THE CEYLON HISTORICAL JOURNAL

VOL. I OCTOBER 1951 NO. 2

CONTENTS

EDITED BY S. D. SAPARAMADU

Published Quarterly

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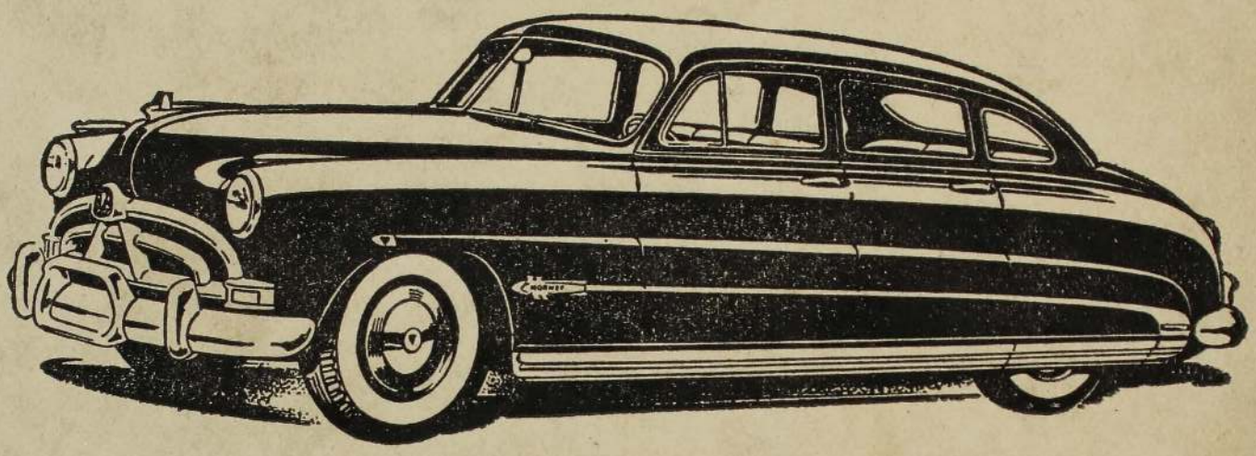

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The Ceylon Historical Journal

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OCTOBER 1951

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Vol. 1 — A Quarterly Review — No. 2

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CONTENTS

Reviews

Notices of Books

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NOTES AND COMMENTS
ON SOME PROBLEMS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BUDDHIST CHURCH

THIS NOTE is not an attempt to deal with all the problems which are connected with the establishment of the Buddhist church but only with one aspect of establishment, namely, the incompatibility of the "sound, autonomous, workable constitution with legal sanctions" demanded by the Buddhist revivalists with the concepts of society which we have today accepted after five hundred years of close association with Western civilization. We do not seek to question the accuracy of the past grievances which the Buddhist revivalists marshall to invalidate their demands for state intervention, nor do we seek to justify them, how much the present state of Buddhism is due to the predatory tactics of the Imperialist and his missionary lackey we are only too well aware. But recriminations over past grievances, over the despoiled lands and the wrecked educational system, though emotionally satisfying to the nationalist can hardly be said to provide for the rebuilding of the future. We too are aware of the need for a re-birth and rejuvenation of Buddhism, of the need for it to emerge as a living force among the Buddhist community, our only grouse is that, in our opinion the direction which the revivalists seek to follow with its emphasis on state aid and temporalities is a blind alley from which will not emerge any great advantage to the Buddhist community.

To understand why establishment of the Buddhist church will be both impracticable and dangerous one should try to understand and form an estimate of our twentieth century society and how we came by it. How much our social scheme and our ways of thinking have been influenced by Western ideas and concepts and how much remains of our older forms of society. The foremost theme in modern history is the rise of the state as the ultimate sovereign power, the emergence of the state as the supreme authority which embodied in itself all the other autonomous bodies with legal sanctions like the feudal nobility or the church. Complementary to the rise of the sovereign state was the disintegration of the static feudal social order and its gradual replacement by the more dynamic social system based on wealth and the worth of the individual. While the earlier system based on status and custom was enforced by state, nobles and church, the three participants in sovereign power, the new system required that society be based on law which was regulated and enforced by the supreme sovereign state. The emphasis in the new dispensation being on the individual and wealth, on the kingdom on earth rather than on the one above it was natural that

the sovereign state should be secular in outlook and composition. Thus the state was both sovereign and secular acting through the law. But these facts are too well known to need repeating . . . .

What matters for our study is that, as much as we would not like to admit it, Ceylon after five hundred years of Western rule has come to accept these concepts as firmly as any European power. Perhaps no other country in Asia has had as close and as continuous an association with the West as Ceylon. The first Portuguese landed here barely a decade after their arrival in the East and though they by no means had discarded the feudal system based on status for one based on law, nevertheless they left behind a community of Roman Catholics and a considerable impact on the cultural life of the Buddhist as well. In contrast were their successors the Dutch. In Europe they had been the earliest to make the transition from a society of status to a society of law, and all their ventures in the East including Ceylon, were all financed and controlled by a limited liability company. Though in Ceylon they retained the old system of status where convenient, as was the case in the cinnamon peelers, when an innovation was required that introduced was one of law. The Roman-Dutch law was an attempt to regulate the new social relationships. Even more important than the Dutch were the British. As the pioneers of the Industrial Revolution which was to cause the final dissolution of the society of status in Europe, the British brought with them not only the rule of law but capitalism and free enterprise in the sphere of economics. Under them the " independent " Kandyans were conquered and in 1832 law was substituted for custom as the regulator of social relationships. In accordance with the concept of the secular state the British in 1845 divested themselves of the right to protect and maintain Buddhism, which duty they had undertaken by the Convention of 1815. What made the absorption of Western culture easier in Ceylon than elsewhere in the East was not only the continuous prior contact with the European but also the fact that Buddhism by its very nature unlike Hinduism or Islam enters comparatively little into the daily life and thought of the individual, while its influence had considerably decreased the strength of the caste system, both of which factors were such a strong bulwark of the society of status in India.

It is in the light of these historical facts that the question of the Buddhist revival should be understood. The demands for the establishment of the Sasana are in contradiction to both the idea of the supremacy of the law as the regulator of social relationships and the concept of the secular sovereign state, the two most firmly established conventions of our Western heritage. What the revivalists demand today is that the government should establish a Buddha Sasana department to look after Buddhist affairs till such time a the Buddhists could be provided with a " sound, workable autonomous constitution with necessary legal sanctions for the control of a

affairs connected with the Buddhist religion". Apart from the propriety of such a constitution to regiment Buddhism let us examine the implications its creation would have on society.

