

# CEYLON *Today*

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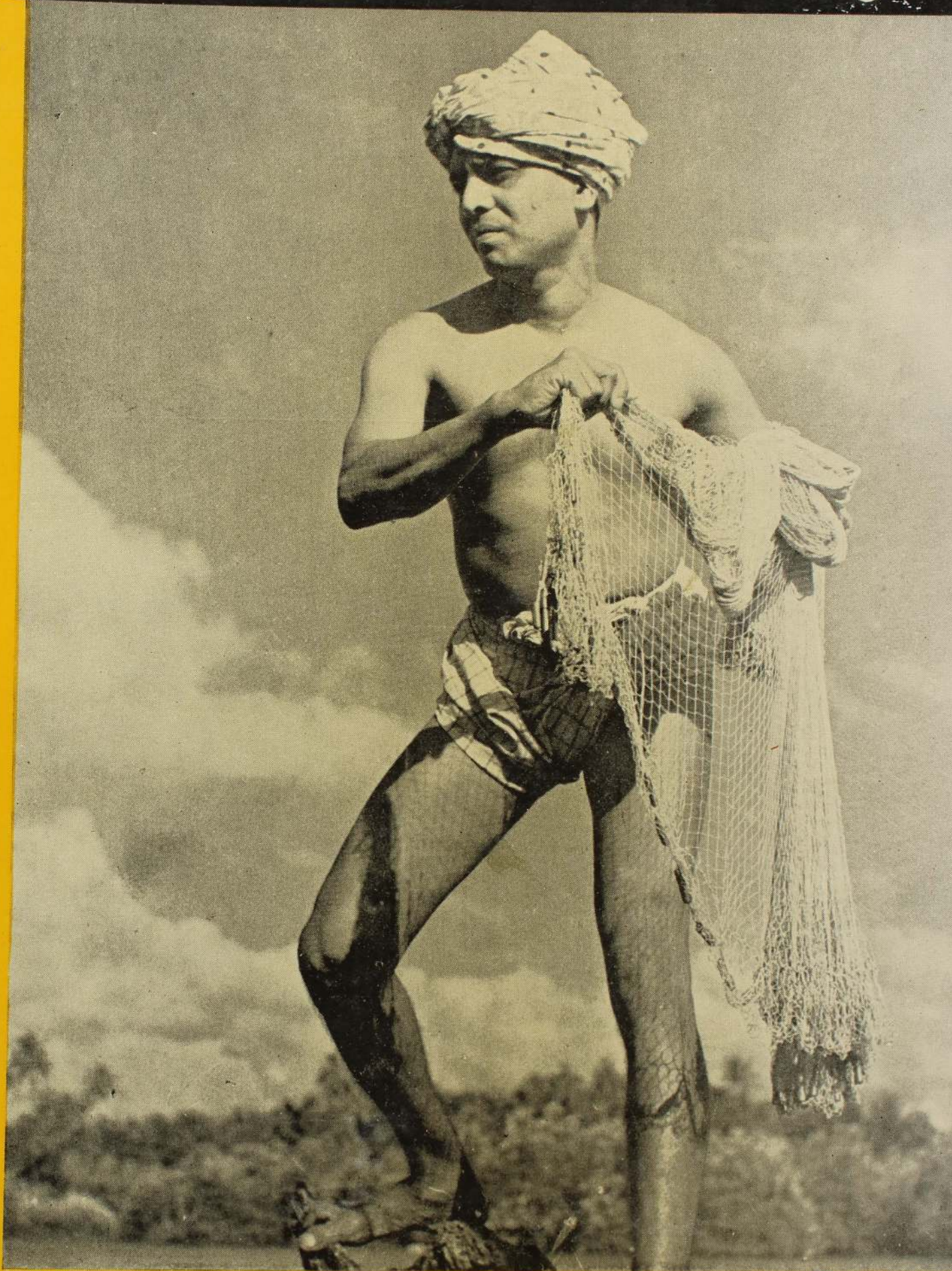
**Books about Ceylon**

LYN de FONSEKA

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*The Throw-net*

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**NOVEMBER, 1955**



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## CEYLON TODAY

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# CEYLON

# Today

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## The Sinhalese and their Contribution to the Art and Culture of the World

JOHN M. SENAVERATNA

THE Sinhalese nation is one of the oldest nations of the world. It stands today, among the countless races of the earth, in the proud and almost unique position of being able to declare that its history is entwined in, nay, that it joins together, the two great ages of human civilization.

This history can be traced back, with unerring certainty, throughout a period of over twenty-four centuries, throughout nearly 2,500 years, and even still further back if need be, till it is well nigh lost in the impenetrable mists of hoary antiquity, in the dim twilight of fable and of fancy.

### Antiquity of Their Civilization

THE glory of a nation may be of a three-fold character : reflected glory, inherent glory, and glory that has been acquired.

Of the first, many things have contributed, and do still contribute today, to render the Sinhalese nation illustrious. For one thing, the vast antiquity of its origin and civilization reflects a sort of imperishable renown on the proud possessors of that ancient name.

A Sinhalese may declare the fact of his nationality with just as much justifiable pride as did the Roman citizen of old when he uttered the words "*Civis Romanus sum*". True that a Sinhalese might not be entitled to say it in, and with, the pride of extensive dominion. But he can say it in the consciousness that he comes of a race compared with which the proudest nations now living are but of yesterday.

"Although the primitive history of Ceylon is enveloped in fable, yet," says an eminent scholar of our own day, "there is perhaps no country in the world that has such a long continuous history and civilization.

"At a time when the now great nations of the West were sunk in barbarism, or had not yet come into existence, Ceylon was the seat of an ancient kingdom and religion, the nursery of art, and the centre of Eastern commerce.

"Her stupendous religious edifices—more than 2,000 years old, and, in extent and architectural interest, second only to the structures of Egypt—and her vast irrigation works, attest the greatness and antiquity of her civilization.



"Her rich products of nature and art, the beauty of her scenery—said to be the loveliest in the world—her fame as the home of a pure Buddhism, have made her from remote times the object of interest and admiration to contemporary nations.

"Merchants, sailors and pilgrims have, in diverse tongues, left records of their visits, which confirm in a striking manner the ancient native chronicles which Ceylon is almost singular among Asiatic lands in possessing."

### Wonder of the Ancient World

IF the celebrity and wide renown of the land which was their birthright and heritage could reflect on them any sort of lustre, the Sinhalese had it in ample measure. Their land was a land of wonder and admiration to the various nations of the world.

It was, and is still today, believed to form part of the region of the Hebraic Ophir and Tarshish, from which King Solomon's Navy supplied him with "gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks".

The ancient Brahmins called it the "Resplendent Land", making a sort of Paradise of it and imagining that beings of angelic nature dwelt in it.

To the Greeks it was the "Land of the Hyacinth and the Ruby", as also "Taprobane", by which name it is described by Onesicritus, Diodorus Siculus, Ovid, Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, and others.

This name is familiar to most of us in the sonorous lines of Milton's *Paradise Lost* :

"Embassies from regions far remote,  
From India and the Golden Chersonese,  
And utmost Indian isle, Taprobane."

And we know that "the early navigators of Europe as they returned dazzled with its gems, and laden with its costly spices, propagated the fable that far to seaward the very breeze that blew from it was redolent of perfume".

To the Chinese, the land of the Sinhalese was known as the "Island of Jewels"; to the Siamese as "Tewa Lanka" or Divine Lanka.

To the Buddhist poets, it was "the Pearl upon the brow of India", and to the inhabitants of the neighbouring continent it was Lanka ("the resplendent"), the name which it still bears among us Sinhalese today.

To the Buddhist mind, it was, and is, hallowed by the most sacred of associations, as being a spot visited by every one of the four Buddhas of the present cycle—Konagama, Kakusanda, Kasyapa, and Gautama.

To the Mohammedans, it was the cradle of the human race, the new Elysium assigned to the exiled parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, to console them for the loss of Paradise.

### Contribution to Art and Culture

AND what of the culture of these people—the contribution which in the course of the centuries the Sinhalese of Lanka made not only to Asian but even to world Art and Culture?

Culture has been defined as any labour or means employed for improvement, correction or growth; in other words, the labour to promote and increase, to improve or advance. On this basis, among and along with other peoples of Asiatic lands, the Sinhalese may, without exaggeration, be said to have been in the forefront or van of progress and advancement from the very beginnings of their history two thousand five hundred years ago.

And if, as Mathew Arnold tells us, culture is also the passion for sweetness and light and, what is more, the passion for making them prevail, the Sinhalese, particularly of the ancient days, had it in ample and satisfying measure, so much so indeed as to induce them as a nation to cultivate the love of excellence in all the things they said and did.

As is fairly well known, the Sinhalese people belong to the same Indo-Aryan stock as the majority of the great inhabitants of North India. But what is not so well-known or recognized or acknowledged is that they were the first to carry





An ancient tank of the Sinhalese

Indian culture beyond the seas, and, in spite of numerous vicissitudes throughout the centuries, to preserve it up to the present day.

### In Literature

TAKE their Literature ; Poetry, for instance. As scholars are aware, the earliest examples of Sinhalese versification, hitherto known, are found among the *graffiti* on the Gallery Wall of Sigiriya. And the Sigiri stanzas contain ample indirect evidence, showing that the versifier's art had had a long history in Ceylon at the time those metrical compositions were scribed on the "mirror wall" of Kasyapa's famous citadel.

References to Sinhalese poetry, relating to periods much anterior to the earliest verses at Sigiri—which are assigned to the 8th century—are contained in the chronicles and other Pali writings of Ceylon.

But the early literature in the Sinhalese language being now irretrievably lost, our only hope of satisfying our curiosity about the nature of Sinhalese versification during the pre-Christian or early Christian centuries, hitherto lay in the possible discovery, some day or other, of a metrical inscription belonging to those times.

And happily, that day dawned for us not only so recently as the year of 1946, but, with singular appropriateness, the discovery fell to the lot of a



distinguished Sinhalese, one of the greatest scholars of our time, Dr. Paranavitana, the present Archaeological Commissioner of Ceylon. Four pre-Christian Brahmi inscriptions in Sinhalese verse which he has discovered afford us, for the first time, tangible evidence to prove that the period during which the Sinhalese language has had a literary culture of its own goes back to at least two thousand years.

No less remarkable was the progress and advance they made in the things that called forth their industry and application—progress and advance in some directions beyond anything which any of their contemporaries among the other peoples of Asia could claim credit for.

### Pre-eminence in Irrigation

IN works of Irrigation they stood pre-eminent among the nations of the world. Their system of irrigation, said a great Englishman of our day, “is the admiration of the greatest Engineers of our time, and it had brought the whole country into a high state of culture”.

Numberless tanks, reservoirs and canals dotted the surface of those parts of the country subject to periodical droughts, when “the sky becomes as brass and the earth as iron”. And this system of water cultivation was the only means of averting those frequent famines which would otherwise have been inevitable. The ingenuity of the people in this direction and the magnificent bounty of their sovereigns are the wonder and the admiration of the modern white man.

Sir Emerson Tennent declares :

“It cannot but exalt our opinion of a people to find that, under disadvantages so signal, they were capable of forming such a work as the Kalaveva Tank, between Anuradhapura and Dambulla, which Turnour justly says is the greatest of the ancient works in Ceylon. This enormous reservoir was 40 miles in circumference, with an embankment 12 miles in extent—a work which has been described as one of the most stupendous monuments of human labour”.

No people of any age or country had so great practice and experience in the construction of works for irrigation. And so far had the renown of their excellence in this branch reached that it is on record that, in the 8th century, the King of Kashmir, Daya-pida, sent to Ceylon for Engineers to form a lake in Kashmir.

### Manual and Mechanical Arts

TURNING to the agricultural system of the Sinhalese, it was certainly such as did honour to their wisdom and fore-thought. And the patriarchal village system which they established in the land was undoubtedly calculated to promote and ensure that which every civilized Government of today strives for, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”.

