
KOTTE AND THE SINHALESE

(Issued to honour the occasion of the shifting of the
Parliament of Sri Lanka from Celombo to Kotte
on 29 April 1982)

Appropriate Technology Services

121, POINT-PEDRO ROAD
NALLUR, JAFFNA

No.

by

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Kulakkoddan's Prophecy

"A time will come in the distant future when the services of the temple (of Thirukoneswaram) will be neglected. But Gajabahu of Anurajapuram will dedicate more lands to the temple and restore its services to their original glory. After a long interval, the services will be transferred to Kalanimalai owing to the incursions of the Parangkis. The Parangkis will be overcome by the Hollander. The leonine solar dynasty of Ceylon will then be dismissed. The Vadukan will reign over all Ceylon, but the Hollanders will snatch a small portion of his territory from him. A new power will overthrow the Hollandars and befriend the Vadukar, and the two friendly powers will restore the worship of the temple (of Thirukoneswaram). After this will come Singkam (the Lion) to govern the whole Ceylon."

Fernao de Queyroz says

1

"And Speaking of Ceylon in particular. That Island of which the King of Cota (Kotte) styled himself emperor is little inferior in size to the Kingdom of Portugal; the riches have been explained, the antiquity of its kings under the same title, dominion and blood, is unequalled in Europe. The people are noble, cultured, and by no means barbarous; well-featured and olive-complexioned, which is the common colour of India as far as the Ganges, they are light and wiry, in keeping with their diet, spare, and of little sustenance; and it is a wonderful thing that we seek to improve the works of God, and fancy that only Northern people are to be esteemed because they are white."

2

"We must, however, admit some of the Sinhalese moral customs, which may well be an example to us, for they have such a horror of theft that in the doors of their houses they use no locks. They deem it a shame to kill by poison and as their greatest occupation is soldiering, and they enjoy peace as an accident, and war is the custom, those who are their captains are also their judges."

3

“The Sinhalese have an abundance of fruit from the bounty of nature. All their care and pleasure they place in arms, in which they constantly exercise themselves. They are regardless of life, brave, robust light-footed, and the continual practice of arms makes them so well disciplined in their own way that the conquest of the Kandyan Kingdom may be compared with the rebellion of the United Provinces. They deem it a sign of weakness to bear only offensive arms.”

4

“We left the King Sede Dissa Bau in the town of Dambadini, and as the scourge and disease, which their histories attribute to the bad water of that region, did not cease, lest they perish altogether, he removed the Court to a place called Polwatte in the Galboda Division. It is at this time, they say, that the city of Kotte had its beginning, which afterwards became the metropolis of the Island; and they say the following was the occasion. In the country of Salpeti one league from Colombo, there lived a foreign merchant, who going a-hunting to the site of Kotte, at the time uninhabited, the grey-hounds gave chase to a hare, which seeing itself pursued by them, turned against the dogs like a Tiger and put them to flight without heeding the shouts of Alakeswara, for such was the name of this merchant. Wondering and amazed at an event so unusual, he returned home pensive and consulting soothsayers, as all these heathen do in their doubts, they replied that the courage of the hare was due to the climate and peculiarity of that place, which was a nursery of courageous souls, and seeing that the land was temperate in climate and the place suited for a strong and large town, and that it would be proportionately wholesome to the spirits of men who should be born and live there, he determined to remove thither his family and those of his kindred and faction; and he was the first founder of that Noble people who increased in a few years and there increased also the pride and arrogance of Alakaswara and his confederates.

“Later, after the death of Alakeswara, Rohula Parakrama Bau seized the town of Kotte and annobled it with building.”

and Pagodas, and they say that this change took place in the year of Christ 1144 in the time of King Afonso Henriques of Portugal."

5

"As long as Rajapura was the capital of Ceylon, the whole Island was subject to one King, but after the innundation of the low lands and after the city of Kotte became the metropolis there were in the Island fifteen Kinglets, subject to the King of Kotte, who therefore was considered to be Emperor, and the same title is in these days claimed by the King of Kandy. These Kinglets were Uva, Waiavo, Puttalam, Mantota Panamgama Mullattivu, Trincomalee, Kottiyar, Batticaloa, Panava, Bintenne, Orupula, Matara, Kandy and Jaffna, which together with the Kingdom of Kotte makes sixteen. This the ancient Kings of Kotte signified by certain celebrated processions called "peraheras" which lasted sixteen days some being held by day and others at night, which amounted to thirty-two, and those by night were more famous. In them women alone took part...