The most important question the Buddhist constitution raises is, how is its governing body to be chosen. Is it to be on a franchise of the Buddhist community or on some type of election such as is provided for in the Buddha Sasana Act of Burma in which not the Buddhist public but institutions, sects and areas elect the central authority. If on the one hand it is based on a universal franchise of the Buddhist community, then would not this body prove to be a threat to the sovereignty of the state ? Is it not possible that the elected representatives of the general public and the elected representatives of the Buddhist public should disagree, and how would such a clash be solved, for both by the nature of their constitution can claim to be representative of the people. Would not an attempt to define the two spheres of influence of the two bodies amount to a virtual division of sovereignty ? On the other hand if the governing body of the Buddhists is to be chosen by the votes of institutions, sects and areas, how can such a constitution claim to be representative of the Buddhist community and presume to " control all affairs connected with the Buddhist religion ".

Again, the revivalists ask for a " sound, autonomous, workable constitution with legal sanctions". What is the significance of " legal sanctions ". Does it mean that the governing body is to have the power to formulate laws on all matters connected with the religion and enforce them, or does it merely mean that the state should make the constitution a legal body ? If the ability to make laws is meant then would not this too amount to a threat to the sovereignty of the state, besides being an imposition on a society which by no means considers religion the ultimate good of life. If on the other hand what is meant by " legal sanctions " is merely that government should give the constitution respectability by formally instituting it by law, the constitution itself not having any legal powers, what guarantee is there that it's decisions can be implemented ? In the absence of any strong public opinion on the matter how can a Buddhist constitution claim to take in all the temporalities of the Sasana ? Will all the holders of temple lands be willing to part with them, and if they are not willing how can they be compelled to do so ? Indeed in this respect the line of action most likely to be followed is that adopted by the two most powerful and wealthiest potentates in Kandy who have even refused to attend the hearings of the commission appointed by government to report on establishment. Besides, if government is going to compel by legislation the grant of all temple lands held in trust to the constitution, how can it take in those considerable lands that are registered in the individual names of priests or lay guardians ?

Thus the only " sound, workable and autonomous " constitution the Buddhist revivalists can have—one based on a franchise of the Buddhist community and with the power to make and enforce its regulations, will not only be a threat to the sovereignty of the State but also be the " self-governing unit within the Government, with chances of its becoming more powerful than the secular government " that Queen Victoria feared on refusing establishment in 1846. On the other hand a constitution without legal powers and not based on a Buddhist franchise will need to get all its important decisions sanctioned by the legislature and implemented by the coercive apparatus of the state, in which case its existence would be superfluous and its functions could just as well be performed by an advisory body to Parliament. Thus while a consti tution with sufficient power to provoke a revival is dangerous a constitution without power becomes superfluous.

Another aspect of establishment which needs study is the question of temporalities. The revivalists argue that the British created a separate governing body for each individual temple from a conscious desire to prevent co-ordination of revenues. They argue therefore that before establishment the scattered temporalities throughout the country should be all pooled by government decree and vested in the constitution. Leaving aside the question of motives, British or indigenous, this is indeed a singular responsibility and one that cannot be trusted to any single body other than one democratically constituted on a franchise of the Buddhist community. On this matter surprisingly enough the act establishing Buddhism in Burma, so often quoted as an example worthy of emulation contains the following interesting provision. Chapter I, sect. 4 of the Buddha Sasana Act of Burma, 1950, says :—

> The establishment of the said Councils (i.e., the central governing bodies) shall not affect the other Buddhist organizations and their rights. The freedom of the other Buddhist organizations to continue in their religious activities shall not be abridged by virtue of any provisions in this Act. The Councils shall not interfere in the affairs of the other Buddhist organizations, but they may give such assistance to the said organizations as they may deem fit on request . . . .

Thus while our revivalists in the fulness of their convictions seek to " control all affairs connected with the Buddhist religion ", including an absolute control over all temporalities, in Burma, so often misquoted as an example of an established Buddhist church, the independence of the units which as in Ceylon is the surest guarantee of the individuality and continuity of the faith is sought to be preserved. Thus what in Burma is an attempt to provide an organization through which the units of the church can act, in Ceylon it is cited as justification for a virtual attempt to regiment the Buddhist faith.

Apart however from the dangers and difficulties which establishment involves one wonders whether a Buddhist revival need only spring from an organizational rejuvenation of the church. Why should not a more deep felt revival be fostered out of the growth in Buddhist education, the bhikkhu vidyalayas, the Buddhist schools and the Chair of Buddhist Civilization in the University. These indeed are some of the resolutions of the revivalists that are not however given their due importance. The question of education raises another more important point.

Should the revival of the religion be necessarily based on a revival of the Sangha ? Brought up in a tradition in which the Sangha was thought of as synonymous with the Sasana it is difficult today to think of a revival on any terms other than a purification of the Sangha and a restoration of temples and temporalities the appendages of the priesthood. The Sangha it is true were indeed the mainstays of the religion in ancient Ceylon where society was agricultural and ignorant and letters and books were the special privilege of the few. In such a system the Sangha was necessary to interpret the scriptures to the people and unlike in other religions apart from this interpretational function the Buddhist priest had few other duties to society. Up to comparatively recent times, scriptural learning was the special reserve of the monks and, ignorance of letters the characteristic of the laity, and in this context all revivals had to be based on a reform of the Sangha who were rightly regarded as the mainstays of the religion. Today this tradition dies hard though the context has changed.

The society we have today is not feudal but modern, characterised among others by an increase in letters and knowledge comparable to the new learning that pervaded Europe on the eve of the reformation. Most of the Buddhist community can read while the printed book has replaced the ola manuscript. Why should not a revival, but a reformation be created out of this new dispensation ? Why not go to the Dhamma, the word of Buddha, the Pali scriptures, for our inspiration ? Why seek to establish a church and reinstate an unfeeling Sangha when the Sasana can be revivified from the body of the adherents themselves ?

A rebirth of religion is indeed a difficult task in a materialistic world of capitalism and the hard realities of economics, but if this revival at least is correctly based, it might yet prove to be the reformation, the re-examination of tenets and beliefs, that Buddhism has been waiting for since the Mahayanists carried the Dhamma to China and the Far East. And in recreating for our future we should not seek a blind refuge in an unfeeling and impossible past but rather seek to revivify our ancient institutions out of those more fruitful elements of our Western heritage.

THE BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF CEYLON

By LAKSHMAN S. PERERA

It is not the purpose of this article to furnish any fruit of original research. It is rather an essay in the application of the principles of historical research and historical methods to the group of records known as the Brahmi inscriptions of Ceylon. The period covered by them is roughly from the third century B.C. to the second century A.D. This is by no means an exhaustive study of these documents. Its main purpose however is to show how a research student in history works on any documents placed before him for study. It should however be mentioned that though the principles of historical research are constant the methods adopted vary widely depending upon the nature and availability of the records. There are three types of problems that confront the research worker in history. There are first of all the problems connected with the establishment of the value and authenticity of the records. Secondly there are those connected with the extraction of historical data from the records. Lastly there are the problems involved in the selection and presentation of this material. It is only the first and the second of these activities that this essay deals with.

