the first time, an alien population seems to have settled down in the country in considerable number. At this point, it would be useful to analyze the geographical spread of this population within the Island.

One can *a priori* assume that a considerable or even major part of the Tamil population settled down at first in and around the capital of Anurādhapura. Silāmeghavanna seems to have realized the danger of this concentration of alien people within and around the capital, and having defeated the Tamil troops of Sirināga, he distributed them as slaves to the various monasteries.<sup>34</sup> But his successors, who had hired Tamil troops to further their ambitions, naturally would not have been able to adopt the same attitude, and it is likely that the Tamils formed a settlement near the capital. As pointed out earlier,<sup>35</sup> there is a group of ruined shrines, mainly Saivite, between the path from Jetavanārāma to Vijeyārāma, and from Pankuliya to Kuṭṭampokuna, and it is possible that these temples would have been built to service the concentration of Tamil people living in Anurādhapura, who would thus have lived in this neighbourhood. But there is no conclusive evidence that, further out from Anurādhapura, there were large concentrations of Tamils living in the outlying regions.

The administrative practice of the Anurādhapura kingdom divided the provincial administration into districts in geographical relation to the capital. Thus the area to the south of the capital was the *Dakkhina desa*,<sup>36</sup> the southern region, and the area east of it was the *Pacchimadesa*,<sup>37</sup> the eastern region. We get reference to the *Uttaradesa*, which thus, would have been the area in the northern direction to the metropolis.<sup>38</sup>

The boundary of the *Uttaradesa* and the metropolitan region of Anurādhapura cannot be accurately fixed; but must have been some distance from the capital.<sup>39</sup> It may be noted at this point that the Jaffna peninsula proper was named the Nāgadipa. The Vallipuram gold plate of king Vasabbha refers to the vihāra, in the foundation of which the scroll was found as the Pilipavata vihāra in Nāgadipa,<sup>40</sup> showing that the ancient name of the peninsula was Nāgadipa. Thus the term *Uttaradesa* used in the *Cūlavamsa* with regard to events in the 7th century A.D., would have included the Jaffna peninsula as well as the area south of it.

From the 7th century onwards, there gradually developed a situation in the *Uttaradesa* which was to prove of some importance in the future for the gradual Tamilisation of the region. The *Cūlavamsa* records that when Sirināga came with Tamil troops to attack Silāmeghavanna, he first occupied the *Uttaradesa*,<sup>41</sup> where he was attacked and defeated. Mānavamma spent the early years of his life in hiding (*linavuttiṭṭa*) from his rivals, living in the *Uttaradesa*,<sup>42</sup> and when he invaded the country, from south India, he first attacked the *Uttaradesa*. In the 9th century, when the Pāṇḍyan king Sri Māra Sri Vallabha attacked Sri Lanka, he, as shown earlier, first attacked the *Uttaradesa*.<sup>43</sup> It would seem, therefore, that by the 7th century, the *Uttaradesa* was less under the control of the king at Anurādhapura, and had become a place of refuge for rebels. Invaders such as Mānavamma and Sri Māra probably attacked the *Uttaradesa* first because it was easier to subjugate the northern sector rather than the better defended western sector, i.e., the route from Mannar to Anurādhapura. The comparatively

<sup>39</sup> The *Cūlavamsa*, (L; v. 12 ff) records that the Pāṇḍyan king Sri Māra Sri Vallabha, when he invaded Sri Lanka (c. 833-855 A.D.) first occupied the *Uttaradesa*, and encamped at Mahātilitagama, where he defeated the Sinhala army sent against him by Sena I, the Sinhala king. The latter, on hearing of the defeat, had sufficient time to gather his valuables and retreat to the hill country. This shows that the Tamil army was not in the immediate vicinity of Anurādhapura but must have been some distance north from the capital. It may be further noted that Mahātilitagama must have been in the southern region of the *Uttaradesa*, as obviously Sri Māra, having destroyed the *Uttaradesa*, must have advanced southwards before halting to meet the counter attack of the Sinhala army. It would have been meaningless for him to have waited in the central portion of the *Uttaradesa*.

<sup>40</sup> E.Z. Vol. IV, pp. 229-237.

<sup>41</sup> Cv. XLIV, vv. 70-73.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. v.3, v. 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, L.; v. 14

<sup>34</sup> Cv. XLIV, v. 73.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter I. Also, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Reports*, 1892, H.C.P. Bell. p.5.

<sup>36</sup> Cv. XLI, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, v. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, XLIV, v 71.

looser control of the king at Anurādhapura over the *Uttaradesa* is confirmed by the *Cūlavamsa*, which says that the chiefs of the *Uttaradesa* rebelled twice during the reign of Mahinda II (777-797 A.D.)<sup>44</sup>

The reason for the existence of this administrative hiatus is not clear. It is certain, however, that it could not be due to the presence of an alien or hostile population between the capital, Anurādhapura, and the Jaffna peninsula. The *Cūlavamsa* records that Sri Māra Sri Vallabha destroyed (*vināsento*) the *Uttaradesa* before he encamped at Māhātālita-gāma, which he would hardly have done if the area contained a substantial number of Tamil speakers who would presumably have been sympathetic to his cause. Whatever the reason may have been the above statement shows a definite loosening of control over this region by the central government of Anurādhapura.

It is probable, therefore, that this situation led to the descendants of the Tamils who had been brought in during the dynastic quarrels of the 7th century settling down on the route to the northern region. The *Cūlavamsa* records that after Sri Māra encamped at Māhātālita-gāma the Tamil population here and there went over to him.<sup>45</sup> If, as we have surmised above, this encampment was in the southern portion of the *Uttaradesa*, this Tamil population would have been living in a direction to the south of this town. It would seem, therefore, that the Tamils who had been brought in at various times settled down in a direction to the north of the metropolitan region of Anurādhapura.

But still further north, and in the Jaffna peninsula itself, the Sinhala population continued to flourish. B. Horsburgh has pointed out that the word *kāmam*, i.e. Sanskrit *Grāma*, is not used by the Tamils of south India for a village; (the words used are *ur* or *paṭṭanm*).<sup>46</sup> Thus the origin of the word *kāmam* used in Jaffna must be *gama*, a Sinhala word. He points out that 'valli' of Vallikāmam in Tamil means 'way', and that<sup>47</sup> 'vimmu' in Tamil means fearfulness. This would render meaningless the names Vallikāmam and Vimankāmam, and the names are only explain-

able if these villages originally bore the Sinhala names Vāligama and Vimangama. Similarly, Chunnākam, Mallākam and Pannākam can only be the Sinhala Sunugama, Mallagama and Pannagama. Also, the Tamil meaning of the word *vil* is bow, which would render meaningless the many Tamil villages whose names end in *vil*. On a similar parallel, therefore, Kokuvil, Uduvil, Mirisuvil, Malvil can only be derived from the original Sinhala names of Kokāvila, Uduvila, Mirisvila and Malvila. The Sinhala word *pola* is Tamilised into *palai*, and the villages of Tumpalai, (Sinhala Tunpola), Tellippalai (Telipola) Varattupalai and Vidattupalai are of Sinhala origin. The Tamil word *pāy* means net or bail, which would render meaningless the names Koppai, Manippai and Katirippai, unless they are words of Sinhala origin, such as Māmpē, Kaduruppe etc. Rev. Fr. S. Gnanaprakāsar supported this view, and pointed out many other instances of such Tamilisation of original Sinhala names.

For example, the names Mākumburei and Chulikumburei can only be Sinhala Mākumbura and Sulukumbura. Moolay can only mean Sinhala Mulyāya, and Ariyālai and Tunnālai can only mean Sinhala Ariyāla and Tunāla. Olukoḍai and Mayilakoḍai can only mean Sinhala Olugoḍa and Mayilgoḍa. Nārāndanei can only be Sinhala Nārāndeniya and Kalvalai and Konavalai can only be Sinhala Galvala and Gonavalā. He further pointed out such names as Polvattai and Kelvattai, which are obviously Sinhala Polvatta and Kchelwatta.

In his *Yālpāna Vaipava Kaumudi*<sup>48</sup> K. Velupillai pointed out more evidence of Sinhala occupation of the Jaffna peninsula. He pointed out a tradition that is prevalent among Jaffna people to refer to agriculture as *kamaththolil*, and to refer to farmers as *kamakkāram*, both of which are not words of Tamil origin, but are obviously from the Sinhala word 'kamata', i.e., paddy threshing floor. He pointed out the use of other words of non Tamil origin, such as *Attala*, *Ikkiri*, *Kādava*, *Kandi* (fishing equipment), *Kapṛādu*, *Gala*, *Gorakka*, *Sundu*, *Vidane* etc. the use of such names as Samarasimham, Vanniasinham, etc., i.e., the use of names ending in *simha*, scarcely used in the Tamil Nāḍu, but commonly used by the Sinhala, all of which emphasises that Jaffna had been extensively inhabited by the Sinhala. He further pointed out that the term *saṅgattār*

<sup>44</sup>. Ibid, XLVIII, vv. 83; 95.

<sup>45</sup>. Cv. LV 15.

<sup>46</sup>. *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, (C.A.L.R.) Vol. II, Pt. 1, pp 54-58.

<sup>47</sup>. Ibid Pt. III, P. 167.

<sup>48</sup>. See chapter 1, fn 4.

vayal used in the literature of Jaffna had nothing to do with the Tamil *Sangam*, but is the equivalent of sangaruvanketa, (Hanguranketa), and meant fields granted to the Buddhist Saṅgha. He gave the Tamil equivalents, and the present locations, of the names of viharas mentioned in the Tamil equivalents, and the present locations, of the names of viharas mentioned in the Sinhala *Nampota*, (a work giving the names of the viharas in Sri Lanka, originally commenced in the 12th century, and finalised in the 18th century) <sup>48a</sup> as Buddhist viharas in the Dema-lapattana, i.e., Tamil district. These are Nāgakovila (Nāgarkovil), Kadurugoda (Kantarodai), Telipola (Tellipalai) Mallagama (Mallākam), Meevanganu (Meevankam), Tannidivayina (Uratturai), Agnidivayina (Analeitivu), Puvangudivayina (Punkaḍadivu) and Karadivayina (Karativu). The Koviya caste, only known in Jaffna, can only be derived from Sinhala *govī*, i.e., farmer, and the Nalavar caste is probably derived from Sinhala *nalakarūyas*, (mat weavers) or *nalayas* (palanquin bearers).<sup>49</sup> There is, therefore, no doubt that while the region to the immediate north of the Sri Lankan capital, Anurādhapura did contain Tamils, the region still further northwards, especially the Jaffna peninsula, was predominantly, perhaps solely, populated by the Sinhala. We may next examine the regions to the east and west of Anurādhapura.

At the extreme east was Trincomalee, even under modern conditions one of the finest natural harbours in the world. There is no doubt that Trincomalee itself, which would have been visited by merchants from the very earliest times, contained centres of non Buddhist worship. The *Mahāvamsa* says that Mahāsena (274-304 A.D.) destroyed temples of gods at Gokanna, Erakāvillu and of the village of the Brahmin Kalanda.<sup>50</sup> The *Mahāvamsa Tika*, commenting on this, adds that Gokanna Vihāra which he built on the site of the temple, was on the coast of the eastern sea, that the other two places were in Rohana, and that he destroyed the phallic symbols in these temples.<sup>51</sup> Gokanna can be identified

<sup>48 a.</sup> *Kadainpot Vimarshanaya*, H.A.P. Abeywardene, Govt. Press, 1978, p.32.

<sup>49.</sup> In paying a tribute to the memory of this scholarly Englishman, and the two Tamil academics who believed that the pursuit of objective truth was more important than the twisting of history in the interest of sectarian communal aggrandisement, the writer notes without comment that this particular volume of the Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register containing this article (see fn 46) is missing from the Museum Library, the Archaeological Department Library and the Colombo Public Library.

<sup>50.</sup> Mhv. XXXVII, vv. 40-41.

<sup>51.</sup> *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, Ed. G.P. Malalasekera, P.T.S. London, 1935, p. 685

as modern Trincomalee,<sup>52</sup> and the above reference shows that even from the 3rd century, it had temples containing Saivite symbols. This suggests a Tamil population in the area.

But this does not mean that such a population would have been pre-dominant in the area. South of Trincomalee, at Seruvila, and north of it at Tiriyay, were famous Buddhist temples whose buildings shows them to be as late as the 9th century A.D.,<sup>53</sup> and even in Gokanna, itself, there were Buddhist viharas.<sup>54</sup> Nor is there any evidence that the area to the west of Trincomalee, i.e., Padaviya and Kantalai (Gamtalāva) had a Tamil population during the period up to the Cola conquest. It is clear, therefore, that while Trincomalee itself would have possessed a Tamil population who would have patronised the Hindu temples, there, the town contained a Buddhist and presumably Sinhala population, while the rest of the district, now Tamilised, contained a Sinhala population.

Towards the west of Anurādhapura, the situation would have been different. Invaders from south India normally landed at Mahātitta i.e., Mantai on the western coast, and marched eastwards to Anurādhapura, and one can reasonably postulate the growth of a Tamil population along this route, especially after the 7th century A.D. The *Culavamsa* says that when Hatthadāṭha came with a Tamil army, the Damilas, i.e., Tamils who dwelt here and there joined him as he approached (*ayanta-meva tan gantvā*). This shows the existence of a Tamil population on the road from Mātota to Anurādhapura.

Next may be taken the extent of settlement of Tamils in Rohana. This region consisted of almost half the Island, with its boundary from the Rajarata, i.e., the north central province and the *Dakkhinadesa*, i.e., the north western province, being a line drawn along the present Kaluganga in the south west, through Adam's Peak in the central hill country, and along the Mahāvali river to Trincomalee in the east.<sup>55</sup> As mentioned earlier Mahāsena destroyed Siva temples at Gokanna (Trincomalee), Erakāvillu and Kalanda. Erakāvillu and Kalanda

<sup>52.</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (E.Z.), Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 172.

<sup>53.</sup> *Dhātuvamsaya*, Ed. Makuluduve Piyaratna, Col. 1941. p35. E.Z. Vol. IV, pp. 151-160; 312-319.

<sup>54.</sup> Cv. XLVIII, v. 5, where Aggabodhi V (718-724 A.D.) is recorded to have constructed *padhānaghara* at Gokanna vihara.

<sup>55.</sup> *Purātana Rohana Rājya*, p.A.T. Gunasinghe, Deepani Press, 1968, p 10 ff.

have been mentioned as in Rohana, and it is possible to identify Erākavilla as modern Eruvil, on the eastern coast south of the Galoya. On this parallel, perhaps the village of the Brahmin Kalanda also lay on the eastern coast. These would have been individual temples, serving the Tamil groups living in these coastal towns. The *Saddharmāṅkārāya* mentions a worshipper of Isvara, i.e., a Saivite, praising an ascetic living in a cemetery, in Rohana.<sup>56</sup> While there would have been such individual Saivites, who may have been Tamils, living in Rohana, there is no evidence of any extensive settlements of Tamils living in Rohana, which consisted of almost half the country.

In summary, there is no evidence of extensive Tamil settlements in the Rajaraṭa, i.e., north central province, till the 7th century A.D., and except for coastal towns such as Traincomalee, Eruvil etc. there is no evidence of such settlements in other parts of the country either. From the 7th century, aspirants to the Sri Lankan throne brought in Tamil mercenaries to settle their quarrels, and these formed a settlement in Anurādhapura, and to the west and immediate north of it. As a result of a loosening of control by the kings of Anurādhapura on their northern provinces, these Tamil immigrants would have settled down in the *Uttaradesa*: but in the extreme north, the Jaffna area had a predominantly Sinhala population. Other than the settlements that radiated from Anurādhapura to the west and to the north, there is no evidence of extensive settlements or concentrations of Tamil people anywhere else.

In this background, deduced from the available evidence, as opposed to imagination, may be discussed certain sweeping statements made by historians, whose net effect is to show a wide spread of Tamil population in the whole of the Island, without indicating the geographical limits shown by the evidence. Pathmanathan, for example, is of the view that "most of the Tamils living in the Island during the late Anurādhapura period were concentrated in towns like Mantāi and Anurādhapura, while the rest were scattered in the market towns and military outposts in Rajaraṭa and elsewhere".<sup>57</sup> He takes references in Sinhala inscriptions to lands such as *Demel kābālla*, *Demelat valandamin*, *Demel gambim*, and to phrases and titles such as *Demel kuli*, *Damīlādhikāra*

<sup>56</sup>. *Saddharmāṅkārāya*, Ed. Ven Sri Gnanesvara, Col. 1924, pp. 672-673.

<sup>57</sup>. Pathmanathan, p. 28.

etc. as "clear evidence of Tamil settlements in the different localities in the Island".<sup>58</sup> It would have been more helpful if "elsewhere" and "different localities in the Island" had been more precisely defined, and lacking this, the impression one gets is of settlements spread over the whole Island.

Apart from the facts indicated above, the evidence adduced by Pathmanathan is not so clear as he makes out. The word *kābālla*, in the context of the inscription, means an allotment of land, and the editor of the inscriptions where the phrases *Demel kābālla* and *Demelat valandamin* appear is of the view that they were lands given for Tamils in the royal service,<sup>59</sup> which is a far cry from these phrases providing evidence of Tamil settlements in the sense of large groups. Also, the word *gam*, in the 10th century, did not always mean a village in the sense of a group of people. Dr. Pran Nath has pointed out that in Indian documents, *grāma* has frequently the meaning of estate, or area of revenue assessment.<sup>60</sup> In the Kandyan kingdom (16th to the 19th century) the word *gama* was often applied to a single estate or field.<sup>61</sup> Such was the situation in Sri Lanka in the 10th century as well. In an inscription of Kassapa V (898-914 A.D.) the word *gama* is applied to two allotments of land, a *pamunu kābālla* and a *Demala kābālla*.<sup>62</sup> Thus the reference in an inscription at Thupārāma in Anurādhapura to the Demala gam of the four directions<sup>63</sup> need not necessarily mean that it was a reference to Tamil villages; it may merely have meant allotments of land given to Tamils in the royal service, the lands themselves being given from around Anurādhapura.

Nor does the term *Demel kuli*, as suggested by Pathmanathan, refer to a kind of poll tax collected from all the Tamils living in the Anurādhapura kingdom, the implication being that the phrase, as applied to two villages, Posonavulla and Galindurugomandala, was to settlements of

<sup>58</sup>. Ibid, pp. 26-27.

<sup>59</sup>. E. Z. Vol. III, p. 143.

<sup>60</sup>. "A Study of the economic conditions of Ancient India", Dr. Pran Nath, pp. 26-33.

<sup>61</sup>. *A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom*, John Doyle, Colombo 1953, p. 53.

<sup>62</sup>. E. Z. Vol. III, p. 276. In a footnote, the editor of the inscription points out this fact. Though Pathmanathan quotes this inscription as evidence he seems to have missed the footnote, and the difference it makes to his interpretation.

<sup>63</sup>. E. Z. Vol. I, p. 113.



Tamils living in these villages. But the inscriptions at Rambāva<sup>64</sup> and Iripinniyāva,<sup>65</sup> where this phrase appears, when read in the full context, does not give this sense at all. The Iripinniyāva inscription says, for example, "*raṭladu paṣkadu melatsin hel kuli demel kuli mivun (go)n bili bat bili sal. nogannā keṭ isā*" The record thus gives certain things such as carts, buffaloes, village oxen, boiled rice etc., which should not be appropriated by the district officials. In this context, the word *kuli* interpreted as a poll tax sounds inappropriate; more probably, as Wickremasinghe, the editor of the above inscription points out, the reference was to Sinhala labourers and Tamil labourers, a conclusion supported by the reference to the *melatsin*, who seem to have been a social group.<sup>66</sup> The Rambāva inscriptions gives the identical wording regarding the village of Galinduru gomandala, and thus, when the passages are read in their full context, it would seem that these references were to individual Sinhala and Tamil labourers, and certainly does not give the idea that these villages had sufficient concentrations of Tamil people to justify the imposition of a poll tax.

It is correct that the word *Damīlādhikāra* appears in inscriptions from the 8th century onwards. From his title, he seems to have been an official who had authority over the Tamils in the royal service, of whom there must have been a considerable number, especially in the mercenary divisions of the army. But it is a notable fact that this office was invariably held by a Sinhala official, and that this office was combined with that of another. For example, the above mentioned inscription of Kāssapa V shows that the order granting the immunities was given by the *Damīlādhikāra*, who was also the *Pandirad*, i.e., the Pāṇḍyan king, which was a title borne by Sinhala officials.<sup>67</sup> In the time of Parākramabāhu I of Polonnaruwa in the 12th century, the *Damīlādhikāras* of the time, Rakkha and Adicca, were respectively a general who led a division of the Polonnaruwa army against Rohana, and a general who volunteered to lead the army against Burma.<sup>68</sup> In other words, the work of the *Damīlādhikāra* was not so extensive or so onerous that it required, even in the 12th century, the services of a full time official.

A similar statement to support this thesis of a wide spread of Tamil speaking peoples in the later Anurādhapura period is that the *Vanigrāma* of Hopitigamu, referred to in an inscription at Badulla dateable to the 10th century, was a *Manigrāmam*, a mercantile group that is known to have operated in south India.<sup>69</sup> The actual passage reads as follows: "*me hopitigamu padi lad kenekun gāttan gamat ā kala mandiraḍin vanigrāmayan hinda...vāvasthā se pere sirit...*" (when the bailiffs of any person who has obtained the market town of Hopitigamu have come to the village they, together with the counsellors, the members of the mercantile corporation (*vanigrāma*) and the elders of the village... and in accordance with former usage). There is not the slightest hint here, when the passage is read in the full context, that the *Vanigrāma* referred to here had any connections with the Indian *Manigrāmam*. On the contrary, *Vanigrāma* here seems to refer to the mercantile chamber, one of several corporate bodies in the market town of Hopitigamu.

The generalisations examined above, which have no basis when the evidence is examined, show the dangers inherent in the methodology heretofore adopted in examining the spread of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. It is not enough to examine isolated references to the existence of Tamils in Sri Lanka during the Anurādhapura period, without examining the extent of the Sinhala population, repetition and without reference to the geographical spread of the Tamil population, and in this light, the spread of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka, till the end of the Anurādhapura period, i.e. 1000 A.D., is not so extensive as has sometimes been painted to have been.

<sup>69</sup> Pathmanathan, p. 28. See E.Z. Vol. V, pt. 2, p. 182 for this inscription.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 172.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 163.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter VIII.

<sup>67</sup> E.Z. Vol. III, p. 276. See also E.Z. Vol. I, p. 158, where a *Pandirad Dapulu*, is referred to. *Dapulu*, i.e. *Dappula*, is a Sinhala name. See also U.H.C. p.371 for the practice of conferring this title on military chiefs.

<sup>68</sup> Cv. LXXV, v. 19; LXXVI, v. 39.

### CHAPTER III

## SETTLEMENT AND SPREAD OF THE TAMIL POPULATION IN SRI LANKA (II)

Around 993 A.D., Sri Lanka was invaded by the armies of the Cola Empire; which by this time had come into a paramount position in South India,<sup>1</sup> and by a comparison of Cola inscriptional records and the Sri Lankan chronicles, it can be concluded that by around 1016 A.D., the Cola armies had invaded Rohana, the southern half of Sri Lanka, where the Sri Lankan king, Mahinda V, had sought refuge. He was captured, and taken as a prisoner to the Cola country.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, the Rajarata and the Māyārata were under the administration of the Cola Empire till 1070 A.D., when these areas were recaptured by Vijayabāhu I, a descendant of the Sinhala royal line, who thereafter became the sole ruler of the Island.

During this period of 77 years, these provinces of Sri Lanka were governed as a viceroyalty of the Cola empire, and administered by a bureaucracy of Cola officials. As Pathmanathan points out, during these years, there would have been a large number of soldiers, Brahmin priests, merchants etc., who came to Sri Lanka and settled down in the country. He draws attention to the archaeological remains dateable to the Cola period that are found, mostly at Mantai, Padaviya, Polonnaruwa, Mādirigiriya, Kantalai, Trincomalee, Jaffna and Attaragalla. "Significantly, all these localities, except the last two, were in the central belt of the northern dry zone."<sup>3</sup> The *Konecar Kalvettu*, which gives a legendary account of the Konesvara temple at Trincomalee, mentions a Kulakottan, who invaded and exercised authority over the area, and says that he was of Cola descent, and that he brought a number of families from the Cola country to be settled in the area.<sup>4</sup> The antiquity of the *Konecar Kalvettu*, and therefore its value as a source of history, is not discussed by this author, and the legend of this mass migration of

<sup>1</sup> U.H.C. pp. 347-348.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 413.

<sup>3</sup> Pathmanathan p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Konecar Kalvettu*, Ed. Canmukarattina Aiyar, Jaffna 1909.

Tamil people into the Trincomalee area is not supported by any other evidence. But we can take the tradition to at least mean that the Colas, a considerable naval power of the time who had brought even parts of Malaysia and Indonesia under their empire, took particular care to keep Trincomalee, with its harbour, under their control.

The Colas would have had under their power the eastern littoral up to Sakāmam, at the mouth of the Pannala Oya in Ampāra district, as Vijayabāhu I had to conquer a Cola fortress there. But the extent of their power into the interior of the country, south of the Galoya, is not known. It is clear, however, that they had no control over Rohana to the west of the present Yāla sanctuary, up to the Kaluganga on the western coast, as various Sinhala chieftains were in active warfare against the Colas in these areas. The central hill country was similarly under the control of the Sinhala.

Nevertheless, the period of Cola rule is of considerable significance in the growth of Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka, especially in the northern province. It has been pointed out in the earlier chapter that, for some reason, the kings of Anurādhapura, from the 7th century onwards, did not exercise a firm administrative control over the *Uttaradesa*, which broadly comprised this province. The inscriptions quoted by Pathmanathan regarding the *Ticai Ayirattu Annuruvar*, a south Indian trading organisation, and the *Caturvedimangalam*, (settlements of Brahmins) shows that there definitely grew up, in the Rajarata itself, concentrations of Tamil populations in various centres. The ancient *Uttaradesa* was physically close to the Cola empire in the Indian mainland, and it is possible that the descendants of the original influx of Cola officials, merchants etc., settled down in this area as well, in the form of Tamil villages in the midst of the original Sinhala population.

As mentioned elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> the Colas established a chain of forts in the Māyārata, i.e., the north-western province as well, and one can presume that Tamil settlements existed around these as well. An inscription at Budumuttāva, near Nikavāratīya, in the Tamil language, records the grant of a lamp in honour the lord Vikkīrama Calāmegha

Isvara in Māgala.<sup>6</sup> As Paranavitana, the editor of this inscription points out, Isvara temples of the period were named after the founder, who, in this case, cannot be specifically identified. But Māgala may be the present Māgallegama, where it is known that the Colas had established a fortress. It is probable that this Siva temple at Māgala was meant to serve the garrison and the descendants of the Cola forces stationed at Māgallegama. On a similar parallel, there were probably concentrations of Tamils living around the other forts as well; but in course of time, this Tamil population in the Māyārata disappeared, being absorbed into the Sinhala.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond this, it is unsafe to speculate. It is certainly rash to say that "the process of transformation of the north eastern littoral stretching from Kokkilai in the north to Verugal in the south, and extending from the coast up to such places as Kantalay and Padaviya into a predominantly Tamil speaking area began in the 10th century and was almost completed by the mid-thirteenth century"<sup>8</sup> and "in fact, the process of the transformation of these areas into Tamil speaking ones, which had started much earlier, was almost complete when the Āriyakravartis established their power in the kingdom."<sup>9</sup>

Such a conclusion can be definitely reached only if there are statistical records for comparison between the Sinhala and Tamil populations of these areas. Even granted that with the type of source material available for the study of Sri Lankan history, such statistical records are not available, such a conclusion will have to be justified only by an intensive statistical study of monuments and epigraphic records. The principal arguments advanced by Pathmanathan for the conclusions embodied above are the existence of a large number of inscriptions

<sup>5</sup> E.Z. Vol. III p. 302.