"The Kings were to go in them with a bangle made of fifteen heads which represented those over whom they dominated."

H. W. Codrington says

6

"During the reign of Vikrama Bahu III, his minister, Alakeswara or Alagakkonara built fortress of New Jayawardenapura or Kotte. He found it expedient that the enemies of his country and religion should be kept at a distance. Arya Chakravarti, the King of Jaffna, attacked by sea and land but was defeated, Alagakkonara capturing his encampments at Colombo, Wattala, Negombo and Chilaw."

7

"Parakrama Bahu VI came to the throne of Kotte in 1411 and was inaugurated in 1415.

"The principal event in his reign was the conquest of Jaffna by Sappunal Kumaraya, the son, actual or adopted, of Parakrama

Bahu. This Kingdom seems to have come into being at least as an independent state about the thirteenth century. The place-names in the peninsula indicate that it was held by the Sinhalese inhabitants at no very remote date, and it certainly was part of the dominions of Parakrama Bahu I."

8

"Phuvanaika Bahu VIII was King of Kotte from 1521—1550. His daughter had been married to one Vidiye Bandara, and with the object of making his position secure against Mayadunna, an embassy was despatched in 1540 to Lisbon with a golden image of their infant son Dharmapala, requesting that the Prince should be installed by the King of Portugal as the heir apparent of the Kingdom of Kotte. This was duly done, and the ambassadors on their return journey came with the first Franciscans.

"The account of the political divisions of Ceylon [presented by the schedule attached to Dharmapala Donation must refer to a period long anterior to 1580. The states over which the King of Kotte claimed suzerainty were the Kingdoms of Sitawake of the seven Korales, of Kandy and of Jaffna, and also the principality of the Four Korales. There were also the Vanniyarships who were bound by tribute to the King of Kotte. These were the two Panamas, Yala, Velewara Kosgama, Wellassa, Palugama, Batticaloa, Kottiyar, Trincomalee and Puttalam."

9

"In the Kingdom of Kotte itself there were three Disawas: one over Matara, one over the Adhikariya of Denawaka, and one over the Adhikariya of Nuwarakalaviya, the country forming the western half of the present North Central Province and stretching, according to our document, from Puttalam to Mannar."

Rev. Fr. S. G. Perera says

10

"On the death of Dharmapala, the Kingdom of Kotte with all its appurtenances passed to Philip I. King of Portugal, by

virtue of the deed of gift. This donation, first made in 1580 (?) to Don Henriques was renewed and ratified in 1583, after the death of that monarch, in favour of Philip I and his successors. On each occasion a solemn assembly of the lieges of Dharmapala was convoked in the precincts of the palace, and when the Donation had been read and interpreted, the people elected representatives to declare in their name that they were content with the donation and would accept the King of Portugal as their King and renounce their right and claim to elect a king of their own nation. Dharmapala himself and the "mohottalas" then solemnly declared that the Kingdoms then known as Kotte, Sitawake, Raigama, Kande-Udarate, and Jaffna, of the Province of the Four and Seven Korales, Matara, Donawaka, Wellawara—Khsgama, Palugama, Batticaloa, Kottiyar, Trincomalee and Puttalam. Finally a clause was added stating that the donation would be null and void in case of an heir was born to Dharmapala."

The "History of Ceylon" by the University of Ceylon says

11

"The Arya Chakravartis of Jaffna who came to power about the same time as the fall of Dambadeniya dynasty continued the issue of Ceylon-type coins. These coins of which there are several types, bear the legend setu in Tamil characters; Parakrama Bahu VI of Kotte who conquered the Jaffna Kingdom reintroduced the Dambadeniya type, but with the addition of a figure of the lion on the obverse.;"

12

"Whether Alakeswara rose to power with the help of the Arya Chakravarti, as we have inferred, or not, he resolved, as soon as he had established his position, to put an end to the virtual suzerainty which the northern Kingdom had gained over the Sinhalese territories. He built up his military potential and established a strategic position in the vicinity of Colombo. A suitable site was found amidst the marshes to the north of the Kelani Ganga, at the place which has since come to be known as Kotte, "the fort." Having completed his preparations for war,

he threw a challenge to the Arya Chakravarti. This was done by hanging the tax-collectors of the northern potentate in 1368.