There are two main sources for the study of the earliest recorded history of the Island. These are the literary records as represented by the *Mahavamsa*[1] and the records inscribed over caves and on rocks. For the study of a period the historian has perforce to utilise all the available source material pertaining to that period. But for various reasons the earliest period of Ceylon history has been studied almost solely from the *Mahavamsa*. This is especially true of the period under review. Therefore in examining the value of the Brahmi inscriptions as source material for this period it is essential that we study them along with the *Mahavamsa* and the other literary resources it represents. Only then will it be clear what contribution these records make towards the study of this period. This involves both an understanding of the place the *Mahavamsa* holds in the historiography of the Island and also a knowledge of the nature and value of the historical data it provides.

Perhaps no other country in the world possesses a chronicle comparable to the *Mahavamsa*. It claims to be a continuous record of the Island's history. Beginning with the earliest dawn of recorded history it continues almost to the end of the eighteenth

1. *The Mahavamsa.* Ed. W. Geiger, P.T.S.
The Mahavamsa. Translated to English : W. Geiger, P.T.S., 1934.

century to times in which historical records are to be found in plenty. As such it has held a unique place among the literature of the Island as a chronicle of history. Its polished Pali verse no less than its unbroken continuity has made the *Mahavamsa* [1] the representative of the old historical literary tradition which consisted of the old *Atthakatha* now lost, the *Dipavamsa*[2] and the introduction to the *Samantapasadika*.[3] Thus from an early age the *Mahavamsa* became the standard and authoritative work which gave the story of the beginnings of the Island and the introduction of Buddhism and its subsequent history. Later writers borrowed extensively from it elaborating it where they deemed necessary from such of the old tradition that was extant at the time. Their facts were never questioned nor was it viewed in any other way than that of the priestly authors. In an age when the written word had a sanctity of its own due probably to the paucity of books and the difficulty of copying and preserving them, this record acquired almost a religious authority. The *Mahavamsa* was treasured as much for the story of the early kings of the Island and their heroic deeds and pious benefactions as for its religious value in giving the story of the introduction and spread of Buddhism in Ceylon. This attitude of complete acceptance of the *Mahavamsa* as a reliable history dies hard and even today in spite of the researches of scholars towards establishing the historical value of the *Mahavamsa* there are many to whom the *Mahavamsa* is a standard history.

Besides its continuity there is another reason which makes the *Mahavamsa* command such uncritical acceptance. It gives such a mass of information about the history of the Island, more than could be found in any extant literary work that people are content to delve only into the *Mahavamsa* for their history thus unconsciously accepting its points of view. It is undoubtedly true that especially for the early and mediæval periods the reconstruction of the history of the Island or even at least the succession of kings is a hopeless task without the data given in the *Mahavamsa* and the literary tradition it represents. All that we would be left with without the *Mahavamsa* would be a few references in contemporaneous literature[4] and a few notices in inscriptions ; and of the period we are concerned with there is no other literary evidence.

Thus while on the one hand the *Mahavamsa* is a unique and valuable historical source it has exerted and continues to exert a pernicious influence on the study of history. It is no wonder

1. *The Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa.* W. Geiger (1908), pp. 44–45. *Mahavamsa.* Translated Geiger. Introd. p. x.
2. *Dipavamsa.* Ed. and Tr. H. Oldenberg.
3. *The Vinaya Pitakam.* Ed. Oldenberg. Vol. III, p. 283.
4. *The Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon :* Adikaram, 1946. This gives a full list of the historical references in the Pali Commentaries.

therefore that with the exception of those scholars who represent the Western school of historical research and their students hardly anyone escapes this influence.

It is here that an independent source would be of great value for historical study and historical thinking. The early Brahmi inscriptions serve such a purpose for the period covered by these records. The effort to incorporate the data which these records supply into a consistent whole with the material which the *Mahavamsa* provides will serve to some extent at least to put it in its proper perspective, as a historical document rather than a history book. Such study would undoubtedly wean the student from the points of view adopted by the author of the *Mahavamsa* and enable him to treat both the *Mahavamsa* and the inscriptions as sources from which material may be drawn for the study of the history of the period. The study of the *Mahavamsa* in this manner has actually preceded the study of the inscriptions as a result of the researches of Professor Geiger.[1] But the existence of records in a different tradition would compel us to apply the principles of historical criticism to the *Mahavamsa* in making use of it for history.

The primary task of the historian is to reconstruct the past. He has for his subject matter the stream of human life consisting of all those aspects of life where men come into contact with each other for the purpose of social living. Politics, economics, religion, art and culture and social life, all fall within his purview. These relationships arrange themselves into set patterns of behaviour within which the daily round of man is run and his creative energy is expressed. But life does not proceed for ever along this dead routine. Great deeds and significant events time and again break this even life. These are often preceded by great movements of thought or changes in ideas. These movements, deeds and events combine to change the patterns of behaviour and the face of society. These naturally would be of greater significance for the historian. Those events will be of the greatest significance which cause the most momentous changes. Thus the historical significance of an event lies in the fact that it has value in the understanding of change in society and of these changes the most important for history would be those which go deepest in affecting the social fabric. Thus the task of the historian is not merely that of reconstructing a static social structure but also that of studying the changes in this structure and whatever contributed to or resulted from them.

A little thought will show that the reconstruction of the past as it actually happened is an impossible task. The vast complex of

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1. *Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa :* Geiger.
   Mahavamsa : Ed. Geiger. Introd.
   Mahavamsa : Tr. Geiger. Introd.

human relationships that go to form society can never be comprehended within any human mind. Even within the contemporary scene our apprehension of what is happening, let alone our judgment upon it, are mere broken fragments of a larger whole. The historian faced with the task of recreating the past has to depend upon what people have thought and written about the events they witness. Sometimes however memory and hearsay stand between the event and the written word. Sometimes these writings have come down to us from the remote past in various stages of preservation. Other evidence too there are, less eloquent than these, for they are the mute remains of what men in bygone ages had created with their hands.

The student of history in his search for the past has two lines of enquiry to pursue with regard to the sources he has to deal with. In the first place he has to establish what may be called the geneology of his source. The object of this enquiry is to find out how far close to the events or the period described the source or the various strata within the source, will take him. This entails firstly the establishment of the original text of the source, from probably a number of extant copies with variant readings. These may have resulted from deliberate interpolations and deletions or may be clerical errors. Secondly, it is possible that the text itself may contain various strata in varying degrees of proximity to the events described for there were no laws of copyright nor was plagiarism considered a crime. The principle behind this enquiry is that the closer the evidence is to the events described the greater would be their chances of accuracy and also the fulness and vividness of description.

The second line of enquiry seeks to establish how far factors such as personal bias, prejudice, credulousness, the mind of the age, the purpose of the work and method of writing and the involvement of the author in the events he is recounting have affected both the selection of the facts and their presentation as an impartial and accurate account of what actually took place. These factors enter in varying degrees into any historical work, either those which were professedly written as histories or those which only incidentally have come down to us as sources. These factors enter least into documents such as legal enactments, proclamations, records of gifts and donations and they are mostly to be found in sources such as diaries, letters, autobiographies and purely propagandist or apologetic works. They may also be found in works which give scope for literary talent and creative imagination.