It may be pointed out at this point that the statement of Pathmanathan that this inscription as well as another on the same spot dated two years earlier (E.Z. Vol. III p. 302) where royal officials of Jayabāhu successor of Vijayabāhu I are found making certain caste regulations, 'suggests that there were Tamil castes of blacksmiths and washermen in Dakkhinadesa in the twelfth century' gives a misleading impression. Such Tamil concentrations, as shown above, were probably concentrated around the former forts of the Colas, and not found in general provenance.

<sup>6</sup> Pathmanathan, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter V for list of Cola fortresses in Sri Lanka.

in Tamil, and the existence of Hindu architectural monuments in these areas. There can be no doubt that the inscriptions and monuments reveal the presence of a or even in some places, a *substantial* Tamil population in these areas. But to reach the conclusion that the Tamil population were in a *majority* in these areas, the following questions will have to be answered in the affirmative. (a) Is it satisfactorily proved that *all* the Sinhala inscriptions and Buddhist monuments in these areas have been discovered? (And it may be remembered that much of these regions are still under jungle). (b) Is it satisfactorily proved that even among the monuments so far discovered, the majority of monuments and inscriptions pertaining to the 10-13th centuries are Hindu monuments and Tamil inscriptions? The answer to the first question may take years; but without it, no definite conclusion can be drawn with such specificity as Pathmanathan has done on the relative number of Sinhalas and Tamils in these areas during the period in question. Strangely enough, Pathmanathan has not done a comparison of even the available monuments; i.e. the answer to the second question of the number of monument and inscriptions so far discovered, which can give even an empirical answer. Lacking such an analysis, the above general observations must remain personal opinions only, and not scientifically proven facts.

All that can be said in the present stage of research is that, while the period of Cola rule saw the settlement of Tamils in parts of the Rajarata, and perhaps particularly in the *Uttaradesa*, these were probably in the midst of the original Sinhala population. For example, in the records found at the Velgam Vihāra, presently Nattana Kovil in Trincomalee District, many grants made by the Cola Emperors and their officials in the Tamil language are found. While these records would have been meant to have been read by the Tamil population in the area (and even this is not completely beyond doubt),<sup>10</sup> the existence of Sinhala inscriptions, by the same logic, would have been meant for the

10. It would have been natural for a foreign governing power, who in this case was the Cola Imperial Government, to have used its own language in its official records, in the same manner as the British Government used the English language in their inscriptions on bridges, etc during the period of its rule. The records in Tamil of the Cola officials no more implies a predominantly Tamil population in the area than the records of the British Government implies a predominantly English, or even English speaking population, in Sri Lanka during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

Sinhala population in the area. Thus an inscriptions of Vijayabāhu I<sup>11</sup> (1055-1110 A.D.) at this site shows that the Sinhala population continued to exist in this area even after a Cola rule of 77 years. The *Cūlavamsa* records that Vijayabahu I restored the Jambukola Vihāra and the cave temple at Jambukola, after he came to power and commenced the reconstruction of the country.<sup>12</sup> The cave temple at Jambukola (*Jambukolalenakan*) is obviously the present Dambulla temple in Matale district, and this suggests that the reference to the other Jambukola was to the ancient vihāra of that name at Point Pedro in the Jaffna peninsula.<sup>13</sup> The restoration was obviously for the benefit of the Sinhala Buddhist population in the Jaffna peninsula at its extreme north, who would thus have formed a substantial segment of the population of Jaffna even in the 11th century.

This basic picture of Tamil settlements scattered in the midst of a Sinhala population in the Rajarata and the *Uttaradesa*, including the Jaffna peninsula, and a Sinhala population without any alien element in Rohana and the hill country, remained true for the rest of the period until at least the death of Parākramabāhu I of Polonnaruwa in 1186 A.D., in spite of suggestions to the contrary. Even in regard to the Polonnaruwa kingdom, which later from the end of the Cola rule in 1070 to the first quarter of the 13th century, where Tamil concentrations in indubitably existed, certain generalised statements have been made, which give a distorted picture of the extent and influence of these Tamil settlements. It has been urged that the designation *Damillūdhikāra* was borne by several dignitaries during this period, and that this suggests that the number of Tamils was much larger than in earlier times.<sup>14</sup> It is further urged that the settlement of Tamil merchants was "in large numbers", and "in substantial numbers and in sufficient strength to constitute townships which were autonomous like those of their counterparts in South India".<sup>15</sup> "During the Polonnaruwa period, the Tamils were found in greater numbers than in earlier times"... "They were an important and influential element in society and exerted considerable influence on the social and cultural institutions of the Sinhalese... Besides, they played a key role in commercial and military affairs."<sup>16</sup>

11. "Silumina", 6th May 1979, published by Dr. S. Ranawella.

12. Cv. LX, vv. 60-62.

13. See U.H.C. p. 430.

14. Pathmanathan, p. 62.

15. Ibid, p. 83.

16. Ibid, p. 83.



It may be repeated again, without apology, that the methodology adopted to reach these conclusions, i.e., by mentioning and emphasising a few isolated Tamil records without taking into consideration the large number of Sinhala literary references and inscriptional records pertaining to the same area and the same period, is an exercise that can be extremely misleading, and tends to distort the picture of the influence of the Tamil population of the time. This fault is compounded when the existing evidence quoted is misinterpreted.

For example, the reference quoted from the *Cūlavamsa* in regard to the several *Damīlādhiḱāras* is erroneous. Ch. 69, v. 6 of the *Cūlavamsa* adduced as a reference to a *Damīlādhiḱāra*, actually refers to a *Malayarāja* (a title often borne by members of the Sinhala royal family) leading Tamil troops, and does not refer to a *Damīlādhiḱāra*. The *Cūlavamsa*, Ch. 75, v. 19, refers to the *Damīlādhiḱāra* Rakkha as leading an army division against Rohana, and the *Cūlavamsa*, ch. 76, v. 39, refers to an incident several years later, where the *Damīlādhiḱāra* Ādicca volunteers to lead the army against Burma. Nowhere is it mentioned that they were contemporaries simultaneously holding this title to look after the interests of a large (er) Tamil population in the country. More probably they were predecessor and successor, whose mention does not warrant the conclusion that the title was borne by "several dignitaries".

While inscriptions do refer to towns such as Nānādesivirapattinam, and to an Ayyampoliapattinam, and one can even grant that these were South Indian mercantile organisations, this does not pre-suppose that these towns were predominantly Tamil. The practice of granting autonomy to market townships was nothing new to Sri Lankan practice. An inscription at Badulla, already quoted, refers to the market town of Hopitigamu, which seems to have had a mercantile chamber (*vanigrāma*) as a part of its governing body,<sup>17</sup> indicating that it had considerable autonomy in running its own affairs. If this system had prevailed in the 10th century in a Sinhala system of administration, the mention of the above mercantile bodies in a name given to a town may merely mean that they were the governing council of that town, and need not imply in any way that the township consisted of Tamils.

17. E.Z. Vol. V. p. 177.

The statement that Tamils played a key role in the commercial and military affairs of the country is equally baseless. While this subject is dealt with in detail elsewhere,<sup>18</sup> it may be mentioned at this point that while the above trading organisations may have played a key role in the trade with South India, and even perhaps with Malaysia, the trade with the west was carried on by the Arabs. The *Cūlavamsa*, the principal source for the period, is more oriented to describing the religious activities of the kings; but even this work refers incidentally to commercial activities. It refers, for example, to the various princes who were contending for the throne after the death of Vijayabāhu I setting fire to villages and market towns.<sup>19</sup> In this espionage activities, Parākramabāhu I used physicians to spy on villages and market towns.<sup>20</sup> One of the officials he summoned for recruitment of troops before commencing war against Gajabāhu II of Polonnaruwa was the Setṭhināyaka,<sup>21</sup> i.e., chief of the Setṭhis, who is specifically mentioned as being of the Lambakanna clan, and who was therefore clearly a Sinhala official. Setṭhi means wealthy merchant or banker,<sup>22</sup> and obviously the above meant either the chief merchant or banker in the country. In order to obtain funds for the war the king proposed to engage in, he sent off by ship many precious stones, and so increased his monetary resources,<sup>23</sup> which is an obvious example of the state itself engaging in trading, and has nothing to do with south Indian merchant guilds. All these instances show the activity of Sinhala mercantile guilds in the Polonnaruwa kingdom, and once again illustrates the danger of reaching conclusions on the predominancy of south Indian influence without examining the activities of similar institutions native to the country.

Similar remarks apply to the key role played by the Tamils in the military affairs of the country. Even during the last stages of the kingdom of Anurādhapura at the end of the 10th century, the army contained Kerala and Karmāta mercenaries, and during the period of the Polonnaruwa kings, they maintained mercenary regiments such as

18. See Chapter VIII.

19. Cv. LXI, v. 64.

20. Ibid, LXVI, v. 137.

21. Ibid, LXLX, v. 12.

22. Childers, "A Dictionary of the Pali Language", London, 1909. p. 473.

23. Cv. LXLX, v. 33

Velaikkāras and Akampātis.<sup>24</sup> But the country's army contained, in the majority, Sinhala troops as well, both regular as well as militia. It is highly unlikely that rulers such as Vijayabāhu I, who had fought the Tamil forces of the Cola Empire from virtually his infancy, and Parākramabāhu I, who had fought for decades against the same empire to destabilise it by placing a friendly prince in its southern area, would have had, in common prudence, a majority of Tamil troops in their armies. It is difficult, therefore, to speak of a key role in military affairs for the Tamil troops in the Polonnaruva army, except by way of wishful thinking.

The real changes that resulted ultimately in the Tamil population constituting a majority in the northern province seems to have commenced only from the end of the reign of Parākramabāhu I. His death in 1186 A.D., saw a power struggle in the Polonnaruva kingdom, with various ephemeral rulers and army commanders contending for political power, until, around 1215 A.D., the kingdom was conquered by a prince named Māgha, who ruled from Polonnaruva till the middle of the 13th century. This chronic weakness of the State resulted in the rise of another political feature, which ultimately facilitated the rise of a separate state in Jaffna, and also culminated in the Sinhala population in Jaffna and its contiguous areas being cut off from their connections with the south.

This was the rise of the Vanni kingships in the 13th century A.D. The rise of these kingships, and the background in which this political institution came into existence, has been discussed elsewhere in these pages.<sup>25</sup> At this point, it is sufficient to mention that there is no doubt that by the end of the first quarter of the 13th century, a series of petty rulers, the Vanniars, some of them of Tamil origin, some of them of Sinhala origin, governed the Rajarāṭa, the former base of power of the Sinhala kings, and also the *Uttaradesa*, north of Anurādhapura including the Jaffna peninsula.

This establishment of a network of petty kingdoms in the Rajarāṭa area was contemporaneous to, and probably also the reason for, the Jaffna area becoming a refuge to various aspirants to the throne of

Sri Lanka. The second quarter of the 13th century saw the gradual consolidation of a new Sinhala kingdom with its capital at Dambadeniya. A ruler from Malaysia, named Candrabhānu, attacked the Dambadeniya kingdom, and on being defeated, sought refuge in the Jaffna area. Māgha of Polonnaruva himself was defeated by Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya around 1255 A.D., and sought refuge in Jaffna.<sup>26</sup> The Jaffna area thus seems to have become a separate political entity, governed by the Jāvaka (Malaysian) rulers, and in the early years of the 14th century, the Jāvaka dynasty was replaced by a family of Tamil rulers, the Āriyacakravartis who originally came from the Rāmnāḍ district in the Pāṇḍyan kingdom in south India,<sup>27</sup> and ruled in the area until it was overthrown by the Portuguese in 1621 A.D.

It was this simultaneous process of being cut off from the regions of the mainstream of the Sinhala population in the south by the rise of the Vanniar kingdoms in the Rajarāṭa, and the continuous rule of a Tamil dynasty for a period of three centuries (which was an unprecedented event which had never happened for such a long period in the Island's history) that probably led to the virtual eclipse of the Sinhala population in Jaffna. Several facts show that the predominant position of the Sinhala in these areas was lost, not by the thirteenth century as claimed by some historians, but much later, and by a more gradual process.

We have pointed out earlier the names of some villages in the Jaffna peninsula that have been Tamilised from Sinhala names. Some of these, names, such as Nārandanei (Nārandeniya), Polvattei (Polvatta) Malvil (Malvila) are in a form of the Sinhala language, not of the 10th century, but the form of the Sinhala language of the 14th century onwards. Secondly, the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai*, the chronicle of the Jaffna kingdom, written in 1736 A.D., but one on which Tamil historians exercise great dependence for their thesis for the predominant position of the Jaffna kings, mentions the Sinhala subjects of the Āriyacakravartis several times. For example, it records that in the time of Vikkīrama Singai-āriyan, there arose a great dispute between his Sinhala and Tamil subjects, and that the Sinhala disliking him on the ground of partiality towards

<sup>24</sup>. See chapter VIII, where this question is examined in detail.

<sup>25</sup>. See chapter. V

<sup>26</sup>. See chapter V for a detailed discussion on this question.

<sup>27</sup>. See chapter VI

his Tamil subjects.<sup>28</sup> Again, it says that in the time of Virodaya Singaiāriyan, the Vanni chiefs instigated the Sinhala people living in the Jaffna kingdom to revolt against him.<sup>29</sup> The Portuguese historian Da Couto, who wrote this particular section of his work (Decade VII) in 1602 A.D.,<sup>30</sup> (i.e. only 40 years after the event) says that when Don Constantine De Braganza, Viceroy of Goa, attacked the Jaffna king in 1560 A.D., and pursued him over the border into the Trincomalee region, he found the bodies of forty Sinhalas.<sup>31</sup> Queyroz says that when Braganza thereafter attacked Mannar, a fortress then belonging to the king of Jaffna, the king's garrison at Mannar consisted of 3000 Sinhalas.<sup>32</sup> These references, some of them contained in the only chronicle of the Jaffna kingdom existing, show that the Sinhalas continued to exist as an identifiable segment of the Jaffna kingdom long after the establishment of the Āriyacakravarti dynasty, until the middle of the 16th century at least. In the course of time, however, they would have been gradually absorbed into the Tamil population, surviving today only in a few castes such as the Koviars and the Nalavar.

As mentioned above, this absorption of the Sinhalas took place probably because the Sinhala population in the Jaffna area was cut off from the mainstream of the Sinhalas in the south-western portion of the Island. It is probable that a similar process took place in the case of the pockets of Tamil population established by the Colas in the north-western province, of whom reference has been made elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> Being cut off from the mainstream of the Tamils in the north, they probably were gradually absorbed into the Sinhala population.

We may next analyse the spread of the Tamil population in the eastern province. As mentioned elsewhere, the boundary of the kingdom of Rohana, from the 8th century onwards, was south of the Galoya, and the area north of this river was considered to be under the direct rule of the king of Anurādhapura. Thus the Colas exercised authority up to this river, and even southwards, as Chaggāma, i.e.,

present Sakāmam, about four miles west of Tirukovil, is recorded to have been one of their fortresses. The breakdown in political authority after the death of Parākramabāhu I affected this area as well, and this region too saw the rise of Vanni kingships.

There is some difficulty in arriving at the actual dates of the rise of these Vanni kingships. Both Indrapāla and Pathmanathan<sup>34</sup> attribute the rise of the Vanni kingships in these areas to Māgha of Kālinga on the basis of the narrative in the *Maṭṭakalappu Mānmiyam*. This states that Mākon, third son of Manuvaratan, king of Kālinga, landed at Manipuram, proceeded to Maṭṭakalappu, and appointed a Kālinga named Cukatiran as ruler there. He occupied Toppavai, divided its territories, and placed the territories of Manarritai, Tirikonai and Mannar under other chiefs. While the connection with Kālinga, and the similarity of the name Māgha with Mākon does suggest that the reference was to Māgha, the names of places mentioned in the *Maṭṭakalappu Mānmiyam* do not coincide with the places mentioned in other records as having been held by Māgha, except for Mannar and Trincomalee,<sup>35</sup> and nowhere else is Polonnaruva referred to as Toppavai. Thus it is doubtful whether the reference in the *Maṭṭakalappu Mānmiyam* was in fact to Māgha; but there is no doubt that Tamil settlements occurred on the eastern coast in the Batticaloa area in a manner similar to the process that occurred in the north central and northern provinces of Sri Lanka.

As in Jaffna, many of the place names in the Batticaloa district can be traced to a Sinhala origin. Horsburgh points<sup>36</sup> out that Tamil *maddu* means measure, degree or limit, and that the Tamil name for Maḍakalapuva (Batticaloa) literally translated should be Chāṭṭukuli. Thus the actual word used, Maṭṭakalappu, is obviously from the Sinhala word Maḍakalapuva. Similarly, Malvattei, another village in this

<sup>28</sup>. Ypvm Tr. p. 24.

<sup>29</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>. J.R.A.S. C.B. Vol. XX, No. 60, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup>. Ibid, p. 194.

<sup>32</sup>. *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, Fernao De Queyroz, Tr. Fr. S.G. Pereira, Govt. Press, 1929, Bk. iii. p. 393.

<sup>33</sup>. See chapter III.

<sup>34</sup>. *Ceylon Journal of Humanities*, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 111 ff. K. Indrapala, "The origin, of the Tamil Vanni chieftaincies of Ceylon", See also Pathmanathan, p.133.

<sup>35</sup>. The *Pūjāvaliya*, (p. 790) mentions Polonnaru, Koṭasara, Gangatāla, Kavudavulu Kurundu-padi, Mānamatu, Mavatu, Mannara, Pulacceri, Gonadebera patan Huratota, Valigama, Govusu and Mipatoṭa as the forts of Magha. The *Culavamsa* (LXXXIII, vv 15-18) mentions Pulatthinagara, Koṭṭhasara, Gangatalaku Kakalaya Padi Kurundi, Mānamatta, Mahātittha, Mannara, Pulacceri Vālikā-gama, Gona district, Madhupādapattittha and Sukaratiittha as his forts.

<sup>36</sup>. C.A.L.R. Vol. II, Pt. 1, pp. 54-58.

district, must be from the Sinhala word Malvatta, and many similar instances can be traced in this area of original Sinhala names presently Tamilised. Thus, till the 13th century, the area would have been predominantly Sinhala.

But there occurred in the 13th century the same political developments as occurred in the north-central province, which cut off this area also from the mainstream of the Sinhala population and civilisation. Paranavitana has pointed out that the destruction of the technocrat class, especially during the time of Māgha, which maintained the irrigation system in the Rajarāṭa resulted in the breakdown of irrigation, which in turn resulted in the breakdown of the organised social and political fabric.<sup>37</sup> By 1262 A.D., when Vijayabāhu, regent of Dambadeniya, started to restore Polonnaruva, this city, which in 1185 A.D., i.e., only 77 years previously was at the height of its glory, was covered with jungle, with its buildings and irrigation systems in ruins.<sup>38</sup> By the middle of the 13th century, the base of power of the Sinhala kings had been shifted to Dambadeniya, in the north western province, from which control of the eastern littoral would have been difficult through the jungle that had grown up in the intervening areas. The bitter civil war that had been fought out in Rohana, especially in its eastern section, during the region of Parākramabāhu I had depopulated it,<sup>39</sup> and though this king attempted to restore its irrigation system, the growth of its population to its normal size would have required several generations of peace, which was not available after his death.

Thus the Batticaloa area would have been isolated from the west and from the south, and it was into this vacuum that Tamil settlers moved in after the 13th century A.D. The date of this event cannot be fixed with any degree of precision. An inscription at Tirukkovil.

<sup>37</sup>. U.H.C. p 715 ff.

<sup>38</sup>. *Pūjāvaliya*, p. 802. Cv. LXXXVIII, v 92 ff.

<sup>39</sup>. At the last stages of the war with Parākramabāhu I, the chieftains of Rohana were so short of manpower that they even called up young boys into battle. (C. LXXIV, v 133). The *Cūlavamsa* further states that Parākramabāhu's generals, both in eastern and western Rohana, hanged, impaled and burnt hundreds of rebels, after the rebellion was put down. (Cv. LXXV, v. 160 ff; vv. 190-193). After such a loss of manpower, the restoration of a population to its normal size would have required several generations.

Ampāra district, is in Tamil, and indited in the 10th regnal year of a Sri Sangabo Vijayabāhu<sup>39a</sup>. On paleographic considerations, it has been assigned to the 15th or 16th centuries, and on this ground, it cannot be the name of any other ruler than Vijayabāhu VI of Kotte, whose reign ended in 1521 A.D. The Tamil inscription must have been meant for the Tamil population in the area, and we can thus conclude that by the turn of the 16th century, there was an extensive Tamil population on the eastern coast. In regard to the other extreme of time, the *Pūjāvaliya* mentions that when Vijayabāhu, Regent of Dambadeniya, went to restore Polonnaruva around 1262 A.D., the Vanni rulers of Rohana brought him gifts for the ordination ceremony he conducted at Dāstota. Since this was a Buddhist ceremony, this participation of the Vanniars would have been because they followed the same religion, and thus it is likely that they were Sinhala Vanni kings.<sup>40</sup> If this is so, it is unlikely that they would have been able to assist Vijayabāhu from Rohana, i.e., the area south of the Galoya unless the Batticaloa area, which intervened between Rohana and Polonnaruva, was occupied by hostile Tamil chiefs. Thus the likelihood is that the area east of Polonnaruva, up to and including Rohana, was under petty Sinhala chiefs, who would have been ruling therefore a population that was predominantly Sinhala, except in a few settlements of Tamils such as Eruvil etc., which had existed for a long time. If this view is correct, the occupation of the Batticaloa area by a Tamil speaking populace seems to have occurred after the 3rd quarter of the 13th century, and the beginning of the 16th century.

In this connection, a legend quoted by Queyroz suggests that the Tamilisation of the Batticaloa area was closer to the 16th century than otherwise. He says that the Machuas, i.e., *Mukkuvar* came with a princess to Batticaloa, that the local kinglet had married her, and that two of the three princes who were their children were killed by Constantine De Saa who governed the Portuguese provinces in Sri Lanka from 1623 to 1630 A.D.<sup>41</sup> Queyroz was probably wrong in his implication that the settlements of Tamils in this area took place as late as the second half of the 16th century; but the legend quoted by him shows that at the time he was writing his work, the Tamil settlements in Batticaloa were not regarded as having any great antiquity.

<sup>39a</sup>. E.Z. Vol. VI, Pt.1, p. 92.

<sup>40</sup>. Cv. LXXXIX, v. 51.

<sup>41</sup>. Queyroz, Bk i.p. 18.



The final spread of the Tamil settlements in the country can be judged by the present map of Sri Lanka, which gives the Tamilised names of towns and villages in the Island. On the western coast, the Tamil names start from Mundel, on the coast north of Chilaw, and their spread to the interior is an average of two miles, broadening to four miles from Puttalam northwards, until it reaches the Vilpattu sanctuary. In this connection may be mentioned that both the Rājavanni area and the Kumāravanni area have Sinhala village names, showing that these Vanni districts had Sinhala Vanniar. From Vilpattu northwards, all names on the coast, up to Pottuvil in the south eastern coast, bear Tamil names. Towards the interior, Tamil names spread to the north of a line drawn from Mullikulam on the western coast up to Mādavachchiya in the north central province, from here northwards up to Vavuniya, and from Vavuniya in a line up to Kokkilai on the eastern coast. East of Vavuniya, the area southwards of a line drawn up to Padaviya on the east, from Padaviya to Gomarankaḍavala, and from Gomarankaḍavala to Kitulkuttuva (4 miles south west of Kantalai), bear Sinhala names and consists of the Vavuniya south Sinhala division, and the Hurulu palāta. On the eastern coast, the deepest penetration to the interior in regard to Tamilised village names is south of a line drawn from Kantalai eastwards to Panvali, Kanḍakaḍu and Punānai. From Kalkuḍah, Tamil names extend to an average of 16 miles to the interior, up to Tirukkovil in the south, and from Tirukkovil to Pottuvil, and average of eight miles. In summary, the Tamil settlements on the western coast did not extend deep into the country, except from the north of Vilpattu, and on the eastern coast, except east of Kantalai, the average penetration to the interior ranges from eight to sixteen miles.

While the above details describe the final spread of the Tamil population of Sri Lanka (the 19th century Tamil settlements in the hill country being excluded) the evidence as shown above suggests that the occupation of these areas by the Tamils as a predominant population took place closer to the 16th than the 13th century. From this point onwards will be examined the influence they exerted on political, economic and social developments in Sri Lanka.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROLE OF THE TAMIL POPULATION IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SRI LANKA (I) THE ANURADHAPURA PERIOD (500 B.C.—1000 A.D.)

As discussed in the first chapter, there can be no doubt, inspite of suggestions to the contrary, that the ancestors of the present Sinhala speaking people of the Island were an Indo Aryan speaking group which originally came from the north west or the north-east of the Indian sub-continent. The original Sinhala population seems to have settled down in the dry zone districts of Sri Lanka, where geographical and climatic conditions were more conducive to the cultivation of their staple food, rice. Similar conditions of geography and climate prevail in the south-eastern portion of the country, and this also came to be a centre of population from early times. But the wet zone districts did not become major centres of population till the 12th century A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Possibly because of the greater economic base of the northern dry zone, the chief who had established himself in Anurādhapura, in the north central province, soon became the paramount sovereign of the Island. Till the time of Dūtthagāmani (2nd century B.C.) Rohana, the south-eastern portion of the Island, was governed by a royal-family which was a branch of the Anurādhapura dynasty. Dūtthagāmani, a prince of the Rohana branch of the dynasty, conquered the kingdom of Anurādhapura from the Tamil king Elāra who had ousted the main Sinhala dynasty, and from this time onwards, the government was centralised in the Anurādhapura State, with Rohana being governed by the representatives of the king of Anurādhapura, who were often members of the royal family. From the 6th to the 8th century, A.D., Rohana was governed by a royal family which was allied by marriage to the Anurādhapura royal line. Rohana became a semi independant principality, with the Gal Oya as the boundary, in the reign of Mahinda II (777-797 A.D.); but it continued to recognise the suzerainty of the kings of Anurādhapura till the northern dry zone ceased to be a centre of political power in the 13th century A.D.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The dry zone consists of almost 70% of the Island and comprises the north-western, northern, north-eastern, north-central, eastern and the south eastern portions of the country. The south western, southern and central portions constitute the wet zone area.

<sup>2</sup> *Purātana Rohana Rājya*, P.A.T. Gunasinghe, Ch. V. Ibid, Ch. VII ff.

However, the geographical position of Sri Lanka vis-a-vis the Indian sub-continent, i.e. its north-western coast at some points being only twenty miles away from the Indian coast, exposed it to political developments in South India from the earliest period of its history. Facing the north western coast was the area covered by the Pāṇḍya kingdom. To the west of the latter was the Kerala kingdom, and to the north the Cola kingdom. These three political divisions, in south India, were existing from the 3rd century B.C., but they did not possess sufficient military power or organisation in the earlier centuries of the Christian era either to conquer each other permanently, or to expand overseas. From the 6th to the 8th centuries, the dominant power in South India was the Pallava Empire, and thereafter the Pāṇḍya and Cola kingdom rose to positions of paramount power, in that order.

While, until the 9th century, there was no organised invasion by these states against Sri Lanka, the geographical proximity of the Island to the Pāṇḍya and Cola countries led to various invasions against it by individual adventurers from these countries. The first recorded conquest from South India was by Sena and Guttika in the 3rd century B.C.,<sup>4</sup> and the second by Elāra, a Cola prince in the next century.<sup>5</sup> Both these invaders held power only over the northern dry zone. In the time of Vattagāmaṇi Abhaya, (1st century B.C.), the northern dry zone was again ruled by a series of Tamil invaders,<sup>6</sup> until the king reconquered the area. For the next hundred years, there were no more invasions, until another group of adventurers subjugated the northern dry zone in the 5th century A.D., until the last of them was ousted by Dhātusena (455-473 A.D.)