Turning next to the skill displayed by the Sinhalese in manufactures, in manual and mechanical arts, we find that weaving was known in Ceylon over 2,000 years ago. And such was the dexterity which the ancient Sinhalese displayed in this branch of industry that, as our chronicles declare, “on occasions when it was intended to make offerings of yellow robes to the priesthood, the cotton was plucked from the trees at daybreak and cleaned, spun, woven, dyed and made into garments before the setting of the sun”.

The Sinhalese were also experts in the art of bleaching. The *Mahavansa*, in its description of the building of the great Ruvanveli Dagaba at Anuradhapura nearly 200 years before Christ, mentions a canopy made of 8,000 pieces of cloth of every hue.

And for the rest the story is still the same. Whatever their hands found to do, the Sinhalese of those days did well.

The tanning of leather, carving in sandalwood and inlaying with ivory, the making of “State Fans and Thrones of Ivory”; then again in the chemical arts, the extraction of camphor and the preparation of aromatic oils, unguents, perfumes



and vegetable dyes and mineral paints ; in all these they exhibited as much proficiency as in the working in metals, gold and silver, iron, steel, lead, bronze, copper.

In their Architecture the Sinhalese people adopted of course from India the idea of the *stupa* or *dagaba*, and preserved it without much modification from the archaic type which is now exemplified at Sanchi. But one important feature in which they differed and departed from the Indian prototype was the frontispiece or *Vahalkada* at the four cardinal points of each *dagaba*.

To the student of ancient Indian culture, the importance of Ceylon monuments lies in the fact

that here archaic types were preserved till a considerably late date, whereas, in India itself, new forms, due to various external influences, had replaced them.

Contrariwise were the Moonstones, which were also not unknown in ancient Buddhist shrines in India, but which underwent a remarkable development in Ceylon. Some of the examples to be seen at Anuradhapura are of the highest technical and artistic perfection. What originally served as a mere decorative feature of ancient architecture became, in the hands of the Sinhalese, " lyrics in stone " as they are aptly described in our day.

(To be continued)

An irrigation tank in South Ceylon







An orient pearl in the oyster

## Fishing for Pearls in the Gulf of Mannar

ALFRED EDWARD

THERE are many theories with regard to the origin of pearls. Poetic fancy and popular belief have even suggested that the pearl was the product of the tears of water-nymphs, of angels, and even of mortals; some believed it was produced by the dew or raindrop being caught up by the oyster and cradled in its shell. The Chinese were perhaps the first to discover that the pearl was caused by an irritation to the oyster, and working on this theory they were successful in producing pearly objects by subjecting the oyster to some form of irritation.

The first Western naturalist to experiment on this theory was Linnaeus in 1761. The baroque or irregular pearl was no doubt due to irritation of the oyster resulting from minute

grains of sand getting into the living shell, or by boring sponges or burrowing worms breaking into the delicate tissues of the oyster. This was beautifully expressed by Sir Edwin Arnold in the following lines :—

“ Know you, perchance, how that poor formless wretch—

The oyster—gems his shallow moonlit chalice?  
Where the shell irks him, or the sea-sand frets,  
He sheds this lovely lustre on his grief.”

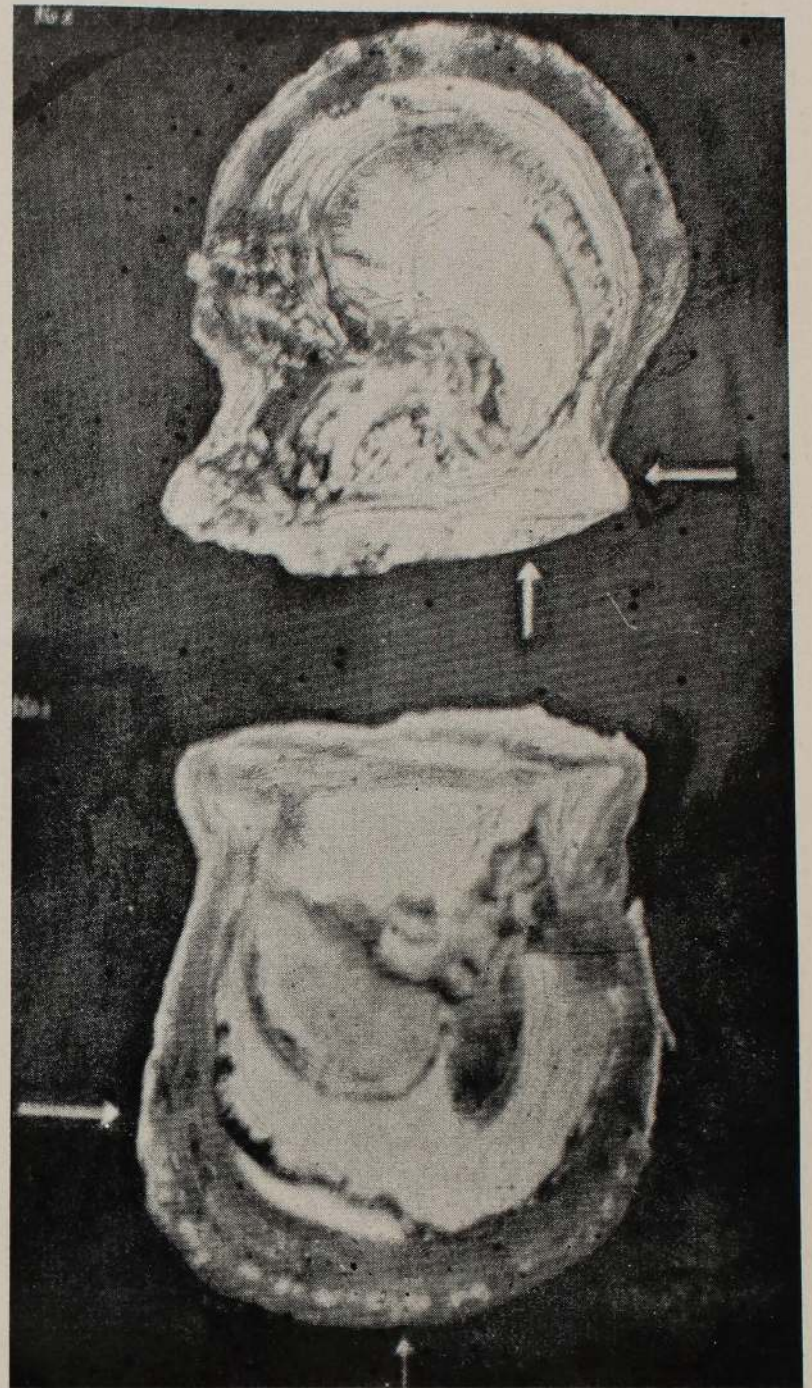
It was possible to create by this method pearly excrescences on the inside of the shell, but till the middle of the 19th century no one had discovered the origin of the regular, well-rounded, orient pearl. It was Dr. E. F. Kelaart,



perhaps the first scientist Ceylon produced, who discovered, in 1859, that the pearl was produced by the presence of a parasite in the body of the oyster. The Italian naturalist, Fillipi, also developed the parasitic theory about the same time. Professor Herdman who conducted experiments in 1902 on the bionomics of the Ceylon pearl-oyster confirmed Kelaart's theory that the pearl was due to the presence of vermian parasites in the oyster. This theory justifies Dubois' dictum that the most beautiful pearl is the brilliant sarcophagus of a worm. The presence of this parasite causes irritation to the oyster, and, in order to destroy this intruder, the oyster secretes the nacre or the pearly substance round the parasite, embalming it and creating the pearl. Herdman says that "it is not sufficient for the oyster to be infected by the *Tetrarhyncus* parasite ; it must also live, retaining its parasite, until such time as it can produce sufficient deposit of the calcareous secretion to form a true pearl".

### Renown in Ancient Times

IT is this pearl that had brought Ceylon its renown in the ancient world and it is this "fair defect of nature" that attracted to us the Arab, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English, "and all our woe". The fame of the Ceylon pearl, like that of its fragrant cinnamon and its incomparable gems, is as old as its history and even goes beyond into the realms of legend and myth. According to a "Kalvettu" quoted by Sir William Twynam, the legendary Alliarasany's pearl divers established the settlements of Kudiramalai and Silavaturai along the north-west coast. Alli was the paramour of Arjuna of Mahabharata fame. There is also the legend of this queen having supervised the pearl fisheries from Karativu on the Calpentiyn peninsula. This appears to be corroborated by the existence of the Karativu shoal, which extends almost to the West Cheval pearl banks ; it would appear that this shoal was part of the Calpentiyn peninsula but was submerged by the sea later,



Seed pearls in an oyster

The *Mahavamsa* refers to Vijaya's gift of pearls and chanks to his father-in-law, the King of Madura ; this was nearly two thousand five hundred years ago. King Devanampiya-Tissa sent an embassy to Asoka with gifts containing eight different types of pearls. Chinese chroniclers and classical writers have left records of the pearl fisheries of Ceylon. Pliny in the sixth book of his "History of the World" refers to Taprobane as "the most productive of pearls of all parts of the world". Ptolemy, Strabo, Athenaeus, Aelian and the author of *Periplus*



of the Erythrean Sea have recorded the fame of the Ceylon pearl. "Periplus", written about the 2nd century A.D., refers to the use of convict labour in the pearl fishing in Ceylon.

The first and most detailed description of the Ceylon pearl fisheries given by a western observer was by Marco Polo who visited Ceylon about 1294. Writing in 1330 Jordanus refers to "more than 8,000 boats" taking part in these fisheries and "an astounding and almost incredible" quantity of pearls being collected.

With the coming of the Portuguese in the 16th century we have more frequent references to the Ceylon pearl fisheries—perhaps the finest description is by that merchant of Venice, Caesar Frederick; Teixeira in 1608 and Ribeiro in 1685, Saar in the Dutch period, Percival in 1803 and Cordiner in 1807 have left us very detailed descriptions of this great enterprise. Milton was no doubt referring to "that utmost Indian isle, Taprobane" when he sang of the pearl of "Ormuz and of Ind". Keats has immortalized the Ceylon diver "who goes all naked to the hungry shark". It has even formed the subject of an opera by Bizet.

### The Gulf of Mannar

THE pearl oyster is found in Tambalagam Bay in Trincomalee, along the coast near Negombo and Chilaw, and even north of Mannar, but the most famous area for Ceylon pearls is in the Gulf of Mannar. The pearl banks or "paars" lie twenty to thirty miles west of the barren coast between Arippe on the estuary of Aruvi Aru and Kudiramalai, the promontory near the mouth of Moderam Aru. The entire Gulf of Mannar has been mapped out and the situation of each "paar" is accurately located. In 1923, a new "paar" was discovered, north-west of the True Venkalai Paar, and this was named Twynam Paar to commemorate Sir William Twynam, the Government Agent of Jaffna, who, for over thirty years in the 19th century, was associated with pearl fishing in Ceylon.

There are nearly ten well-known "paars", all at a depth of five to ten fathoms, where the pearl oyster breeds. Though this breeding ground is second in extent only to those of the Persian Gulf, pearl fishing in Ceylon has been characterized by its intermittent and uncertain nature. The Dutch were singularly unfortunate, as during their period of control of the pearl banks the yields were inconsequential and uneconomic. Their last fishery was in 1768 and the British had theirs in 1796. There were no fisheries between 1732 and 1746, also between 1820 and 1828, between 1837 and 1854, 1864 and 1873, 1892 and 1900, and again from 1925 to the present date. When the banks have lain fallow for long periods they have invariably yielded profusely. We might therefore expect a good yield next year.

It is to discover the causes of this irregularity that Professor Herdman of Liverpool University was brought out to Ceylon in 1902. His investigations revealed that this irregularity was caused by shifting sands, predacious fish, and overfishing. One of his recommendations was that a Marine Biologist should be appointed to carry out continuous scientific investigations and experiments to counteract the effects of silting and overfishing.