With this brief introduction to the principles of research work and the value of historical evidence we could proceed to discuss the relative importance of the Brahmi inscriptions and the *Mahavamsa* for the study of the early period of Ceylon history.

Of the many types of sources a historian has to deal with in unravelling the early periods of history, inscriptions hold a high and honoured place. These have a double advantage over other types of records in that their accuracy is strengthened by the elimination of errors due to both the time factor and the personal element. These records with but a few exceptions are contemporaneous with the events set down for remembrance and probably refer to the period immediately preceding. This in itself enhances their value. But it must also be added that where time and weather have failed to erase the record, it has been preserved to our own day just as it has been set down on the rock. Thus we are assured firstly that there is the closest possible relation in time to the events recorded and that a fickle memory has not intervened; secondly that it is free from the process of being handed down and copied from perishable material to perishable material. The other advantage which inscriptions possess over literary records is that most lithic records are mere statements to the fact of a donation or the promulgation of regulations and rules. Sometimes it is a bold statement to the effect that some event or transaction took place together with the barest details. This eliminates as far as is possible in a written record, the personal element which intrudes itself so much into the longer literary works. There are however a few exceptions where ambition and pride have coloured even lithic records as for example the inscriptions of Nissanka Malla.

Judged by these standards the *Mahavamsa* has obvious limitations as a source for the earliest period of Ceylon history—that covered by the Brahmi inscriptions. It shares almost all the weaknesses of a literary source. The portions of the *Mahavamsa* which deal with this period may be important as an example of mediæval historiography but before it can be utilised as material for history it has to be subjected to searching tests to establish its value as historical evidence. Only so can any adequate comparison be made between the value of the *Mahavamsa* and the inscriptions for history. Thus the *Mahavamsa* has to be regarded as a source for the study of history and not as a history in itself. Scholars especially Oldenberg[1] and Geiger have gone into the question of the sources of the chronicles of Ceylon and their interdependence. Though their initial work has not been adequately continued we now know sufficient about them for our purpose.

Though hitherto in this article the *Mahavamsa* alone has been referred to as representing the literary evidence bearing on this

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1. Ibid.
Dipavamsa : Ed. Oldenberg. Introd.
Pali Literature of Ceylon : Malalasekera.
Early History of Buddhism : Adikaram.
Pali Chronicles of Ceylon : G. C. Mendis, *University of Ceylon Review.* Vol. IV, pp. 1–24.

period, it is by no means the only source nor the earliest. The *Mahavamsa* is undoubtedly the best known of these sources chiefly because of its literary value and its consequent compactness and completeness. According to Geiger there are four sources extant today through which the facts about the past history of the Island during the earliest period have come down to us. These are in order of chronology, the *Dipavamsa* which according to Oldenberg was written between the beginning of the fourth century and the first third of the fifth[1]; the *Samanta Pasadika* which Geiger places about the first third of the fifth century[2] ; the *Mahavamsa* which Geiger dates about the beginning of the sixth century[3] ; and the *Mahavamsa Tika* or the commentary on the *Mahavamsa* composed according to Geiger again about 1000–1250 A.D.[4] It has been pointed out that these works in addition to depending the one upon the other, drew upon a source, now lost, which has been termed variously as *Sihalatthakatha*, *Poranatthakatha*, " the old *Mahavamsa* of the *Sihalatthakatha* " or simply *Porana*.[5] From the various references to this earlier source we know it to be an historical introduction which was part of the old Sinhalese commentaries to the Buddhist canonical works.[6] It has been conjectured that this was a work in Sinhalese prose interspersed with Pali verses and that at the time the *Dipavamsa* came to be written its form was fixed though the various Viharas contained recensions of the work which may have differed slightly in detail.[7] It is possible, though it has not been done so far, to establish fairly accurately by comparing the four extant works, the original strata of the *Atthakatha* as it existed when the *Dipavamsa* was composed. We would still be at least three centuries removed from the period under discussion. Our next step would be to see how far this gap can be bridged.

There are two important facts regarding the *Mahavamsa Atthakatha* which may provide us with a clue in estimating the historical value of its contents. The first of these is the statement given in the *Dipavamsa*[8] and the *Mahavamsa*[9] that the Pali canon and the *Atthakatha* or the Sinhalese commentaries on them were put down in writing during the reign of Vattagamani (89–76 B.C.). There is

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1. *Dipavamsa :* Oldenberg. Introd., pp. 8–9.
2. *Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa :* Geiger, p. 103.
3. Ibid., p. 43.
4. *Mahavamsa :* Geiger. Introd., p. xi.
   Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa : Geiger, pp. 32–34.
5. *Mahavamsa :* Tr. Geiger. Introd., p. x.
   Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa, pp. 44–45.
6. Ibid., pp. 63–64.
7. *Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa :* Geiger, pp. 57–63.
8. *Dipavamsa :* Ch. 20. v. 19-21
9. *Mahavamsa :* Ch. XXXIII, v. 100–101.

no reason to doubt this tradition. In the reign of Vattagamani there was a serious revolt that was followed by a severe famine. During this time many of the monks who had committed the Scriptures to memory died. It was thought best therefore that the Scriptures should be set down in writing. Dr. Mendis is of opinion that this task was completed by the middle of the first century A.D.[1] We can assume therefore that about this time the *Mahavamsa Atthakatha* which was the historical introduction to the Sinhalese commentaries was also put down in writing.

The other fact referred to above is that from the *Dipavamsa* it is possible to gain some idea of the form in which the *Atthakatha* was written. It seems to have been a mixture of Pali verse and Sinhalese prose. Geiger is of opinion that the Pali sections were just aids to memory—words in a certain sequence to fix the story and the chronology.[2] The prose sections were the expansion of the Pali "memorial verse". This indicates that at one time there was an oral tradition which in course of time was fixed. But that the person reciting expanded upon this orally. This in turn came to be fixed probably in various versions depending upon the Vihara in which the tradition was preserved.