Fundamentally, these were not attempts at a colonisation of Sri Lanka by Tamil speaking peoples, or an attempt to absorb Sri Lanka into a Tamil kingdom on the mainland. They were incidents where individual adventurers, who may have lost their own homelands in south-India due to internecine warfare, were seeking homes elsewhere. At all times they were rulers, admittedly of foreign origin, who were ruling a kingdom through its native administrative structure, and at no time were they attempting to keep a foot-hold in their own countries

<sup>4</sup>. Mhv. v, 10.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid v, 13.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid. XXXIII, vv. 56-61.

<sup>7</sup>. Cv XXXVIII, vv. 29-34.

Many of them were Buddhists, or had the same attitudes to Buddhism as did the Sinhala kings, when they occupied the Sri Lankan throne.<sup>8</sup> Also, the whole of their rule covered a period of 106 years out of a total of approximately 1250 years, and even these 106 years consist of chronological groups of 22, 44, 14 and 26 years, each group separated by several centuries from the other. Thus, until the beginning of the 10th century, one cannot speak of any fundamental Tamil influence in the external sense of the term.

The real influence of Tamil speaking peoples on the politics of the Island came, not from external invasions, but from their influence in the internal politics of Sri Lanka. The gradual build up of a Tamil speaking population in the country, along with the growth of Tamil mercenary regiments, brought in by various Sinhala aspirants to the throne, has been discussed in an earlier chapter. It is sufficient at this point to recall that, commencing from Ilanāga (33-43 A.D.) various contenders for the throne brought in south Indian mercenaries to assist them in their quest for political power. It is unlikely that these mercenaries returned to their own countries; and it is probable that especially after the intensification of the usage of such mercenaries in the 7th century A.D., they formed settlements in and around the capital, Anurādhapura, in the northern and western directions from the city. From this time onwards, they began to exercise, on occasion, an influence on the political affairs of the country.

Māna, nephew of Kāśapa II (650-659 A.D.) brought his father Dappula, ruler of Rohana, to be consecrated as king at Anurādhapura, when another contender, Hatthadāṭha, landed in the Island with Tamil mercenaries. The Tamil population on the line of advance of Hatthadāṭha, i.e. between Mahātittha and Anurādhapura, joined him, and Dappula had to return to Rohana. We find several references to Tamil personages, i.e. Potthakutṭha, Mahākanda etc during the reign of Aggabodhi IV (677-683 A.D.). Indeed, after the death of this king, Potthakutṭha became a king maker, and put forward two candidates, one a member of the royal family, to the throne.<sup>11</sup> The *Cūlavamsa* records that for the first ten years of the reign of Mahinda V. (982-1039

<sup>8</sup>. See chapter IX.

<sup>9</sup>. Cv. XLV, vv. 11-20.

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid, XLVI, vv. 19-23.

<sup>11</sup>. Cv. XLVI, v. 39 ff.

A.D.) there was full of trouble in the country, with Anurādhapura being full of strangers, i.e. Tamil mercenaries brought during the period of his predecessor Sena V, and that the Kerala mercenaries rebelled.<sup>12</sup> It was probably these troubles in the country, and its resulting weakness, that tempted the Cola Emperor, Rājārāja I, to invade Sri Lanka in 993 A.D.

But, as the above account shows, this type of direct interference by the resident Tamil population in the internal politics of the country was rather rare, though scholars on the history of the Tamils in Sri Lanka tend to give undue emphasis to this aspect of the political history of the Island. "The Tamil mercenaries who were thus brought from time to time... played a decisive role in the succession disputes of the 7th century".<sup>13</sup> To put this in the correct perspective, this decisive role was only during the period 650 and 683 A.D., and the next problem for the Sinhala rulers rose only in 990 A.D., i.e., over 300 years later. Even this arose because the government of Mahinda V was so weak that the population refused to pay taxes,<sup>14</sup> resulting in the Kerala mercenaries who had not been paid, not unnaturally, revolting for their wages.

At this point, the actual result on the whole country of the above political incidents, however limited in the larger vista of the period, as well as the result of the battles fought by various members of the Sinhala royal family with the aid of Tamil mercenaries, may be evaluated. We get a somewhat distorted picture if we guide ourselves by the information given in the *Cūlavamsa* alone, as this work gives mainly the incidents concerning the consecrated principal rulers of the Island who had their base of power in the Rajarāṭa. But a good portion of the Island, amounting to nearly half the area, lay outside the direct influence of the above events. It is useful to recall at this point that the boundary of ancient Rohana, till the time of Mahinda II (777-797 A.D.) was a line drawn along the Kaluganga in the west through Adam's Peak in the central hill country, and along the Mahavāli river to the east.<sup>15</sup> It was only during the time of this king that the boundary on the east was pushed southwards to the Galoya.

This area of Rohana, which was cut off from the main centre of political activity in the Rajarāṭa by the central hill country, had its own political institutions from the earliest times. If the *Mahāvamsa* tradition is correct, the brother of Devānampiyatissa (2502-10 B.C.) had established himself in Rohana as an independent ruler during the lifetime of this king,<sup>16</sup> and his descendants continued to rule the area till one of them, Dutthagāmani, conquered the Rajarāṭa as well. Thus the rule of Sena and Guttika, as well as of Elāra, both of whom invaded the country after Devānampiyatissa, did not cover Rohana, and was confined only to the Rajarāṭa. During the Tamil invasion that occurred during the reign of Vaṭṭagāmani Abhaya, Rohana seems to have been ruled by a Brahmin, Tiya or Tissa, and was not under the control of the Tamils who had conquered Anurādhapura.<sup>16</sup> During the invasion of the Tamils in the reign of Mittasena (428-429 A.D.), the *Cūlavamsa* records that all the kinsmen of the noble families fled to Rohana, and that they supported Dhātusena.<sup>17</sup> This shows that during this period of invasion too, the effective control of Rohana belonged to Dhātusena, and not to the Tamil invaders.<sup>18</sup> As mentioned earlier, from the 6th century on-

<sup>12</sup> Mhv. XII, v. 6 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Purātana Rohana Rājya*, P.A.T. Gunasinghe, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Cv. XXXVIII, v. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Pathmanathan (p. 28) quotes, as an example of Tamil invaders patronising Buddhism, "an epigraph from Kataragama, attributed to the Tamil king Dāthika, the son of Tiritara, (recording) a grant of land made for the defraying of expense connected with the ritual of the Mangala cetiya at Kataragama". The implication that Tiritara, one of the Tamil rulers who governed Anurādhapura just prior to Dhātusena, had political control over Rohana, is not justified by the evidence. The inscription is a record of a Mahādali Mahana, son of prince Saratara, and Paranavitana, the editor of the inscription (E. Z. Vol. III. p. 216-218) points out the resemblance between the name Saratara to the name Tiritara, and the name Mahādali Mahana, i.e. Mahādāthika Mahanāga, to Dāthiya, both of these being among this group of Tamil invaders. Such an identification cannot be accepted. According to the *Cūlavamsa*, Tiritara reigned before Dāthiya, and if the latter was Mahādali Mahana, who is given royal titles, it is difficult to understand how Tiritara, his predecessor, would have been called only a prince, if in fact Tiritara was Saratara. Also, the *Cūlavamsa* is specific that the Tamils ruled this (*oragangāya isseran*) side, i.e. the Anurādhapura Side of the Mahavāli river, showing that the authority of the Tamil rulers did not extend to Rohana. Lastly, from the time of the Tamil ruler Khuddapārinda, Dhātusena was in a state of active warfare, and killed Tiritara, Dāthiya and Piṭhiya. In these circumstances it is difficult to believe that the authority of the five Tamil rulers who governed the Rajarāṭa in the 5th century extended to Rohana. It is more likely that the above inscription referred to two local Sinhala rulers in Rohana.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, IV, vv. 2,5.

<sup>13</sup> Pathmanathan, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Cv. LV, v. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Purātana Rohana Rājya*, P.A.T. Gunasinghe, pp. 11-14.

wards, Rohana had its own royal family which was in control over the area, and the vicissitudes that befell the Anurādhapura royal line had no effect on them. Thus, the invasions of Sinhala pretenders who brought in Tamil mercenaries, and the interference of local Tamil leaders in the internal politics of the country, had no practical or visible effect over nearly half the Island.

Secondly, it may be remembered that even the Tamil leaders who took part in the political affairs of the country worked through the existing institutional and cultural framework of the country, thereby following the example of the earlier Tamil invaders who had occasionally conquered the Rajarāṭa. Potthakutṭha and Mahākanda, for example, built several Buddhist vihāras, and gave maintenance grants to them, which shows either an active sympathy for Buddhism, or a desire on the part of these non-Sinhala political leaders to respect and maintain local institutions.<sup>19</sup> It may be assumed that even the Sinhala invaders who attacked the kingdom with the aid of Tamil troops took particular care to ensure that their troops did not harm local institutions, especially Buddhist institutions.

In sum, therefore, the political influence of Tamil speaking peoples in Sri Lanka, for the first one and a half milleniums of the Island's history, was minimal. The rule of Tamil invaders, taken together, was restricted to only 106 years, in chronological groups spread over 1250 years. Geographically, their rule, as well as that of the Tamil ministers of the 7th century A.D., included only half the land. Institutionally, they governed through a purely local administrative system. Political domination by Tamil speaking people commenced only with the beginning of the 11th century.

<sup>19</sup>. Cv. XLVI, vv. 19-25

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROLE OF THE TAMIL POPULATION IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SRI LANKA (II)

#### FROM THE COLA CONQUEST TO THE RISE OF THE KINGDOM OF JAFFNA

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the Pāndya and Cola kingdoms rose to power in South India after the 8th century, after the breakdown of the power of the Pallavas of Kānchi. Under Rājarāja I, who came to the throne in 985 A.D., the Cola kingdom rapidly waxed in strength, and expanded into Pāndya and Kerala, and it was a matter of time only for Sri Lanka to suffer invasion. The rise of the Cola Empire on the Indian sub continent coincided with a time in Sri Lanka where there was a situation of political anarchy, due to a succession of weak kings. Sena V was a drunkard and profligate, whose reign saw a continuous quarrel between him and his army commander. His successor, Mahinda V, was so weak that the people refused to pay taxes, resulting in his being unable to pay his troops, who thereupon mutinied against him. Probably as a result of these chaotic conditions in the Island, Rājarāja invaded Sri Lanka, and from 993 A.D., the Island is listed as one of his conquests. Mahinda V fled to Rohana and carried on the government from there. But in 1017 A.D., the forces of the Cola Emperor Rājendra I, attacked Rohana, and captured the king as well as the royal regalia.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, from 993 A.D., the Rajarāṭa of Sri Lanka formed part of the Cola Empire. It was organised as a province of that empire, and the province, known as Munmuḍicolamaṇḍalam, was governed by a prince of the Cola imperial family.<sup>2</sup> The administrative system was organised on the same lines as that which prevailed in the rest of the empire. The significance of the Cola conquest is that for the first time, Sri Lanka

<sup>1</sup>. See U.H.C., p. 344 ff. for a history of these event.

<sup>2</sup>. Pathmanathan, p. 35 ff



formed an integral part of a foreign state, an event that did not recur till the death of king Dharmapāla of Kotte in 1593 A.D., after which, by deed of gift, the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka became a part of the Portuguese Empire.

Even so, the whole of Sri Lanka did not fall within the ambit of the Cola empire. The Colas built a series of fortresses in the Island, which shows their area of effective control. In the north-western province their forts were at modern Batalagoda, Talagallēla (Kurunagāla District), Mānikdena (Mātale district) and Māgallegama (Puttalam district).<sup>3</sup> Since it is known that they ruled from Polonnaruwa, the above facts show that they had control over the north-western and north-central provinces, and by implication, the northern province as well. They are known to have had a fort at Sakāmam, which implies that they<sup>4</sup> had control on the eastern coast at least as far south as this town, showing that the coastal area even south of the Galoya was in their hands. But the southern, central, Sabaragamuwa and western provinces were outside their power, and in these remote fastnesses, the Sinhala power gradually revived, until in 1070 A.D., Vijayabāhu I, a scion of the old royal family of Anurādhapura, ejected the Colas and became sole ruler in the Island.

The Sinhala state of Polonnaruwa lasted from 1070 A.D., to until around 1215 A.D., when Polonnaruwa was captured by Māgha, who came from Kālinga in India. There is no doubt that until the death of Vijayabāhu I in 1110 A.D., the writ of the ruler of Polonnaruwa ran from Jaffna to Devinuvara, the southernmost point of Sri Lanka. After his death, until the accession of Parākramabāhu I in 1153 A.D., the Island was divided into several principalities, governed by various members of the family of Vijayabāhu I. After the reunification of the country by Parākramabāhu I, the government of Polonnaruwa ruled the entire country. The *Cūlavamsa* gives in detail his conquest of Rohana,<sup>5</sup> and his subsequent economic and religious activities in that region, while an inscription of Parākramabāhu I at Nainativu in Jaffna<sup>6</sup> shows his effective control of Jaffna and its surrounding Islets.

<sup>3</sup> Cv. Tr. p. 206, fn. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cv. LVIII, v. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, LXXIV, v.45.

<sup>6</sup> *University of Ceylon Review*, (U.C.R.) Vol. XXI, 1963.

Historians have tried to trace a predominant Tamil influence in the Polonnaruwa kingdom, without, as usual, adducing any proof. "The Court of Polonnaruwa seems to have been imbued with and animated by ideas which emphasised that the monarch was superhuman and potentially divine. Such a conception of state had the effect of enhancing royal power and authority in a society that had lost its homogeneity owing to the penetration of Hindu influence at all levels of society, and in successive stages<sup>7</sup>." Such an extensive and in-depth penetration of Hindu influence is a figment of the writer's imagination, and is not supported by even a shadow of proof.

While it is correct that the author of this section of the *Cūlavamsa* has shown Parākramabāhu as a larger-than-life figure, nowhere has he compared this king with a god, or attributed any divine traits to him. Contemporary inscriptions nowhere compare the kings of Sri Lanka of the 12th century with gods or attribute any divinity, actual or potential, to them. The inscriptions of Vijayabāhu I, and Parākramabāhu I, or even the more vain-glorious Nissankamalla, try to prove the pure descent of these kings from the kshatriya lineage, and not from a divine or superhuman progenitor. There is no evidence, either in contemporary literature or inscriptions, that in the eyes of the people the kings of Polonnaruwa had a more exalted status than their predecessors of Anurādhapura, and while the administration of Parākramabāhu I was more centralised than that of his predecessors and successors,<sup>8</sup> this was due to his stronger personality, and to the political necessities of the time than to "the penetration of Hindu influence at all levels of society."

The end of the reign of Parākramabāhu I saw a power struggle in the Polonnaruwa kingdom, where various forces contended for leadership. This resulted in anarchy and the breakdown of the irrigation system, the mainstay of the economy, and, ultimately, of state power. As mentioned earlier these conditions led to the rise of a network of petty kingdoms, the Yanni kingships, which covered the former Rajarāṭa, and even

<sup>7</sup> Pathmanathan, p. 65. Emphasis mine.

<sup>8</sup> For example he gave up the practice of appointing the heir apparent to govern the Māyārāṭa (Dakshinadesa).

Rohana, in the course of the 13th century. The geographical spread of these kingdoms, and their linguistic affinities, has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> What is to be noted here is that the rise of these petty principalities cut off the base of power of the Sinhala king, at Dambadeniya, from the former *Uttaradesa*, which as shown elsewhere, was less firmly controlled even from Anurādhapura from the 7th century onwards. The northern province, thus isolated, became the refuge of certain claimants to the Sri Lankan throne,

After the dynastic struggle following the death of Parākramabāhu I in 1186 A.D., Māgha, a prince of Kālinga in India invaded the country, captured Polonnaruva around 1215 A.D. and ruled the former Rajarāṭa. During the period of his rule, which saw an active persecution of Buddhism and the native administrative class, various Sinhala generals and princes, such as Subha of Yāpahuva, Bhāma of Minipe, Bhuvenekabāhu of Govindamala and Vijayabāhu of Dambadeniya, established themselves in these mountain fortresses, and did what they could do to protect their religion and their people from the persecutions of Māgha of Kālinga and his soldiers. Vijayabāhu of Dambadeniya who was consecrated around 1230 A.D., as Vijayabahu III established himself as the paramount ruler with his base at Dambadeniya in the north western province, and he, with his son Parākramabāhu II, who came to the throne around 1236 A.D., subjugated the other petty rulers, and established a kingdom which ultimately covered the north western, western, central and southern provinces of Sri Lanka.

In his eleventh year, i.e. 1247 A.D., Parākramabāhu II had to face an attack by a king called Candrabhānu, who had left his original kingdom in the Malay peninsula, and sought to establish himself in Sri Lanka. This invader was defeated, and Parākramabāhu II thereafter concluded an alliance with the Pāṇḍyan kingdom in south India, which, after the decline of the Cola Empire in the course of the 12th century, had established itself in a paramount position in this part of the Indian sub-continent. He, with the aid of the Pāṇḍyans, attacked Māgha of

Kālinga at Polonnaruva around 1255 A.D., and the latter, faced with an attack from the north by the Pāṇḍyans, and an attack from the south by the Sinhala king of Dambadeniya, abandoned Polonnaruva, and fled elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> It was these rulers, Candrabhānu and Māgha, who according to the available evidence, first established a separate state in the Jaffna peninsula.

The *Pūjāvaliya*, which was contemporary to the above events, does not say that Candrabhānu, after his defeat, re-embarked and returned to his own country, and thus there is a strong possibility that he settled down in another part of the Island. Codrington and Paranavitana have pointed out the existence of names such as Chāvācakcheri (Jāvācakcheri) and Chāvānkoṭṭai (Jāvānkoṭṭai)<sup>11</sup> in the Jaffna peninsula, which suggests that a group of people called the Jāvākas have settled down and occupied a prominent position in the area for a long time. Since 'koṭṭai' means fort, and 'cakcheri' means administrative centre, it is safe to conclude that these Jāvākas would have been in a governing position if such centres were given their name. The *Sri Lanka Kaḍaimpota* mentions Jāvācakcherirāṭa as one of the five *raṭas* whose boundaries are marked with pillars inscribed in the Tamil script,<sup>12</sup> which also shows that Chāvācakcheri was once an administrative division. Nor are these names of recent origin, as they can be traced back to the 15th century.<sup>13</sup> The only recorded instance of a group of people called the Jāvākas coming to Sri Lanka is the reference in the *Pūjāvaliya* and the *Cūlavamsa* to the Jāvākas army of Candrabhānu. These facts have led to the plausible suggestion that Candrabhānu, after he was defeated by the Sinhala forces in 1247 A.D., established himself in the Jaffna peninsula,

<sup>9</sup>. See chapter VII.

<sup>10</sup>. For a detailed discussion of these events, see "The Decline of Polonnaruva and the Rise of Dambadeniya," Dr. Amaradasa Liyanagamage, Govt. Press, 1968.

<sup>11</sup>. *A Short History of Ceylon*, H. W. Codrington, London, 1926, p. 78. See also U.H.C., p. 626.

<sup>12</sup>. *Kaḍaim'ot a Vimarshanaya*, H.A.P. Abeywardene, Govt. Press 1978, p. 207.

<sup>13</sup>. The *Kokila Sandesaya* (Ed. P.S. Perera, Col. 1906), a work of the 15th century, (v. 139) mentions Jāvānkoṭṭai in Jaffna as a place where Sapumal Kumaraya, who invaded Jaffna from Kotte in the middle of the 15th century, defeated the Kannaḍi forces of Ariyacakravarti. This shows that this town was in existence even around 1450 A.D.

The same view applies to the ultimate fate of Māgha of Kālinga after he had been defeated and ejected from Polonnaruva around 1255 A.D. Neither the *Pūjāvaliya*, the author of which was contemporary to the event, nor the *Cūlavamsa*, say that he died in battle, and it may therefore be presumed that he fled for refuge elsewhere. Rasanayagam, in this connection, suggested that Vijaya Kulankai, who, according to the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai*, was the first of the Āriyacakravarti rulers, was no other than Māgha himself,<sup>14</sup> who is referred to in Sinhala sources as Kālinga Vijayabāhu. Professor Indrapala, in more detailed research,<sup>15</sup> also concluded that Māgha settled in Jaffna after his expulsion from Polonnaruva.

What is interesting for the purposes of the present study is that by the middle of the 13th century, the Jaffna peninsula had become a refuge for defeated aspirants to the Sri Lankan throne, and that in this area, they were beyond the control of the Sinhala rulers living in the south. The relapse of the Rajarāṣa into jungle, and the rise of the Vanni kingdoms in the area intervening between the base of power of the Sinhala kings and the Jaffna peninsula would have rendered it a safe refuge. In any case, it is unlikely that the infant kingdom of Dambadeniya would have possessed the necessary military resources to have pursued its enemies to the Jaffna peninsula, which thus became the nucleus for the formation of a separate kingdom.

Sinhala sources say that Candrabhānu invaded the Dambadeniya kingdom for a second time, and these sources, when collated with contemporary inscriptions of the Pāṇḍya kingdom in south India, suggests that this event occurred around 1261 A.D. A comparison of these two sets of sources show that on this occasion, Candrabhānu was defeated by the joint forces of the Pāṇḍyan and Sinhala kingdoms,

acting in alliance.<sup>16</sup> In an inscription of the Pāṇḍya ruler Vira Pāṇḍya,<sup>17</sup> indited in 1263 A.D., and in his Kuḍumiyamalai prasasti, indited in 1264 A.D.,<sup>18</sup> it is said that Vira Pāṇḍya took the crowned head of the Śivakan, and that he defeated one king and raised him to the other world. The Kudumiyamalai prasasti further says that the son of the Śivakan, who was formerly recalcitrant, submitted to Vira Pāṇḍya, and was restored to the kingdom of Ilam (Lanka) formerly ruled by his father. Dr. Liyanagamage, on the basis of a comparison of Sri Lankan records with these inscriptions, has concluded that what was described in the latter was the defeat and death of Candrabhānu, and the raising of the latter's son to a ruling position by the forces of Vira Pāṇḍya. It is clear, under the circumstances, that the Jāvaka dynasty was established in a ruling position as a subordinate principality of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom.

At this point may be discussed the location where the son of Candrabhānu was put in as a ruler by the troops of Vira Pāṇḍya. It is known from Sri Lankan sources that after 1263/64 A.D., the Dambadeniya ruler was governing an area extending from Devinuvara in the south to at least Anurādhapura in the north, and at least up to Dāṣṭota (on the Mahavāli river) on the east.<sup>19</sup> This area can thus be excluded as the region where the Jāvaka dynasty was re-established. The *Pūjāvaliya*, a contemporary work, records that when Vijayabāhu, the eldest son of Parākramabāhu II (who the de-facto ruler of the kingdom as his father was incurably ill by this time) went around 1265 A.D. to restore Polonnaruva, the Vanni kings of Rohana brought him gifts.<sup>20</sup> This shows that Rohana i.e., the area south of the Galoya, acknowledged the suzerainty of the Dambadeniya kings, and hence the Batticaloa area, north of this river, and intervening between the Galoya and Polonnaruva, also would have similarly acknowledged the suzerainty of Parākramabāhu II. Thus both the area south of the Galoya and the Batticaloa region

14. *Ancient Jaffna*, pp. 328-329. Pathmanathan, (p. 165) does not agree with this view that the author of the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* or one of his copyists mutilated the name Vijaya Kalinga Cakravarti to Vijaya Kulankai Cakravarti. He points out that the *Vaiyaapāṭal*, one of the sources of the *yālpāna Vaipavamalai*, gives the word in the form Kulankaiāriyan, showing that this form of the word was an old one. This, however, is not conclusive. The *Vaiyaapāṭal* itself was written in the 16th century, and the original mistake may well have been made by the author of the *Vaiyaapāṭal* himself.

15. Unpublished Thesis London, 1966.

*The Decline of Polonnaruva*... Dr. Amaradasa Liyanagamage, p. 142 ff.

*Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* (A.R.E.) No. 588 of 1916.

8th All India Oriental Conference, pp. 509-526.

See *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, Vol. VI, "The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara", p. 63, for an inscription of Parākramabāhu II. At see also Cv. LXXXVIII, v. 80, 90 ff where Vijayabāhu is recorded to have restored Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva.

<sup>20</sup> *Pūjāvaliya*, p. 804.

can be excluded as the area where the Jāvakas were re-established. The Kudumiyamalai prasasti refers to the army of Vira Pāṇḍya putting the double carp, the emblem of the Pāṇḍyan kings, on the flags waving from Konamalai and Trikutagiri. Since this emblem has been found at Trincomalee,<sup>21</sup> this town which in Sinhala is called Tirikunāmalai, is obviously the place where the Pāṇḍyan army planted their rulers crest. There is, however, no inscriptional or reliable literary evidence that it was ever a royal capital, or that it was ever connected with the Jāvakas, and thus the Trincomalee area also can be ruled out as the place where the son of Candrabāhnu was established as a king.

In all likelihood, therefore, the Jāvaka dynasty was re-established in the Jaffna peninsula. In this connection, it must be pointed out that the names Chāvakaccheri and Chāvankottai would have been permanently established in the memory of the people of Jaffna only if Jāvaka rule there had existed for a considerable period. As seen above, Candrabāhnu first invaded the Dambadeniya kingdom in 1247 A.D., sought refuge in the Jaffna peninsula and ruled there for fourteen years before he invaded the Dambadeniya kingdom for a second time around 1261 A.D., and was finally defeated. This period of 14 years would hardly have been sufficient for the above place names to have taken root. These places would have been permanently identified with the Jāvaka occupation only if such an occupation had existed for a long time. The evidence for such long occupation is found from the account of Marco Polo, a Venetian traveller who came to Sri Lanka between 1293 and 1295 A.D.<sup>22</sup> He speaks of the pearl fisheries, which suggests that he landed in a port on the north-western littoral, which by this time<sup>23</sup> belonged to the ruler of Jaffna. He says that "They have a king called Sendemain, and are tributary to nobody". The Sinhala king of the time was either Parākramabāhu III or Bhuvanakabāhu II, and the known titles of neither of these rulers resemble this name in any way. On the other hand, there is a strong resemblance between this name Sendemain and the name Candrabāhnu, and for this reason, Tennent has plausibly identified this Sendemain as Candrabāhnu.<sup>24</sup> This Candrabāhnu

who was living in 1293 or 1295 cannot be the Candrabāhnu who had invaded the Dambadeniya kingdom, as he had been killed around 1261 A.D. He must have been a son or a descendant of the latter.

Furthermore, there is evidence that around 1284 A.D., the king who was ruling Jaffna was not a member of the Āriyacakravarti dynasty, which was of Tamil origin. The *Cūlavamsa* records that the Pāṇḍyan forces of Māravarman Kulasekera, led by a general named Āriyacakravarti, attacked the capital of the Sinhala kingdom, Yāpahuva, at that time ruled by Bhuvanakabāhu I, successor of Vijayabāhu IV of Dambadeniya.<sup>25</sup> Bhuvanakabāhu seems to have died defending his capital,<sup>26</sup> and thereafter, Parākramabāhu III, son of Vijayabāhu IV, went to Pāṇḍya, recovered the Tooth Relic of the Buddha which had been taken there by Āriyacakravarti, returned to Sri Lanka, and established himself as the king. The Tamil chronicle *Yālapana Vaipavamalai*<sup>27</sup> records that Jeyavira Singaiariyan, king of Jaffna, had a dispute with Puvinēyavāku, king of Kandy (sic) over the pearl fishery, which he won, and that thereafter the lyre flag of Jaffna waved over the whole of Lanka for twelve years. After this, Parākkiramavāku, on the interference of the Pāṇḍyan, received back the throne from Jeyavira. Comparison of these sources show that the account in the *Yālapana Vaipavamalai*, shorn of its unreliable elements,<sup>27</sup> was referring to the invasion and defeat of Bhuvanakabāhu I, and the restoration of Parākramabāhu III by Maravarman Kulasekera referred to in the *Cūlavamsa*. In this connection the reference to the lyre flag of Jaffna, (*mīthuma yālakkoḍi*) is significant. The dynastic emblem of the Āriyacakravartis of Jaffna was the bull,

<sup>21</sup> U.H.C. p. 768, fn 103.