In 1925, Dr. Joseph Pearson, the Government Marine Biologist, analysed the causes enumerated by Herdman and his conclusions were that, though shifting sands did affect the pearl banks, overfishing could not be considered a serious cause of destruction as it was not always possible to denude a pearl bank of all its oysters. The unhelpful conclusion arrived at, after many years of scientific investigations was "that the pearl bank area, with its hundreds of square miles of deep water, with its lack of protection from the violence of the southwest monsoon, and with a complete lack of a suitable place in which to establish an oyster 'nursery' cannot be brought under human control . . . and that it pays better to restrict attention to inspection and to let nature have a free hand".



### Unvaried Methods

ANOTHER feature of the Ceylon pearl fisheries is the unvaried methods that have been employed to fish for pearls. The descriptions of Marco Polo or Caesar Frederick might easily have been used to describe pearling operations of the past and even those of the 20th century. The pearl fishery is usually held in March or April. After a preliminary examination of the banks in late October of the previous year, publicity is given, in December, of the proposed fishing. Again in February the area to be fished is examined to make sure that the oysters are there, and the banks are charted and buoyed-off.

Marco Polo, describing an actual fishing scene, says that "when the men have got into the small boats they jump into the water and dive to the bottom, which may be at a depth of from four to twelve fathoms, and there they remain as long as they are able. And there they find the shells that contain the pearls, and those they put into a net-bag tied round the waist and mount up to the surface with them and then dive anew. When they cannot hold their breath any longer they come up again and, after a little, down they go once more, and so they go on all day". To facilitate the descent, a heavy stone is tied to a rope, and standing on the stone the diver descends to the bottom of the sea. When he has reached the limits of his endurance, he tugs at the rope and the man on board called the *manduck* pulls the rope, giving the diver the impetus to ascend.

The length of time a diver remains submerged in a depth of seven or eight fathoms rarely exceeds sixty seconds, although some may remain a little longer. Capt. Donnan, the Inspector of Fisheries, reports that in 1885 in Mannar an Arab diver remained 109 seconds in seven fathoms of water. Various writers have reported longer stays under water, some even have given the incredible length of half an hour to one hour. This is no doubt pure fiction or misreported hearsay, but we can assume that on the average a skin diver can be under water for about a minute.

In the Ceylon fisheries there have been always two classes of divers—the Arabs from the Persian Gulf and the Parava divers from South India. A few Erukampiddy Moors from Mannar have also taken part. The consensus of opinion among all observers is that the Arab has always proved himself the better diver; he can stay longer under water and often brings up more oysters at each dive. It is this diver whom Matthew Arnold described in his "Sohrab and Rustom":

"Dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sands of Bahrein in the Persian Gulf,  
Plunging all day in the blue waves; at night,  
Having made up his toll of precious pearls,  
Rejoins her in their hut upon the shore."

The Indian Tamil diver on the other hand is more excitable and easily discouraged if he does not get more than seven oysters to a dive. The Arab is more systematic. When he is exhausted he regains the boat and immediately divests himself of his wet drawers and wears a fresh one and warms himself near a fire on the boat. The Indian does not care to remove his scanty clothing and does not warm himself and is therefore more liable on a windy day to fall ill. The Arab also wears a horn nose-clip when he gets under water, the Tamil merely holds the nose between his thumb and forefinger during the rapid descent to the bottom. Both Arab and Tamil go down feet first, with the feet resting on the stone sinker. Because of the rivalry between the Arabs and the Tamils, Pearson says that in 1925 they watched the arrival of the Arabs with not a little misgiving. But they proved to be tractable and disciplined. Of the two thousand divers required in 1925, only 500 Arab divers were given permission to come to Ceylon.

### The Shark-Charmer

BEFORE 1885 there was a very interesting member of the diving *entourage*. He was the "Abraiman" of Marco Polo, the Shark-Charmer



or Kadal Katti. When Marco visited Ceylon the Shark-Charmers received one twentieth of the total catch of oysters. But due to the fact that no fatality as a result of sharks had occurred during the entire recorded history of pearl-fishing, and because these charmers always got from the credulous divers more than they deserved, the Government did away with this practice of having them at the fishery. Since no fatality has occurred even after 1885 it might be reasonable to assume that the Shark-Charmer was a fake and an impostor. It is also mentioned that the sharks in the Gulf of Mannar are not man-eaters.

A typical diving day starts at midnight. The boats each with about 30 to 40 men on board sail for the pearl banks to reach the reefs by sunrise. There each boat takes its position on the area marked out for each day's work and, on a signal from the guard vessel, the diving commences. The divers work in pairs, each pair using a single diving stone and descending alternately. The diving continues until a signal is given from the guard vessel about 12 o'clock when all diving is stopped and the boats leave for the shore.

In 1925, the Government introduced the system of bagging the oysters before the boats sailed for home. This was considered necessary as it was felt that on the return journey many oysters were being illicitly opened by the crew of the boats. This procedure necessitated the appointment of three Sealing Superintendents and Seven Sealing Officers. Pearson calculated that bagging did prevent a considerable amount of loss to Government.

Perhaps the most attractive sight at the pearl fisheries was the return of the boats from the banks. Many observers have written in praise of the beauty of the covey of sails glistening in the westering sun as they make for shore. On a windless day the Government tugs towed the boats to the shore before nightfall as it was feared that straying boats might disappear with their precious load. On arrival, the crew of each boat carried the oysters into the Government enclosure and one-third of the entire

catch was given to the divers. The other two-thirds were auctioned and by 9 p.m. the entire enclosure was cleaned and made ready for the following day.

### The Diver's Share

IN the days of the Portuguese, the diving was conducted by the Government and the divers were permitted to retain one-fourth of the catch and the remainder was divided into three equal portions, for the king, the Church, and the soldiers respectively. In 1648, when the Dutch arrived, they too continued the same practice but due to the difficulties of management they soon resorted to leasing the banks each year to the highest bidder. When Ceylon became a British colony, at first the Dutch policy of leasing was followed. In 1835, the Government began to operate fishing on its own as the Portuguese had done, and allowed one-third of the catch to the divers and sold the balance by auction. In 1906 the right to fish for pearls was leased to the Ceylon Company of Pearl Fishers for an annual payment of Rs. 310,000. This provoked quite a lot of unrest among the people ; but by 1912 the Company requested the Government to terminate the lease as the good harvest of 1905 was never repeated and the Company suffered a serious loss. The Government thereafter revived the practice of conducting the fisheries under its own auspices.

The pearl-buyers were invariably Chetties from the towns of South India and Moors. The oysters were bought in lots of thousands and then removed by the successful bidder to private enclosures where they were left for a few days to decompose and putrefy. This process was accelerated by the bluebottle flies which came in such abundance during the season that eating and drinking became a painful process and the "intolerable stench, impossible of description, the quintessence of millions of oysters, fills the place and makes existence a burden to those who have not acquired odour-proof nostrils".

When the pearls have been removed from the rotting oysters, the refuse was subjected to a



minute scrutiny and in this many women and children were also employed. The average size of the pearl secured in Ceylon is smaller but the quantity collected is greater than in any other country. The Ceylon pearl is invariably very white in colour and is unsurpassed for roundness and orient. The South Indian and Ceylon merchants use 10-sized baskets—the Madras City, Bombay and Calcutta merchants use 30-sized baskets. Each basket is round about 6 to 8 inches in diameter and two to three inches high with sized holes in the bottom. The size of the holes in each basket is different. The pearls that do not pass through the holes of the baskets Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 are called "Chevo"; the pearls that do not pass through the holes in Nos. 5, 6 and 7 baskets are termed "Vadivu"; and the pearls that do not pass through the holes in Nos. 8, 9 and 10 are classed as "Thul". All the other small pearls are generally designated "Masi".

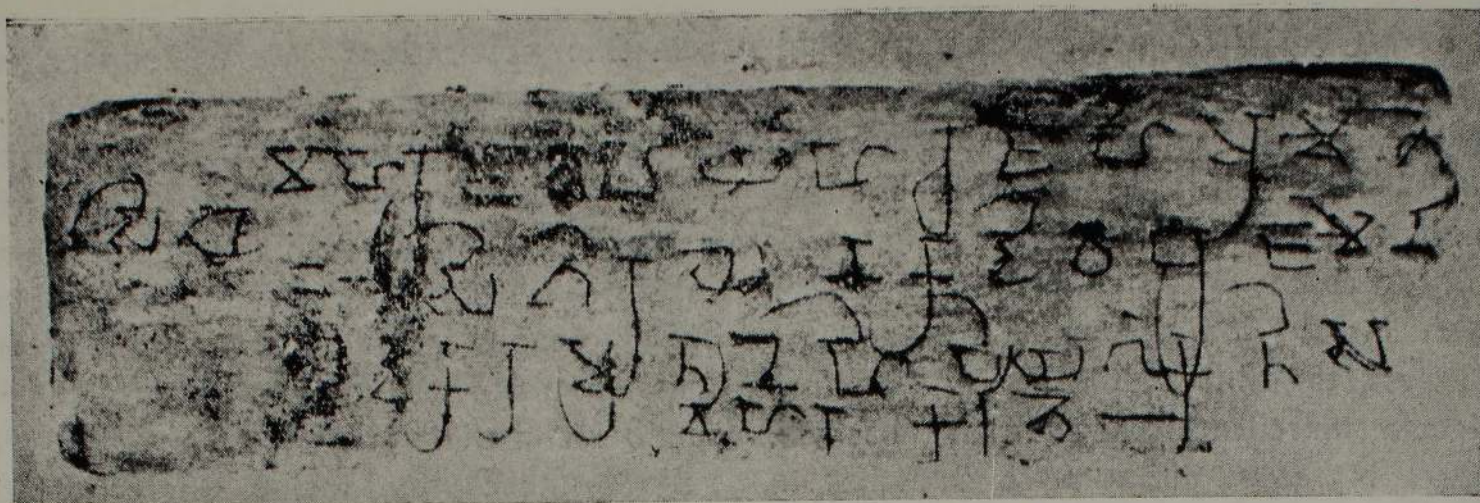
### Temporary Camp

AN important feature of the pearling season is the establishment of a temporary camp along the coast. All the fisheries conducted during this century were prosecuted from the pearling camp at Marichchukatti. Near this forgotten little hamlet on the coast, another village comes to life. Cadjan huts for traders, a temporary resthouse for wealthy pearl merchants, shanties for purveyors of all types of merchandise, a kachcheri, post office, hospital, police station—all these are erected for the duration of the pearling season. The camp superintendent in 1925 was the Government Agent of Jaffna, Mr. F. J. Smith, and the

scientific operations were supervised by Dr. Joseph Pearson, the Marine Biologist. Boats bringing divers, *manducks*, and other passengers, come from all parts of Asia: "The broad and roomy Jaffna dhoneyes commonly painted black, the lugger-like Paumben boat, the very narrow and speedy canoes from Kilakarai and neighbouring villages most noticeable owing to their great number and their bright colours—red, green or yellow—the clumsy-looking, single masted Tuticorin lighters, sharp sterned and copper-bottomed, the largest boats in the fleet; and most singular of all, the three masted great canoes from Adriampatnam and Muthupat on the Tanjore coast, pale blue in colour and with curved prow".

The pearl town becomes overnight the centre of all human activity; the deserted coast finds itself crowded with all variety of prospectors, and the human flotsam from the backwaters of all Asian towns drift in to cash in by fair means or foul on the gamble of the pearl fair. Cordiner in 1802 saw in Silavaturai "parties of strolling jugglers, tumblers and female dancers, mendicants of all description, dwarfs, persons shockingly deformed, mechanics of every trade and retailers in every branch of commerce even from the remotest parts of India". The reverend gentleman was particularly interested in a middle-aged woman acrobat from India who could balance herself even by her chin on the top of an elevated pole. In a few weeks when the diving season is over—the season is only 6 to 8 weeks—and when the pearl camp has had its "crowded hour of glorious life", all these people disappear as noisily as they arrived and leave the desecrated shore to its uninterrupted communion with the waves.





Vallipuram Gold-plate of King Vasabha of the second century A.D.