“The Arya Chakravarti, was not slow to react to the challenge. He sent strong forces both by land and by sea, which advanced to the heart of the Sinhalese country and occupied Colombo, Negombo, Watta'a and Chilaw. Alakeswara attacked these enemy encampments, slew large numbers of the enemy and forced the remainder to retreat. Ultimately he succeeded in repelling the forces of the Arya Chakravarti. The Arya Chakravarti's ships that were lying at anchor at Panadura were destroyed and the Tamil warriors slaughtered.”

13

“According to the Rajavaliya Prince Sapumal raided a number of villages in the vicinity of Jaffna, captured prisoners and brought them to Kotte.

“King Parakrama Bahu VI gave orders for the final offensive. The decisive battle which opened the route to Jaffna took place at Javaka - Kotte on the mainland close to Elephant Pass, which was a fortress going back to the days of Chandrabanu.

“The Sinhalese forces arrived at Jaffna apparently without further fighting. The Arya Chakravarti escaped, but the members of his family, including his brother and uncle were brought to Kotte as captives.”

“King Parakrama Bahu VI was crowned King of Kotte in 1416”

14

“Kanagasuriya Singai Aryan had to leave his kingdom owing to troubles created by the Sinhalese of Jaffna, with the help of the Vanniyars. He fled to India with his two sons. After a period of seventeen years, during which Vijaya Bahu was King of Jaffna, he returned to Jaffna with a large army, and killed Vijaya Bahu in battle.

“During the reign of Vikkrama Singai Aryan, in Jaffna trouble broke out between the Tamil and Sinhalese subjects on account of

religious differences. King Vikkrama Singai Aryan of Jaffna caused one Punchi Banda and seventeen others among the Sinhalese to be executed, and restored order.

"In 1458 there was no Arya Chakravarti ruling in Jaffna, which had already been seized by Prince Sapumal from Kanagasuriya Singai Aryan. The Pandya empire had collapsed in 1311 and thereafter the Pandyas had sunk into a position of insignificance"

15

"Sapumal was the ruler of Jaffna for seventeen years from 1450 till he went to Kotte on the death of Parakrama Bahu and succeeded to the throne as Bhuvanaika Bahu VI. He built the Kandasamy temple in Nallur.

What others say

16

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"You are aware that liberal terms have been offered in the hope of attracting both the Tamil of the North and the Sinhalese from further South to take up cultivation of land in the Wann district."

"So far the only applications have been from certain people of the North - Central Province who have relatives already settled in the Wann. The subject was discussed at the last Tamil durbar but the result was not such as to lead one to hope that the population of Jaffna are likely to display any great eagerness to take up land in this district until the example of some more enterprising persons has persuaded them of the material advantages to be gained"—His Excellency Sir Henry Edward Macallum in the Legislative Council, on April 24, 1911

17

Nallur Swami Gnanaprakasara, says "In the third century B. C. Buddhism brought (to this Island) an accession of Pali and Sanskrit words by the hundred and thousand, words relating to monastic life and institution, to philosophy and the then known arts and

sciences The land began to be studded with viharas and other religious buildings. In the Jaffna Peninsula many places are still known by names connected with Vihara, i.e. Chulipuram for Sulu Vihara, Tolpuram for Tula Vihara, Chuddipuram for Sittiye Vihara, etc. Other places are known simply as Veram for Vihara. Some lands are known as Poyiddi (Bo hittiya) Puttakaladdy, Puta Koyilady, etc. The yellow-clad brotherhood was found in every nook and corner teaching the people under the high royal patronage. Buddhism brought not only a vast amount of non-Dravidian words to enrich the nascent Sinhalese language but also the spiritual cement to weld the people to a homogeneous society. All those who embraced Buddhism felt a sense of solidarity and community of religious interests. Caste and colour did not stand in the way, Birth and occupation mattered little. The solidarity created by the Dharma not less by a common language made the Sinhalese-speaking Buddhists rally together as a nation.