<sup>22</sup> *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* Tr. Sir Henry Yule, London, 1920, p. 313.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter VII.

<sup>24</sup> *Ceylon, An Account of the Island, Physical, Historical and Topographical*, Sir James Emmerson Tennent, London, 1859, Vol. I, p. 636.

<sup>25</sup> Cv. XC, vv. 44-55.

<sup>26</sup> *Political History of Yapahuva, Kurunagala and Gampala*, P.A.T. Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, University of Peradeniya 1989. (Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis).

<sup>27</sup> The reference to the king of Kandy, for example can only be because the author of the *Yalpana Vaipavamalai* who was writing in 1736, was familiar with the Kandyan Kingdom, but probably had not even heard of the earlier kingdoms of Dambadeniya, Yapahuva, Kurunagala, etc. Also, Jeyavira is said to be the eighth ruler of the dynasty, which, as shown elsewhere (Gunasinghe Unpublished Thesis) could not be correct.



as is evidenced by the Āriyacakravartis of Jaffna having the bull emblem on their coins.<sup>28</sup> Thus the lyre flag of the ruler of Jaffna who attacked in 1284 A.D., as a feudatory of the Pāṇdyans, could not be that of Āriyacakravarti, but of another dynasty, which, on the above evidence of the Kudumiyamalai prasasti and Marco Polo, could only be the Jāvaka dynasty.

The establishment and length of rule of the Jāvaka rulers in Jaffna has been discussed at length above in view of the attempts made in some quarters,<sup>29</sup> to gloss over their rule in Jaffna, and emphasise a beginning of the Āriyacakravarti rule in the area from 1284 onwards. The above facts show, however, that while the establishment of a separate state in Jaffna took place in the middle of the 13th century, the ruling family was not of Tamil origin, and that it was not a Tamil state. It was a state which arose in the political conditions of the time, and in view of the fact that it was established by the Pāṇdyans, it was probably tributary to this south Indian kingdom.

It is in this context that the invasion and sack of Yāpahuva, and the rule of 12 years of the Sinhala area mentioned in the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* has to be evaluated. The Jāvaka kings were Buddhists in their religious faith.<sup>30</sup> When Candrabhānu invaded Sri Lanka for the second time in 1261 A.D., the *Pūjāvaliya* says that the Sinhala forces of Padi, Kurundi, Mānavatu and Gonadebera joined him, showing that because

of his Buddhist convictions, and because the Dambadeniya rulers were of recent origin, the Sinhala of the northern district supported him. In this background, when the kingdom of Yāpahuva was destroyed and the Pāṇdyans placed the Jāvaka kings of Jāffna as their viceroys in Sri Lanka, for twelve years, the latter would have had support among the Sinhala population, and the nature of their rule would thus have been no different to that of earlier rulers such as Sena, Guttika and Elāra, who had been rulers of foreign origin ruling through a local system. It is unlikely that the infant state of the Jāvakas of Jaffna had the necessary resources to establish their own administrative system in the former kingdom of Yāpahuva, and they would thus have governed through the existing administrative system. It is clear that the administration of the Sinhala areas by a Buddhist ruler of Malaysian origin whose capital was in the Jaffna peninsula in no way meant a Tamil domination of the Sinhala areas, except that in a remote sense the country was under the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom.

28. *Ceylon Coins and Currency*, Hl. W. Codrington, Reprinted, 1975, p. 74.

29. Pathmanathan (p. 157) says that "Jāvaka rule in North Ceylon was of short duration, and made little impression on the life and culture of the people". and is of the opinion (p. 178) that the Pāṇḍyan general Āriyacakravarti was deputed by the Pāṇḍyan king to govern Jaffna, and that he, or one of his kinsmen, assumed royal power when the Pāṇḍyan kingdom was destroyed by a Muslim invasion in 1310 A.D. As shown above, the duration of Jāvaka rule was from 1247 to 1293 at least, i.e. a period of 43 years, which is not all that short. Moreover, the *Cūlavamsa* (XC v46) and the *Daladā Sirita* (Ed. Valivitiye Sorata, Gunasena Press, 1970, p. 45), both near contemporary documents, are specific that Āriyacakravarti returned to Pāṇḍya, and gave the Tooth Relic to the Pāṇḍyan King.

30. The *Pūjāvaliya*, a work contemporary to the event, (p. 790) says that Candrabhānu falsely claimed to be a Buddhist. In reference to this second invasion, it says (p. 802) that Candrabhānu demanded the Tooth and Bowl Relics. In an inscription at Jaiya in Malaysia attributed to him (Liyanagamage, *The Decline of Polonnaruwa*... p. 134) the information given shows that he was a Buddhist, though the author of the *Pūjāvaliya*, because of the political problem posed by Candrabhānu, is reluctant to admit the genuineness of this king's religious convictions.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ROLE OF THE TAMIL POPULATION IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SRI LANKA (III)

In the previous chapter, reference has been made to a general named Āriyacakravarti, who led the Pāṇḍyan army in its attack on Yāpahuva in 1284 A.D. Pathmanathan has convincingly demonstrated that the Āriyacakravarti dynasty of Jaffna, who ruled the area till it was overthrown by the Portugese in 1619 A.D., was descended from this Pāṇḍyan general. He points out that the Āriyacakravartis were from a feudatory family of the Pāṇḍyas who exercised power in the area corresponding to the coastal areas of the present Rāmnād district in south India and that they seem to have been distinguished military leaders.<sup>1</sup> It was one of the members of this family who had led the Pāṇḍyan attack on on Bhuvēnakabāhu I of Yāpahuva, and, as shown in the previous chapter, this army had acted in collaboration with the forces of the Jāvaka ruler of Jaffna. This would have enabled the general Āriyacakravarti to establish political and personal connections with the Jāvaka royal family.

Such connections are shown in a legend quoted by Queyroz.<sup>2</sup> He says that when Kotte was the capital, a certain Panical, a foreigner who was a native of Malavar, came to Sri Lanka, and was raised to the rank of a modeliyar by Parākramabāhu. His son Chamba perumali was sent to govern Jaffna. In the course of time, some Brahmins, natives of Guzerat, called Arus, who claimed royal descent, came with the Nāyakas of Madura and created the pagoda of Ramnacor. One of them married the daughter of the king of Jaffna, and his descendants came to be heirs to that kingdom.

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1. Pathmanathan, ch VII.

2. Queyroz, Bk I, pp. 48-49.

It is obvious that Queyroz has here confused the sending of Sapumal Kumārāya to Jaffna in the reign of Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte in the middle of the 15th century with the immigration of the royal family which had ruled Jaffna at that time. The Āriyacakravarti dynasty had emerged long before the conquest of Jaffna by Sapumal Kumārāya, and the settlement of the Āriyar (Brahmins) at Rāmesvaram (Ramnagar) had taken place much earlier than the commencement of Nāyak rule at Madura. But, distorted though it is, the tradition quoted by Queyroz of an 'Aru', i.e., Āriya ruler marrying the daughter of the king of Jaffna seems to have an early origin. For example, a tradition quoted in the *Sekerasasekeramalai*, a Tamil astrological work of the 14th century, is similar, if not exactly parallel.<sup>3</sup> It says that Rama founded the temple of Ramesvaram, and he, sending 512 Brahmins, appointed two of them to sovereignty, granting them the title of the Āriya king of spotless scriptures. Common points between this tradition and the tradition quoted by Queyroz are the word Āriya, the connections with Rāmesvaram, and the statement that the Āriyas were of the Brahmin caste. Thus it is probable that the tradition quoted by Queyroz, of an Āriyacakravarti marrying the daughter of the king of Jaffna, may have had some basis in fact. It is conceivable that the general Āriyacakravarti, who was already acquainted with Sri Lanka, may have wished to expand his dominions in Rāmnād, which is on the Indian coast opposite the coast of Sri Lanka, to include those of the Jāvaka king of Jaffna when the latter passed away.

The actual date on which the Jāvaka kingdom of Jaffna passed into the hands of the Āriyacakravarti noblemen from Rāmnād is not known; but it is quite certain that so long as the Pāṇḍyan ruler Māravarman Kulasekera was alive, the king of Jaffna could not establish himself on a basis independent of the Pāṇḍyans. From 1268 A.D. onwards, Māravarman Kulasekera, with whom were associated four of his brothers, exercised a firm control over his kingdom,<sup>4</sup> and he certainly would not have allowed his feudatory ruler at Jaffna to break

away from his empire. There is evidence of an attempt made by the Jāvaka king of Jaffna to become independent; but it seems to have firmly suppressed by Kulasekera.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of this control exercised by Māravarman Kulasekera over his dominions, it is unlikely that the first of the Āriyacakravartis was able to establish himself as an independent ruler till at least 1308 A.D., which marks the last year of Kulasekera.<sup>6</sup> The death of the latter resulted in the breaking out of civil war between his sons, and in 1311 A.D., the country was invaded by Malik Kafur, the general of Ala-ud-din-Khalji, the Muslim Sultan of Delhi, who was conducting periodic raids into the Deccan. Subsequent to this, a Muslim Sultanate was established in Madura, the ancient capital of Pāṇḍya.<sup>7</sup> In this disaster that befell the suzerain power, the Pāṇḍyas, the Āriyacakravarti ruler would have established himself as an independent potentate. Thus the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna became an independent political entity only after 1308 A.D.

The *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* gives a history of twelve kings of the Āriyacakravarti dynasty, some of whom are mentioned in other Tamil works. According to Tamil tradition, they organized the conquest of the Vanni region, probably after they had established themselves on a firm footing. Possibly because the climate and soil of the Jaffna

<sup>5</sup> It has been pointed out earlier that Marco Polo, who came to Sri Lanka between 1293 and 1295, remarked that Sendemain and his people were tributary to nobody. As shown, the Jāvakas were established by the Pāṇḍyan rulers, and would have been Pāṇḍyan feudatories, and the above remark is explainable only on the basis that during the years 1293 and 1295 A.D. the Jāvakas were attempting to become independent. An inscription of a Jāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXI, p. 121) describes him as a second Rama in plundering Lanka. From the date of this inscription, Hultsch, the editor concluded that this ruler was the same person as Sonder Bandi Deva described by Marco Polo as one of the five brothers reigning in the Malabar country in the period 1293-1295 A.D. While there is no positive proof to this effect, it is possible that this was taken as a result of an invasion of Sri Lanka which occurred after Polo visited India. Such an invasion could only have been against the Jaffna kingdom, as there is no indication that the Sinhala kingdom was invaded around this time by a Sundara Pāṇḍya. When the remark made by Polo is considered, it is probable that the Jāvaka king attempted to free himself from the Pāṇḍyas, but was suppressed by Sundara Pāṇḍya, one of the brothers who were associated with Māravarman Kulasekera. Nilakantha Sastri, however (*The Pāṇḍyas*, p. 160) attributes this inscription to Jāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya who reigned around 1250 A.D.

<sup>6</sup> *The Pāṇḍyas*, p. 181.

<sup>7</sup> This summary of historical developments in India has been taken from *The Delhi Sultanate*, Ed. R.C. Majumdar, Bharata Vidya Bhavan Bombay. 1957, pp. 275-295.

<sup>3</sup> Pathmanathan, pp. 170-171.

<sup>4</sup> *The Pāṇḍyas*, Nilakantha Sastri, London, 1929, p. 181.

peninsula was not naturally conducive to the cultivation of rice, the Āriyacakravartis built up a strong navy, with which they conducted trade with south India, and even with Arabia.<sup>8</sup>

The internal history of the kingdom of Jaffna is not within the scope of this work; but in regard to its external relations, and its expansion within Sri Lanka, it has been claimed by some historians that "it is not impossible that Varotaya Singāiāriyaṇ exacted tribute as claimed by the *Cekerāsasekeram*, from either Parākramabāhu IV or his successors."<sup>9</sup> It has been urged that a work called the *Kurunāgala Vistaraya* mentions that Parākramabāhu IV, son and successor of Bhuvēnakabāhu II of Kurunāgala, shifted his residence to Kurunāgala because Anurādhapura was laid waste by the invasions of the people of Yāpapatuna, and that this implies that during his reign, the frontier provinces of the Kurunāgala kingdom was attacked by the forces of Āriyacakravarti.

There is absolutely no foundation for this statement, except for the above eulogistic statement in a Tamil astrological work. After the establishment of the Sinhala kingdom in the time of Parākramabāhu III (after it had been conquered by the Pāṇḍyans in 1284 A.D.) his cousin Bhuvēnakabāhu II defeated Parākramabāhu III and ruled from Kurunāgala. Parākramabāhu IV, the son of Bhuvēnakabāhu II, seems to have had effective control over the old Dambadeniya kingdom; but the northern portion seems to have been taken over, not by the king of Jaffna, but by a ruler called Vanni Bhuvēnakabāhu, who, after the death of Parākramabāhu IV, ruled from Kurunāgala. The southern portion of the kingdom was taken over by Vijayabāhu V, who seems to have been a member of the Dambadeniya dynasty. The kingdom of Vanni Bhuvēnakabāhu itself sub divided after his death between

two of his sons, one of whom ruled from Dādigama, and the other from Kurunāgala. But it must be emphatically stated that there is no evidence, either in Sinhala or Tamil literature (except the above vain-glorious statement), or in inscriptions, that the Sinhala kings paid tribute to the Āriyacakravarti rulers of Jaffna during the first half of the 14th century.<sup>10</sup>

The reference to the Parākramabāhu mentioned in the *Kurunāgala Vistaraya* as Parākramabāhu IV is completely misleading. This work has been written in the manner of a *Kaḍaimpota*<sup>11</sup> regarding Kurunāgala, and has still not been published. While it mentions a Parākramabāhu who had abandoned Anurādhapura because of rebellion by the people of Yāpapaṭṇal, nowhere in this work has been mentioned as Parākramabāhu IV of Kurunāgala. This identification is an invention of Pathmanathan, with the idea of proving a Tamil dominion over the Sinhala areas in the early 14th century. The *Kurunāgala Vistaraya* goes on to relate that in times more recent to Parākramabāhu, there were two rulers called Vanni Vijayabāhu and Bhuvēnakabāhu, and these rulers can be more probably identified as three Vanni rulers, the last two of whom appear in an inscription at Anurādhapura.<sup>12</sup>

On the contrary, the account of the Arab traveller Ibn Batuta, who came to Sri Lanka around 1344 A.D., provides evidence that the Sinhala king was not a subordinate of the Āriyacakravarti ruler. He arrived in Battala (Puttalam) and met Ayria Shakarwati (Āriyacakravarti) who was at that time engaged in the pearl fishery.<sup>13</sup> The account of Ibn Batuta shows that he to some extent admired the Āriyacakravarti

8. In a letter sent by Bhuvēnakabāhu I of Yāpahuva (1271-1284 A.D.) to the Sultan of Egypt, (J.R.A.S. (C.B.), Vol. XXVIII, pp 82-85) the king mentioned that he had been approached by the Yemenis for an alliance, but that he had rejected the proposal. On the other hand Ibn Batuta saw (Ibn Batuta, Tr. Mahdi Hussain, p. 217) ships of the Āriyacakravarti in south Indian ports headed for Yemen, showing that the Yemenis had made successful overtures to the king of Jaffna where they had failed with the Sinhala king.

9. Pathmanathan, p. 231.

10. Some of the events narrated above are not in accordance with the published works on the subject, such as the University History of Ceylon. The above is a summary of conclusions reached by the writer and submitted as a part of his Ph.D. Thesis to the University of Peradeniya in 1980.

11. An English translation of this document, which, like other *Kaḍaimpotas* found in Sri Lanka belong to a class of literature which describes various districts and towns, has been published by F.H. Modder in J.R.A.S. (C.B.), 1895, p. 35. A copy of this work in Sinhala typescript, prepared on the instructions of Mr. Palita Weeraman, Government Agent, Kurunāgala, presently in the writer's possession, has been referred in the above connection.

12. Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, 1980. See also E.Z. Vol. III pp. 286-288.

13. Ibn Batuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, Tr. H.A.R. Gibb, London, 1925,



ruler whom he met. But he is quite specific that the principal sovereign of the Island was the Kunār of Kunarkar, *i.e.* the ruler of Kurunāgala. He does not mention anywhere that the latter was paying tribute to the Āriyacakravarti ruler, which he would have done if in fact he was obtaining tribute from the other rulers of the Island, as he has described the Jaffna king in some detail. We can thus eliminate the possibility that the Jaffna kingdom, except along the western coast, had expanded outside its boundaries in the early 14th century.

But, during the middle of the 14th century, the king of Jaffna seems to have established a domination in the south for a short period of around 24 years. It has been pointed out in research elsewhere by the present writer<sup>14</sup> that the year 1350 A.D. marked the nadir of the mediaeval Sinhala kingdom built up by Vijayabāhu III and Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya. The political map of Sri Lanka would show Gampala and its immediate environments forming one kingdom; the only one, in fact, which was recognised by the chroniclers of the time as the dominion, of the consecrated ruler of the Island. Peradeniya and Kandy formed one principality, governed by Vikramabāhu, nephew of Bhuvanakabāhu, the king reigning at Gampala, who, after a civil war, had become independent of the Gampala kingdom. His frontiers merged into a third kingdom, Kurunegāla, governed by the descendants of Vanni Bhuvanakabāhu, a ruler mentioned in the chronicles as coming to power after Parākramabāhu IV. The Kurunāgala principality itself would have extended further north, receiving, when it could, the homage of the Vanniars of the north central province, who now constituted the only political authority in this which was once the heartland of the ancient Sinhala kingdom. In the western province, the Jalasti of Colombo, an Abyssinian ruler,<sup>15</sup> and around Beruwala, Khwaja Jahan, a Muslim ruler, governed independently.<sup>16</sup> Since the state governed by the consecrated ruler, with his capital at Gampala was so weak, it is likely that the provincial governors of Galle and Matara also would have governed independently, and in Ampāra district, which formed the heartland of ancient Rohana, an inscription at Magulmahāvihāra shows that the

area was governed by two brother kings called Parākramabāhu.<sup>17</sup> This atomisation of the once powerful Sinhala kingdom into a mass of petty principalities fighting among themselves would have proved an irresistible temptation for the king of Jaffna to essay a conquest of the southern areas.

The financing of their government would always have been a problem to the Āriyacakravarti kings of Jaffna. Though the skill and industry of the farmers of Jaffna even today compensates to some extent for the lack of natural fertility, there is sharp difference in the acreage of rice cultivated between the Maha (*i.e.* the season of the October rains) and the Yala (the season of the May rains) season. For example, in the years 1960/61 to 1961/62, selected purely at random, the average nett extent harvested in Jaffna district for Maha was 64,903 acres, and for Yala the nett extent harvested was 9,776 acres, *i.e.* a total of 73,869 acres per year. Comparable figures for Kurunāgala district was a total of 181,843 acres. The yield in Jaffna district, per acre, after a fertilizer application of 0.855 cwt per acre, was 31.36 bushels, while the yield in Kurunāgala, after a fertiliser application of 0.726 cwt per acre, was 33.25 bushels per acre.<sup>18</sup> While, admittedly, it is an exercise full of pitfalls to use modern day statistics to assess the soil fertility of the various regions of Sri Lanka during the mediaeval period, the above statistics are at least an indication that the natural fertility of the soil in the Jaffna area is less than in the south, in that with a greater application of fertiliser, the Jaffna district gives a lesser yield than Kurunāgala. Since the area cultivated was also much less than in the Sinhala districts, the yield from the land tax, the principal source of revenue in an ancient state, would have been correspondingly less in the Jaffna kingdom.

It was probably this lack of revenues that led the Jāvaka king of Jaffna, in 1284 A.D., to assist the Pāṇḍyan king in a war against Bhuvanakabāhu I of Yāpahuva; indeed, the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* is specific

14. Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, 1980.

15. *Ibn Batuta*, p. 256 ff.

16. J.R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. XXXII, p. 208.

17. E.Z. Vol. IV. pp. 161-169.

18. These statistics are calculated from the tables given in *Statistical Abstract of Ceylon*, 1967, published by the Department of Census and Statistics.

that the war was over the pearl fishery,<sup>19</sup> and it was probably for the same reason that it came to depend on trade to a large extent to earn its revenues. In this background, the anarchy that prevailed in the Sinhala kingdom around 1350 A.D. would have provided the Āriyacakravarti ruler of Jaffna a golden opportunity to improve his revenues.

The *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* states that in the time of Kunavira Singaiāriyan, the king of Kandy did not pay tribute, and that therefore, he wrested from Kandy a few districts.<sup>20</sup> The reference to Kandy can be taken as a general reference to the Sinhala kings, as the author of this work knew no other Sinhala king than the king of Kandy. This statement is supported by other evidence. The *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*<sup>21</sup> and the *Rājāvaliya*<sup>22</sup> state that the Āriyacakravarti ruler of Jaffna stationed tax collectors, and collected revenues, from the nine ports and all the districts. This last statement, rather than the statement in the *Yālpāna Vāipavamalai* gives the true nature of the conquest effected by the Āriyacakravartis in the middle of the 14th century.

The information given in an inscription at Mādavela, dated in the 3rd year of Vikramabāhu III of Gampala, i.e. 1359/60 A.D., is of crucial importance in analysing this situation, and may be quoted in full here. "By the agreement made on the eighth day of the waxing moon (*aṭavaka sandhānaya*) of the lunar month of unduvap in the third year of His Universal Majesya Sri Sangabo Sri Vikramabāhu, the Brahmans Tenuvara, Malamadala, Naduvalantaru (to whom) were entrusted the

19. Ypvm Tr. p. 22. This would have formed a noteworthy portion of revenue at the time. C.R. De Silva (*Portugese in Ceylon*, 1617-1638, H. W. Cave and Co. 1972, p. 190, fn 2) points out that the purchasing power of a xerafim, a unit of currency, used in the 17th century, was that it could buy, in 1630 A.D., among other things thirty to forty measures of rice. At present values, therefore, a xerafim (based on the price of rice) would thus be around Rs. 300 per xerafim. He further points out that the average income from the pearl fishery in the 16th century was 10,000 xerafims per fishery. Thus the income from the pearl fishery would have been around Rs. 3 million, a considerable revenue even by modern standards. Further, such sum would have formed a large portion of the revenues of an ancient state, which was lacking revenues from such sources as income tax, business turnover tax postal revenues, etc.

20. Ypvm Tr. p. 22.

21. *Alakesvara Yuddaya*, Ed. A.V. Suravira, Ratna Press, 1962, p. 19.

22. *Rājāvaliya*, Ed. A.V. Suravira, Lake House Investments, 1976, p. 207.

madigaya of (the districts of) Singaruvāna, Balavita, Mātala, Dumbara and Sagama tunraṭa by... perumāḷun vahanse..."<sup>23</sup> Firstly, it is clear that an agreement had been made by the Tamil prince. (the *perumāḷun vahanse* whose name has disappeared by the process of erosion from the inscription) and Vikramabāhu III, and that even after this agreement, Vikramabāhu continued to use the full titles of a sovereign ruler, i.e. Sirisangabo Cakravarti Svāmin. Secondly, we find this personage who bears the Tamil title of a prince disbursing the revenues of the Gampala kingdom for the maintenance of Brahmans with non Sinhala names. Thirdly, what was disbursed by the Tamil prince was the *madigaya*, which was apparently the customs duties charged on various goods that passed between districts.<sup>24</sup> This situation of a Tamil prince appropriating and disbursing the customs revenues of the Gampala kingdom is exactly paralleled by the statement in the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* and *Rājāvaliya* that the king of Jaffna collected revenues from the nine ports and all the districts of the kingdom of Gampala.

From the collation of these facts, certain conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the king of Jaffna did not apparently attempt to systematically conquer the southern areas of Sri Lanka, and maintain his own administrative system and his own bureaucracy. His own resources in armed forces and administrative personnel would have been too few for this. He would thus have reached an agreement with the Sinhala king (perhaps the *aṭavaka sandhānaya* mentioned in the Mādavela inscription) whereby the idea of an annual tribute, the hall mark of normal submission of a subordinate ruler, would have been extended to stationing tax collectors in the dominions of the Sinhala king, who were given the right to collect the internal and external customs revenue of the kingdom. It is unlikely that major armed forces were stationed

23. E.Z. Vol. V, Pt. 3, p. 464 ff. In the full translation of the inscription, the editor Dr. Godakumbara, basing himself on a reading of Paranavitana, gives the wording *sagama tunraṭa Sa (va) lupati Mar (rr) tandam perumāḷun vahanse madigaya pavarā*. It has been concluded that the name of the perumāḷun vahanse was Marrtāṇḍa, who has been identified as the Singaiāriyan ruler of Jaffna of that name. But in the actual stampage, neither the word *savulapati* nor the word *Marrtāṇḍa* can be read. But there is no doubt that the donor was a Tamil prince, as the title Perumāḷ in Tamil means prince, and this title is not met anywhere else in records of the Sinhala officialdom of the time.

24. Ibid.

within the kingdom.<sup>25</sup> In his own turn, he would have agreed to allow the Sinhala monarch to have the rights and status of a full sovereign ruler, and to have full control of the normal day to day administration. The objective of the king of Jaffna seems to have been, not to establish a political, administrative or social domination of the Sinhala areas but to devise a simple way of adding to the revenues of his impoverished kingdom.

Such a system, where the agents of another state were stationed inside a sovereign country, and collecting the taxes of the latter without the support of any notable military forces, would have been a unique and unprecedented situation, and could not have lasted long in any event. Niśśanka Alagakkonāra, minister of Vikramābāhu III, who was himself of mercantile origin, and whose mercantile interests would have been adversely affected by this system, built a fortress at Kotte near Colombo, and drove away the tax collectors from the Gampala kingdom.<sup>26</sup> The Āriyacakravarti king sent military forces to restore the *status quo*, but Alagakkonāra heavily defeated them, and drove them all the way back to Chilaw, and confined the Tamil kingdom to its boundaries. The *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*, which describes these events,<sup>27</sup> says that thereafter he cleansed the *Sāsana* in the year 1912 of the Buddhist era, i.e. 1368 A.D. A document issued in 1373 A.D., the *Niyangampāya Sannasa*, calls Niśśanka Alagakkonāra the destroyer of the Āriya soldiers, i.e. the soldiers of Āriyacakravarti.<sup>28</sup> Thus, certainly before 1373 A.D., and probably before 1368 A.D., Alagakkonāra had ejected the Tax collectors of the Āriyacakravarti king of Jaffna, and defeated the latter in a military action. We have earlier noted that Ibn Batuta specifically says that the principal sovereign of the Island, in 1344 A.D.,

was not Āriyacakravarti, but the king of Kurunāgala. Thus the thrust southwards of the king of Jaffna would have commenced after this year, and the period of economic domination of the Jaffna kingdom over the Sinhala areas would have lasted a maximum of twenty four years.

The revived power of the Gampala kingdom, under the enlightened administration of the Alagakkonāra family, the members of which took over the various ministries in the kingdom, succeeded in containing the kingdom of Jaffna within its original border, at least on the western littoral. Around 1380 A.D., after the death of Niśśanka Alagakkonāra, the Āriyacakravarti ruler essayed another conquest of the Gampala kingdom, on this occasion sending an army to attack Gampala overland, and another army by sea to attack Raigama, the hereditary fief of the Alagakkonāra family.<sup>29</sup> Both armies were defeated and destroyed, and the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* records that Vira Alakesvara, nephew of Niśśanka Alagakkonāra, who faced the attack at Raigama, burnt the Tamil ships,<sup>30</sup> thus rendering the Jaffna army immobile for several years to come, and probably dealing a heavy blow to its overseas trade.