At this point we have to leave off the *Mahavamsa Atthakatha* to consider the value of an oral tradition. That which is observed by anyone as an eye witness remains in his memory for a generation. The manner in which the experience or the events witnessed are preserved further is by fixing it in some form usually in a bare metrical verse. In between however, since no written record exists man's creative and fertile imagination gets to work. It was not a conscious attempt to falsify the facts of history but rather to elaborate the facts already known in outline, basing oneself not on any historical discipline for none such existed, but on what may be called the mind of the age. This included the latent credulousness of the ancients, their ideas of the universe, their conception of the great and the significant, the unlimited bounds they placed on religious achievement and above all their complete lack of any sense of evolution and history as we know them today. Thus it happens that invariably the kernel of truth is surrounded by myth and legend and the interest in a good story gets the better of any desire to set down facts as they occurred. Facts become barely visible beyond two generations and even when set down in writing in the *Atthakatha* we can only assume the form in which we have the story today. It may have taken time for the prose expansion to get set into a form and here there was ample scope for the imaginative reciter. Popular legends were incorporated after they had grown amongst a people whose main interest was romance rather than

1. *Early History of Ceylon :* G. C. Mendis (1945), p. 45.
2. *Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa :* Geiger, pp. 8–11.

history.[1] The author of the *Mahavamsa* himself often reserved to himself the right to amend and polish the verbose and crude language of earlier writers.[2] Thus it was possible that in filling out the memory verses the descriptions came automatically to have the background not of the time the events took place but of the time of the person who was elaborating the story. It is also possible that the models they had in mind was the background of the Jatakas and the other stories of the Pali canon. Therefore the most reliable portions for the early period of history would be the main kernel of events, the names, the reigns and the succession of kings and the main donations they made. It is not likely that the form of the prose sections was fixed immediately on being set down in writing. Popular traditions probably were added on from time to time and emendations and additions were occasionally made. Thus we could place the writings as we have them at least a century removed from the period being reviewed.

The relative value of the two sources will now become apparent. It is only the Brahmi records that will take us right into the heart of the earliest period. These together with the main facts which the *Mahavamsa Atthakatha* provide after the trappings of a later age have been removed will give us the closest picture we can have of the early period. The archæological remains would naturally be a valuable asset but for the fact that no systematic study has yet been made of the growth of the structures to determine what portions were there during this period and what additions had been made later on. It is possible that some of the descriptions given of the buildings in the *Mahavamsa* were based upon the buildings as they were at the time of writing and not as they were at their erection.

Thus the Brahmi inscriptions though they give considerably less information than the *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa* are valuable in that they give authentic data about the early period. They further provide a few facts especially about the common folk not given in the chronicles. In addition they create an atmosphere within which to set the facts that can be recovered from the *Mahavamsa* tradition.

The Brahmi inscriptions are so called because the script in which they are inscribed is the same as the Brahmi characters of the Asokan inscriptions.[3] These are the earliest inscriptions of Ceylon and may be found in large numbers inscribed under the drip-ledges of rock caves to be found among the many outcrops of gneiss such as Vessagiri, Sigiri, Dambulla and Ritigala that dot the northern,

1. Ibid., p. 22.
2. *Mahavamsa :* Ch. I, v. 1–3.
3. *Epigraphia Zeylanica :* Vol. I, p. 12*f*.

eastern and southern plains of the Island. They are also some times found inscribed on rock surfaces near tanks and what may have once been fields. These rock-inscriptions however are rare compared with the cave-inscriptions. Though it is estimated that there are very nearly three thousand cave inscriptions few have been published and fewer still have been edited in the archæological and epigraphical journals. Probably their brevity and the stereotyped nature of their contents have dissuaded scholars from spending time upon them when later periods contained longer and more varied records.

These records seem at first sight to be of little value because they are short and consist of at most a sentence or may be two. They are always set in the same form which give the name of the donor with his genealogy, and the occupation or titles that he possessed. The rest of the record merely states that the cave was given to " the Sangha of the four quarters, past and present". A typical record would run as follows :—

DEVANAPIYA MAHARAJHA GAMINI TISAHA PUTA DEVANAPIYA TISA A(BAYAHA) LENE AGATA ANAGATA CATU (DI) DISA SAGASA.[1]

There are among these early inscriptions too the rock-inscriptions which record donations of tanks, canals and land and also the construction of thupas, cetiyas, steps, etc. These are not as numerous as the cave-inscriptions. But they become popular towards the end of the period and increase in number while the cave donations gradually cease. The form of the donations gradually changes from that of the cave records to include particulars about the donation such as the situation and extent of the land or the name of the tank or the particular shares of the tank that are granted.[2] Another important change is that the donation is made now to the monks of a particular vihara which is mentioned by name. These latter inscriptions are few and are important really as pointers to the changes that were to follow.[3]

The language and script of a record would normally be the first concern of the research student. These inscriptions present hardly any difficulty on that score. It has been established that the script is the same as Asokan Brahmi characters. It has also been said that it comes nearest in form to the Asokan characters in the first century A.D.[4] Before that the script is less developed. The end of the period under consideration is marked both by the gradual

1. *Epigraphia Zeylanica :* Vol. I, p. 144 (No. 10.1.1).
2. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions :* L. S. Perera (unpublished) pp. 3–4, 119–121.
3. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions,* pp. 3–4.
4. C. W. Nicholas.

cessation of the cave-inscriptions and also the gradual development of the Brahmi characters towards a bent of its own. It has been very roughly put down as the end of the first century A.D.[1] Throughout this long period of nearly four centuries the script itself changed very little. Though this makes the deciphering of the records simple it has one disadvantage in that it is not possible to fix the date of a record on the basis of palæographical evidence supplied by the development of the script, except within very wide limits.

The language of the inscriptions is Sinhalese in its oldest form. Though it can be classed as a Prakrit it is distinct from any known language.[2] The nature and form of the cave-inscriptions however do not permit us to glean from them anything but the barest about the language. It is only with the longer rock-inscriptions that any development in language can be traced. As it is therefore, the language too presents hardly any difficulties to the research student.

A very serious difficulty in working on the lithic records of the mediæval period of Ceylon is that they have been badly weathered. Some have been chipped by treasure hunters and some have been worn smooth by the feet of countless devotees when inscribed pillars were used in the construction of buildings in later periods. But once again the Brahmi inscriptions are almost all in a very good state of preservation. They are usually incised deep into the rock and the letters are large so that a person standing at the mouth of the cave may be able to read them. Thus it is possible even to make accurate eye copies of these records without the usual process of ink estampages and photographic copies. These preliminaries over, the record is now ready for historical evaluation.

Two very important and indispensable facts must be known about any historical record. These are the date of the record and the location where it was found or the area it refers to. They have been described as the twin eyes of history and without them a record is practically useless.

These records have been dated between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D. Perhaps the most cogent reason for the upper limit is the tradition, which we have little reason to doubt, that Buddhism was introduced to Ceylon during the reign of Devanampiya Tissa or may be just a little earlier than that.[3] He

1. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 3.
Palaeographical development of the Brahmi Script in Ceylon : C. W. Nicholas, *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, p. 60*f*.
2. *Grammar of the Sinhalese Language :* W. Geiger, pp. 1–3.
3. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XIII.
Early History of Buddhism : Adikaram, pp. 45–51.
Pali Literature of Ceylon : Malalasekera, p. 15.

was the contemporary of Asoka. Since these early records all register donations to the Sangha they must date from the introduction of Buddhism into the Island. Thus the third century B.C. would be the most likely period.

It may be argued that since the script in the Ceylon records come closest to the Asokan only in the first century B.C. that the inscriptions which were written in the less developed script belong to a period before that of Asoka. But similarity of script does not indicate contemporaneity of records especially when they are so far removed from each other and set within different traditions. Assuming however that writing was introduced to Ceylon from India it can happen that the less developed Brahmi script of Ceylon was contemporaneous with the script of the Asokan records.