"In the north of the Island, it would seem that the old Tamils did not wholeheartedly embrace the new faith, although they had been carried away by the Sinhalese wave, speaking their own dialect with a new intonation and adopting the non-Dravidian element to the fullest extent. They spoke Sinhalese, their land was full of Buddhist monuments. As a people they were all Buddhist themselves. We know that Buddhism was not entirely a foreign religion; It was but the twin sister of Hinduism both having emanated from Brahmanism or more truly Buddhism represented the views of a reformer who assailed the enslaving ritualism of Hinduism and directed his attention to right conduct alone."

18

In his speech before the Ceylon National Association on April 2, 1917, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam said, "The splendid stand that the Sinhalese made against Europeans for three centuries, until they voluntarily surrendered the Island (of Ceylon) to the British Sovereign with full reservation of their rights and liberties, is a matter of history."

19

Sir Ponnambalam Ramaanathan (1851—1930) in his 68th year moved at the first session of the Ceylon National Congress on,

December 12, 1919, "That the Legislative Council should consist of about 50 members of whom at least four-fifths should be elected according to territorial divisions upon a wide male franchise, and the remaining one-fifth should consist of official members and unofficial members to represent important minorities and the Council should elect its own Speaker as President "

20

Speaking in the Legislative Council on June 16, 1922, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan said, "If we ask for Territorial Members, there will be an overwhelming number of Sinhalese in the Legislative Council. I do not grudge them that, but the result of this territorial system of election will be that there will be fewer Tamils, and fewer still or none to represent the other communities and interests in the Legislative Council.. The introduction of territorial representation in Ceylon will lead to the political slavery of the British settlers here and of the Burgher, Tamil, Muhammedan and Indian communities who, taken singly or together, will be overwhelmed by the Sinhalese Community "

Comment: If Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was given a Colombo Seat in the Legislative Council, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan would not have changed his political view and would have supported territorial representation throughout his life.

21

"After spending 24 years among the Sinhalese I came to the Jaffna District in January this year. Lo and behold, what a difference in outlook between the two communities." — A. Tharmalinkam of Karainagar, in a statement published in the "Ceylon Daily News," July 25, 1969,

22

Mr. V. N. Navaratnam, Federal Party M. P. for Chawakachcheri said at the Moral Rearmament Conference held in Michigan in the U. S. A. in 1957 that he felt very sorry for the wrongs the Tamils had done to the Sinhalese and tendered an open apology at the Conference. (For detailed report [please see "Times of Ceylon" of 19-9-1957])

The symbol of Sinhalese inspiration

What is Crown to the United Kingdomites the Sacred Relics of the Buddha are to the Sinhala Buddhists. I can think of only these two peoples in modern history where danger to one is identified with danger to national pride, honour and sovereignty. Therefore let me take up this opportunity to briefly touch on the history of the Relics.

When the Buddha's Alms-Bowl and the Relics were brought to Sri Lanka during king Devanampiya Tissa's time by Sanga-mitta's son (Sumana), Asoka's son (Mahinda), was at Mihintala. The Collar-Bone Relic and the Alms-Bowl were placed in the Thuparama Dagaba at Anuradhapura. Devanaampiya Tissa proclaimed by beat of drums that those of the people who desired to see the Relics of the Buddha must first take the uposatha vows of fasting and abstinence from sensual pleasures.

Devanampiya Tissa ruled at Anuradhapura from B. C. 307—267. In B. C. 144 Outugemunu began in real earnest the work of the Great Thupa. The stone-pillar, set up of old by Devanaampiya Tissa was removed and the place for the Thupa was dug out to a depth of seven cubits and the foundation stone was laid for the Relic Chamber of the Ruwanveliseya.

During the reign of Mahasena's son, Sri Meghavanna (304—332 A. D.), Buddha's Tooth Relic was brought to Sri Lanka in 313 A. D. from Kalinga to prevent it from falling into the hands of a hostile king.