## Archaeology in Ceylon—No. II

### The History of Epigraphical Research

W. S. KARUNARATNE

EPIGRAPHY is one of the most important branches of Archaeology in Ceylon. This is due to the fact that Ceylon possesses a large amount of inscriptional material. When we consider the history of archaeological work in Ceylon, too, we see that epigraphical research received attention first. Epigraphy deals with the decipherment and interpretation of ancient documents inscribed mostly on stone and other forms of durable material. When the Europeans first came to Ceylon it appears that nobody knew the art of deciphering the ancient inscriptions. Robert Knox, who was a prisoner here during the middle of the 17th century, has said that he saw several of these records and that nobody could make anything out of them. In the 19th century James Prinsep discovered the method of reading the Brahmi script, while he was working at the inscriptions of Asoka. Not long afterwards Ceylon, too, focussed its attention on its epigraphs and consequently in 1874 Sir W. H. Gregory, then Governor of Ceylon, appointed Dr. P. Goldschmidt as Archaeological Commissioner.

#### The Beginnings

HE was entrusted with the task of examining and reporting on the inscriptions of Ceylon. He

worked first at Anuradhapura and then at places like Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee, and Hambantota, amidst great difficulty. Probably due to continued exposure to sun and rain, he contracted malaria, which accounted for his death in 1877. The reports which were written by him marked the beginning of Ceylon Epigraphy. In 1878 Dr. E. Muller filled the post thus vacated. After working for five years at the inscriptions of Ceylon he brought out a book which contained the texts and translations of nearly a hundred and seventy inscriptions. This was a commendable work, considering the fact that Ceylon Epigraphy was still in its infancy at that time.

These two pioneers worked individually though they were designated Archaeological Commissioners. The Archaeological Department was founded in 1890 with Mr. H. C. P. Bell as its head. Mr. Bell showed a great interest in inscriptions as well as other branches of archaeological work in Ceylon. It was he who proposed that a journal should be published in Ceylon on the lines of the *Epigraphia Indica*. For this purpose one of his assistants, Dr. D. M. de Z. Wickramasinghe, was appointed Epigraphist to the Government of Ceylon in 1899. He pursued his epigraphical research while functioning at the same time as



lecturer in Tamil and Telegu at the University of Oxford. He read the inscriptions with the help of ink-impressions taken on paper—which are called estampages. These were despatched to England for his use. In 1904 he published the first part of the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*. His introductory article was on the Sanskrit inscription which was found in the precincts of the Abhayagiri monastery. As there was confusion with regard to the identity of Abhayagiri and Jetavana at this time, his article was named "The Jetavanarama Sanskrit-Inscription", as Abhayagiri was so called then. The first volume of *Epigraphia Zeylanica* contained twenty-two inscriptions; among them were included the Brahmi inscriptions at Vessagiriya and Ritigala, the Perumiyankulan Rock-Inscriptions of Vasabha, the Anuradhapura Slab-Inscription of Kassapa V, and the Vealkatiya Slab-Inscription of Mahinda IV. The publication of the first volume was completed in 1912. Most of the inscriptions which were included in the second volume were those of King Nissankamalla. Soon after the publication of this volume, that is, in 1929, Dr. Wickramasinghe's epigraphical work came to an end, but two of his articles were included in the third volume, one of which was a long paper on the Chronology of Ceylon. When this eminent scholar, who went blind in his old age, returned to Ceylon, the Government awarded him a pension in recognition of his services. Only very few comprehend his great contribution to linguistic and historical researches

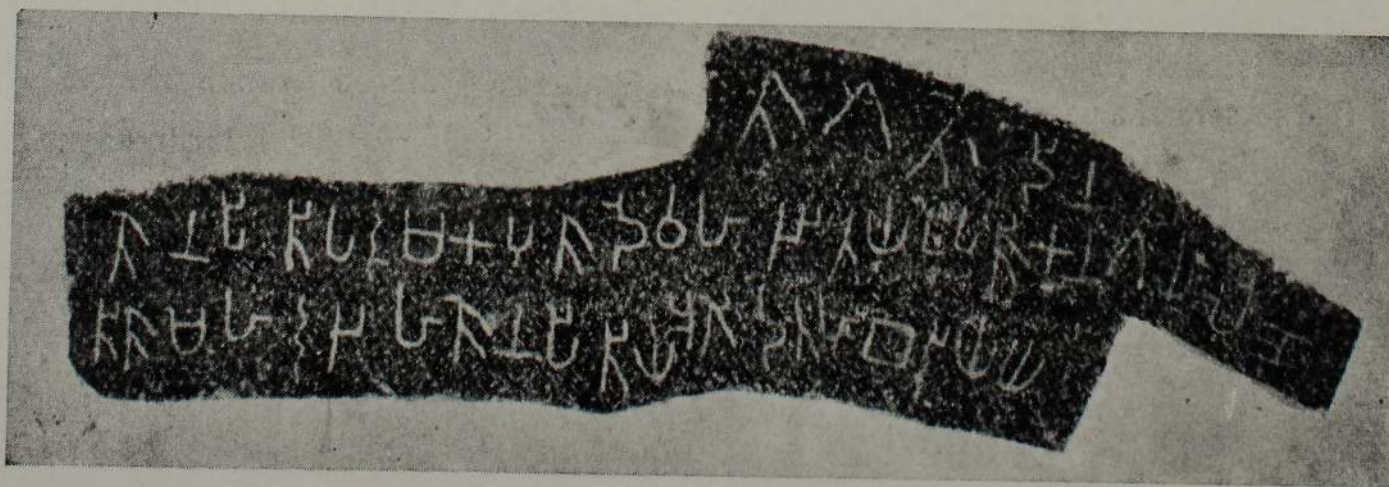
of Ceylon. It was Dr. Wickramasinghe who placed Ceylon Epigraphy on a firm footing, and Ceylonese owe him a great debt of gratitude.

After Dr. Wickramasinghe, the publication of the *Epigraphia Zeylanica* was continued by Dr. Senarat Paranavitana, then Epigraphical Assistant to the Archaeological Commissioner. Except for a few articles contributed by Mr. H. W. Codrington, the third and the fourth volumes contain mainly the work of Dr. Paranavitana. The fifth volume has just been published.

### Brief Survey

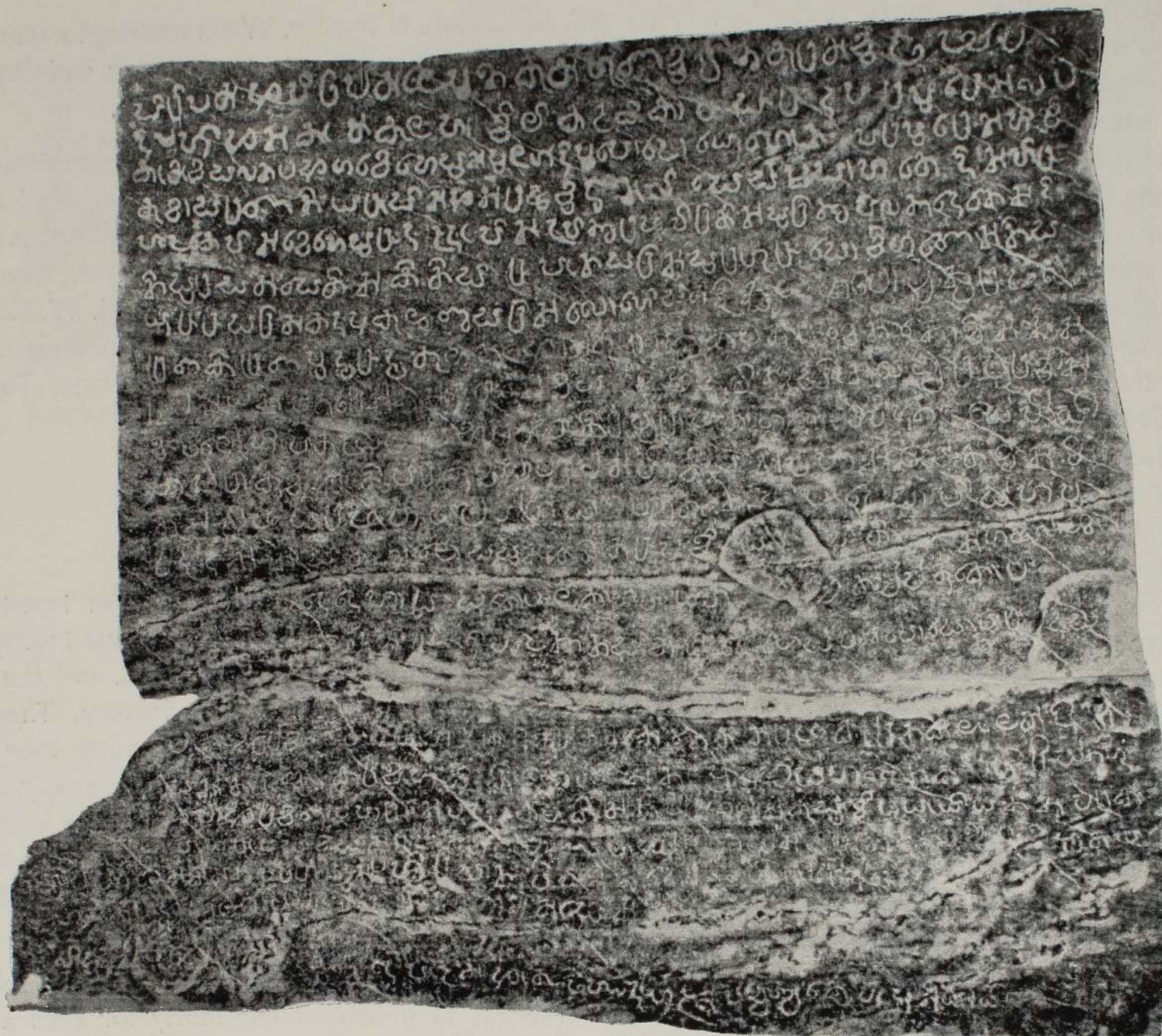
LET us make a brief survey of the inscriptions published so far. The earliest of our inscriptions are dated in the 3rd century B.C. and the most recent ones belong to the 19th century. Therefore the period covered by them stretches over 2,200 years. We have been able to publish only a very few of the large number of inscriptions belonging to this vast period. It will require more than a life-time to make a complete study of the two thousand odd inscriptions so far discovered.

Ceylon is fortunate in possessing these reliable records in unbroken continuity for such a vast stretch of time. Epigraphical material provides a sure basis for historical research, and now Ceylon can boast of a continuous recorded history of two millenia.



A Brahmi inscription of the first century B.C.





Devanagala Rock-Inscription of Parakramabahu I, where the Burmese War is mentioned (12th century)

All that we learn from tradition and art can be fixed in point of chronology with the help of Epigraphy. The decipherment of the letters of an inscription is possible only when a large number of inscriptions has been studied. Then we know for certain that letters of a particular shape belong only to one definite period of time.

Inscriptions were not engraved for the direct purpose of supplying historical information. Their purpose was to make a declaration which had a bearing on the events current at the time. Evidence gleaned from these records is, therefore, more trustworthy than historical narratives. Source-books like the *Mahavamsa* sometimes provide only a one-sided picture of the life of the

community. Inscriptions often have a broader theme in regard to subject-matter and enable us to obtain a clearer idea of the history of a particular time.

Evidence gathered from inscriptions could be classified under two main headings :

- (1) Material dealing with study of languages ;
- (2) Evidence connected with religious, political, economic, and social history.