Soon afterwards, the Jaffna kingdom itself was faced with a foreign attack, and it was, for many years, in no position to attempt any further domination of the southern areas of Sri Lanka. As mentioned earlier the Pāṇḍyan empire, which had been the leading power in south India at the beginning of the 14th century, had been destroyed by several attacks made by the Muslim Sultan of Delhi, and by 1336 A.D., a Muslim ruler had been established in the Pāṇḍyan capital at Madura. After political power had, in Delhi, passed into the hands of the Tughlukh dynasty, Muhammed bin Tughlukh (1326-1351 A.D.) attempted a systematic conquest of the Deccan; but after his death, the outlying provinces of the empire broke away, and there was established in the southern portion of the Deccan, a Muslim kingdom ruled by the Bahmani dynasty. South of the Bahmani kingdom, there arose at the same time the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara, which in time came to be the most

<sup>25</sup>. Both the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* and the *Rājāvaliya* state that Niśśank Alagakkonāra chased away the tax collectors of Āriyacakravarti, and do not say that he drove away any armed forces. The fact that Āriyacakravarti had to mount a full scale invasion launched from Jaffna to restore the *status quo* shows that he did not have any major military forces within the Sinhala kingdom.

<sup>26</sup>. Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, 1980.

<sup>27</sup>. Nks. p. 27.

<sup>28</sup>. *Sāhityaya*, Magazine of the Department of Cultural Affairs, 1982, p. 128.

<sup>29</sup>. See Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, 1980. where the present writer has pointed out that the invasion described in the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* was one that occurred before 1368 A.D., and the invasion described in the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* and the *Rājāvaliya* occurred around 1380 A.D.

<sup>30</sup>. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*, p. 21.

powerful Hindu state in southern India. It was often at war with its Muslim neighbour in the north; but in the tradition of the *digvijaya*, (universal conquest) which was the ideal of Hindu rulers, it expanded southwards as well. One of the states that fell before it in this expansion southwards was the Muslim State of Madura, once the capital of the Pāndyan kingdom. Once this was occupied, the turn of Jaffna, which was the immediate neighbour of the Sultanate of Madura, came next.

The Alampundi plates of Virupāksha, son of the Vijayanagara emperor Harihara II, dateable to 1385 A.D., states that he conquered, among others, the people of Ilam, i. e. Sri Lanka.<sup>31</sup> It is stated in the Ariyur Plates,<sup>32</sup> dated 1390 A.D. and in the Soraikkavur plates<sup>33</sup> of Virupāksha that he weighed himself in gold in the presence of the god of Rāmesvaram. The specific mention of these attacks on Ilam, i. e. Sri Lanka, shows that these statements were not mere hyperbole. Since it is necessary to identify the kingdom in Sri Lanka which received these attentions, the other expeditions made by Vijayanagara against Ilam (Sri Lanka) may be briefly listed here.

A Vijayanagara inscription dated in the saka era 1357, i.e. 1435 A.D., mentions that Lakkhanna Dandantya, the imperial Governor at Madura, fitted out forces for destroying several regions, including Iyalpanam and Ilam.<sup>34</sup> An inscription of saka 1362, i.e. 1440 A.D. credits the Vijayanagara Empire with the title of *Ilam tirai konḍa*, i.e. one who drew the tribute of Ilam.<sup>35</sup> Abdo Razzak, a Persian traveller who visited the court of Deva Raya II in 1443 A.D., says that in the previous year, Lakkhanna Dandantya had gone on a voyage to the frontiers of Ceylon.<sup>36</sup> In some of the inscriptions of a Arikesari Parākrama Pāndya, a Vijayanagara feudatory who was ruling from Tenkasi, it is said that Parākrama saw the backs of his enemies in battles he fought in, among other places, Singai and Anurai,<sup>37</sup> which

may be identified as Singainagār, the capital of the Āriyacakravartis of Jaffna, and Anurādhapura, under which was identified the Sinhala kingdom in general. These inscriptions are assignable to the period 1449 to 1455 A.D.

Several conclusions can be drawn from an analysis of the information given in these inscriptions. Firstly, the Vijayanagara records always drew a distinction between Ilam and the Sinhala kingdom, except in the inscription of Deva Rāya II, dated 1435 A.D., mentioned above. The Ariyur Plates, noted above, and a work called the *Nārāyanavilāsini*<sup>38</sup> say, for example, that Virupāksha planted a pillar of victory in Sinhala, the Ariyur plates thus drawing a distinction between Ilam and Sinhala. The above references in the inscriptions of Arikesari Parākrama Pāndya, who would have fought as a feudatory in the Vijayanagara army, also maintains this distinction between the Sinhala kingdom and other areas in Sri Lanka.

Secondly, comparison with the Sinhala records of the time shows that while there are references to clashes between the Sinhala kingdom and the Vijayanagara empire, the claims made by the latter of victories over the Sinhala kingdom seem to have been exaggerated. The *Nikāya Sangrahaya* says, in references to Virabāhu, who succeeded Bhuvēnakabāhu V of Gampala in 1390 A.D., that he destroyed enemies such as Damilas, Malalas and Yonakas.<sup>40</sup> The *Pājāvaliya* says, that the soldiers of Māgha of Kalinga included Malalas among others and it usually accepted that these were south Indian soldiers. Further, while the word Yonaka originally meant Greeks, by this time it meant Muslims. There is no evidence that the Gampala kingdom ever went to war with any Muslim Kingdom in India; but there is evidence that the Vijayanagara army had Muslim soldiers to give it a better training in archery.<sup>41</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the Malalas and Yonakas whom

<sup>31</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. III, p. 228.

<sup>32</sup> *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XVIII, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VIII, p. 300.

<sup>34</sup> A.R.E. No. 128 of 1901. *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. VII, No. 778.

<sup>35</sup> A.R.E. No. 144 of 1916.

<sup>36</sup> *A Forgotten Empire*, R. Sewell, London, 1900, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of the later Pāndyas, Nos. 2, 4, of 1917.

<sup>38</sup> *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 324, note 4.

<sup>39</sup> Nks. p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Pājāvaliya*, p. 790. See also 'the Decline of Polonnaruwa,.....' Amaradasa Liyanagamage, p. 106.

<sup>41</sup> *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 292. It is probable that the Vijayanagara emperors, for obvious reasons, preferred to use their Muslim troops against their non-Muslim enemies in the south rather than against their Muslim enemies in the north.



Virabāhu fought were troops of the Vijayanagara empire, in the course of the expedition that Virupaksha led against the Sinhala kingdom between 1385 and 1390 A.D., mentioned in the Alampundi plates and the Ariyur plates.

The expedition of Lakkhanna Dandanāyaka, made around 1435 A.D. is also mentioned in the Sinhala sources. The *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*, says that the armies of Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte, who was ruling the Sinhala kingdom around this time, defeated the forces of the Kannadi, i.e. Kanarese king.<sup>42</sup> Somaratna has shown that this was the expedition referred to in Vijayanagara inscriptions as having been made by Lakkhanna Dandanāyaka.<sup>43</sup> The references in the inscriptions of Arikesari Parākrama Pāndya probably refers to the fighting he had to engage in around 1450 A.D., when the forces of the kingdom of Kotte attacked the kingdom of Jaffna around this time.

Comparison with the Sinhala records show, therefore, that the victories claimed over the Sinhala kingdom by the Vijayanagara emperors were more eulogistic than actual, as they are very specific that the expeditions were defeated. Also, there is no evidence in Sinhala inscriptions or literary records that the kingdom was ever a tributary state of the Vijayanagara empire.

But a different fate attended the kingdom of Jaffna. As shown above, the reference to Ilam in the Vijayanagara inscriptions, distinct from Sinhala, shows that they were referring to a state other than the Sinhala state. In the context of the time, the references can only be to the kingdom of Jaffna. From the geographical point of view of the panygerists of the Vijayanagara empire, Ilam meant that portion of the Island opposite their own kingdom, i.e. the north western and northern region of the country. There is, moreover, definite evidence that the Jaffna kingdom was brought under the suzerainty of the Vijayanagara empire.

It has been already mentioned that the Sinhala sources refer to the Vijayanagara emperor as the Kannadi, i.e. Kanarese king. The

*Kokila Sandesaya* records that when Sapumal Kumāraya attacked Jaffna (around 1450 A.D.) the Kannadi garrison of Jāvakkakottai resisted stoutly.<sup>44</sup> While in the late Anurādhapura period, the Sinhala kings had Canarese mercenaries serving them,<sup>45</sup> it is clear that by the 15th. century, the term, as used in Sri Lanka, meant the Vijayanagara troops, and the above reference shows that the Vijayanagara soliders were stationed as a garrioso at Jāvakkakottai. Further, the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* records that when Sapumal Kumāraya attacked the capital of the Jaffna kingdom, a *yon vadakkayā*, i.e. an Indian Muslim, threatened to make short work of the prince by cutting him and his horse into two.<sup>46</sup> As shown earlier, the Vijayanagara army used Muslim troops, and the presence of this Muslim leader also shows that the troops of that empire were serving in the Jaffna kingdom. Further, the inscriptions of Arikersari Pārākrama, dateable to the period of the attack of Sapumal Kumāraya on Jaffna, may also be interpreted in their reference to the Sinhalas as assistance given by this Vijayanagara feudatory to his colleague feudatory, the king of Jaffna, against the Sinhalas, as there is no evidence from Sinhala records that they faced a south Indian attack around this time.

These facts show that the Vijayanagara attack on 'Ilam', i.e. the kingdom of Jaffna, succeeded where they had failed against the Sinhalas, and that they permanently brought the area under them as a feudatory kingdom, and stationed their own garrisons and troops within that kingdom. What would have happened was that the attack of the Vijayanagara empire would have caught the Jaffna state at one of its weakest moments. It had received a severe defeat in the south around 1380 A.D., with two of its armies, and its navy, destroyed. It would thus have been in no position to resist the attack of the Vijayanagara prince Virupāksha, whose state possessed far greater military resources than had either the Pāndyas, or the Muslim state of Madura which had succeeded it. Thus, from around 1390 A.D., the Jaffna kingdom seems to have become a feudatory of the Vijayanagara empire. The attacks mentioned in the Vijayanagara inscription in 1435 and 1440 A.D.

<sup>44</sup>. *Kokila Sandesaya*, v. 239.

<sup>45</sup>. Cv. LV, v. 12.

<sup>46</sup>. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup>. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup>. *Political History of the kingdom of Kotte*, G. P. V. Somaratna, Deepani Press, 1978, pp. 99-102.

suggest that the king of Jaffna occasionally attempted to throw off this yoke; but the Vijayanagara garrisons present in the area around 1450 A.D. shows that these attempts were not successful, and he would have continued to rule as a feudatory of the Vijayanagara empire, being reduced to this humble position from the pre-eminence of being the wealthiest and most powerful ruler in Sri Lanka referred to in the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* in the third quarter of the 14th century.

In the middle of the 15th century, the misfortunes of the king of Jaffna were compounded by an attack launched against him by the Sinhala king with his capital at Kotte. Virabāhu, after he succeeded Bhuvēnakabāhu V of Gampala as its ruler in 1390 A.D., went to war with his brother Vira Alakesvara at Raigama and drive the latter out of the country. However, after the death of Virabāhu round 1399 A.D. Vira Alakesvara returned and governed the country from Kotte until he was taken prisoner to China. A prince called Parākramabāhu VI established himself at Kotte around 1410 A.D., and made it the most powerful and pre-eminent kingdom in Sri Lanka, and in order to realize in practice the dream of every Sinhala ruler of governing the whole Island, he, around 1450 A.D., sent an army to conquer Jaffna.

It is possible that this victories over the expeditions sent against him by the Vijayanagara emperors made him sufficiently confident of being able to challenge that empire by subjugating one of its feudatories. Also, by this time, the able Deva Rāya II was dead, and had been succeeded by the weaker Mallikarjuna, and the Sinhala king may have thus taken advantage of the weakness of the suzerain power of Jaffna. He sent one of his adopted sons, Sapumal Kumārāya, to Jaffna, and the latter defeated Kankasuriya, the reigning Āriyacakravarti ruler, who fled abroad to India, though his two brothers and his uncle were captured.<sup>47</sup>

Thereafter, Jaffna seems to have been governed by Sapumal Kumārāya until at least 1469 A.D., when he left the region to capture Kotte from Jayavira Parākramabāhu, grandson and successor of Parākramabāhu

<sup>47</sup>. The above events are a summary of the findings of G.P.V. Somaratna, in his *Political History of the kingdom of Kotte*.

VI. The *Yālpāna Vaipavāmalai* refers to a rule by a Vijayabāhu for a period of 17 years after Kanakasuriya had fled abroad; but this seems to be a reference to the person whom Sapumal Kumārāya left behind as governor when he marched on Kotte; the reference to the rule of 17 years was obviously a reference to that of Sapumal Kumārāya himself.

The *Yālpāna Vaipavāmalai*, in its reference to Vijayabāhu, gives a gloomy picture of rule, where the Tamil population was harassed, and made to imitate Sinhala customs, manners and dress. This chronicle however, was written nearly 300 years later. Contemporary sources indicate that Sapumal Kumārāya, who was regarded by the Sinhalas of the time as a national hero, governed Jaffna, on the whole, with understanding and sympathy. Even today, the ordinary people of Jaffna point to Kodikāmam, not with resentment, as the place where Sapumal Kumārāya planted the Sinhala flag.<sup>48</sup> A verse appended to the *Kayilayāmalai* attributes the founding of the Kandasāmy temple at Nallur to a Bhuvēnakabāhu,<sup>49</sup> and a *kattiyam* recited daily at this temple refers to the founder as Srisanghabodhi Bhuvēnakabāhu of the Suryavamsa.<sup>50</sup> There is no doubt that this is a reference to Sapumal Kumārāya, who came to the throne of Kotte under the name of Bhuvēnakabāhu VI. The temple would thus have been built immediately after the death of Parākramabāhu VI and the accession, two years later, of Bhuvēnakabāhu VI at Kotte, as this king counted his regnal years to include the period after the death of Parākramabāhu VI and the reign of the latter's grandson. Sapumal Kumārāya marched to the conquest of Kotte with the aid of military forces from Jaffna, and it was probably this, along with the use of Jaffna officials in his administration, that led to serious revolts against him. All these facts show that he gained the genuine admiration of the people of Jaffna, and certainly does not confirm him as the tyrant pictured in the *Yālpāna Vaipavāmalai*.

<sup>48</sup>. This information was given to me by Mr. N. Vamadeva, S.L.A.S., former Commissioner of Marketing Development.

<sup>49</sup>. Pathmanathan, p. 281.

<sup>50</sup>. Ibid, p. 282.

It is probably as a result of the rebellions faced by Bhuvanakabāhu VI that the hold of the Kotte kingdom on Jaffna weakened, permitting Kanakasuriya to return to Jaffna and capture the kingdom. But it is not certain as to whether he continued to be a vassal of the Vijayanagara empire. Mallikarjuna, though faced with a host of enemies, kept the empire intact; but the reign of Virupaksha II, who succeeded Mallikarjuna in 1465 A.D., saw confusion and disorder with the Bahmani Sultan and the Gajapati of Orissa making inroads into the empire.<sup>51</sup> It is unlikely that the emperor would have been able to either assist Kanakasuriya to recover his dominions, or to maintain control over Jaffna thereafter. It is probable, therefore, that Kanakasuriya recovered his former kingdom on his own. But neither he, nor his immediate successors, would have been able to engage in any expansionist policies southwards for the time being. The Sinhala kingdom, though rent by internal dissension, was nevertheless still the most powerful state with the king of Kotte successfully quelling the various revolts that broke out against him. By 1505 A.D., the Vijayanagara empire had recovered, and the Italian traveller Ludovico De Varthema, giving an account of the empire as it existed between 1503 and 1507 A.D., says that its frontiers extended as far as Sri Lanka.<sup>52</sup> It is probable, therefore, that in the early years of the 16th century, the Jaffna kingdom once again became a feudatory state of the Vijayanagara empire. But, as shown later, it is possible that the king of Jaffna established a dominant position over the Vanniars in the northern and a part of the north central province during this time.

The history of the kingdom of Jaffna becomes obscure from this point onwards. The *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* records the existence of only two more rulers after Kanakasuriya, i.e. Pararāsasekeran and Cankily, and says that in the time of the latter the Portuguese conquered Jaffna. But, since it is known from Portuguese sources that the conquest of Jaffna was in 1619 A.D., and it is known that Kanakasuriya lived in the middle of the 15th century, it is obvious that this chronicle has left out a period of nearly a century. Much research is necessary,

therefore, to deduce a coherent account of the internal history of Jaffna during the 16th century. Such an analysis in depth is outside the scope of this work; but in order to deduce the true position of this kingdom vis-a-vis the other states in the Island, it is necessary to obtain a brief idea of this kingdom's history in the 16th century.

Some idea of this is obtainable from Portuguese writers, especially Queyroz. A Xaga rāja is mentioned as ruling Jaffna in 1543 A.D., who is more fully described elsewhere as Xagarāja Xāgara Pandāra, probably Sekārāsa Sekera Bandāra).<sup>53</sup> The Portuguese viceroy Don Constantine De Braganza attacked him in 1560 A.D., and the Jaffna ruler sued for peace; but the Viceroy had to hastily evacuate Jaffna as a result of revolt there.<sup>54</sup> The possession of Mannar, however, passed permanently into Portuguese hands after this campaign, and thus ended the long domination of the king of Jaffna over the western littoral up to Mundel in the south, along with the profits of the pearl fishery of the area.

Sekerāsasekeran, sometime after this campaign, was driven out by his subjects; but apparently regained the kingdom, as in 1563 A.D. he, "who was once more in power"<sup>55</sup> sent forces to assist Māyādunne, king of Sitāvaka, who was at that time besieging Kotte. But, in the interim, there seems to have been some confusion. Queyroz records that in the time of Jorge De Mello De Castro, captain of Mannar, (1562 A.D.) the people of Jaffna imprisoned their ruler, Cachim Neyra,<sup>56</sup> but that the latter succeeded in regaining his throne. Castro got him assassinated, and set up a Periyapulle on the throne, and the latter was succeeded by Perea Rāja Pandāra.<sup>57</sup> Cachim Neyra, who was imprisoned by his people, is described by Queyroz as a person who had taken the kingdom belonging to one of his kinsmen, and thus he seems to have been a member of the Āriyacakravarti family. He cannot be the same as Sekerāsasekeran, who was driven out by his subjects, as the latter was the legitimate, if unpopular, king of Jaffna. It is probable, therefore,

<sup>51</sup>. *A Forgotten Empire*, Sewell, p. 95 ff.

<sup>52</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>. Queyroz, Bk ii, p. 242, fn. and 244. Also, p. 351.

<sup>54</sup>. J.R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. XX, Da Couto, p. 181 ff.

<sup>55</sup>. Queyroz, Bk. iii. p. 418, 395.

<sup>56</sup>. *Ibid.*, Bk. i p. 49.

<sup>57</sup>. *Ibid.*

that in the confusion that followed the ejection of Sekerāsasekeran, Cachim Neyra, another member of the royal family, usurped the throne and there was considerable political trouble in Jaffna.

Queyroz identified Perea Rāja Pandāra, who succeeded Periyapulle, as Puvirāja Pandāran, who, around 1593 A.D., attacked the Portuguese fort at Mannar.<sup>58</sup> He would be the same as Puvirāja Pandāran, who is described as the illegitimate son of Sekerāsasekeran, both of whom the people of Jaffna drove out.<sup>59</sup> If so, the reign of Periyapulle would not have lasted long, and the throne would have been reoccupied by Sekerāsasekeran by 1563 A.D., in which year he sent assistance to Māyādunne of Sitāvaka. The exact date of the death of Sekerāsasekeran is not known, but would be between this year and 1593 A.D.

In this year, the Portuguese attacked the Jaffna kingdom, killed Puvirāja Pandāran, and put on the throne a prince called Hendramanasingha, who assumed the throne name of Pararāsasekeran. He seems to have been the son of Periyapulle whom Castro had placed on the throne of Jaffna after he had got Cachim Neyra assassinated. What is important in this episode is that from this year onwards, the Jaffna kingdom became a client state of the Portuguese government of the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka, with Roman Catholic clergy being allowed to practise their religion freely within the area. In 1619 A.D., Cankily Kumāra, a nephew of this king, usurped the throne; whereupon the Portuguese invaded Jaffna, and abolished the kingdom, absorbing the area into their direct dominions.

In summary, therefore, the kingdom of Jaffna as a separate political unit commenced only in the middle of the 13th century; but it was not a Tamil kingdom ruled by Tamil speaking kings. It was only after 1308 A.D. that it became an independant kingdom, and only around 1300 A.D. that the Tamil Āriyacakravartis came to govern it. For the first half century of its existence, it was a feudatory of the kingdom of the Pāṇdyas, a south Indian state, and from 1360 onwards, i.e. from the rise of the

Vijayanagara empire, it was a feudatory state of the latter. From 1450 onwards, for a period of around 20 years it was a part of the Sinhala kingdom of Kotte, and even after it became free from Kotte due to the internal turmoil in the latter kingdom, it once again became a feudatory of the Vijayanagara empire. From 1560 onwards, its hold on the western littoral was lost, and in 1593 A.D. it became a client kingdom of the Portuguese, ceasing to exist altogether in 1619 A.D. Thus, in terms of external sovereignty, it was under various kingdoms for the major portion of the period of its existence.

But the question of external sovereignty apart, it had its own history of expansion within the Island. As shown, in 1284 A.D. itself, the boundaries on the western coast extended as far south as Mundel, and for a quarter of a century, in the middle of the 14th century, it exercised a form of economic domination over the Sinhala kingdom. It is necessary, in view of the various political claims made in modern times, to examine in depth the boundaries of the mediaeval kingdom of Jaffna.

58. Ibid, Bk i, p. 49, as read with Bk iii, pp. 445; 450-456.

59. Queyroz Bk. iii, p. 395



## CHAPTER VII

### THE BOUNDARIES OF THE KINGDOM OF JAFFNA

It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that the original kingdom of Jaffna was established by a Malaysian, Candrabhānu, who had been defeated by the forces of Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya.<sup>1</sup> This Malaysian family was re-established in the Jaffna peninsula once again around 1261 A.D. by the forces of the Pāṇḍyan king Jaṭāvarman Vira Pāṇḍya. Around 1284 A.D., war broke out between the Pāṇḍyas and Bhuvēnakabāhu I of Yāpahuva, and the Jāvaka king of Jaffna, as shown in the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai*,<sup>2</sup> assisted the Pāṇḍyas. According to the latter work, the quarrel between the Sinhala king and the Jaffna king was over the pearl fishery. It is obvious that the very limited agricultural resources of Jaffna, from which the land tax, the principal revenue of an ancient government was derived, made itself felt right at the beginning, forcing the Jaffna ruler to look elsewhere for revenues.

Thus, while after 12 years from the destruction of Yāpahuva, the kingdom was given back by the Pāṇḍyas to the Dambadeniya dynasty, there is a probability that the pearl fishery was retained by the king of Jaffna. In 1344 A.D., when the Arab traveller Ibn Batuta came to Sri Lanka, he found Āriyacakravartī at Battala (Puttalama) engaged in the pearl fishery.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the king of Jaffna of 1344 A.D. was in possession of the pearl banks of the north western coast of Sri Lanka strongly suggests that the king who reigned in 1284 A.D., and who went to war over this same pearl fishery, had retained it from this year onwards. The actual extent of this domination over the north western coast can also be deduced. Ibn Batuta says that a town called

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1. See chapter V.

2. Ypvm Tr. p 22.

3. Ibn Batuta p, 254.

Munar Mandali lay at the extreme limits of the dominions of Āriyacakra varti,<sup>4</sup> and this town is identifiable with Mundal, north of Salāvata (Chilaw). Further, in 1368 A.D., when Niśṣanka Alagakkonāra drove back the army of Āriyacakra varti from the Gampala kingdom, the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* records that he captured certain forts along the coast, the northernmost of which was Salāvata.<sup>5</sup> Don Constantine De Braganza, in 1560 A.D., captured Mannar, which shows that Mannar was in the possession of the king of Jaffna.<sup>6</sup> It is clear from these facts that the boundary of the kingdom of Jaffna extended along the western coast of the Island as far south as Mundel. But, as shown earlier,<sup>7</sup> the spread of the existence of Tamil names in the area shows that from Mundel to Puttalama, the control of the Jaffna kingdom into the interior was no more than two miles, and from Puttalama to the southern boundary of the Vilpattu santuary, no more than four miles.

However, the boundaries of the kingdom of Jaffna in the interior of the Island, and on the eastern coast, is much less clear. Since this question is tied up with the question of the extent and location of the Vanni kingships, it is necessary to discuss briefly the origin and spread of these at this point.

Indrapala has pointed out that the Vanniar was the name of a military caste in south India, and that Vanniar soldiers were brought into Sri Lanka at the end of the 12th century and the first quarter of the 13th century by south Indian and other aspirants to the throne.<sup>8</sup> He suggests that the term Vanniar became generally applicable to various petty chiefs after chieftains of the Vanniar caste had established themselves in the northern part of Sri Lanka. Pathmanathan holds a slightly different view.<sup>9</sup> He points out that the term *Vanniar pattu* was used in south India to denote a land holding held by Vanniar regiments on service tenure, and that the term Vannia (r) nayan signified the rank of a feudatory chieftain, which shows that Vanni meant an administra-

tive division in south India. He suggests two explanations; the first is that there developed in Sri Lanka the practice of placing the administration of territorial divisions under the charge of Vanniar regiments and their leaders. The second is that pockets of local authority which gradually developed into autonomous principalities as a result of the decline of central authority came to be referred to as Vannis when they were occupied and administered by Tamil warriors belonging to the Vanniar community. It is probable that there is an element of truth in the view of both these scholars, as Pathmanathan's theory does not explain as to how Sinhala chiefs came to be called Vanniars. It may be that the original term may have applied to the Tamil generals who had set themselves up in authority in the northern and north central provinces after the anarchy in Polonnaruwa that commenced after 1186 A.D., and that the term was adopted by the Sinhala chiefs who had similarly set themselves up as a result of this same anarchy.

However, it is certain that this process of the growth of the Vanniar must have occurred by the turn of the 13th century A.D. The *Cūlavamsa* refers to Vijayabāhu III as having attained the dignity of a king of the Vanni,<sup>10</sup> and the *Daladā Pūjāvaliya* refers to his original capital, not as Dambadeniya, but as Palābatgala.<sup>11</sup> Since Vijayabāhu seems to have been consecrated in 1230 A.D.,<sup>12</sup> his becoming a Vannirāja would have been earlier to this.

There are two features noticeable about this spread of the Vanni kingships in the 13th century. Firstly, while in the 19th century, the Vanni consisted of a definite geographical area,<sup>13</sup> in the 13th century,

4. Ibid, p. 256.

5. (Ibn Batuta) p. 256 ff.

6. J.R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. XX, p. 181 ff.

7. See chapter III

8. *Ceylon Journal of Humanities*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 111-140.

9. Pathmanathan, Pp. 122-132.

10. Cv. LXXXI, v.11.

11. *Daladā Pūjāvaliya*, Ed. Batugampala Saranasara Thera, Matura, 1954, p. 63. Probably this is the Palābatgala which is a village in Ratnapura District.

12. *The Decline of Polonnaruwa*,... Amaradasa Liyanagamage, p. 97.