The lower limit placed on the Brahmi inscriptions is the first century A.D. There is no hard and fast line of demarcation as to when the Brahmi script gradually develops a bent of its own towards Sinhalese characters.[1] The end of the first century however is cited as the time when changes begin to occur in the script away from the usual Brahmi characters. Another consideration of some importance is that the cave inscriptions gradually decline in numbers after the turn of the century. There are historical reasons for this.[2] However it makes a convenient division especially because we know definitely that hardly any king makes a cave donation after this period.[3]

None of the cave donations are dated according to any era. Therefore for the chronology of these records one has to depend entirely on palæographical evidence except in those inscriptions which mention the names of kings who can be identified with kings mentioned in the *Mahavamsa*. If we assume as correct the list of kings given in the *Mahavamsa* and the chronology based upon the evidence it furnishes as to regnal years and synchronism[4] then the inscriptions of these kings fall into a fairly accurate choronological pattern. It should be mentioned however that no identification would be possible nor any satisfactory genealogy formed if we did not possess the evidence of the *Mahavamsa*. But for this evidence we would have only the names of kings without any knowledge of the order in which they ruled and it is only in the cases of a few of these has it been possible to trace any connection based on genea-

1. See Palæographical Chart, C. W. Nicholas. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, p. 60
2. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, pp. 122, 311.
3. Ibid., p. 65.
4. Chronology of the early Pali Chronicles : G. C. Mendis, *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. V, p. 39.

logy.[1] Taken together however the inscriptions and the *Mahavamsa* generally support each other.

The identification of kings mentioned in the inscriptions is not always easy. The terms DEVANAPIYA which in the *Mahavamsa* is used only of Devanampiya Tissa[2] and GAMANI which is used only by a few such as Dutthagamani and Vattagamani[3] are used in the inscriptions as titles rather than personal names. ABA, TISA and NAKA though they help sometimes are too common and are of little use in identifying kings. The first clue for identification is the peculiar personal names that distinguish some of the rulers such at UTI (Uttiya),[4] LAJAKA (Lanji Tissa),[5] MACUDIKA (Mahaculi Maha Tissa)[6] and KUTAKANA or PUTAKANA (Kutakanna Tissa).[7] It is on the basis of these names, the titles MAHARAJA and DEVANAPI and the genealogies sometimes given that kings mentioned in the inscriptions have been identified. When there is insufficient evidence sometimes doubts arise as in the case of the inscriptions of Dutthagamani and Vattagamani who both had the inscriptional name GAMANI ABA.[8]

These inscriptions which mention the names of kings are important for the light they throw on the political history and institutions of this time. But their value would be much less without their proper chronological order.

There is next the location of these inscriptions. Here again no systematic work has been done except a series of articles by Mr. C. W. Nicholas.[9] Since the earliest monks were likely to have lived

1. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, Ap. V and IX.
2. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XI, v. 6.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 35e
   Two Royal Titles of Ceylon : S. Paranavitana. *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (1936, July), pp. 449–462.
3. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XXII, v. 1, 71.
   Ibid. Ch. XXXIII, v. 34.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, pp.37–38.
4. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XX, v. 29.
   Archaelogical Survey of Ceylon Annual Report, 1933, p. 14.
5. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XXXIII, v. 19.
   Ceylon Antiquary, p. 204.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. I, pp. 147–149 (No. 10.iii.a).
6. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XXXIV, v. 1.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, III, p. 156.
7. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XXXIV, v. 28.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, III, p. 156.
   Ceylon Antiquary, Vol. III, p. 76.
8. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, pp. 10, 12.
9. Epigraphical Map of Ceylon : C. W. Nicholas. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, p. 142*f*.

not too far from nor too near to the haunts of habitation the location of the inscriptions and their provenance would be a fair indication of the areas of habitation. Unfortunately the development can only be dimly traced because on the basis of palæography the records can be dated only within as wide a period as a century. Even so, within these limits, important evidence can be gleaned about the expansion of inhabited areas when the location of the records and their probable dates are taken together. Mr. Nicholas has attempted something of this kind. Roughly from the records we know that the northern plain was the most populous area and that the eastern and southern plains and also the southern portion of the northern plain were also inhabited. There are further a few records in the central highlands and the western coastal plains.

The location of the records is important in other contexts too, the most important of which is the political. The location of an inscription of a king can be taken as an indication of the extent of his kingdom or where he had effective rule. This fact together with a careful study of the titles and their significance will reveal the political set up of that time. Thus we know that the titles DEVANAPIYA and MAHARAJA are sovereign titles because they are used only of kings who from the *Mahavamsa* are known to have been sovereign rulers.[1] The provenance of these inscriptions will give the extent of their authority. On this basis the authority the king of Anuradhapura wielded over Ruhuna becomes an interesting study.[2]

The title RAJA though sometimes adopted by kings who according to the *Mahavamsa* held sovereign rank is also used by kings not mentioned in the *Mahavamsa*.[3] It also happens that lines of such rulers together with princes, entitled AYA hold sway in areas far removed from the main seat of government. Such groups are to be found in the Kagalla District,[4] on the southern border of the Eastern Province[5] and also occasionally in the central highlands.[6] Since RAJA is a royal title the conclusion to be drawn from this is that they were semi-independent local rulers, who flourished for a time and were finally absorbed by the more powerful rulers of the North. It is also possible that in times when the kings of Anuradhapura were weak these minor rulers set themselves up as independent kings in these areas.

1. *Institutions of Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 24*f*, 35*ef*.
2. Ibid., pp. 52–58.
3. Ibid., pp. 24–35*e*.
4. Ibid., p. 58.
5. Ibid., p. 57.
6. Ibid., p. 59.

In the same manner therefore it may be possible to glean facts of significance as regards the economic and religious set up when facts such as the existence of gilds or heretical sects or people of other faiths are taken in conjunction with the location of the inscription in which they are mentioned.

History consists of the activities of men and women in their day to day life and the numerous relationships they enter into with each other. The task of reconstructing this depends entirely on the availability of evidence. Though for recent periods a detailed history covering many aspects of human activity is possible, for the remote periods one has to depend upon the meagre material that has come down to our own day. Sometimes however these records are not only few but also varied in character. It thus becomes extremely difficult even if the records be contemporaneous to fuse them together in order to obtain a consistent picture of the period. They would supply only brief facts of the whole. The *Mahavamsa* and the Brahmi inscriptions provide two such contrasting types of evidence. The *Mahavamsa* deals with the great events that impressed the people of that age such as famine and drought, wars and battles, struggles for the throne and donations to the Sangha and the construction of the vast irrigation works. The record of these events gathered colour with time and were incorporated in the chronicles at a later date. The Brahmi records deal mostly with the simple donation of caves to the Sangha or as in a few with land and small tanks by kings as well as those in humble walks of life. These common acts of piety may not have attracted the attention of chroniclers and keepers of records. But nevertheless they are important as revealing at first hand some aspect of the life of the people.