As regards language, that of the majority of the inscriptions is Sinhalese in all its phases from third century B.C. to the modern times. Apart from Sinhalese, there are inscriptions in Sanskrit, Pali,



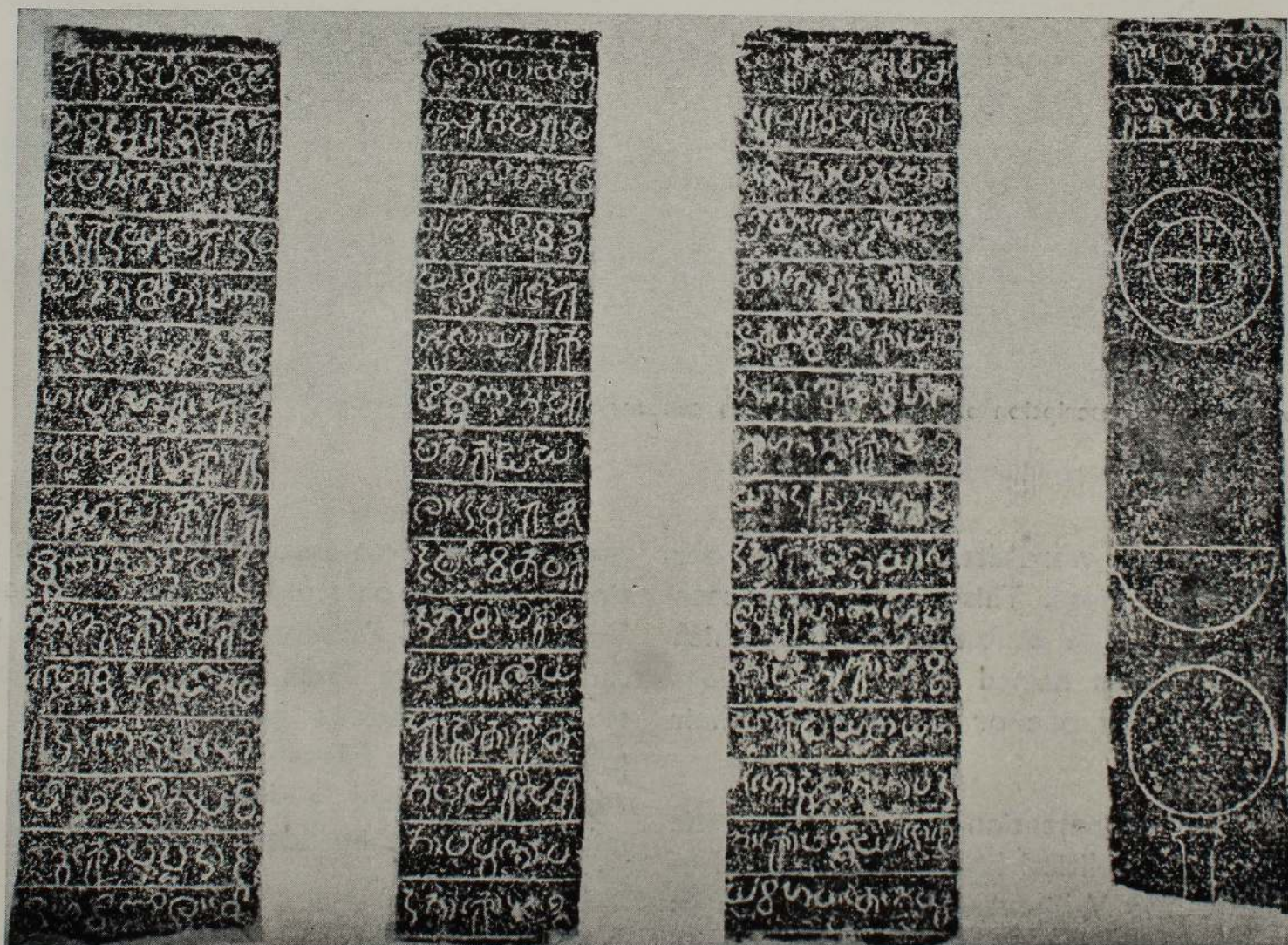
and Chinese and Arabic. Inscriptional evidence is invaluable in the study of the evolution of these languages. They provide material regarding their Phonology, Morphology, and Semantics. Phonology is the science concerning the sounds of the words of a language; Morphology deals with the form of words; and Semantics with the changes in the meaning of words. With the help of inscriptions we see how the words change to facilitate pronunciation. The modern Sinhalese word "Kumbura" has been derived from the Vedic word "Urvara". The development is Uvara—Ubara—Kubara—Kubura—Kumbura. The Sinhalese word "Hungak" which means "much" or "a large quantity" meant quite the opposite a few centuries earlier.

### The Brahmi Script

THE earliest script is known as the Brahmi. This was current from the 3rd century B.C. to the

5th century A.D. The 6th and 7th centuries witnessed the transitional stage between Brahmi and Sinhalese. The modern Sinhalese script began to evolve from about the 8th century and it is interesting to note that the sign for "a" (as in cat) appeared for the first time at this period. The language is throughout Sinhalese, though the early script is called Brahmi. The difference between the language and the script can be illustrated with the Sanskrit language. It is often written in the Nagari script and sometimes in the Sinhalese script.

Coming to the historical aspect, I have to confine myself to a few brief remarks. In our earliest inscriptions the kings had the title of "Devanampiya". This was borrowed from "Devanampriya" of Asoka. They also had the titles of "Maharaja", "Gamani", and "Abhaya". Later the kings were known as Mahaparumaka and Maparumuka. The two titles of Sirisangabo



Gonnave Devale Pillar-Inscription of the 10th century





Kottange Rock-Inscription of Lokeshvara II (13th century)

and Abhasalamevan were alternately used by our ancient Sinhalese kings. This can be clearly seen in the 9th and 10th centuries, during which period the king is named in the inscriptions sometimes only by one or the other of their titles.

The inscriptions mention not only dynastic history but also political history and method of government. The Vallipuran Gold-plate tells us that the Jaffna Peninsula was governed by a minister during the reign of Vasabha in the 2nd

century A.D. Even treaties of kings were sometimes engraved on stones, such as that between Gajabahu II and Parakramabahu I, as seen in the Sangamu Vihara Rock-Inscription. Methods of taxation, regulations governing temple lands, procedure to be followed in the enforcement of royal orders, and a host of other political information, are included in the subject-matter of inscriptions.

Next let us turn to economic conditions. In the Tonigala rock-inscription the interest derived





Trained cock birds preparing for the contest







from depositing paddy and beans is mentioned. Inscriptions such as the one at Nilagama belonging to the reign of Dala Mugalan lay down the fee which was required to redeem a slave of the 6th century. In the Viharegala inscription, the king is said to have bought a tank for 500 gold pieces and to have repaired it by spending another 500. King Gajabahu I spent 5,000 gold pieces in constructing a tank called Vadamanaka. Mercantile corporations seem to have existed from very early times.

As regards social conditions, we see the prevalence of auspicious words such as "Svasti" and "Siddham". Even today Sinhalese children are initiated to learning with the words "Svasti Siddham"—"May there be luck and prosperity". The practices of pouring water on the hands of the donee when something is dedicated, and proclamation by beat of drum, existed from very early times. It was customary for a child to be named after his grandfather. When we study the names of Sinhalese kings in succession, this is

apparent. The Timbirivava inscription of Gothabhaya speaks of lands as being inherited from the father. Among the items of food offered to the monks of the fourth century were rice, curd, honey, sweets, and ghee. It is significant that neither fish nor meat is mentioned. In this manner, a great deal of evidence could be gathered regarding the social conditions which prevailed in ancient times.

The most important evidence is the information concerning religious institutions. The majority of our records constitute grants made to the Sangha by royal patrons. Therefore we can say that the origin and development of Buddhist monastic establishments are permanently recorded on stone. The earliest ones mention the dedication of caves to forest-dwelling monks, and, as time goes on, the grants show us well-organized religious bodies. The Katikavata of Parakramabahu I has sought even to prevent disunity in the Order. It is certain that a more complete picture of the life in ancient Ceylon would be gained with the advancement of the science of Epigraphy.

## Epigraphia Zeylanica

A REVISED chronology of Ceylon kings from Mahasena to Mahinda V covering a period of 700 years is the most notable contribution to the *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (Vol. V, Pt. I) which has just been published. This paper is from the pen of the Editor himself, Dr. S. Paranavitana. This Part of the journal, though styled No. I, actually contains matter which would normally fill well over three parts.

The copper-plate of Vijabahu I, the historic discovery of which from Panakaduva in Morawak Korale was announced a few years ago, a tenth century inscription from the Gal-Oya area, containing terms of absorbing interest in

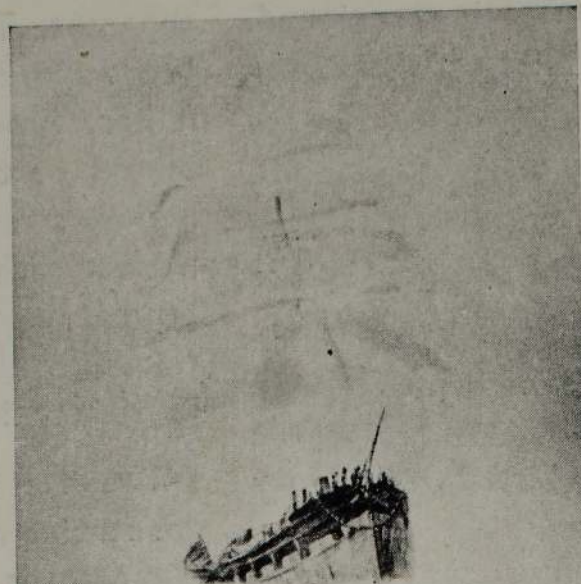
mediaeval laws and land tenure, and a Sanskrit inscription from Kapararama near the Twin Ponds in Anuradhapura, with its reference to a lunar eclipse of 900 years ago, are among the highlights of the 14 papers contributed by the Editor. His assistant in the same field, Mr. W. S. Karunaratne, makes his debut by editing the only known inscription of the prince Manabharana, cousin and rival of Parakramabahu I.

The *Epigraphia Zeylanica* used to be printed at the Oxford University Press. The present number is the first to be locally turned out, and the work, which is by the Government Printer, measures up to the British production.





**1796**  
**THE MAIL RUNNER**



**1800**  
**SEA MAILS BY CLIPPER**



**1820**  
**MAILS BY COACH**

## Mail Transport in Ceylon

KENNETH J. SOMANADER

WE who are used to macadamized roads, streamlined limousines, express trains, and jet-propelled aeroplanes, can hardly form an idea of what travelling in Ceylon must have been before, and just after, the British took over the Island.

One had then to trudge for days and days, at great personal inconvenience, over scraggy rocks, precipices and ravines, or had to be carried over hot and trackless wastes, in palanquins borne on the shoulders of over-wearied men.

Even as late as 1796, there were no carriage roads in the Island; and it is said that when Governor North went on a tour round Ceylon in 1800, he started from Colombo with 160 palanquin-bearers, 400 coolies, 2 elephants, 6 horses, and 50 lascars.

Those were the days when the greater part of the country was covered by thick forests in which

wild animals roamed freely. And the mails were carried by relays of runners, some two hundred of them, who were attached to the various "post offices" in the Island. It is of interest that, even today, in one or two of our remotest areas, mails are still carried by runners who take as much time to carry the mails over a distance of 30 or 40 miles as a plane takes to carry the mails from London to Ceylon.

### Danger from Wild Animals

FROM the earliest times, these runners have done their job faithfully and well. Even during early British times, when the railway served only a limited part of the Island, the brunt of the service was borne by them. Carrying lights and firelocks, they walked singly during the day and in pairs at night, in constant fear of molestation by bears,



leopards, and other wild animals. Several runners were thus wounded, and some even killed by animals. When this happened their families were pensioned on four rix-dollars a month.

The story is told, for instance, of Sinnar, a native of Batticaloa (in East Ceylon) and one of the hardiest runners of his day. He lived in the early eighties of the last century and carried the mail from Maha Oya to Gal Oya, on the Batticaloa-Badulla run. Sinnar went through the ordeal for a time, resorting to charms and anklets; but one day, near dawn, he was trotting along with the mail-bag on his head—in his hand was the usual iron rod with bell attached. Suddenly he noticed movement among a herd of buffaloes grazing by the wayside, and was soon confronted by a “rogue” elephant.

The man turned and ran but not before the elephant had started off behind him. There was no tree near by and the animal was rapidly gaining on him. Sinnar noticed a culvert and, with the ingenuity that one normally displays in extreme danger, he wriggled into it. Then, crouching midway, he awaited developments.