13. In the *Manual of the Vanni Districts*. (Colombo, 1895) J.P. Lewis describes the Vanni as bound on the north by the lake of Jaffna, on the south by the Aruvi river, and the district of Nuvarakalaviya, east by the district of Trincomalee and on the west by the district of Mannar. Oswald Brodie, in his *Account of the District of Nuvarakalaviya* (J.R.A.S. (C.B.) 1856, p. 137 ff) describes the northern boundary of Nuvarakalaviya, i.e. the southern boundary of the Vanni as a line drawn from six miles east of Arippe, through a point 95 miles south of Jaffna, to a point 25 miles west of Trincomalee.

the Vanni kingdoms had a much broader spread. As pointed out earlier, Vijayabahu III, when he started his career, was a Vanni ruler at Palābatgala, in the Sabaragamuva province. The *Pūjāvaliya*, referring to the events around 1261 A.D., says that the Vanni rulers of Pihitirata (Rajarata) rendered obeisance to Vijayabāhu, regent of Dambadeniya, when he came to Anurādhapura,<sup>14</sup> and that similarly, the Vanni rulers of Rohana sent him assistance in his attempt to hold the Ordination ceremony<sup>15</sup> at Dāstota. In other words, the Vanni kingdoms had spread over the North central province (the ancient Rajarata), the present Sabaragamuva Province, and to the area south of the Galoya, and, inferentially, to the north of it as well.

Secondly, the writers of the 13th century drew a distinction between the Sinhala vanniār and the Tamil vanniār. The *Pūjāvaliya* says that Vijayabāhu III took into his protection powerful Sinhala who were dwelling as *Mahāvannin* (*Demala bhayin e e tānhi maha vanniva vasanā bali sinhalayan tamahata vasangavan gene*).<sup>16</sup> Again, the same work says that Parākramabāhu II brought under his influence the Sinhala *mahāvannin* who could not be subjugated even by his father.<sup>17</sup> Even in the 19th century the Vanni ruler of Anurādhapura was a Sinhala.<sup>18</sup> In escaping from the Kandyan kingdom in 1678 A.D., Robert Knox crossed the Kerenda oya (Kurundu oya?) and entered the Malabar i.e. the Tamil country, but refers to the prince of this people as Wannionunay, i.e. Vanni Unnāhe.<sup>19</sup> The last, being a Sinhala word which apparently described the Vanni ruler of the time, shows that the ruler himself was a Sinhala. Thus, whatever may be the origin of the Vanni kingships, by the 13th century itself, various petty chiefs even among the Sinhala styled themselves as Vanni kings.

It is in this background that we must analyse the traditional Tamil account of the settlement of the Vanniars in the former *Uttaradesa* of the kingdom of Anurādhapura. The principal account of this settlement of the Tamil Vanniār is found in the *Vaiyaapātāl*, a work

written in the 16th century. After giving a confused account of the founding of the kingdom of Jaffna, reminiscent of the Vijaya legend, it says that Ceyatunka Vira Varacinkan sent emissaries to Madura, his original home, to inform his uncle that he desired to marry the daughter of the latter.<sup>20</sup> The ruler of Madura summoned Vanniars of royal lineage, and sent them with his daughter to Sri Lanka. The king of Jaffna instructed the Vanniār to conquer the region of Atakkaparru, and rule it as tributaries to the king. Realising their inability to do this with their existing numerical strength, they sent emissaries inviting other chiefs such as Ilancinka Māppanan and others to come to Sri Lanka, bringing with them as many persons and castes as possible from Madura and other areas. A number of chiefs responded to this invitation, and set out on the conquest. As a result of this campaign, Titaviracinkan became the chief of Karikūttamalaipattu, four other chiefs dislodged the canrar and valayar and occupied Mullivalai; Ticaiantar came to Melpattu and killed the two chiefs of the Vetar; Cinvaku conquered Merkulumalai and Kulakkamulai the Brahmin Capatittu conquered Tiriya; three other chiefs settled at Kaccay; Ancinkam settled at Kattukulampattu; Cinkavaku conquered Trincomalee; Mamukan conquered Verugal and Tampalakāmam, and Mayilan conquered Kottiyāram.

While this tradition in the *Vaiyaapātāl* gives the conquest of the Vanni by the king of Jaffna, other traditions give a different version regarding the Vanniār domination of Trincomalee. The *Konecar Kalvettu*, which records the legends and traditions concerning the Konesvara temple at Trincomalee, says that Vararamatevan, son of Manuniticolan, and his son Kulakottan, having heard of the sanctity of the site, came to Trincomalee, bringing craftsmen, and constructed the temple. He brought a chief from Madurai, and raised him to the rank of Vannipan, and ordered that the accounts of the temple should be maintained by the Vannianar of Kattukulampattu.<sup>21</sup> The *Dakshinakailāsapurānam* says that the name of Kulakottan was Coḍaganga,<sup>22</sup> and Pathmanathan has credibly identified him<sup>23</sup> with a Coḍaganga, whose frag-

14. *Pūjāvaliya* p. 802.

15. *Pūjāvaliya*, p. 804.

16. Ibid, p. 785.

17. Ibid, p. 789.

18. *Manual of the North Central Province*, R. W. Levers, Col. 1891, p. 44.

19. *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, Robert Knox, Ceylon Historical Journal, Vol VI, Nos. 1-4, p. 266.

20. *Vaiyaapātāl*, Ed. J. N. Arulprakasan, Col. 1953, 20 ff.

21. *Konecar Kalvettu*, Ed. Canmukarattina Aiyar, 1909, Jaffna, p. 2-6; 40-42.

22. *Dakshinakailāsapurānam*, Ed. P. P. Vaitilingam Tecikar, Point Pedro, 1916, preface; v. 8.

23. Pathmanathan, p. 142.

mentary inscription, in Sanskrit, has been found at Trincomalee, and who landed there, according to the data given in the inscription in 1223 A.D.<sup>24</sup>

Pathmanathan has correctly pointed out that the specificity of these traditions suggest that they were not myths, but based on historical facts. What is important for our present purpose is that a comparison of these traditions with other available data indicate approximately the time at which the Jaffna kingdom expanded into the Vanni area, and thus indicates also the possible boundary of this kingdom in the interior.

The above facts show that, well into the second half of the 13th century there were Sinhala Vanniar in the Rajaraṭa area, as it is unlikely that the Vanni kings of the Pihitirata mentioned in the *Pūjāvaliya* can be any other than Sinhala Vanniar. The Sinhala population was present still further northwards. The *Pūjāvaliya*, a document contemporary to the event, says that when (around 1261 A.D.) the Jāvaka king Candrabhānu invaded the Dambadeniya kingdom for the second time, he gathered Sinhala forces from Kurudu, Padi, Mānavatu and Gonadebera (*Kurudu-Padi-Gonadebera-paṭan ādi tūnhi sinhala balasene*) into his forces.<sup>25</sup> Padi has been identified as Kuncuttu Korale and Kaḍḍukulampattu in Trincomalee district, and Kurundi has been identified as Karikuttamalai south in Vavuniya district. Gona-debera is obviously Trincomalee. It may be remembered that, of these places, Karikuttamalai pattu and Kaḍḍukulampattu were areas supposed to have been conquered in the wave of Vanniar forces described in the *Vaiyaapāṭal*. It is clear, therefore, that even in the second half of the 13th century, these areas were under the Sinhala Vanniar, and that if the conquest described in the *Vaiyaapāṭal* is correct, it would have occurred after the reign of the Jāvaka dynasty of Jaffna, i.e. after at least 1294 A.D.

An inscription at Kankuveli, Trincomalee district, records a grant made by a chief called Malayil Vannianar, and the headmen of seven villages to the shrine at Konaināṭar. Paleographically, it has been

to the late 14th century<sup>27</sup> Malayil may stand for Tirukunamalai, in which case, this record is that of the Vanni ruler of Trincomalee. It is notable that the land grant is made by this Vanni ruler without mentioning a sovereign. As shown, the *Vaiyacpāṭal* tradition is to the effect that Trincomalee was also conquered by the wave of Vanniars who had been sent by the king of Jaffna. The existence of Sinhala Vanniar till the end of the 13th century, and the existence of an independent Vanni chieftain in Trincomalee at the end of the 14th century, shows that the action described in the *Vaiyaapāṭal* had not taken place, at least in the Trincomalee area, until after 1400 A.D.

At the latter end of the chronological scale, one must look for the point where the Vanni was first identified as a geographical unit, as one can concede that this took place as a result of the subjugation of the Vanni by the kings of Jaffna. The earliest known references to the Vanni as a geographical area is in the Memoir of the Dutch Governor Ryckloff Van Goens. Writing in 1658 A.D., he says that the kingdom of Jaffnapāṭam included the Vanni, which commenced with Coddikulampattu three or four miles to the north of Mantota and "continuing its circle to the point of Calmoney opposite Colombuturai...running eastwards across the country until it reaches the sea...then stretching southeastwards to Trincomalee and westwards...again to Calpentyn, Mantota and Mannar".<sup>28</sup> It is probable, therefore, that the area was subjugated before this date, and before 1619 A.D., when the kingdom of Jaffna ceased to exist.

While, at its full extent, the kingdom of Jaffna would have extended thus to the southern border of the Vanni described above,<sup>29</sup> its boundary was never a firm line of demarcation. There are traditions in the *Yālpāna Vaipavamalai* itself of Vanniars rebelling against the kings of Jaffna, though, in view of the confused nature of this chronicle, no chronological framework is possible regarding these events. It records that the Vanniars gave trouble in the reign of Marttandū Singai Ariyan

<sup>24</sup> E. Z. Vol. V, Pt. 1, pp. 170-173.

<sup>25</sup> *Pūjāvaliya*, p. 802.

<sup>26</sup> *Kadainpot Vimarshanaya*, H.A.P. Abeywardene, Govt. Press 1978, p. 105.

<sup>27</sup> *Cintanai*, Vol. II, pp. 37-40, K. Indrapala, *Kankuvelikalvettu*.

<sup>28</sup> *Memoir of Ryckloff Van Goens*, Tr Edward Nelms, Col. 1932, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> See fn. 13.



but that the king kept them in check. Varodaya Singaiāriyan found his Vanniar feudatories instigating his Sinhala subjects to rebel against him. When Virodaya Singaiāriyan was absent in the Pāndya country, the Vanniars revolted against him. This uncertain loyalties of the Vanniars continued as late as the 17th century, even after the fall of the Jaffna kingdom. Knox records that, while the Vanni chief who lived across the Kurundu oya was under the Dutch, (and we can presume thus that this division was governed by the Jaffna king when the kingdom existed), he lived more in fear of the king of Kandy.<sup>30</sup> Very probably the Vanniars would have given their loyalty to either the Jaffna king on their north, or the Sinhala king on their south, depending on who was the more powerful. Thus, the boundaries of the kingdom of Jaffna in the interior of the Island would have been very fluid.

There is evidence that the Trincomalee region belonged, if it belonged at all, to the kingdom of Jaffna for a short period of time only. Queyroz quotes the last will of Dharmapala, king of Kotte, in which he bequeathed his kingdom to Portugal, probably made shortly before his death in 1597 A.D., that for the last hundred years, i.e. between 1400 and 1500 A.D., the Vanniars of Panama, Yāla, Vellasa, Pālugama, Kottiyār and Trincomalee had acknowledged the rule of the king of Kotte.<sup>31</sup> With our grater knowledge than Queyroz of the events of the 14th century, this suzerainty of Kotte can be thrown back still further. The Sinhala sources mention that before the conquest of Jaffna around 1450 A.D., the forces of Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte subjugated the Vanniars.<sup>32</sup> Historians have assumed that the reference to the conquest of the Vanniars by Parākramabāhu VI was confined to those Vanniars whose principalities existed on the route to Jaffna,<sup>33</sup> and did not include those on the eastern littoral. But the above, information from Quayroz shows that at the end of the 15th century when the Kotte kingdom was in dissarray, these areas belonged to Kotte, which strongly suggests that at the height of its power under

Parākramabāhu VI, it could and did exercise effective suzerainty over the eastern regions. It is very probable that the Vanniars of Trincomalee and Kottiyar regions submitted to the suzerainty of the Kotte kingdom when their colleagues in the present Vanni districts were forced to yield to superior military might around 1450 A.D. In other words, the Trincomalee area, which as we have seen, does not seem to have been under the king of Jaffna in 1500 A.D., acknowledged the suzerainty of Kotte, probably around 1450 A.D., certainly around 1500 A.D. Thus the control of the kingdom of Jaffna over Trincomalee (if indeed it ever existed) did not last for more than a century at the very most; it was more probably no more than fifty years. It must be emphasised too that the Batticaloa region, which, as shown elsewhere, was colonised by Tamil speaking peoples close to the 16th century, was never under, or formed part of, the kingdom of Jaffna.

The expansion of the kingdom of Jaffna, therefore, is not the somewhat simplistic process (described but not analysed by historians) of a wave of invaders from the Vanniar caste of south India attacking the present Vanni at the behest of the king of Jaffna, and holding it thereafter as a fief of Jaffna. The above analysis shows that in all probability, the kingdom of Jaffna did not expand outside the peninsula till the end of the 13th century, A.D., except along the western littoral. The Vanniar domination of Trincomalee took place in the 13th century independent of the rule of Jaffna, and inscriptional evidence shows that till the 15th century, this independence continued, if indeed it was ever lost. Thus, if the tradition in the *Vaiyaappāṭal* of a group of Vanniars conquering the Vanni in a wave of conquest is correct. (and this is questionable, as other data shows that Trincomalee, included in the description, was independent till the end of the 14th century), this wave of conquest would have occurred in the late 14th or early 15th century, i.e. approximately between 1375 and 1450 A.D. Even after this, the boundary was not static. The Trincomalee area was lost to

<sup>30</sup>. C.H.J. Vol. VI, p. 266.

<sup>31</sup>. Queyroz, Bk. iii. p. 528.

<sup>32</sup>. *Political History of the kingdom of Kotte*, G.P.V. Somaratna, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>33</sup>. Pathmanathan, p. 268.

the king of Kotte after the latter had conquered Jaffna, and, as the last will of king Dharmapala shows, even after the king of Jaffna regained his dominions around 1470 A.D., Trincomalee was permanently lost. In the interior, the Vanniars, some of whom, in the north-central province, continued to be Sinhala, gave their loyalty to whoever was the more powerful ruler. On the western coast, the territory up to Mannar from Mundel was lost to the Portugese in 1560 A.D. Thus the boundary of the Jaffna kingdom on their southern frontier was a fluid one for the entire period of the existence of this kingdom.

## CHAPTER VIII

### INFLUENCE OF TAMIL SPEAKING PEOPLE ON ADMINISTRATIVE MILITARY AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS

The existence of certain Tamil terms in the nomenclature of the administrative hierarchy of the ancient and mediaeval Sinhala kingdom, the existence of Tamil mercenary regiments in the army of this kingdom, and the existence of south Indian mercantile guilds in Sri Lanka has led to a general impression of a predominant Tamil influence in these sectors of the national life of ancient Sri Lanka. As mentioned often in these pages, this subject has to be studied in the background of the Sinhala administrative, military and commercial systems then existing, if a proper evaluation of the influence of Tamils in these fields is to be accurately evaluated, and such an analysis is attempted in the next few paragraphs.

#### Administrative Affairs

The Brahmi inscriptions of Sri Lanka show the existence of a considerable number of officers who served to assist the king in the duties of administration, during the pre Christian era. But the general impression that one gets from a study of these inscriptions is that the administrative system, until the 4th century A.D., was a comparatively simple one. The great inter-connected irrigation system, requiring a high degree of technical expertise to operate it, had not yet grown, to the full complexity it attained in later times. The extensive viharas with their large land holdings and numerous serving populations had not yet developed. In these circumstances, while the inscriptions reveal the existence of a few leading officials such as ministers, generals, treasurers etc., the host of minor officials known in later inscriptions of the Anurādhapura period was not known.

But, with the economic system, and, consequently, the great units of the economy such as the vihāras becoming more complex, the bureaucracy also grew. The construction of inter-connected tanks, the development of new lands and the growth of the population itself necessitated that both the central and regional administration had to increase in numbers and complexity. "It was a very important responsibility of the State to maintain the vast and complex irrigation system in efficient working conditions... and there was a separate department of state for this". "An army of subordinate officials, civil and military, functioned in the 9th and 10th centuries for collecting the revenues due to the state, for keeping proper accounts of them..."<sup>1</sup>

The increasing complexity of the bureaucracy would have resulted in the creation of new posts, and offices of state to meet the new needs, unknown earlier to the simpler needs of the Sinhala administration. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Sinhala inscriptions of the 9th and 10th centuries contain several words that have been attributed as being loaned from the Tamil language, such as *mekappara*, *melaṭsi*, *perenāṭṭuvan*, *ulpāṭu*, *kanakkār*, *kolpattī* and *mandrāṇḍi*. It has been suggested that most of these words relate to administration and revenue, and are indicative of the increasing importance of Tamils in military and political affairs.<sup>2</sup>

This view is oversimplistic. Firstly, it is doubtful whether some of these words had a Tamil origin at all. All these words have to be considered in the context of the inscriptional record in which they appear. For example, the word *melaṭsin* that appears in the Anurādhapura slab inscription<sup>3</sup> of Kāssapa V appears in regard to villages and lands pertaining to the various member vihāras of the Abhayagiri fraternity. After specifying that members of the royal family should not enter and take away labourers, buffaloes, oxen etc., or cut down trees, the inscription specifies, '*melaṭsi novadnā isā*' i.e. the *melaṭsi* shall not enter. Similarly, the inscription of an Udā Mahayā (10th century) says<sup>4</sup> that the *vāri*, *perenāṭṭu* and *melaṭsi* shall not enter the village.

1. U.H.C. p. 373.

2. Pathmanathan, p. 32.

3. E. Z. Vol. I. pp 41-57.

4. Ibid, pp 182-190.

The Moragoda inscription of Kāssapa IV<sup>5</sup> also lays down that *melaṭsi* shall not enter (Here the word is spelled as *melakshi*). The Mihintale Tablets of Mahinda IV<sup>6</sup> lay down that the *kuli* and the *melaṭsi* would be taken over as the sole property of the vihāra. The Iripinniyāva inscription says that the district headmen should not appropriate the *melaṭsin*, the Sinhala coolies and the Tamil coolies.<sup>7</sup> The context of these inscriptions show that the *melaṭsin* were a class which was not held in high regard, and that they seem to have been serfs attached to the various institutions. It would seem, therefore, that the word *melaṭsi* was not a Tamil loan word given to any new institution, but was really a corrupted Sinhala form of Sanskrit *mleccha*, meaning outcaste or foreigner.

Another such alleged loan word is *perenāṭṭuvan*, which also appears in the forms *perenāṭṭiyam*, *perenāṭṭiyam* and *perenāṭṭu*. Wickremasinghe, tentatively, took the word to mean Tamil *naṭṭār*, i.e. villagers. This is not acceptable in the context of the inscriptions. For example, in the Anurādhapura slab inscription of Kāssapa V, the word appears in the phrase '*āt vehera kam navamat denu isā pērenno van viri tānat perenāṭṭiyam no vadnā isā*' i.e. that *perenāṭṭiyam* shall not enter the places occupied before.<sup>8</sup> The inscription of Udā Mahayā, referred to above, says '*mehi... gambimat vāri perenāṭṭu melaṭsin novadnā isā*', i.e. labourers, *perenāṭṭu* and *melaṭsi* shall not enter.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in the Buddanehala inscription of Kāssapa V,<sup>10</sup> it is said '*ulvāḍu perenāṭṭu novadnā kot isā*', i.e. *perenāṭṭu* and *ulvāḍu* shall not enter. Obviously, all these references are to certain classes of people, who, because of a low social status they occupied in the community, could not enter the lands. In view of this, the idea of Wickremasinghe that the word refers to villagers in general may be disregarded, as it would have been a meaningless and self defeating act to debar all villagers from entering the monastery. Nor is the word

5. Ibid. pp. 200-207.

6. Ibid, pp. 75-113.

7. E.Z. Vol. I. p. 163-171.

8. Ibid, pp. 41-47.

9. Ibid, pp. 182-190.

10. Ibid, pp. 191-200.

*perenāṭṭu* of Tamil origin, as neither this word, nor its variants, appears in the Madras University Tamil Lexicon as a Tamil word. On the other hand, *nāṭṭiyam* can be derived from Sanskrit *nāṭya*, dance or play, and this may refer to a class of dancers, the word again being a corrupted Sinhala form of an original Sanskrit word.

Similar remarks apply to the word *ulvāḍu*. The Buddhanehela inscription has the words '*ulvāḍu perenāṭu novaḍnā kot isā tuḍise novaḍnā kot isā vāriyan nogammā kot...*'. *Ulvāḍu* has been derived from Tamil *ulpāḍu*, occurring in Travancore inscriptions in the context of officers of the temple.<sup>11</sup> Paranavitane also has taken the word to have a Tamil origin, from *ul*, meaning interior, and *pāḍu*, to sing, which the interpreters to mean that *ulvāḍu* meant a class of functionaries who had the right to enter the inner music hall of the royal place. But this interpretation does not stand analysis.<sup>12</sup> Wickremasinghe, on the basis of the interpretation given in the *Ruvanmala*, has derived the word from *hulvāḍu*, basket weaver.<sup>13</sup> In fact, an inscription at Kataragama records the form of the word as *hulvāḍu*, which supports this suggestion. In this context, it may be remembered that in the Buddhanehela inscription, *ulvāḍu* appears along with *perenāṭṭiyam* (dancers, as shown above) and *tuḍise* (drummers) as classes forbidden to enter the land. In Sri Lanka even today, drummers and dancers are regarded as an inferior caste, and in the full context of this phrase, *ulvāḍu*, drummers and dancer shall not enter, merely means that these social groups were not to enter the lands; the interpretation of a Tamil origin to give the meaning of dancer to *ulvāḍu* is obvious nonsense within the context of the phrase.

11. E. Z. Vol. III, p. 97.

12. E. Z. Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 130, fn. 1. In the Badulla pillar inscription it is said that "vāri, perenāṭṭiyam and ulvāḍu" shall not enter. *Ulvāḍu* most probably were class of functionaries who had the right of entry to the inner music hall of the royal palace, and *perenāṭṭu* (pere—front or outside; *nāṭya*—dancing) a lower grade who were not permitted to proceed further than the dancing hall in the music hall in the outer precincts of the palace". If the view of Paranavitana is correct, the words should always appear together. This is not so. The inscription of Uda Mahayā says that the *perenāṭṭu* shall not enter; but does not debar the *ulvāḍu*. Nor does the word *ulvāḍu* appear in the Tamil lexicon, showing that it was not a Tamil word at all. Nor can one imagine why, when the inscription of Uda Mahayā says that royal officers should not enter, why it specially singles out the dancers in the royal palace for disbarment of entry into the lands. More probably, *ulvāḍu* as well as *perenāṭṭu* referred to socially inferior folk, who were forbidden to enter the lands.

13. E. Z. Vol. I, p. 199, in. 12.

The word *mandrāṇḍi* also seems to be of Sinhala rather than Tamil origin. For example, in the Badulla pillar inscription, of the 10th century, the word appears in the phrase "*me Hoppilgamu padi lad kenekun gūttan gamat ā kala mandrāṇḍin vanigrāmayan...hinda...pere sirit daḍa ganut misa aniya nokaranu isā...*" (When the bailiffs of whoever has received the village come, the *mandrāṇḍi*, the *vanigrāma*... shall levy the taxes according to former custom.)<sup>14</sup> The context seems to mean that the *mandrāṇḍin*, along with the *vannigrāma* consisted of those who had administrative and judicial authority, and does not seem to mean intermediary, or one who pleads the cause of others, one who brings a dispute before the court for adjudication etc., which is the meaning of the Tamil word *manrāḍi*. It is more probable that this word, which has so far been found only in this inscription, was derived, not from the Tamil word *manrāḍi*, but from the Sanskrit word *mantradhara*, meaning counsellor or advisor.

Two words, *mekappar* and *kanakkar*, are definite loan words from Tamil. The word *mekappar*, appearing in several inscriptions, seem to be derived from Tamil *meykappar*, i.e. bodyguard, and *kanakkar* is a Tamil word for accountant. It is probable that some of the claimants to the Sinhala throne who invaded the country with Tamil mercenaries continued to use these mercenaries after they had achieved power, and that the word used for these guards, *meykappar*, passed into the language, so that the royal bodyguards came to be known as *mekappar*. But this does not mean that the *mekappar* continued to be of foreign origin, and that the original Tamil bodyguards continued to occupy a position of power and influence for a long time. It may be mentioned in this connection that the entry of any words into a language does not imply in any way that the original users of those words had to be in a predominant position over that language for a long time. For example, the Tamil word *Kaccheri*, used even today for the office of the Government Agent of each district all over Sri Lanka, was originally used for the centres of administration of the Madras government when the maritime provinces were placed under it after these provinces were conquered by the British in 1796 A.D. Even after the rule of the Madras govern-

14. E. Z. Vol. V, Pt. 2, pp 177-195.



ment ceased in 1802, i.e. six years later, the word continued to be used, and passed into common parlance. To quote another example, the Portuguese word '*almāriya*' is used in the Bengali language for cupboard, though the Portuguese held only a minor fort on the Hughli river, and by no means dominated Bengal at any time. A similar process would have happened to the word *mekappar*, which, originally used for Tamil bodyguards, subsequently came to mean bodyguard in general. In this connection, it is significant that all the *mekappar* mentioned in the inscriptions bore, not Tamil names, but traditional Sinhala names. Had the *mekappar* continued to be of foreign origin, they would have borne non Sinhala names.

Nor is there evidence of Tamil influence on the administrative system of the Polonnaruva kingdom, though, during the Cola period of 70 years, the Rajarāṣa and the Māyārāṣa would have been run under the administrative model prevalent in the Cola country. The *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*<sup>16</sup> and the inscriptions on the seats of the Council Chamber of Nissankamalla<sup>17</sup> give an idea of the titles prevalent in the Polonnaruva kingdom, and all these titles have a Sinhala origin. Parānavitana has attributed a Tamil origin to the word *kaḍa* in the term *kada goṣṭhayehi ātavum*, one of the officials mentioned in the Council Chamber inscriptions.<sup>18</sup> But the word *kaḍa* in the sense of a market place, appear in the *Milindapaṇṇa*,<sup>19</sup> a Pali work of India of the first century B.C.s, and the origin of the word in the Council Chamber inscriptions may well be Pali or Sanskrit, rather than Tamil.

Also, the words *demala ley daru*, appearing in the phrase *demala leydaru pota atvara liyana dev*, in the Panākaḍuva inscription of 1082 A.D., issued by Vijayabāhu I of Polonnaruva, has been translated as *Atvara Liyana Dev*, the (keeper of) the register of Tamil clerks,<sup>20</sup> and the implication that this refers to a large number of Tamil clerks in the service of the Polonnaruva kings has been emphasised. But this

does not appear to be a correct translation. From the point of view of practical administration, this translation implies that the number of Tamil clerks in the royal service was so large that a special officer whose sole duty was to maintain lists of them was necessary. There is no evidence in other sources for such a large number of clerks, of any linguistic persuasion, in the administration of the time. The term *ley daru* appears in records of the Anurādhapura period,<sup>21</sup> and the phrase *ley daru pota*, taken in isolation, can be translated as clerical record, or register maintained by the clerks. Thus, the term *Demala ley daru pota* can be more probably translated as clerical register of Tamils, i.e. a register where the number of Tamils living in the kingdom, or capital, was maintained, for security or other reasons.

Nor is there any trace of Tamil influence in the administration of the kingdoms of Dambadeniya, Yāpahuva, Kurunāgala and Gampala, i.e. the period between 1230 and 1400 A.D. The literature and inscriptions of the period refer to various officials, but it is only towards the end of this period that we come across the word *mudali*, which seems to have been gradually been substituted for the older title *amātya*. Since the term occurred in south Indian documents of a somewhat earlier period, it probably was a term borrowed from south India.