There was a time when the main concern of historians was the narration of the outstanding events of the past. But today they have to take into account for historical study not only events and dates but also society and its structure. If we delve deep into the substance of history it will be seen that there are two aspects to it. There are on the one hand the day to day events that take place, the individual deeds and thoughts of men and their interaction in society. On the other it will readily be seen that these deeds and thoughts usually follow set patterns. This ensures both the stability of society and its continuity. This structure of society or pattern of conduct is called an institution. Thus the way a country is governed, the mode of succession, the economic set up, all go to form the institutional structure of a society. The term is also used in a narrower restricted sense to mean a closed organisation or association for a specific object. The Sangha itself, or a particular vihara or even an executive body within the political framework can be called an institution in this sense. Those institutions are

important historically which are basic to the maintenance of the social fabric and those events are important historically which contribute to changes in the institutional structure.

The value of the seemingly insignificant details which the Brahmi inscriptions provide is that though as events they may not be important, they are valuable contemporary evidence for the reconstruction of part at least of the institutional structure of the period. Thus the events mentioned in the inscriptions and the *Mahavamsa* would have a framework within which they could be placed. Indeed it can be said that this aspect of history is as vital if not more so than a mere recapitulation of events. Events themselves can only be understood in their relation to the institutional structure. Moreover these provide that indefinable atmosphere that pervades each age as it passes. If one is not imbued with it, the study of the period or research into events connected with it, would be out of historical perspective.

The cave-inscriptions bear witness to what seems to have been a very common practice at this time—that of making gifts of caves to the Sangha.[1] These are sometimes natural caves that are formed by the hummocks of rock that rise above the surrounding jungles. The donation consisted of making these caves habitable, by the cutting of drip-ledges, the construction of brick or mud walls with windows and doors and the cutting of steps sometimes for easy access into the cave. It is significant that at this early period both kings and common people make the same type of grants but that as time went on the kings took to making grants of land and tanks. This may be an indication of the gradual rise of the power and influence of the king after which they eschewed more humble donations.

There may at first sight appear to be a contradiction between these humble grants of caves and the description of magnificient viharas in the *Mahavamsa*. Was it that the early grants of kings were limited to cave donations or that the larger donations around Anuradhapura went unrecorded on stone ? There are occassional inscriptions recording constructions of thupas, etc., outside Anuradhapura. Can it be that what is recorded in the *Mahavamsa* is a description of the structure as it appeared at the time when the description became set into a form, with the additions and embellishments of later years rather than what it was at the time the grant was originally made ? It is significant that the names of so many of the early viharas mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* as having been constructed by kings or as being recipients of his favours end with

1. Ibid., pp. 65, 111, 113–114.

suffixes such as GIRI,[1] LENA[2] and PABBATA[3] all of which mean "rock" or "stone cave". These probably were collections of cave dwellings to which later additions such as *caityas* and *uposathagharas*[4] were made later. As has been pointed out already there a few records most of them unpublished which register the construction of CETAs (*cetiyas*) and TUBAs (*thupas*) both by kings and ordinary people.[5] These thoughts cannot fail to throw light on the background of the *Mahavamsa* story.

The *Mahavamsa* evidence that Buddhism spread rapidly in Ceylon very soon after its introduction finds ample corroboration in the inscriptions. The numerous donations by ordinary folk and spread throughout what were at that time the habitable areas is convincing proof that within the first three centuries Buddhist monks had spread their activities throughout the kingdom and that they had met with an enthusiastic response. But the records do not show how deeply Buddhism had entered into the life of the people. It is interesting to note that BAMANAs (Hindu Brahmins) are sometimes mentioned as donors of caves.[6]

Little details such as the formula adopted in recording a donation may reveal much. The phrase AGATA ANAGATA CATU DISA SAGASA though taken from the *Vinaya*[7] is an indication of what the people thought of the Sangha and may be, of the nature of the Sangha itself. The cave is made over to the whole Sangha and not to a particular vihara or to a particular monk or group of monks. One can probably visualise behind this a time before the viharas developed into separate and rigid institutions, a time when monks lived more near to the ideal of living their lives of meditation away from the entanglements of the world. Though probably living in groups the emphasis was perhaps more on the individual than on the community. Soon however there are signs of development for when grants which implied a regular income such as land and tanks came to be made the donation had to be made to a more specific continuing body than the universal Sangha. Thus the grants were made to " the community of monks resident at a

1. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XXI, v. 5 , Ch. XXXIII, v. 8.
2. Ibid., Ch. XXXIII, v. 8.
3. Ibid., Ch. XXI, v. 5.
4. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 125.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, III, pp. 163–169 (No. 15).
5. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 116, 125.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, III, p. 212–216. (No. 21*a*)
6. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 133.
   University of Ceylon Review VII, pp. 259–263 : C. W. Nicholas.
7. *Vinaya Pitakam*, Vol. II, p. 147.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica I, p. 16.
   Epigraphia Indica, Vol. VII, pp. 18–59.

particular vihara".[1] Occassional terms such as MAGEPATI,[2] MAJIMA BANAKA[3] provide glimpses of the organisation of the Sangha at this time.

The only way in which these records become relevant to a study of the political structure is from the titles of the donors in these records. There are firstly those who have the ranks of king and prince and queen, and next those who were probably officials of the central administration such as AMATE[4] and BADAKARIKA[5] meaning " minister " and " treasurer ". We have already touched on the importance of taking the geographical location of an inscription as a clue to the demarcation of kingdoms, and areas which were governed at least for brief periods by local rulers who set themselves up as kings. There is besides this the study of the significance of the titles themselves and what they reveal about kingship. What was the significance of the title MAHARAJA at a time when even the great Emperor Asoka himself uses only the title RAJA?[6] Was there any differentiation between the titles RAJA and MAHARAJA which were often used by the same king ? What was the connection between the family title DEVANAPIYA (KULA)[7] used by the Sinhalese kings and that used by Asoka ? There is again the title GAMANI. It means in the Vedic period the leader of a clan or tribe or village.[8] How is it that it becomes in Ceylon a title adopted by kings ? There is little doubt that this throws some light on the origin of kingship in Ceylon. It is also interesting to note that in the inscriptions a different title, GAMIKA, is used for those who

1. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 120.
2. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 129.
   Ceylon Journal of Science, Vol. II, p. 210. (No. 654).
3. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 129.
   Ceylon Journal of Science, II, p. 122. (No. 506).
   Early History of Buddhism : Adikaram, pp. 24–32.
4. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, II, p. 126. (No. 529).
   University of Ceylon Review, Vol. VIII, p. 118.
   Ceylon Journal of Science, II, p. 216. (No. 680).
   Sessional Papers XIX (1892), p. 70.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 75.
5. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, II, p. 216. (No. 680).
   University of Ceylon Review, Vol. VIII, p. 124.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 75.
   Ceylon Journal of Science, II, p. 127. (No. 532).
   A.S.C.A.R., 1934. S. 71, iii, p. 18.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, I, p. 135. (No. 10.i.86).
6. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 24*f*.
   Asoka : Mukherji, ch. VIII, p. 215*f*.
7. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 35*e*.
   Epigraphia Zeylanica, III, p. 156.*n*.5.
8. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, p. 37*f*, 43–44.
   Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, p. 95.

may have been village chiefs.[1] The consideration of these problems together with his religious activities and the extent of the authority they exercised do reveal something on kingship as it existed at this time. Here again it is that of a line of kings who had but lately emerged to sovereign rule over the Island gradually establishing themselves with the beginnings of a central administration. They probably did not yet command the great resources which their successors had to make very generous gifts to the Sangha and what they actually did in Anuradhapura stand as even greater achievements than may at first be realised.