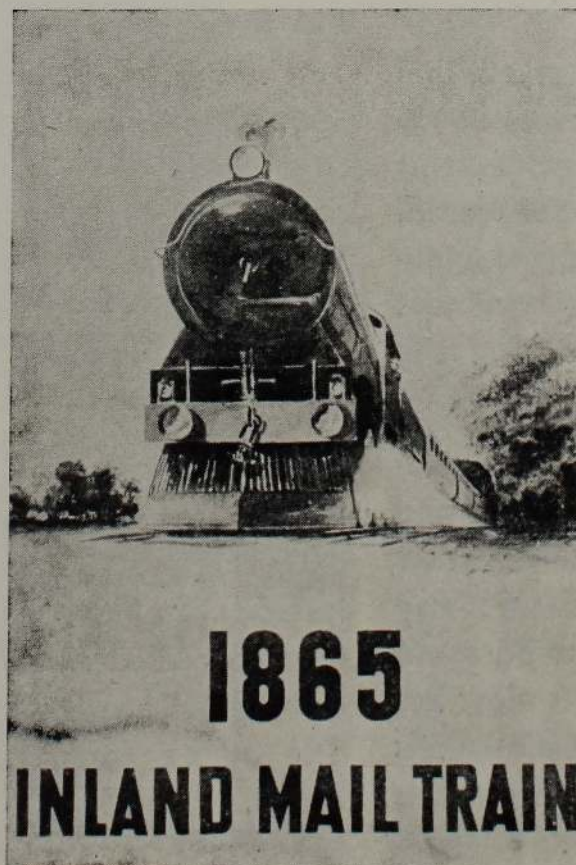
Not long after, the man heard the thud of feet overhead; and a few moments later, he saw a snake-like proboscis searching for him in the dark. But presently it withdrew and the runner felt quite secure in the culvert, even though he must have wished it were air-conditioned.

To his dismay, however, the animal returned and, with calculated precision, rolled a huge boulder to block the mouth of the culvert. This done, the elephant, with devilish purposefulness, began to dislodge the culvert, brick by brick.

If you wish to know how Sinnar felt, just exchange places with him! Fortunately for Sinnar, some Veddahs who were passing by succeeded in driving the animal away by means of lighted torches and demoniacal shouting. It was a perspiring Sinnar who eventually emerged from the culvert with his bag of mail to tell the tale!

### The Man-eating Leopard

THERE is also the story of the Punanai man-eating leopard which was once a terror in the area. Its last victim was a mail runner. And when the animal





was finally shot by Mr. Shelton Agar and cut open, there were found within a red post office tag and a GPO button.

At the time that runners manned most of the mail services in Ceylon, there was also a daily post to and from Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay. The rate was one-and-a-half "fanams" (about 10 cents) for every 100 miles on a letter weighing less than one silver rupee. The mails were conveyed by catamarans which plied between Kankesanturai and Point Calimere, a distance of 29 miles. These craft did very efficient work, considering the difficulty of crossing, and received a subsidy of Rs. 110 a month. A steamer service, however, was substituted in their place in January, 1899, as a precaution against plague.

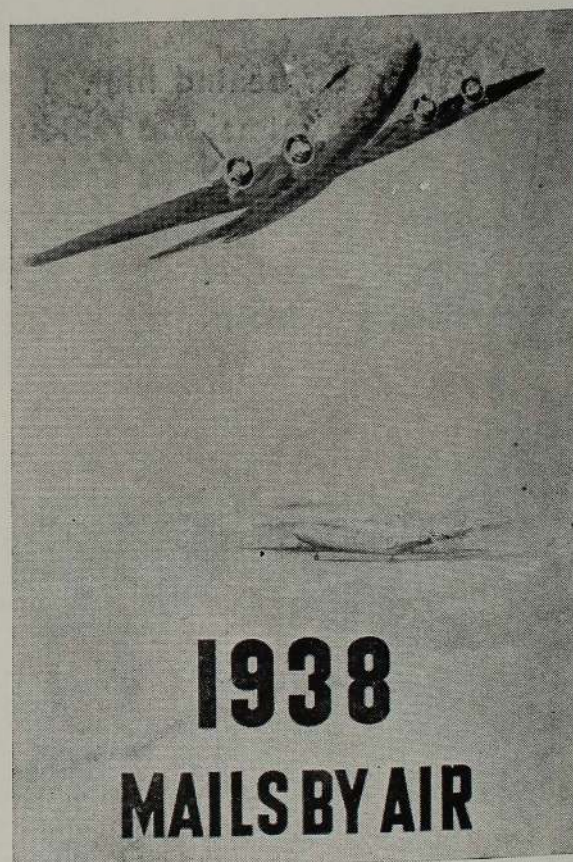
The Royal Mail Coach, running between Colombo and Mahahena, a distance of  $37\frac{1}{4}$  miles, was introduced on February 1, 1832. It was the first postal and passenger vehicle of the kind established in India and Ceylon, and (according to Ferguson) in the whole of Asia. On that historic day, a light four-wheeled carriage drawn by one horse started from Colombo to Mahahena and then returned to Colombo.

Here are the editorial comments that appeared in the *Colombo Journal* three days later :—

"So the Mail Coach has at last started, and the road to the interior is now opened to anyone who can muster 9 shillings; in this scheme at all events, we have taken the lead of all India, and shown what energy and perseverance may effect in introducing English manners and customs into this remote quarter of the globe.

"We are sure that our readers will join with us in congratulating the Proprietors and Managers on the successful result of their efforts; the practicability of the scheme may now be considered as proved; we understand that the distance to Mahahena,  $37\frac{1}{4}$  miles, has been performed in 6 hours, and the Kandy mails are in consequence delivered full three hours earlier than had been the case before.

"As the coach starts at 4, no sun as far as Mahahena, and the carriage being well provided with lamps, but little danger can ensue from the darkness of the night, particularly as the coachman must soon become perfectly acquainted with the road. We have authority for stating that it is intended to continue the establishment along the whole road to Kandy, as soon as horses can be procured and the stables erected, and hopes are entertained that, in the course of a few weeks, the whole will be completed. As everything that has as yet been done meets with our fullest approbation—and *dimidium facti, qui bene coepit, habet*—it remains with the public to show whether they are disposed to encourage so novel an establishment".



### The Mail Coach

IN July, the service was extended to Kandy. The daily carriage to Mahahena was discontinued and, instead, the Mail Coach left Colombo at 5 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and returned on the following days, leaving Kandy at 4 a.m. The journey took about 14 hours up and 12 hours down.

(Continued on page 25)



## The Development Finance Corporation of Ceylon

TWO factors which are seriously hampering economic development in under-developed countries like Ceylon are a shortage of long-term finance and a shortage of entrepreneurship. In Ceylon the chief sources of long-term finance, apart from what the Government raises by taxation and what comes from abroad, are commercial banks, savings banks, life insurance companies, trust funds, the State Mortgage Bank, the Agricultural and Industrial Credit Corporation, and undistributed company profits. The total available from these sources is very limited and cannot ensure a good rate of development. What is worse, even the available supply is not at present fully utilized for productive investment because of lack of ideas, initiative, and managerial and technical skills. The Development Finance Corporation, legislation for which is just being completed, is expected to make a material contribution to the solution of these two difficulties. It will be a new and large source of long-term capital and it will also be specially equipped to channel this capital effectively into productive private investment. It will provide both loan and equity capital. It will also foster, initiate, direct and operate enterprises to the extent it considers necessary.

The idea of such an institution is not of course new. In most countries where private enterprise has been poor, local capital scanty or insufficiently mobilized, and technical knowledge and experience deficient, development finance corporations in one form or another have been established. The World Bank in recent years has assisted in the establishment of such institutions in several countries such as India, Turkey, Mexico and Ethiopia. Even in developed countries, as for instance in Canada and the United Kingdom, such corporations have been found to be useful.

### World Bank's Recommendation

IT may be recalled that the World Bank Mission recommended the establishment of three new

development agencies in Ceylon on the following lines :—

(1) An Economic Committee of the Cabinet to be aided by an economic planning secretariat. This Committee would have the task of putting together the planning of development as a whole, supervising the necessary general surveys, and co-ordinating requests for external technical advice.

(2) An Institute of Applied Research. This, through technical research and inquiry, would provide knowledge about the real potentialities of local materials and about the adaptation of modern techniques to local circumstances.

(3) A Ceylon Development Corporation, an autonomous financing agency, with capital participation by Government, commercial banks, and private individuals. The Corporation would provide the finance necessary to initiate new projects in industry, agriculture or miscellaneous business, and to assist the progress of promising ventures already started by individual enterprise ; and would furnish or arrange for managerial and technical assistance to new ventures or to others in need of it.

The first two recommendations have already been implemented, the only modification being that, instead of functioning through an Economic Committee, the whole of the Cabinet is functioning as the final planning authority. A Planning Secretariat was established in 1952 and an Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research in 1954. The third recommendation is now being implemented.

In Ceylon private investment has not been entirely lacking, but it has generally followed conventional channels in agriculture and trade. New fields, particularly industrial undertakings, have generally been shunned. What local entrepreneurs have lacked is not merely capital but also technical and managerial knowledge and experience. To place finance at the disposal of an



entrepreneur who lacks a technically sound project or has no managerial capacity is only a waste of resources. A Development Finance Corporation can go a long way in overcoming these deficiencies.

This is perhaps the right time for the setting up of the Corporation, since the country's export income has been running at a fairly high level for some time past and exceeding its import expenditure. Much of this unspent income is simply being held as liquid assets and these are steadily growing. Financial institutions also have large idle funds at their disposal. The Development Finance Corporation would be a good instrument by which much of this capital seeking investment outlets can be productively harnessed. Further, the Government is providing more and more technical data regarding projects which could be developed by interested entrepreneurs. Investigations carried out by the Ministry of Industries have already resulted in the drawing up of a list of small industries which could be considered for immediate development. In the agricultural field the possibility of growing new crops and of improving the existing ones is being constantly investigated. It is also expected that the technical service provided by the Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research will stimulate many new projects and also make many existing projects more finance-worthy. In all these ways the Corporation will find the climate already favourable for its operations.

### Constitution and Powers

THE Corporation will be a completely private organization. It was felt that only as a private institution free from the political and administrative limitations of a Government undertaking, could it most effectively carry out its duties.

As defined in the Act, the objects of the Corporation will be—

- (a) to assist in the establishment, expansion and modernization of private industrial and agricultural enterprises in Ceylon ; and

- (b) to encourage and promote the participation of private capital, both internal and external, in such enterprises.

To achieve these objects the Corporation is empowered to make long or medium-term loans with or without security, acquire shares (or any other interests) in new or existing enterprises, underwrite new issues of shares, bonds and other securities, guarantee loans from other private investment sources, borrow funds from sources either in Ceylon or abroad, and provide security for loans obtained. It has also power to sell its investment at any time it considers appropriate and reinvest the proceeds in other undertakings, thus ensuring the maximum developmental use of its resources. Among its other powers, it can furnish managerial, technical and administrative advice, or assist in securing such services.

The authorized share capital of the Corporation will be Rs. 8 million, divided into 80,000 ordinary shares of Rs. 100 each. In addition the Corporation may borrow from the Government up to the amount of Rs. 16 million free of interest. Any loan so taken is to be repaid in fifteen equal annual instalments, the first of which will be in the sixteenth year succeeding the year in which the loan is taken. The Corporation however could, if it wishes, prepay all or any part of any such loan at any time. While any part of this loan is outstanding, the Corporation—(a) cannot pay dividends exceeding 12 per cent. and (b) must put aside not less than 20 per cent. of the net profits as a special reserve fund until the fund equals the amount of the loan outstanding. It is also however provided that in the event of the liquidation of the Corporation, no payment for any part of this Government loan outstanding will be made until the shareholders have been paid the capital they contributed. This precedence of paid-up share capital over the Government loan is intended to be a special incentive for investment in the Corporation.



### Obtaining Loans

THE Corporation can obtain loans from the World Bank and the Government is authorized to guarantee such loans up to Rs. 24 million.