The entry of loan words into a language is too complex a process to be dogmatic on the influence wielded by the original users of these words. Such influence, as may be seen in the case of the word *mekappar*, may have been of short duration. It may be that the rise of new local conditions, which may have had their parallel in south India, may have resulted in new administrative posts arising for these new local conditions being called by their south Indian equivalents. For example, the word *ganaka*, i.e. accountant, is found in the Brahmi inscriptions of the pre Christian era,<sup>22</sup> which shows that the profession was known among the ancient Sinhalas. But the word used in the inscriptions of the later Anurādhapura period was the Tamil *kanakkar*. It is possible that the complex administrative system necessary in the case of the monasteries of the time, which had their parallel in the developments

<sup>16</sup> Nks. p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> J.R.A.S. (C.B.), Vol. XXIX, No. 77, pp. 304 ff.

<sup>18</sup> U.H.C. p. 540.

<sup>19</sup> *Sri Sumangala Sabdakoshaya*, Ed. Vālivitiye Sorata, Col. 1963, p. 221.

<sup>20</sup> E. Z. Vol. V, Pt. 1, pp. 1-27.

<sup>21</sup> U.H.C. p. 374.

<sup>22</sup> I.O.C., No. 212.

of the temple administration of Hindu temples in south India, led to this term being borrowed from Tamil. Thus, we cannot, without considering the large number of officials revealed in these documents bearing Sinhala names and Sinhala titles, say that Tamil influence was predominant, or even considerable, in the administrative systems of the various kingdoms that existed during the period of this study.

### Military Affairs

It is probable that the army of the king of Anurādhapura, in the early period, consisted of a small professional bodyguard, while for purposes of war, an army was recruited from the country. The *Mahāvamsa* describes<sup>23</sup> the manner in which the army of Dutthagāmani (2nd century B.C.) was recruited, and says that the total strength of this army was eleven thousand one hundred and ten warriors. This does not mean that this was necessarily an accurate figure. It merely means that according to the ideas of the 5th century, when the author of the *Mahāvamsa* was writing his work, a special army was regarded as necessary for the waging of war, and a strength of 11,000 men was regarded as a powerful force. It is probable that the titles of *chattaggāhaka* (parasol bearer) and *asiggāhaka* (sword bearer), seen in the administrative system of the Anurādhapura period<sup>24</sup> shows a remnant of a time when the tribal chiefs were attended by these personages, and doing these actual duties, at a time when he had only a bodyguard.

In time, with the increase of the power and pretensions of these chiefs, especially that of the chief of Anurādhapura who subsequently established paramountcy over the whole Island, a more powerful professional army would have come into existence. The very existence of the title *Senapati*, i.e. commander of troops, known both from the chronicles<sup>25</sup> and inscriptions<sup>26</sup> from the earliest times, shows that the kings of Anurādhapura maintained a standing army. An inscription of the 4th century A.D. shows a garrison of such solidiers, maintained by the grant of lands.<sup>27</sup> The actual size of this body of professional

soldiers is not known, but it was with the aid of such troops that the kings maintained a centralised administration and effective control of the country.

It was in such a context that, in the 7th century, there was a large influx of Tamil mercenary troops from south India, who accompanied the various pretenders who came to win the Sinhala throne. It is probable that such claimants who won the kingship retained the Tamil troops who had accompanied them, reimbursing them by the grant of lands. In the course of time, they seem to have become permanent regiments.

During the Cola conquest and afterwards, one finds more such Tamil regiments in the royal service, who, on occasions, exerted some influence on political matters. One such military community was the *Velaikkārār*, a south Indian military group who had served the army of the Cola empire in several of its provinces. They seem to have been a composite group of persons of different linguistic affinities, such as Tamils, Telugus and Malayālis, and they seem to have been organised as a corporate body. "The tone and contents of the inscription of the *Velaikkārār* suggests that they were an autonomous group which entered into agreements with others through their leaders."

Even after the expulsion of the Colas, Vijayabāhu I seems to have employed them. In the 30th year of his reign, the *Velaikkārār* rebelled against him and plundered Polonnaruwa when he wished to invade south India.<sup>31</sup> Though the mutiny was ruthlessly suppressed, with the ring leaders being burnt alive, after the death of Vijayabāhu I in 1110 A.D., an inscription at Polonnaruwa<sup>32</sup> records that the *Rājaguru*, i.e. royal preceptor Mugalan Mahathera gave over to them the task of protecting the Tooth Relic of the Buddha, the symbol of sovereignty

<sup>23</sup> Mhv. XXIII, vv. 96-100.

<sup>24</sup> U.H.C. p. 369.

<sup>25</sup> Mhv. XXXIII, v. 33.

<sup>26</sup> I.O.C. No. 251.

<sup>27</sup> E. Z. Vol. v, Pt. 1, pp 111-119.

<sup>29</sup> Paranavitane, in E.Z. Vol. VI, Pt. 1, pp. 13-20, has published an inscription found at Madirigiriya, which he has attributed to a Mahinda VI, a king hitherto not found in the accepted chronicles, where the phrase *Velakara balat novadnā isa*, i.e. Velakara and soldiers shall not enter, allegedly appears. However, I am doubtful of this reading, as the estampage is very damaged at this point. Moreover, this inscription is alleged to mention the Jāvakas, with which point Paranavitane become obsessed in his later writings. This inscription, therefore, does not give conclusive evidence that the *Velaikkārār* were employed in the army of 9th century Sri Lanka.

<sup>30</sup> Pathmanathan, pp. 75; 78.

<sup>31</sup> Cv. LX, vv. 35-44.

<sup>32</sup> E.Z. Vol. II, p. 242.

of the Sinhala kings. This probably was done because the reigning monarch, Vikramabāhu II, was a Hindu by religious persuasion,<sup>33</sup> and the Mahathera Mugalan thought it best, under the circumstances, to institute his own arrangements to protect the Tooth Relic, as royal protection over it was lacking.

But this contract seems to have broken down, as we find that the Tooth Relic had been taken to Rohana. After the death of Vijayabāhu I, the country was divided among his family, with his son ruling in the Rajarata and his nephews dividing up the Māyārata and Rohana between them. There was constant civil war between these princes, and at some stage the Tooth Relic was taken to the south. Possibly because they were freed from its this contract, the Velaikkārās again proved to be a disturbing factor. When Gajabāhu, son of Vikramabāhu II and grandson of Vijayabāhu succeeded to the Rajarata, his rival princes attacked him from Rohana and Māyārata, and suborned the *Velaikkārār*, so that Gajabāhu had to take refuge elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> After Parākramabāhu I, ruler of Māyārata, finally conquered the Rajarata, his aunt at Rohana, Sugalā, refused to acknowledge him, so that troops had to be despatched against her. On this occasion, the troops at Kotthasāra, i.e. Kottiyār, including the *Velaikkārār*, rebelled, and attempted to attack Polonnaruva, but were repulsed.<sup>36</sup>

A second group of Tamil mercenaries was the *Akampati*. They are mentioned in inscriptions in south India from the time of the Cola ruler Kullotunga I (1070-1120 A.D.), and their chiefs were known as *Akampati mudalis*.<sup>37</sup> *Akampati pentukal* (*Akampati* women) served in the royal apartments and temples.<sup>38</sup> An inscription from the time of Gajabāhu II of Polonnaruva,<sup>39</sup> the earliest lithic record

in Sri Lank referring to the *Akampati*, refers to the grant of an *akampati* palanquin bearer of this king. These references suggest that the *akampatis* were members of the king's personal bodyguards, and were perhaps in a more trusted position than the *Velaikkārār*. The *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* says that Parākramabāhu I used thousands of *Akampati* troops in his campaigns, though, in this instance, the author seems to have thrown back the conditions of his own time, and used the term *akampati* for local troops as well.<sup>40</sup>

While these Tamil troops seem to have been utilised by the various princes who contended for supremacy during the Polonnaruva period, the method of quoting these instances in isolation to give an exaggerated and distorted picture of their actual influence in the military machine of the Polonnaruva kings should be avoided. The Sinhala kings wisely maintained a balance of power within the army, so that, while the main forces were Sinhala regiments, both regular and militia, even the foreign regiments were recruited so as to maintain a balance between each other.

Firstly, there were the professional Sinhala regiments. The *Cūlavamsa* refers to the Sinhala regiments such as those who rebelled against Mahinda V in the 10th century, forcing the latter to flee to Rohana.<sup>41</sup> Sinhala regiments rebelled against Parākramabāhu I at Kotthasāra.<sup>42</sup> Thus it is a distortion of the total picture to view the professional soldiers of the Polonnaruva army as consisting of foreign mercenaries only.

Secondly, there was the militia that was called up at need. The *Cūlavamsa* records that Gokanna, general of Gajabāhu II, rallied his own army as well as the people of the country (*raṭṭhavāsikasenāuca*) and marched against Parākramabāhu.<sup>43</sup> In describing the campaign of Parākramabāhu I against Rohana, the *Cūlavamsa* records that the army and the people of the district (*sarattṭhavāsikā.....mahiteamu*) stood ready to oppose him.<sup>44</sup> The *Cūlavamsa*, describing the manner

33. *The Royal Consecration in Mediaeval Sri Lanka; the problem of Vikramabāhu I and Gajabāhu II*. Sirima Kiribamune, *Sri Lanka Journal of South Asian Studies*,

34. Vol. I, pp. 12-32.

35. C.v. I.XIII, v. 24.

36. Ibid. I.XXIV, v. 44.

37. A.R.P., No. 72 of 1926.

38. A.R.P., No. 506 of 1912.

39. E.T. Vol. I, pp. 14-17.

40. Nks. p. 21. See also supra.

41. C.v. LV, vv5; 12.

42. Ibid. LXXIV, v. 44.

43. Ibid. LXX v. 82.

44. Ibid. LXXIV, v. 52.

in which Parākramabāhu collected troops for his projected attack on the Rajarāṭa, from his capital at Māyūrāṭa, says that after he raised and posted these troops, he raised several thousand foreign soldiers such as Keralas.<sup>45</sup> The differentiation shown in the last reference clearly shows that the militia raised in the country consisted of Sinhala troops and no other.

Thirdly, the Polonnaruwa kings maintained regiments of foreigners other than Tamils, such as the Malāyālam speaking Keralas, and the Kannaḍa (Kannāṭa) speaking Mysoris.<sup>46</sup> Even today, under a united India, there is little love lost between these two groups, and between both of them and Tamil speakers, and the employment of such different linguistic groups in ancient times, coming as they did from different and rival kingdoms in India, would have been the safeguard of the Sinhala kings against domination by one group of foreign mercenaries.

Thus there is no basis for the statement<sup>47</sup> that the Tamils 'played a key role in commercial and military affairs'. While there were foreign professional mercenaries, the large majority, when the militia is included, consisted of Sinhala troops, and besides, the foreign troops themselves consisted of rival linguistic groups who would not have normally joined for common action. Common prudence on the part of the Polonnaruwa kings would have necessitated that they had a majority of Sinhala troops in an army which, in the case of their foreign wars, had to fight Tamil states.

There are no specific references that Tamil troops served in the army of the Dambadeniya kings, but since such troops served in the army of the kings who succeeded them, the probability is that a segment of the professional troops consisted of Tamil soldiers. The *Cūlavamsa* has a reference to a group of foreign mercenaries called the Āriyas, who have been identified by Codrington as Rājputs.<sup>48</sup> This identification is not certain, and they may have even been Pāṇḍyan soldiers.<sup>49</sup>

45. Ibid, LXIX, v. 18.

46. Ibid, LXXIV, v. 44; LV, vv. 5; 12.

47. Pathmanathan, p. 83.

48. C.A.L.R. Vol. X, p. 88.

49. Gunasinghe, Unpublished Thesis, 1980.

The use of Tamil troops continued till the later period as well. However, after the capital of the consecrated ruler of the Island was shifted to the wet zone of the country, the nature of the army also changed. The army of the dry zone kingdoms had a considerable number of professional soldiers; but in the wet zone kingdoms of Gampala, Koṭṭe etc; the existence of powerful Senāpatis, i.e. generals, who on occasion acted as kingmakers, is virtually unknown. The army consisted of more the militia, called up in times of war, than professional troops.<sup>50</sup> Thus the numerical strength of the mercenary troops also would have been low, and it is in this context that we must analyse the references to Tamil troops in the documents of the period.

The Gadalaḍeniya inscription, indited in 1344 A.D., refers to the Sinhala Demala *senā* i.e. the Sinhala and Tamil army as among the officialdom of the king of Gampala, Bhuvenekabāhu IV.<sup>51</sup> The Niyangampāya sannasa, of 1373 A.D.,<sup>52</sup> says that certain images in the Niyangampāya vihara in Gampala were constructed in the name of the eight commanders of the Sinhala and Tamil army. Among the signatories to this document are '*mūla agampāḍi netti agampāḍi ātūhuvu Demala Sinhala sevama (sic) āṭadenā vama*'. (we being) the eight (generals) of the Tamil and Sinhala army including the *mūla agampāḍi* and *netti agampāḍi*). The *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* records that among the troops concentrated by Niṣṣanka Alagakkonāra at Koṭṭe to attack the army of the king of Jaffna were Tamils.<sup>53</sup> In the army of Sapumal Kumāraya which attacked the Jaffna kingdom around 1450 A.D. were Tamil, Tulu and Malala soldiers in addition to Sinhala troops.<sup>54</sup>

50. At the end of the 17th century, the army of the Kandyan kingdom consisted of 2,950 men of the regular army, and 13,600 militia. These troops were given to the Dutch by Tennekoon Disava, the former commander of the Kandyan army who had fled to them for refuge, and may be regarded as reliable. (See J.R.A.S. C.B.) (N.S.), Vol. V. p. 160). While the numerical strength of the Kandyan army may have been at this low figure because of extensive war and the population in the 16th century during the Portuguese period, the general picture of a small professional army and a large militia would hold true for the earlier period as well.

51. E. Z. Vol. IV, pp. 90-110.

52. *Sāhityaya*, 1972, p. 128.

53. Nks. P. 27.

54. *Kokila Sandesaya*, v. 289.



What is significant here is that by the time of the 14th century, segments of the mercenary troops of the earlier period such as Velaikkāras, Keralas, Karnātas, etc have disappeared, and only the *akampaṭi* remained, which would have been natural if they were originally bodyguards,<sup>55</sup> and the professional army came to be restricted to a small force of bodyguards during the period of the kingdoms of the wet zone. Moreover, it is not certain whether the *akampaṭi* troops referred to during this period were entirely Tamil troops. The *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*, written in 1386 A.D., classifies the forces sent by Parākramabāhu I against Burma into *navani* and *aagampaṭi*.<sup>56</sup> *Navani* means naval forces, and if so, the term *agampaṭi* used here must mean land forces in general, as it is clear that the entire army could not consist of Tamil *agampaṭi* mercenaries. Since we know, however, that the *akampaṭi* consisted of a separate military community in the Polonnaruva period, it is obvious that the author of the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* was throwing back the conditions of his time to describe the activities of the Polonnaruva period, two hundred years before him, where the term *agampaṭi* had ceased to mean a military caste, but had come to mean professional troops in general, such professional troops not necessarily being Tamil troops.

The Tamil segments of the army, therefore of the kingdoms of Gampala and Kotte thus seems to have been smaller than in the earlier period. The professional army itself seems to have been smaller; which means that the number employed of foreigners also would have been less. Among this army were professional Sinhala troops as well, and the militia called up in time of war would have been entirely Sinhala. In times of war, kings would have hired other troops, such as those who accompanied Sapumal Kumāraya, for the duration of the war.

### Commercial Activities

The Indian Ocean was the scene of considerable trading activity from early times. Free, generally, from violent storms and typhoons, it is also free from fogs and other natural obstacles to navigation. Moreover the monsoons, blowing in predictable directions at predictable times,

are a unique feature of this ocean, which permitted wind propelled ships, over, the monsoons, blowing in predictable directions at predictable times, which, before, the invention of the tack sail in Europe in the 15th century, depended on wind direction, to sail to their destination on a planned pattern. Thus Sri Lanka, which is in the centre of the routes across this ocean, became an *entrepot* of trade from early times.

As pointed out elsewhere, in this work, the very settlement of Aryan speaking peoples in Sri Lanka probably took place during the course of trading activities.<sup>57</sup> While this shows trading relations with India, Sri Lanka had equally vigorous relationships in this field with Europe and China as well. Chinese records mention the bringing in of ivory and buffalo horns to China from Sri Lanka in 97 A.D.<sup>58</sup> Large hoards of Roman coins, dateable to the 5th century A.D., have been found in Sri Lanka, showing large scale trading with the Roman Empire. In this context, the statement of a historian that "the lifeline of (Sri Lanka's) economy was with South India. She was dependent on south India for her import of textiles and metals, while most of her most valuable products... were taken to south Indian ports from which they were re-exported to many parts of the world"<sup>59</sup> is a ludicrous twisting of historical facts.

There can be no denying that there was extensive trade with south India; but that Sri Lanka's economic life was dependent on trade with south India is not borne out by any evidence whatsoever. Firstly, ancient economies, except perhaps in city states such as Venice, were rarely dependent on trade with other countries. At a time when the unit size of the carrier transporting goods (such as sailing ships, bullock carts etc.) were small, it is unlikely that all the requirements of Sri Lanka such as its food, clothing etc., were brought in from outside the country.

Secondly, as shown above, Sri Lanka had trading relations from the earliest times with other countries, in both Asia and Europe. For example, Cosmas, writing in the 5th century A.D., records that ships from India, Persia and Ethiopia came to Sri Lanka for the exchange of goods.<sup>60</sup> Also, the evidence shows that far from importing textiles

<sup>55</sup>. See supra.

<sup>56</sup>. Nks. p. 21. When quoting from the Sinhala sources, I have retained the form *agamadi* as used in these sources. The correct form is *akampaṭi*.

<sup>57</sup>. *Anurādhapura Yagaya*, Ed. A. Liyanagunasinghe and R.A.L.H. Gunawardene, Vidyalankara Press, 1961, pp. 177-195.

<sup>58</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>. Pathmanathan, p. 66

<sup>60</sup>. *Christian Topography of Cosmas*, Ed. J. W. Meerland, p. 365.

from south India, Sri Lanka actually exported textiles. The *Rājatarāṅgani*, a chronicle of Kashmir, says that the queen of Mihirakula (probably the Hun king of that name of the 5th century A.D.) used silk exported from Sri Lanka.<sup>61</sup> The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a work of the 5th century A.D., says that Sri Lankan cotton fabrics were exported to other countries.<sup>62</sup> A work called the *Tirthakalpa* records that a merchant from Sri Lanka took cotton fabrics from Sri Lanka to Bhārūkaccha, a north Indian port.<sup>63</sup> Nor is there evidence that metals were imported from south India; on the contrary, references in the *Mahāvamśa*<sup>64</sup> suggest that metal deposits were found in the Island itself. Thus, the alleged dependence of Sri Lanka on the south Indian trade seems to be an exercise in imaginative fiction than an attempt at serious historical analysis.

With the Cola conquest of the northern portion of Sri Lanka in the 10th century, many south Indian guilds seem to have commenced operations in Sri Lanka. Several inscriptions of an organisation called the *Ticai ayirattu annuruvār*<sup>65</sup> which seems to have had a wide-spread network, as its inscriptions are found in places as far away as peninsular India, Sumatra, Burma and Majapahit are found in Sri Lanka as well. An old Tamil verse records that it carried out its activities in eighteen lands, of which Cinkalam, i.e. Sinhala, heads the list.<sup>66</sup> They had several sub groups, such as the *Valanciyar*, *Virakkolī* and *Cettiyar*.<sup>67</sup>

The appearance of this trade guild in Sri Lanka coincided with, in the 11th century, a great stimulus of trade in the Indian Ocean. In Europe, the period saw the invasion of the middle east by the Europeans, who sought to capture Palestine for Christianity, and they established a series of small kingdoms in and around Syria which lay athwart the mediæval trade routes.<sup>68</sup> Professor Hitti points out that while in the

Orient, European noblemen acquired new tastes in perfumes, spices and other tropical products.<sup>69</sup> Also, by this time in the east, the Sri Vijayan empire had weakened, and the dependence of the southern Sung dynasty in China for trade goods, which hitherto had been satisfied by Sri Vijaya, led to a great expansion of the Chinese mercantile marine, with ships being built that could carry hundreds of men and a year's supply of grain.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Chinese ships commenced coming into the Indian Ocean in large numbers, and in the early 14th century, the emperor Yung Lo adopted the device of sending great fleets of ships to tributary countries, to collect tribute as well as trade goods.<sup>71</sup>

There is no doubt, therefore, that the south Indian trade guilds noted above would have taken an active part in the new stimulus of trade that was felt in the Indian Ocean after the 11th century A.D., which did not leave Sri Lanka untouched. There is reference to the export of cinnammon from Sri Lanka in a letter written by a Jewish merchant in Aden, who wrote in 1130 A.D.<sup>72</sup> Da Coutosays that in the time of Dambadeni Pandar Pracura Mabago (i.e. Parākramabāhu II of Dambadeniya,) the Island became famous on account of the fine cinammon that its jungles yielded.<sup>73</sup> Bhuvēnakabāhu I of Yāpahuva (1272-1284 A.D.), in a letter to the Sultan of Egypt, promised to send, if necessary, twenty ships per year of various Sri Lankan products, such as cinnamon and textiles, by way of trade.<sup>74</sup> This stimulation of external trade would naturally have resulted in the increase of trade within the country as well, by way of collecting these goods and selling them to the various shippers who exported these goods.

61. *Rājatarāṅgani*, Bk. i., p. 295.

62. *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, Ed. Schoff. p. 47.

63. *Archæological Survey of India*, Annual Reports, 1905/05, p. 144.

64. *Mhv.* XXVII, v. 16.

65. *C.T.I.* Vol. I, p. 46 ff.

66. *C.T.I.* Vol. II, p. 9.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Mediæval Trade Routes*, H. Baker, Historical Association Pamphlet No. 11, London, 1978, p. 15.

69. *History of the Arabs*, Philip K. Hitti, Macmillan & Co. 1937, p. 667.

70. *Science and Civilisation in China*, Joseph Needham, Cambridge University Press, 1971, Vol. IV, p. 464.

71. *The Fall of Sri Vijaya in Malay History*, F.W. Wolters, Lund Humphries, London, 1970, p. 67 ff.

72. *Letters of Mediæval Jewish Traders*, S. D. Goitein, Princeton University, Press, 1973, pp. 181-186.

73. *J.R.A.S. (C.B.)*, Vol. XX, p. 65.

74. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, No. 72, pp. 82-85.

But it is difficult to speak, as some historians have done,<sup>75</sup> of a key role played by the Tamil population in the commercial affairs of the country. It has been pointed out earlier in this work that the *Cūlayāmsa* carries several references to market towns, and that one of the officials whom Parākramabāhu I summoned for recruitment of troops was the *Setthināyaka*, who is clearly referred to as a Lambakanna, i.e. a family of Sinhala origin.<sup>76</sup> The large number of villages ending with 'pola' at the end of their name in Sri Lanka show that they were market towns, suggesting a widespread marketing network built up without benefit of south Indian trade guilds. There is little doubt that the traders who patronised these market towns were Sinhala. Though the town of Hettipola is alleged to have been so named because it was a stronghold of the *Cettis*, the Tamil guild shown above, it is equally possible that the name was derived from the Pali word *Setthi*, the place being so named because the chief merchant, was a *Setthi*, the chief of the *Setthis* being the *Setthināyaka* (a Sinhala) shown above.

Mediaeval inscriptions carry several references to the *Siṭāna* (Pāli *Setthi*), i.e. merchant millionaires of the period who are clearly Sinhala. For example, among the grants made to the Gaḍalādeniya Vihāra in 1344 A.D. was a gift made by a Kalu *Siṭāna*,<sup>77</sup> and the Niyangampāya Sannasa,<sup>78</sup> of 1373 A.D. refers to Jayamahale, one of the donors in the document, as a *siṭu*. The *Mayura Sandesaya* written in the late 14th. century, describes the *nagaram siṭu*, i.e. chief *setthi* of the capital city, of the court of Bhuvenabāhu V of Gampala.<sup>79</sup> All these references show that the Sinhala were by no means backward in trading, and that leading members of society were rich traders. It is clear that a large or even a major portion of the internal trade of the country was carried on by Sinhala merchants, who probably had their own guilds, led by *siṭānas*.

Even in regard to the goods traded in east Asia, while a certain amount would have been carried on by south Indian guilds, an equally substantial portion would have been carried on by merchants of the Sri Vijayan empire, and later on, by the Arabs. For example, it is very probable that the name of Hambantōṭa, now a minor fishing port on the southern coast of Sri Lanka, is derived from Sampantōṭa, from the Malaysian sampans which sailed into this port. A similar origin may be attributed to Sammanturai (Sampantōṭa = Sammantōṭa = Tamilised Sammanturai) on the eastern coast.

By the 8th century A.D., Islam gained a rapid hold in west Asia among the Arabs, and by the end of the century, the Arab empire stretched from the Indus to the Atlantic. By the 10th and 11th centuries, the Muslims were invading India, and by the 13th century, (1292 A.D.) there is definite evidence of a Muslim kingdom in Sumatra.<sup>80</sup> S.Q. Fatemi points out that Arab traders had settled down in Malaysia some time prior to even this date.<sup>81</sup> In Sri Lanka there is a persistent tradition that the wife of Vanni Bhuvenekabāhu, who ruled Kurunāgala around 1320 A.D., was a Muslim lady,<sup>82</sup> and there is definite evidence that by the middle of the 14th century, Beruvala, on the western coast, had a Muslim settlement.<sup>83</sup> These Muslim influences undoubtedly came through the activities of Arab traders, and there is evidence of settlements of Muslim traders in the coastal towns of Malaysia from the 9th century onwards.<sup>84</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the south Indian merchant guilds did not have a monopoly on the trade with east Asia, and that they shared this trade, first with Sri Vijaya, and then with the Arabs.

<sup>75</sup> Puthmanathan, p. 83...

<sup>76</sup> Cv. LXIX, 0. 12. *Setthi* (See Childers, Pali-English Dictionary) meant millionaire or banker, and the above word probably meant the chief of the *setthis* in the kingdom.

<sup>77</sup> E.Z. Vol. IV, pp. 90-110.

<sup>78</sup> *Sāhityaya*, 1972, 0p. 128.

<sup>79</sup> *Mayura Sandesaya* Ed. W. F. Gunawardhana, Col. 1928, v. 159.

<sup>80</sup> *Islam comes to Malaysia*, S. Q. Fatemi, London, 1968, p. 8. ff.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, ch. V.

<sup>82</sup> *Sāhityaya*, 1965, p. 67.

<sup>83</sup> J. R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. XXXIII, p. 208. A document in the Canarese language, called the *Paradara Soderā Ramani Kathe* (J.R.A.S. (C.B.), 1900 p. 584) describes a defeat of the armies of the Suratan, i.e. Sultan of Delhi who had established a customs house in Sinhala. This was probably a reference to the settlement of Khwaja Jahan at Beruwala.

<sup>84</sup> *Islam comes to Malaysia*, S. Q. Fatemi, p. 99.

There is no doubt that Sri Lanka's trade with the west, even from the 10th century onwards, would have been mainly in Arab hands. Even in 729 A.D. a Chinese work called the *Hwi-chao* refers to trade contacts between Iraq and Sri Lanka,<sup>85</sup> and trade contacts would have been sufficiently strong for the legend quoted by three Iraqi writers<sup>86</sup> to say that Chosrose Nasirwan, king of Persia, (8th century) invaded Sri Lanka. There is a tradition that Al Hajjaj, governor of Iraq, ordered the invasion of Sind in north western India in the 9th century because Sindhi pirates had attacked a ship carrying the orphaned children of Arab merchants resident in Sri Lanka.<sup>87</sup> The embassy sent by Bhuvanakabāhu I of Yāpahuva, referred to above, was led by Al Haj Abu Uthman, an Arab. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Arabs dominated the western trade from the 8th century, with very little evidence that the south Indian guilds participated in this trade.