Vijaya Bahu I (1056—1111) caused a temple for the Tooth Relic to be built at Polonnaruwa near his palace. Vikrama Bahu (1111—1132) who ruled Polonnaruwa seized the lands dedicated to the Buddha and oppressed the priests. The priests removed the Tooth and Bowl Relics to Ruhuna. In 1156, when Parakrama Bahu the Great was king of Polonnaruwa (1153—1186) there was a rebellion in Ruhuna against Parakrama Bahu the Great. Manabharana's mother, Sugala Devi raised the standard of revolt. In his campaign against the rebels Parakrama Bahu was able to bring back the Relics to Polonnaruwa. In 1165

Parakrama Bahu the Great built the Jetavanarāma including a round Tooth Relic Temple near his palace.

Nissanka Malla (1187-1196) built a new Tooth Relic temple at Polonnaruwa in sixty hours. It is said that there was anarchy in Sri Lanka from 1200-1215 during which period the Tooth and Bowl Relics were carried away and hidden at Kotmale. Vijaya Bahu III (1220-1224) made his capital at Damabadeniya, and calling back the priests who fled to India during the period of anarchy, he conveyed the Tooth and Bowl Relics from Kotmale to the seat of Government and thence to Beligala, where they were lodged for the sake of safety. Vijaya Bahu III died in 1224 and was cremated at Attanagala.

Parakrama Bahu II (1234-1269) brought back the Tooth Relic from Beligala and lodged them at Dambadeniya. After the death of Bhuvanika Bahu I (1271-1283) there was a famine. During this period the Pandyan King, Kulasekhara (1265-1308) sent his Minister, Arya Chaktavarti to invade Sri Lanka. Arya Chakravarti invaded Sri Lanka and carried away the Sacred Relics.

Parakrama Bahu III (1302-1310) had to humble himself by a personal embassy to the Pandyan court before he was able to get back the Relics. He placed the Relics at Polonnaruwa, which he had made his capital. Bhuvanika Bahu II (1310-1325) carried away the Relics to Kurunegala which he had made his capital. Parakrama Bahu VI (1412-1468) built a temple for the Tooth Relics at Kotte. One of the Buddha's tooth relics was said to have been carried away by Vidiye Bandara, but later recovered by the Portuguese and burnt by the Viceroy of Goa. How far this event is true, I do not know.

Vimala Dharma Surya I (1590-1604), King of Kandy, built a two-storeyed building for the Tooth Relics in Kandy. He brought the Relics from Delgamuwa in the Sabaragsma where they were said to have been kept concealed after their removal from Kotte. Vimala Dharmasūrya II (1687-1707) built a three-storeyed building for the Tooth Relics in Kandy;

Buddhism has a bright future in Sri Lanka: Firstly, the Governments of Sri Lanka have opened missions abroad to propagate Buddhism. Secondly, the Buddhist laity have a regard for the Buddhist clergy. Thirdly, the Sinhala Buddhists love to study Pali - the Language of Buddhism. This is further strengthened by the opening of a Buddhist-Pali University by the Jayawardene Government. For this, His Excellency J. R. Jayawardene will always be remembered in the corridors of history. He will also be remembered for making Kotte the new capital of Sri Lanka. The ancient Sinhala Kings kept the Tooth Relic in their capitals. It may be said now that the Tooth Relics should be kept at Kotte thereby conforming to a historical tradition.

^a
The Parliament of Sri Lanka is to be shifted to Kotte on April 29, 19^a2. His Excellency J. R. Jayawardene, the only ^{elder} politician who has never known defeat at the hustings, the only surviving Sri Lankan politician who actively participated in the Indian Congress national freedom struggle, has reason to be justifiably proud of the historic and historical change he has smoothly brought about in the present decade of Sri Lankan turbulent political scene, and it is to be piously hoped, nay, it shall be the holy duty of every conscientious man, woman and adult, born and bred in Sri Lanka, to be equally proud of this memorable national event, the like of which may not be witnessed in the next millennium.

May His Excellency J. R. Jayawardene, a sincere believer in the power of the Buddhist priests to influence the God of rain on behalf of the agriculturists in particular, and of the nation in general, live to be a centenarian.

May Sri Lanka's steps be guided towards an everlasting South Asian solidarity.

Thikkarai Road
Karainagar
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A. Tharmalingam

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