The Corporation will function under a Board of Directors consisting of—

- (i) A Government Director who will be appointed by the Minister of Finance acting in consultation with the Minister of Industries, Housing and Social Services. This appointment, however, will last only as long as there is outstanding to the Government any loan made by it to the Corporation.
- (ii) The Director of the Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research (*ex officio* and without voting rights).
- (iii) The General Manager of the Corporation (*ex officio* and without voting rights).
- (iv) Not less than four and not more than six other Directors elected by the shareholders. The Minister of Finance will appoint the initial Shareholder Directors. A majority of these Shareholder Directors shall at all times be Citizens of Ceylon.

The key to the successful functioning of the Corporation is efficient management. The granting

of development loans will be coupled with the provision of technical advice and supervision to the new ventures over a long period of time to ensure competent and efficient management of the enterprise. It will be the duty of the Board of Directors to ensure that every application dealt with on behalf of the Corporation is considered strictly on its financial and economic merits. The Corporation will continue to maintain a check on the project for which assistance has been granted throughout the period during which the Corporation has an interest in the enterprise. This will help to ensure both that the funds of the Corporation are being put to the most effective use and that the new enterprise is being established on sound lines.

The stagnation in productive investment in Ceylon is so deep-seated that it has been considered necessary to propose the setting up of this new Corporation in addition to the existing financial institutions. In the increasing tempo of development which is needed in the country there is at present room for more than one institution for promoting and financing new productive ventures. Through this new Corporation it is hoped to provide a wider range of financing possibilities for projects which are basically sound but do not come within the limited range of operation of the existing financial institutions.

(Reproduced from the September issue of the *Bulletin of the Central Bank of Ceylon*.)



## The Annual Session of the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science

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THE eleventh annual session of the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science is meeting at a period of our history when the climate for the advancement of science in all its branches is most favourable. In Ceylon the wounds of World War II are still to be seen—in over 100,000 acres of slaughter-tapped rubber, and in our capital city where firegaps were cut to meet enemy attacks with incendiary bombs. But we are going forward with no uncertain stride. In addition to the provision of improved services for education, health, housing, water supplies and power, the chief preoccupation of Ceylon now and in the near future will be to increase our production of rice, tea, rubber, and coconuts, and to establish comparatively small industries throughout Ceylon to meet localized unemployment as well as under-employment. In all this we have realized the value of science and of research. The three important Research Institutes for Tea, Rubber, and Coconut, have now been provided with adequate funds by the industries themselves and by Government in order to give them full scope for work in connection with the protection, rehabilitation and advancement of these industries. Their work for years has been of the highest international standard.

\* \* \*

The scientific control and research of all the other agricultural activities in Ceylon are in the hands of the Department of Agriculture. Reading through the last year's Presidential Address, I gathered the impression that there was some anxiety that this work was not adequately co-ordinated. This should not be the case. Adequate funds are now available as well as assistance in personnel from C-Plan members and United Nations Organizations. Increased

production of food, including milk, is, however, the first priority of the Department of Agriculture.

Out of nearly 333,000 species of plants in the world, man has made use of about 3,000 different species for food. Of these, only 150 have become important enough to enter into world commerce. The majority of the world's people obtain the bulk of their food from about 12 species—namely, three cereals, rice, wheat and corn; two sugar-producing plants, sugar cane and sugar beet; three starchy root crops, potato, sweet potato and cassava (our manioc); two legumes, soya bean and common bean; and two tree crops, banana and coconut. Actually sixty per cent. of the world's people, however, obtain eighty per cent. of their energy from one single species—the rice plant. Rice, therefore, accounts for half the human energy of the world. All those concerned must never forget the vital importance of keeping abreast of research work done in connection with the rice plant and its cultivation in other lands. Let us also give the maximum possible attention to this same subject here in Ceylon.

Last year, in the Opening Address, the Minister of Finance referred to the proposal to establish a Ceylon Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research with the assistance of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. We should congratulate the Minister of Industries on the fact that this Research Institute, which so many of us wanted very urgently, is now an accomplished fact, set up as an independent body, on the lines the World Bank experts considered necessary. I should like on this occasion to wish its first Director, Dr. Francis Godwin, all success in his service to Ceylon. He is assisted by Dr. Lilljelund, also lent by the World Bank, and 21 Ceylonese scientists, who between them have thirty-four University



degrees, including six Ph.Ds. Dr. Godwin, you have started well—already nineteen major research projects are under examination—eleven of them for Government, six for Private Industry, and two started by the Institute. But please do not allow either Ceylon, or the World Bank, to forget about you and your team. We want to see you, and to hear you, as often as possible.

\* \* \*

There are also other lessons to be drawn : the need for organization, for team-work, and for a sense of urgency, if research is to be useful to any country. The research genius is not thwarted by organization, by team assistance,

and by competition. On the contrary the most brilliant brains need the hard work of less brilliant but fully trained colleagues. The collaboration may even be international—for instance, the American Cancer Society's very recent decision to engage an international Committee of fifty authorities to make an appraisal of all that has been achieved in cancer research in the last decade. From field to laboratory, from laboratory to field, giving your study of what is happening elsewhere the highest priority on your time—only thus will you be fully qualified to serve your country. The tragedy is that, if you fail to do so, there is no substitute.

*(Extracts from H. E. the Governor-General's speech.)*

## MAIL TRANSPORT IN CEYLON

*(Continued from page 20)*

The capital required for the undertaking, calculated at £2,000, was raised by shares of £50 each, and among the shareholders were the Governor, Sir Robert Wilmot Horton (who owned six shares), and several others who were serving in the British administration.

For several decades, the mail coach to Kandy did service to the colony in carrying not only the mails but also "shoals of planters and loads of specie". The venture proved so successful that, in 1838, the Government started another coach service between Colombo and Galle.

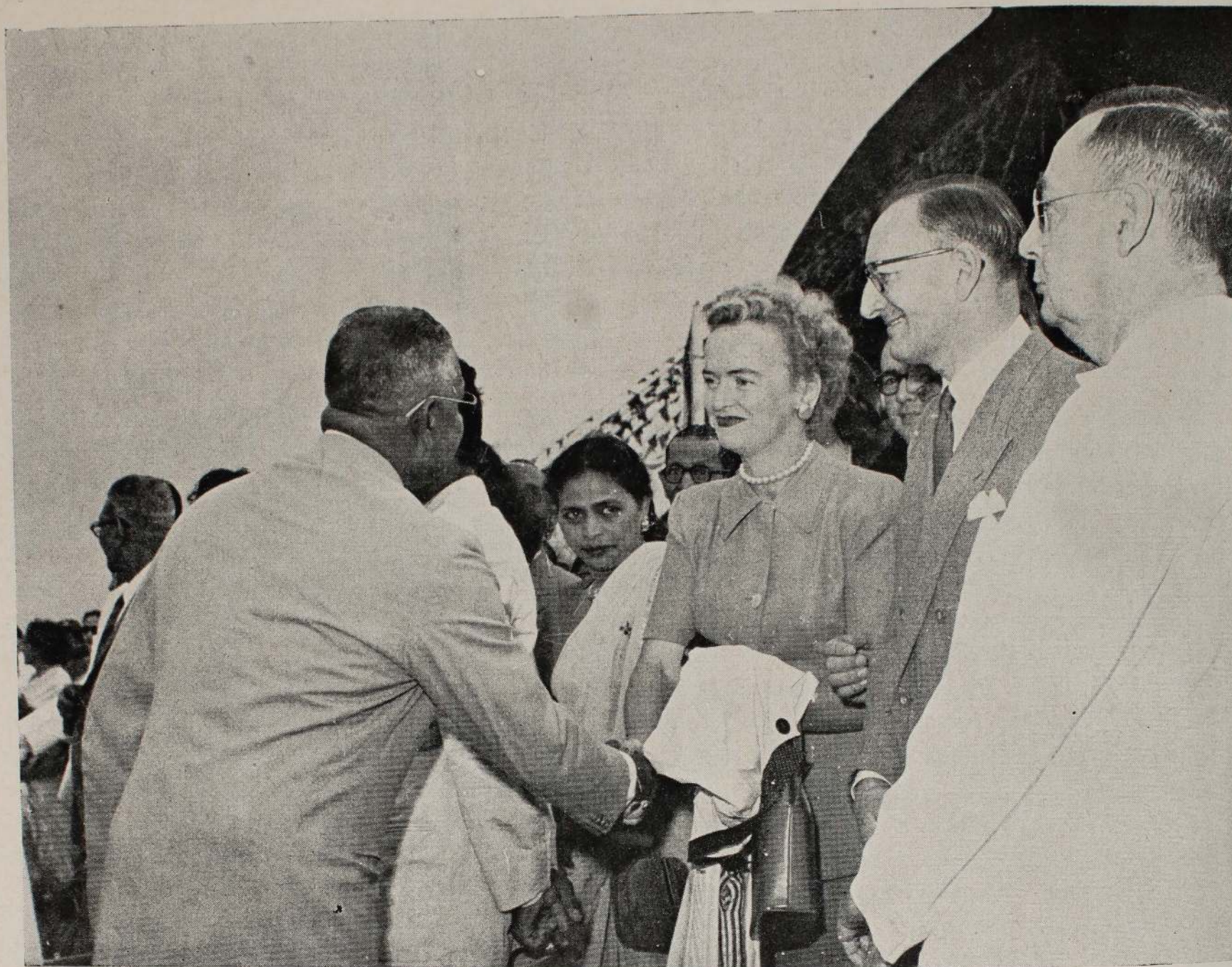
But feelings of humane consideration for that noble animal, the horse, made many a traveller long for the day when steam would supersede

animal-power in the toil of ascending the Kandyan mountains. And eventually, after some 40 years, the mail coach service was replaced by the railway. That was in August, 1867.

Incidentally, the Road Ordinance was passed in 1848, requiring every able-bodied man between 18 and 60 years of age to give six days of labour every year, or pay a few shillings as commutation for the maintenance of roads.

Around the middle of the last century, when the Fergusons started a newspaper in Ceylon, they began a carrier-pigeon service which, for a time, conveyed the news from Galle to Colombo. Other forms of mail transport at the time were found to be slower, though safer.





The Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir John Kotelawala, with members of the diplomatic corps shortly before he left for Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand, on his goodwill mission

## Foreign Affairs

THE Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir John Kotelawala, is at present on a tour of Australia. Speaking on November 6 over the Australian Broadcasting Commission's nation-wide network, he declared that he was greatly impressed by everything he had seen during his visit to Australia.

Sir John said: "I marvel at the wonderful opportunities which nature has given you. I think that here in Australia you have another world force in the making.

"I admire the grit, determination and pioneering spirit, which in a brief 100 years have made the countryside yield abundance, built cities, fostered industries, and founded a happy and healthy nation.

"Geographically you are of the East," continued Sir John, "racially and culturally your ties are with the West. You have shown in no uncertain terms that you wish to be friends with eastern people and also help our efforts to better ourselves,



"Helping us to attain our goals should appeal not only to your sense of humanity but also your desire for your own security."

In conclusion Sir John stressed matters of common interest between the two countries, including cricket, horse-racing, and tea-drinking, and promised constant endeavours to strengthen the Commonwealth and preserve the democratic way of life.

### **Arrival in Australia**

THE Prime Minister first set foot on Australian soil on October 26, when he arrived in Perth and was received by the Australian Minister of Territories, Mr. Paul Hasluck.

He told pressmen that a Tea Producers' Corporation, to be formed in Colombo shortly, aimed at eliminating the middleman, thus bringing down the price of tea.

Addressing a reception sponsored by the Mayor of Perth, Sir John said that the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations have more need of each other today than at any time in history. This need was based not only on the preservation of their existence or their economic level but also on the life of their very system of Government.

The Prime Minister next left for Adelaide where he arrived on October 28. In a statement to the press, he said that the best way for Australia to convince Asians that there was no racial prejudice behind the "White Australia" policy was by friendly acts and practical help. He added that Australia could cement Asian goodwill through the Colombo Plan by giving technical aid.

### **In Melbourne**

SIR John arrived in Melbourne on November 1. Commenting on the decision of Princess Margaret not to marry Group Captain Peter Townsend, Sir John told pressmen that "Princess Margaret has sacrificed love for duty and the whole world appreciated her sense of duty".