Thus, considered in the general background, and when the sources are compared, while the individual references to south Indian guilds, considered in isolation, give the impression that they were important in trading activity, in actual fact their importance was not so high, and certainly they did not hold the key position in trading activity. Like all aspects of Tamil activity, while the operations of Tamil merchants in Sri Lanka had their place in the mercantile activities of the time, it was in proportion to their numbers, and certainly must not be over-estimated or exaggerated.

<sup>85</sup>. *Journal of the Greater India Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 205.

<sup>86</sup>. *Persian Navigation*, Wade Hassan, p. 67.

<sup>87</sup>. *Ceylon, An Account of the Island* Tennent, Vol. I, p. 590 ff.

## CHAPTER IX

## CONCLUSIONS

This work would be incomplete without a study and analysis of the cultural intermingling of the Sinhala and Tamil population in the Island. However, a complete discussion on this interaction, *i.e.* the borrowing of words between the two languages, the influence of social customs of each on the other, etc. is a subject that will require a book by itself, and is too wide to be attempted here. But we can at least analyze two aspects that signify, and to some extent measure, the cultural influence of one community on another, *i.e.* religious beliefs and religio-architectural patterns.

It may be remembered in this connection that while, as shown in the main work, individual Tamils had been resident in the Island from the earliest times, and the country had been invaded by south Indian adventures from its earliest history, cultural differences between the Sinhala and the Tamils seem to have commenced only from the 5th. century onwards. Brahmi inscriptions that mention Tamils, recording grants where Tamils participated, were indited in Sinhala, and the names of the Tamils are Indo-Aryan. This cultural similarity also explains the ambivalent attitude shown by the author of the *Mahāvamsa* to the Tamil king Elara. On the one hand, he is mentioned as being anti Buddhist, and an enemy of the Sinhala.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is said that he repaired the Mihintale cetiya which had been accidentally damaged by this chariot,<sup>2</sup> and emphasis is paid to his high sense of justice. It is probable, therefore, that while the sources utilised by the author of the *Mahāvamsa* did not emphasize any harm to the

1. Mhv. XXII, v. 85; XXIII, v. 8.

2. Ibid, XXI, v. 21 ff.



Sinhalas and Buddhists by king Elāra, the author himself was influenced by the feelings prevalent in his time (5th. century A.D.) regarding the Tamil population of Sri Lanka.

Indeed, the reference in the *Mahāvamsa* itself show that there was, culturally, little difference between the two peoples during this early period. Sinhala fought for king Elāra.<sup>3</sup> The *Mahāvamsa Tika* says that Dutthagāmaṇi had to engage in meditation to prevent his soldiers from killing each other.<sup>4</sup> This shows either that the Sinhala fought in the army of king Elāra, or that the dresses of the soldiers of Dutthagāmaṇi and the soldiers of Elāra were so similar as to be indistinguishable. The *Mahāvamsa Tika* further mentions a Elāra paṭimāghara, which seems to have been part of the stupa constructed by Dutthagāmaṇi at the spot where king Elāra fell in battle,<sup>5</sup> and was cremated. Also, the respect paid during succeeding centuries to the tomb of king Elāra by the Sinhala may have been, not only on account of the order of the national hero, Dutthagāmaṇi to this effect, but also due to the genuine fondness the people of Anurādhapura had for this just and humane Tamil king.

Furthermore, even in later times, Tamils who were in ruling positions in the Island actively supported Buddhism. For example, one of the invaders who attacked Sri Lanka during the time of Vattagāmaṇi Abhaya (c. 103 B.C.) took away the Bowl Relic of the Buddha, which shows that he was a Buddhist.<sup>6</sup> Damiḷadevi, the queen of Candamukha Siva (43-52 A.D.) who from her name seems to have been of Tamil origin, granted her own revenues from a village to the Isurumuniya vihāra.<sup>7</sup> Of the Tamil princes who invaded the country during the 5th century A.D., an inscription at Arāgama, in Kurunāgala district records a grant made by Pārinda,<sup>8</sup> and in another inscription, the

wife of Khudda Pārinda makes a similar grant to a Buddhist vihāra, even referring to her husband as Buddhādāsa, i.e. the servant of the Buddha.<sup>9</sup>

But, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Tamil rulers Pārinda and Khudda Pārinda, cultural differences between the Sinhala and the Tamils seem to have crystallised around this time. When this group of Tamil invaders, including Pārinda and Khudda Pārinda, came to Sri Lanka, the kinsmen of noble families fled to Rohana, and when Dhātusena ousted the last of these invaders and captured power, he punished the noble families who had supported the Tamil rulers.<sup>10</sup> The author of the *Mahāvamsa* has been identified as a Buddhist monk, Māhānāma, who was the uncle of Dhātusena,<sup>11</sup> and if so, the ambivalence seen in the *Mahāvamsa* regarding the various Tamil rulers who had governed the country during the earlier period may be due to the popular attitude prevailing towards the Tamils in the 5th. century A.D.

The reason for this differentiation in culture is not clear. It is possible that the rise and intensification of Saivite Hinduism in south India during the early centuries of the Christian era<sup>12</sup> may have resulted in the Tamil population commencing to have a special consciousness of identity. While the Tamil rulers who governed Sri Lanka from time during this period may have helped Buddhism, their motivation may have been more political than religious, and the ordinary Tamil population which accompanied them may well have identified themselves as a separate community from around this time. This separate identification is seen more clearly from the 7th century onwards. When Hatthadāṭṭha (later king Dāṭhapatissa II, 659-667 A.D.) invaded Sri Lanka with a Tamil force, all the Tamils living in various places, joined him.<sup>13</sup> When the Pāṇḍyan king Sri Lanka Mura Sri Vallabha

<sup>3</sup>. Ibid, XXIII, v. 4, where it is recorded that the uncle of Nandimitta, paladin of Dutthagāmaṇi, was a general of Elāra.

<sup>4</sup>. *Vamasattha'pakasini*, p. 475.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid, p. 483.

<sup>6</sup>. Mhv. XXXIII, 55.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid, XXXV, v. 48.

<sup>8</sup>. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Section G, Vol. II, p. 181.

<sup>9</sup>. E.Z. Vol. IV, p. 114.

<sup>10</sup>. Cv. XXXVIII, vv. 12;39.

<sup>11</sup>. U.H.C. p. 49.

<sup>12</sup>. *The Classical Age*, Ed. R.C. Majumdar, Bharatha Vidya Bhavan, 1954, p. 427 ff.

<sup>13</sup>. Cv. XLV, v. 19.

raided Sri Lanka between 833 and 853 A.D., the Tamils living in the Rajarata joined him.<sup>14</sup> This shows that, after the 5th century at least, the Tamil population living in Sri Lanka showed on occasion a special loyalty to their brethren in south India, showing that there had arisen a cultural alienation between them and the Sinhala.

We have analysed in previous chapters the settlement and gradual spread of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka, and the manner in which, after the 13th century, a Tamil kingdom, linguistically different from the main community in the Island, arose at the northern end of the country. But, while the cultural practices of the Sinhala who lived in the Jaffna area before they were absorbed by the Tamil speaking people may have influenced the latter (and no scholar has yet analysed this) there is little evidence of such cultural penetration of the Tamil population among the mainstream of the Sinhala population living in the central north central, north western, western and southern portions of the Island.

To take one of the main aspects of the culture of a community, the religion of the Sinhala was, and continues to remain (except for a minority of Christians,) Theravada Buddhism, while the religion of the Tamils who settled in Sri Lanka was, and continues to remain (again except for a minority of Christians) Saivite Hinduism. The presence of shrines dedicated to gods such as Vishnu, Kataragama (Skanda Kumāra), Pattini, Gambāra etc within the premises of Buddhist temples in modern times has been often interpreted as a gradual exertion of the influence of Hinduism on the Buddhist religion. But deeper analysis of this situation shows that the worship of such gods, and the presence of their shrines in Buddhist temples did not arise as a result of the rise of Saivite Hinduism, but that it was an integral part of the popular religion from early times.

It may be pointed out at this stage that Theravada Buddhism, in its pristine doctrines, would not have offered the ordinary, less intellectually developed sector of the population, the spiritual solace necessary for the problems that arose in their everyday life. Buddhism, is a teaching

that highlights the necessity of, and the methods to be followed for freeing oneself from the cycle of rebirth, and does not offer any divine guidance or assistance for the solution of daily problems such as penury, illness etc. Thus the ancient Sinhala who embraced Buddhism would have, for their everyday spiritual needs, found it necessary to retain their faith in the various Brahmanical gods they had worshipped when they originally entered Sri Lanka. The *Mahāvamsa* records that Pandukābhaya, founder of Anurādhapura as the capital, laid out the banvan tree of Vessavana, a house for the Sacrifice, and various other shrines around the city.<sup>15</sup> Even if one doubts the existence of Pandukābhaya as a legend, it shows that these shrines existed in and around the city at least at the time the *Mahāvamsa* was being written.

Furthermore, there are several references to Brahmanas in Sri Lanka. In the Pandukābhaya legend itself there is mention of the Brahmin Pandula, who was the tutor of the king.<sup>16</sup> One of the emissaries sent by Devānampiyatissa to the Mauryan Emperor Asoka in the 3rd century B.C. was a Brahmin, and one of the places where the Bodhi Tree was brought on its way to Anurādhapura was the village of the Brahmin Tivakka.<sup>17</sup> During the reign of Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya, the province of Rohana, under the leadership of a Brahmin, rebelled against him. There are references in inscriptions to a large number of Brahmins who granted caves as residences to the Buddhist Sangha.<sup>18</sup> These references show that Brahmins were known and respected among Sri Lankan Buddhists, but probably did not form a separate and numerous caste as happened in India.<sup>19</sup> They probably attended to duties connected with divine worship, which the Buddhist monks of the time did not participate in.

<sup>15</sup> Mhv. X, v. 84 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, v. 20

<sup>17</sup> Mhv. XXXIII

<sup>18</sup> I. O. C. p. lxviii

<sup>19</sup> During the Cola period there were established *Caturvedimangalams*, i.e. settlements of Brahmins, at Kantalai and other places. But they do not seem to have lasted long. For example, an inscription at Kirindagama in Ampāra district records the purchase of a land lost by Jeyakontha Calamekha Caturvedimangala, and it being handed back to Brahmins, (C.T.I. Vol I, p. 27). This shows that once royal support was lost, these villages also disappeared, as the Brahmins did not form a segment of the people.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, L. v. 15.

In this background, what is most noticeable is that no Buddhist temple contains, nor is there evidence that any contained, shrines of Siva and his associate gods and goddesses, such as Durga and Kālī. Modern temples contain shrines of Gods such as Vishnu, Kataragama etc. Though modern day Hinduism associates the Kataragama God with Siva, the Sinhala worshippers who throng to his temple have no consciousness of this, and regard him as the God protecting the south of Sri Lanka, without associating him with Indian deities. In fact, the worship of this God seems to have been known in Sri Lanka from early times. The *Cūlavamsa* records that Mānavamma, who was doing an incantation at Gokanna, met the god Kumāra riding on a peacock, an obvious reference to Skanda Kumāra, (the Kataragama God) whose legendary vehicle is the peacock,<sup>20</sup> showing the worship of this god in the 7th century A.D. Thus the absence of the shrines of Siva and his associated deities in Buddhist temples show clearly that the presence of divine shrines in Buddhist temples had nothing to do with the influence of Hinduism on Buddhism but is a mere remnant of the worship of Vedic and Paurāṇic gods by the ancient Sinhala Buddhists.

Nor is there influence of Saivite Hinduism on the basic plan of the Buddhist religious buildings. Structures such as *stupas* and *uposatha-gharas* have no corresponding equivalent in Hindu temples. In regard to the internal plans of the vihāras, "the vast majority of the architectural remains of the later Anurādhapura period consists of stylobates... fall into two distinct categories. The first consists of a square sanctum from which projects a perron of smaller dimensions. Internally, the shrine consists of two inter-communicating rooms, the larger one behind the smaller. In the case of the second type of building, a larger edifice in the centre of a walled-in quadrangle is surrounded by four smaller edifices of the same type at the four corners."<sup>21</sup> This is the basic plan of a Buddhist temple in Sri Lanka even today.

However, the plan of a Hindu temple is completely different. "The sanctuary... is known as the *vimāna*, of which the upper and pyramidal

or tapering portion is called the *sikhara*. Inside the *vimāna* is the *garbha grha*, which was usually entered by a doorway on its inner, and usually eastern side. In front of the doorway was a pillared hall, or *mandapa* (and between them) the *antarāla*. Leading up to the main hall or *mandapa* is a porch or *ardha mandapa*...". Often the whole complex was surrounded by a wall. During the Pāṇḍya period in south India, the *gopuram*, or the gate tower, was built to overshadow even the *vimāna*.<sup>22</sup>

If the penetration of Hinduism and Tamil culture into the Sinhala culture was as profound as sometimes painted to be, one would have expected a change in the basic plan of the religious buildings of the latter. As shown above, the plans of Buddhists buildings remained unchanged through the centuries. The point is necessary to remember in view of the often expressed view that the Sinhala buildings of the Polonnaruwa period showed traces of Dravidian influence. This may be correct as far as the external mouldings, decorations etc are concerned, which is only to be expected as some of these buildings were constructed by Tamil architects.<sup>23</sup> But no fundamental change in the nature of religious beliefs, or the method of worships, is symbolised in any architectural changes in the plans of Buddhist vihāras, even till the end of our period of our study.

We may now review, in brief, the spread of the Tamil population in Sri Lanka, and the ultimate influence they wielded in politics and other aspects of Sri Lankan history. If the correct methodology of analysing both Sinhala and Tamil sources is adopted, and the spread of the Tamils considered in the known background of existing Sinhala settlements, it can be seen that for the first one thousand three hundred years of the country's history, i.e. the period up to 1000 A.D. when

<sup>20</sup>. Cv. LVII, v. 5-7.

<sup>21</sup>. U.H.C. p. 398.

<sup>22</sup>. *Indian Architecture*, Percy Brown (Third R Edition) Bombay 1956, pp. 74; 106.

<sup>23</sup>. The sculpture of the Gaḍalādeniya vihāra, according to the inscription there, (E.Z. Vol. IV. pp. 190-110) were made by a *Gaṇakāra* *śāyā*, who from his name, seems to have been a Tamil. According to the Lankatilaka inscription, (U.C.R. Vol. XVIII, 1960, pp. 4-14), one of the architects of the vihāra was a *Sthāpati Rāyāra*, who also, from his name, seems to have been a Tamil.

Anurādhapura was the capital, Tamil influence was minimal. Concentrations of Tamil population were found only in and around Anurādhapura, along the road to Mantai, and, to some extent, on the route from Anurādhapura to the *Uttaradesa*, with the Hindu monuments in Anurādhapura showing that the largest concentration was in the city itself. There would have been a few Tamil settlements in Trincomalee, Eruvil etc. But the rest of the country, including the Jaffna peninsula, consisted solely of the Sinhala population. Politically, the Tamils in Sri Lanka wielded some influence through the occasional adventurers who raided the Island and captured the throne; but these adventures were ruling basically through a Sinhala system, and through Sinhala institutions. While, for a brief period in the 7th century, the Tamils in Sri Lanka did exercise some influence, this, as well as the influence, of the above mentioned adventurers, was confined only to the Rajarāṭa and the Māyārāṭa, and almost half the country, i.e. Rohana, was outside their control. Culturally, some of them seem to have been Buddhists, and none of the Tamil rulers seem to have caused any harm to Buddhist institutions. But the other aspects of society, such as the mercantile system, the army and the administration, were solely in Sinhala hands, and the total picture is that of a Sinhala country, with Sinhala institutions and Buddhist religious beliefs, covering the land from north to south and from east to west. The influence of Tamils in this period, except in the instances noted above, are attributions of modern 'scholars', and not borne out by any evidence.

1. Concentrations of Tamil peoples outside the Anurādhapura city area would have built up during the 77 years of Cola rule which commenced in 992 A.D. These consisted of the Cola military garrisons as well as the many administrators, merchants, brahmins etc. who would have come to the Island during this period. But politically, the kings of Polonnaruwa, till the end of the reign of Parākramabāhu I, had full control of the Island from Dondra to Point Pedro. With his death, however, and the political anarchy which followed, the northern province, which from the 7th century onwards itself was less rigidly controlled from Anurādhapura in comparison with other areas, was cut off from the mainstream of the Sinhala population by the growth of jungle, and by the rise of a chain of petty kingdoms, the Vanniars.

With this situation arising, the Jaffna area became a place of refuge for several contenders for the throne of Dambadeniya, which, by this time (mid 13th century) had become the paramount kingdom in Sri Lanka. One of these contenders, Candrabhānu, first found refuge in Jaffna, and the rise of a separate state in Jaffna commenced with this Malaysian ruler in 1247 A.D.

This Malaysian, or Jāvaka dynasty, continued to rule in Jaffna till the end of the 13th century A.D., as a vassal state of the Pāṇdyas, until the family was replaced by the Āriyacakravarti family of Rāmnād which ruled Jaffna till it was overthrown by the Portugese in 1619 A.D. This Kingdom of Jaffna, upon the existence and boundaries of which many modern claims are made for a separate Tamil state, was in the context of the time, a petty kingdom which was struggling to keep itself from being swamped by its south Indian neighbours in the north, and its Sinhala neighbour in the south, except for a brief period of about 25 years in the middle of the 14th century, when it reached a powerful position. During this period, it held the Sinhala kingdom in a form of economic domination, though administrative and military control of the latter kingdom was beyond its powers. But, before this period, it was under the Pāṇdyan kingdom, and after this period, especially after a severe military defeat around 1380 A.D. at the hands of the Sinhala kingdom, it was under the Vijayanagara empire. For 22 years it was directly ruled by the Sinhala king of Kotte, with its ruler fled to South India, and even after this king regained his dominions, certain areas such as Koṭṭiyār and Trincomalee (if indeed these areas were ever under the king of Jaffna) were permanently annexed to Kotte. In 1560 A.D. it lost the control of the western coast up to Mannar, to the Portugese, and from 1593 A.D. a Portugese protegee was governing Jaffna till the dynasty was finally overthrown in 1519 A.D.

The area which this kingdom controlled effectively also varied from time to time. Along the western coast, it held the territory to a depth of two miles or so from present Mundel to Vilpattu, and to a depth of four miles up to Mannar. In the interior, its boundaries varied with the extent of control it could exercise over the Vanni kingdoms. There is no clear evidence that it controlled Trincomalee, and the area of Batticaloa, i.e. the Eastern Province other than Trincomalee district, was never under this kingdom.



Thus, studied in relation to the basically Sinhala background of the history of Sri Lanka, the influence exerted by the Tamil population was not so extensive nor so deep as modern propagandists would wish us to believe. In the north central, north western, central, western, southern, Sabaragamuwa and Uva Provinces, i.e. seven of the nine provinces of Sri Lanka, the Sinhala culture prevailed, with little evidence of Hindu or Tamil penetrations.

This brings us to the end of our study. As mentioned at the beginning, the purpose of this analysis is to examine the spread and intermingling of two cultures with reference to the source material on both sides. The use of such an analysis, in view of the explosive issues involved in modern times, is not merely academic. If so, it would be merely a waste of paper and ink. Certain conclusions can be drawn from this analysis which has relevance to the problems of modern day Sri Lanka.

Firstly, though during the 7th century and afterwards, cultural differences between Sinhalese and Tamils became accentuated, ethnic and racial hatreds do not seem to have played any part in this difference in culture. Sinhala records seldom, if ever, mention the difference in terms of race, and neither they, nor Tamil and south Indian records, hold each others' communities in contempt on racial grounds. There was inter-marriage between the Sinhalese and the Tamils at the highest levels; Parākramabāhu I, for example, was the grandson of a Pāṇḍyan, i.e. south Indian prince who had married the sister of Vijaya-bāhu I. Tamil leaders such as Potthakuttha and Mahākanda occupied high political office, and nowhere is it said that they were disliked because they were Tamils. The leading classes among the Sinhalese and the comparatively few Tamils in ancient Sri Lanka recognised that they were different from each other in language but they never on that account hated each other racially, nor wished to destroy the culture of each other.

Nor is there evidence that such racial hatreds existed at lower levels of society either. Tamil leaders had no hesitation in fighting in the armies of Niśśanka Algakkonāra and Sapumal Kumāraya against their fellow Tamils of the kingdom of Jaffna. Sinhala soldiers fought for

the king of Jaffna against the Portuguese. The ancient and mediaeval Sinhala and Tamil ordinary folk seem to have had in their minds the concept of two dynasties, i.e. Sinhala and Āriyacakravartī, but not of two mutually incompatible races divided by hatred.

Secondly, while there is no evidence of racial hatreds between the two linguistic groups, there was, on the one hand, the insistence of the Sinhalese on the granting of a primary position to Buddhism, the present religion of the majority of the Sinhalese, and on the other hand, the willingness of Tamil leaders to reciprocate it. Buddhism was such an integral part of Sinhala culture that none other than a Buddhist could become the consecrated king of Sri Lanka, and leaders of Tamil origin who sometimes rose in the Sinhala polity understood and respected this attitude. Buddhism in Jaffna seems to have died for lack of patronage, rather than active persecution at the hands of the Āriyacakravartīs.

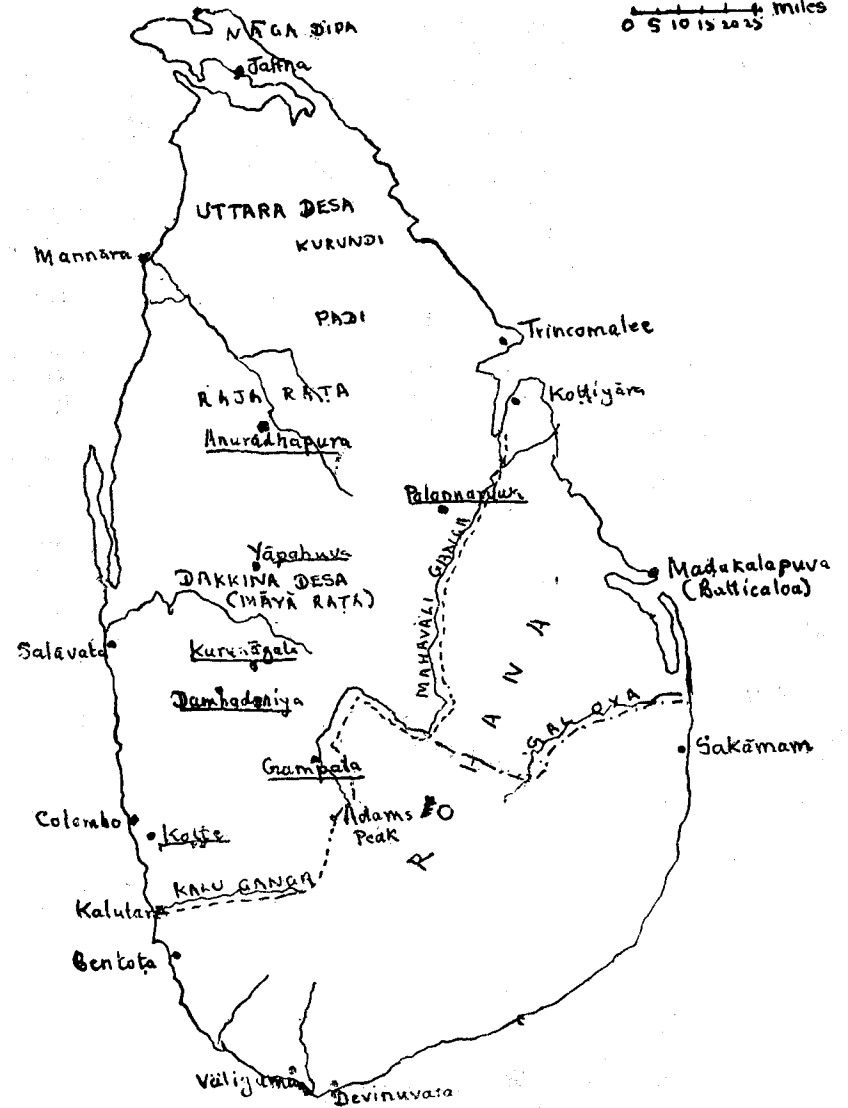
Thirdly, the conclusion can be drawn that the kingdom of Jaffna, on its own was helpless and defenceless. The peak of its power was when it was in a position to take over a portion of the revenues of the Gampala kingdom, and this position was achieved because of the anarchy prevailing in the Sinhala state. At most other times, it was under its northern or southern neighbour. The chronic economic weakness of the Jaffna kingdom, though off-set to some extent by the industry of its population could never enable it to become a strong and viable state able to stand on its own as an independent government.

These are lessons that should not be lost on those who now seek a separate state for the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

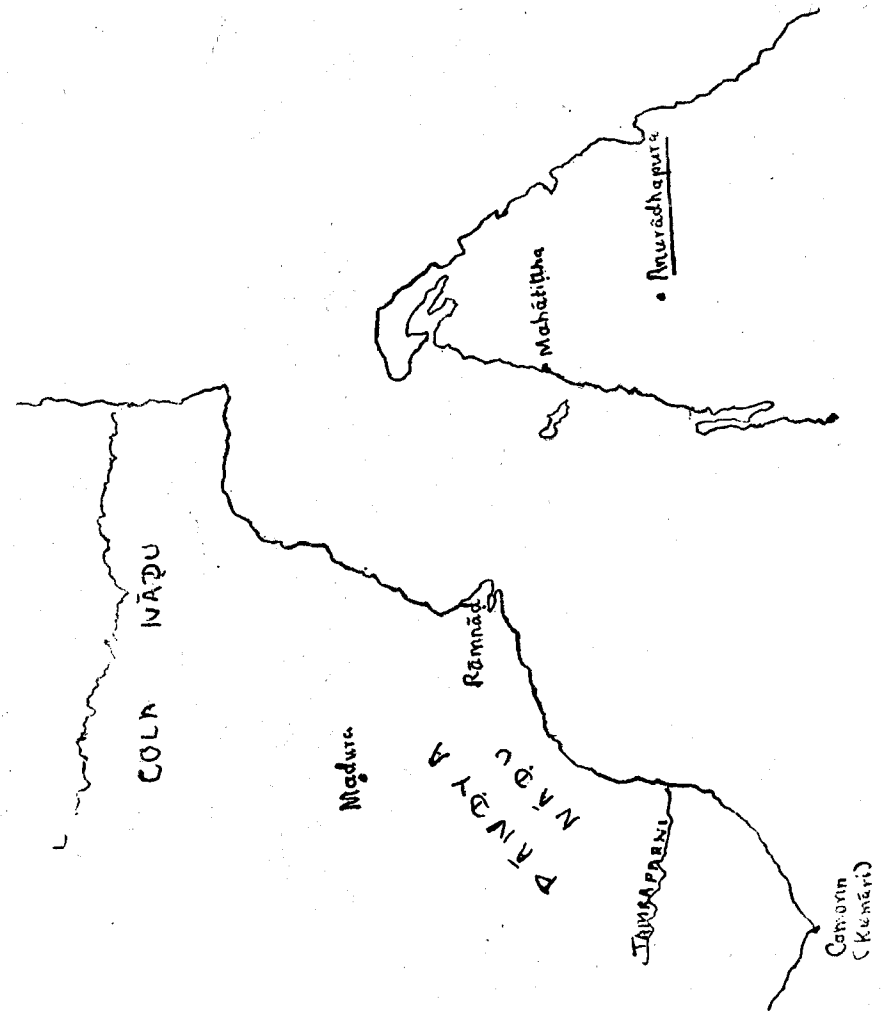
# ANCIENT DIVISIONS OF SRI LANKA

Scale

0 5 10 15 20 miles



# SOUTH INDIA AND SRI LANKA



# TAMILISED NAMES OF SRI LANKA ( Shaded Area )