In Melbourne Sir John inspected the Olympic Games site in the company of the chairman of the Organizing Committee. He congratulated the organizers on the sites selected for the various events and on the work so far completed. He said that Ceylon would probably send the biggest team ever to represent the country overseas, including athletes, swimmers and boxers.

Later the same afternoon the Ceylon Premier watched Australia's biggest racing event, the Melbourne Cup.

### **Welcomed by Australian Prime Minister**

ON the following day Sir John arrived in Canberra and was received by the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. R. G. Menzies. He visited Parliament House and met all the Australian Ministers at a meeting of the Cabinet. Later he was the guest of honour at a private Cabinet luncheon.

In the evening the Ceylon Premier gave a Press interview. He said that Ceylon was firmly attached to the British Commonwealth. The Colombo Plan had made people realize that they were members of a club helping each other. He hoped Ceylon's admission to the United Nations would follow the Foreign Ministers' talks in Geneva. After explaining Ceylon's attitude towards SEATO, Sir John said that he had asked Egypt about the next Afro-Asian conference but had not yet received a reply.

On November 3 the Prime Minister laid a wreath at the War Memorial in Canberra and inspected a vast range of exhibits of two world wars.

Sir John next visited the Royal Military College at Duntroon. Later he lunched at Parliament House as the guest of the Acting Minister of External Affairs, Sir Philip McBride, and again met all the Cabinet Ministers.

### **Prime Minister Accorded Reception**

THE Ceylon Premier was next accorded a reception by the Ceylon High Commissioner in Australia,



Mr. P. R. Gunasekera, at the Hotel Canberra. Among those who attended it were the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. R. G. Menzies ; members of the diplomatic corps ; and leading Parliamentarians from all parties.

On the next day Sir John inspected the engineering works at the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. On the following day he saw the site of the great Adamamby dam.

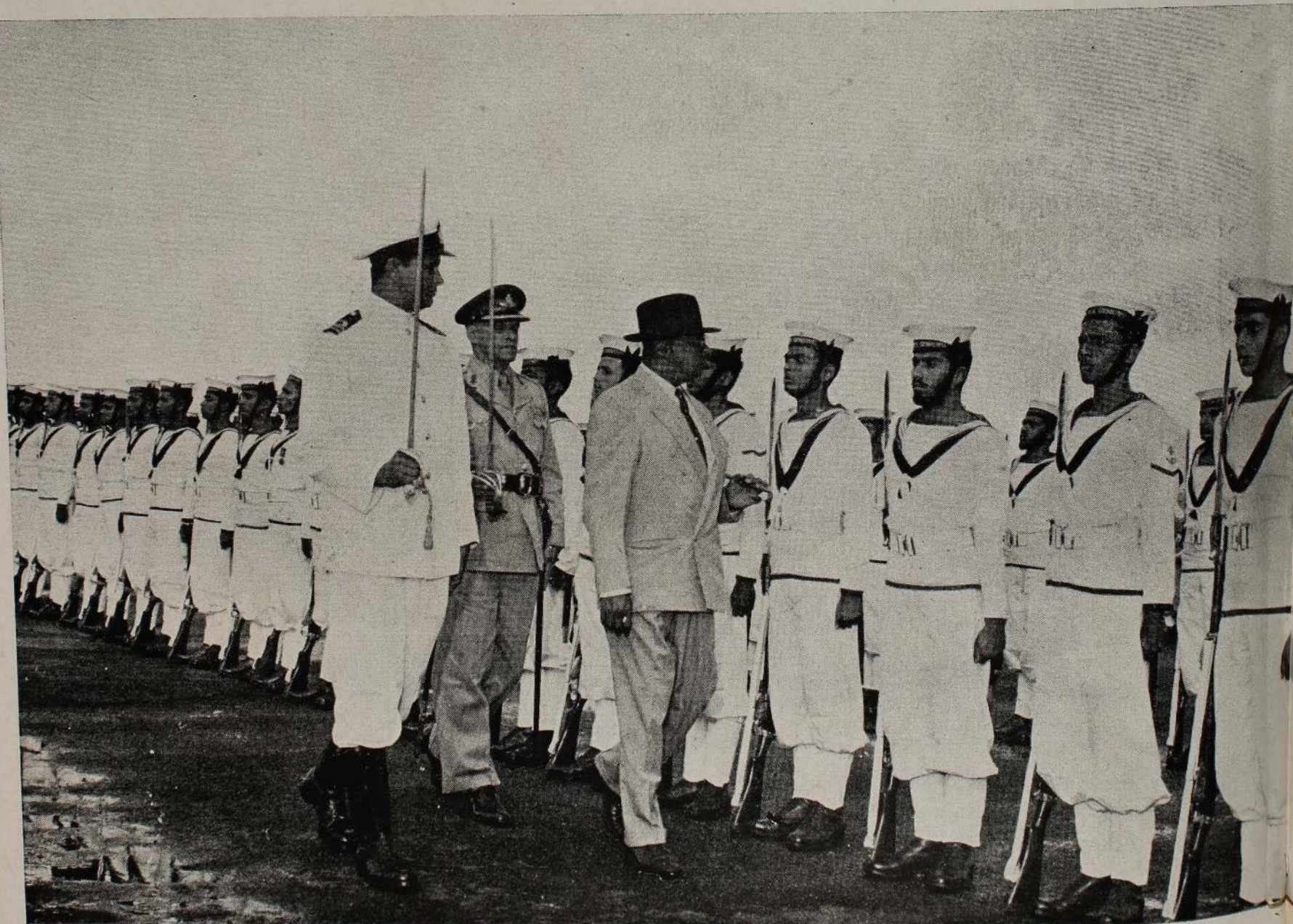
### **Ceylon's Rubber-Rice Agreement with China**

THE Minister of Commerce, Trade and Fisheries, the Hon. S. C. Shirley Corea, who led the recent trade mission to China, returned by air on October

18, along with the other members of the delegation. Shortly afterwards he made the following statement to the press :—

“ We have agreed with China for the second half of 1955 and for 1956 to fix prices of rubber on a basis which is more advantageous and secure than that underlying a fixed price. China has not only guaranteed to pay us a floor price of 27 pence per pound of sheet rubber when the average Singapore f.o.b. price is below 22 pence but has also agreed to the principle that she will pay us a progressively varying premium at different price levels. At the lower levels the premia will be higher than at the higher price levels. On this

The Prime Minister inspecting the Guard of Honour drawn up at the airport





principle we have fixed the premia for the second half of 1955 (i.e., from June 1 to December 31) as follows :—

- (1) In the price range 22d. to 28d. and at 28d., a premium of 5d.
- (2) In the price range 28d. to 35d. and at 35d., a premium of 5d.
- (3) In the price range 35d. to 40d. and at 40d., a premium of 4d.
- (4) Over 40d., a premium of 3d.
- (5) Below 22d., a floor price of 27d. is guaranteed.

“ It will be seen that on this basis Ceylon is guaranteed a premium over world prices at all levels and the risk of losing the full benefit of any premium which is estimated on the fixed price basis is eliminated. This method also eliminates the need for revising prices during the currency of any annual contract.

“ For 1956 we have received the same premia for rubber as for the second half of 1955 except in the price range 28d. to 35d. where the premium will be 4d. instead of 5d.

“ In the case of rice too we have adopted an entirely new formula for fixing price. At a time when rice prices in world markets are falling it is neither easy nor wise to fix a price with a supplier who is not a main exporter of rice. We have therefore agreed with China on a formula for fixing rice prices for 1956 which will preserve for us complete flexibility of obtaining our rice requirements for 1956 at world prices.

“ The negotiations this year were particularly difficult and protracted. The results however are I think highly satisfactory, and rubber producers as well as our rice-consuming population will have no cause for complaint about our contract for 1956 ”, observed the Minister.

### **New Envoys from Italy and Austria arrive**

Dr. P. Solari, the new Italian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Ceylon, arrived

here in the *Asia* on October 17, to take up his post. He succeeded Dr. G. B. Cuneo.

Another who arrived in the same ship was Dr. A. Lenukh, the new Austrian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to India and Ceylon. He was accompanied by his wife.

Dr. Lenukh presented his credentials to the Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, on the following day.

### **Finance Minister Returns from C-Plan Conference**

THE Minister of Finance, the Hon. M. D. H. Jayawardane, returned to the Island on October 25, after attending the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee meeting in Singapore.

Interviewed by pressmen shortly after his return, Mr. Jayawardane said that the U. S. Government had not yet decided in which country the nuclear research station for the development of atomic energy for peaceful purposes should be established. The U. S. authorities would consider the facilities available in Ceylon for that purpose. He revealed that several member-countries of the Colombo Plan had expressed their agreeability to locating the centre in Ceylon.

The Finance Minister said that donor-countries would provide more C-Plan aid in the next few years. The U. K. and Canada had both announced that they would increase their contributions. He had also discussed with the New Zealand delegation a programme for assistance to Ceylon next year from New Zealand.

Mr. Jayawardane stated that the Consultative Committee meeting had paid special attention to the role of technical assistance, and it was decided to place greater emphasis on technical training in the area.

### **Ceylon at I. L. O. Conference**

THE Third Session of the Committee on Work and Plantations of the International Labour Organization commenced at Geneva on October 17, 1955, and continued up to October



29, 1955. The Ceylon Delegation was led by Mr. C. B. Kumarasinghe, Deputy Commissioner of Labour. The other members of the Delegation were :

Mr. E. S. Appadurai	Second Government Dele- gate
Lt.-Col. J. A. T. Perera	Employers' Representative
Mr. C. H. Z. Fernando	Employers' Representative
Mr. V. K. Vellayan	Workers' Representative
Mr. S. Chelliah	Workers' Representative
Mr. R. J. S. Bean	Advisers to the Employers' and the Workers' Representatives
Mr. C. V. Velupillai	

Mr. C. B. Kumarasinghe was Ceylon's Delegate to the 130th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office held at Geneva from November 15 to 18, 1955.

### Sixth United Nations' Technical Assistance Conference

THE Government of Ceylon participated in the Sixth United Nations' Technical Assistance Conference held on October 26, 1955, at United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Mr. R. S. S. Gunewardena, Ambassador for Ceylon in the U. S. A., represented Ceylon at the Conference, with Mr. Annesley de Silva, Counsellor of the Embassy, as alternate representative.

### Ceylon's Request for U. N. Aid

CEYLON has asked for technical assistance to the value of about Rs. 2½ millions next year from the United Nations' Technical Assistance Board and the various agencies of United Nations.

These requests were discussed at a meeting of the United Nations' Technical Assistance Committee of the Economic Social Council, which started at the U. N. Headquarters in New York on October 26.

Ceylon's case was presented by the Ceylon Ambassador in Washington, His Excellency Mr. R. S. S. Gunewardena.

### Ceylon's Aid to Flood Victims in India and Pakistan

CEYLON Government has decided to donate a million rupees worth of foodstuffs and a limited quantity of rice to India and Pakistan to help relieve distress caused by the floods in those countries.

Ceylon donated foodstuffs last year to the Maldives when the cyclones hit the islands and Maldivians were on the verge of starvation.

### Ceylon Navy Ship's visit to Burma

IT has been decided that *H. M. Cy. S. Vijaya* should pay a formal visit to Burma from December 2 to December 9, 1955.

*H. M. Cy. S. Vijaya* will be commanded by Lieut.-Commander D. V. Hunter, Royal Ceylon Navy, and will carry a complement of five officers and 110 ratings. Since this visit will coincide with the Fifth Session of the Sangayana in Burma, it has also been decided to convey in the *Vijaya* a small contingent from all three Armed Services to be present at the celebrations.

The necessary diplomatic clearance for her visit is being sought from the Government of Burma.

### Ceylon on British TV

THE British Broadcasting Corporation is to televise the Ceylon Government Film Unit's documentary entitled "The Order of the Yellow Robe". The film, which depicts the Ordination Ceremony at the Malwatte Buddhist Temple in Kandy, is to be put over on the night of November 1. The main film, of 12 minutes' duration, has been reduced to 6 minutes for the purpose of the programme. The film was produced and directed by Mr. George Wickremasinghe, Director of the Ceylon Government Film Unit.



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