An aspect of the political life of the period which the *Mahavamsa* omits altogether is local government and how village life was organised. Here again we have but glimpses from the titles of donors such as GAMIKA and PARUMAKA[2] and JETE, ANUJETE[3] and PUGA.[4] The title PARUMAKA though it appears very frequently in the inscriptions defy adequate explanation. They may be village elders or a class of landed gentry. Whatever the precise meaning of the terms may be we can be certain that they were the back-bone of a stable local government at a time when the power of the kings was not sufficiently centralised in order to provide the protection and leadership the people needed.

The Brahmi cave-inscriptions contain very little material for the reconstruction of the economic life of the country. There are however two groups of facts that can be taken for consideration. Sometimes in mentioning the name of the donor of a cave the inscription also gives his occupation. Thus words such as RUPADAKA (sculptor),[5] MANIKARA (jeweller)[6] are mentioned and give us some idea of the specialised occupations of this period. The term GAHAPATI mentioned so often and interpreted as "householder" may also have an economic connotation.[7] But of this we cannot be certain. The other group refers to the terms PUGA and JETE and ANUJETE. Though these have sometimes been

1. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, pp. 78–81.
   University of Ceylon Review VIII, p. 125 : C. W. Nicholas.
2. *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions*, pp. 81–88.
   University of Ceylon Review, VIII, p. 121 : C. W. Nicholas.
3. *A.S.C.A.R.*, 1932, p. 9.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 100.
4. Ibid.
   Ibid., n. 7.
5. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, II, p. 214. (No. 671).
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 101.
6. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, II, p. 205. (No. 617).
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 101.
7. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, II, p. 195. (No. 571).
   Ceylon Journal of Science, II, p. 125. (No. 522).
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 137.

interpreted as village council and village elders, yet when taken in comparison with the other terms used at this time the most likely interpretation is that these referred to some sort of trade guild and to its president and vice-president. This interpretation is also supported both by the etymology of the word and its application in ancient India.

There are besides the cave grants the few records which make donations either of tanks and water-rates (DAKAPATI)[1] or of fields and the rights to the produce (BOJAKAPATI).[2] Though few in number they are important at least as fore-shadowing the developments that were to take place in the next period; for these records differ somewhat from such records of the following centuries. We have in them material such as measurements and references to fields, villages and tanks which give us a fleeting glimpse of what the economic structure at this time was like. Much of course has to be inferred. An unusual inscription of this period is the "Tamil householder's terrace inscription" which witnesses to the existence of a gild of merchants among whom probably were also sailors (NAVIKA), right in the heart of Anuradhapura.[3]

These problems and aspects which are by no means exhausted here—take us through the main contribution which the Brahmi inscriptions make towards the reconstruction and evaluation of the period. Many problems such as ownership of both caves and land, the powers wielded by kings and his official relations with the Sangha and the gradual change in the nature of the Sangha can receive but scant attention in an article of this nature and many interesting details have been omitted.

It was not the purpose of this article as already mentioned earlier to consider in detail the actual content of historical evidence which these inscriptions provide and to discuss the problems which they raise. Rather it was to indicate the value of these inscriptions to the study of the earliest history of Ceylon, to give as far as possible the method and technique adopted in utilising these documents for the purpose of historical study and to demarcate the scope of the evidence supplied by them.

It will be readily seen that far too little attention has so far been paid to these inscriptions considering their importance. Taken together they form an indispensable adjunct to the literary tradition bearing on the period and a valuable corrective to its folk-lore, myth and legend, and to the literary and creative imagination of its authors.

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1. *Ceylon Antiquary*, III, p. 204.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions, p. 94, 264–288.
2. Ibid.
3. *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch*, 1935, p. 54. S. Paranavitane
   Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report, 1939, p. 17.
   Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscripti ms, p. 100.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EARLY SINHALESE PAINTINGS WITH CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PAINTINGS

By NANDADEVA WIJESEKERA

THE SITES containing the ancient paintings both in India and Ceylon may be conveniently divided into two groups. The brick built edifices such as dagobas, viharas and monasteries form one. The other consists of rock caves, natural or artificial, and faces of large rock boulders. The peculiarity of the latter class which contains the oldest surviving paintings is their picturesque situation amidst salubrious surroundings. The selection may have been determined not without an eye to beauty of landscape and serenity of environment. It may be presumed that the prerequisites of this art manifestation compelled the choice of unique positions as an added advantage. In Ceylon the elevation of the site commanded the visitor to gaze at the paintings from a spot standing below it.

The natural scenic beauty induced the suitable frame of mind to absorb one's whole interest when the actual scenes in colour presented themselves thereby losing one's individuality and mentally elevating one to the level of the subject. A physical feature that induced the choice may also be taken as the immensity of proportions of the rocks themselves. This factor added to the majesty of the whole scheme suggest also an element of surprise in the strength of form. Sigiriya, Dambulla and Dimbulagala present such a setting without any doubt.

But one point of difference marks the sites in India and Ceylon. The Indian frescoes have been located in actual structural edifices chiselled out of the living body of the rock ; which factor when reduced to architectural elements may still be equated with built up temples. These caves harmonise admirably as an element of the natural beauty of landscape. In Ceylon this beauty may be less in degree but the physical aspect suggests a greater element of wonder. What Ceylon lacks is the method of carving out structural buildings from massive rocks.

Why did the Sinhalese whose knowledge of stone cutting was not inferior to that of the Indians deviate from the practice accepted in India. They followed most probably the ancient practice of using natural rock caverns. Also the quality of Ceylon rock differed so as to make it a burden to excavate the structural buildings out of it. An attempt, however, on a small scale may be still seen in the case

of the Galvihara at Polonnaruva. In the case of India the paintings are depicted on the walls of rock hewn temples whilst those of Ceylon remain on the face of the rock itself, exposed in cases to the natural elements. It may be that the Indian frescoes served the needs of a few resident within an area whereas the Sinhalese presented them before a wider congregation. Those paintings found on the surfaces of brick built edifices remain another matter pertaining to the practice both in India and Ceylon of embellishing temples, dagobas, and viharas for the edification as well as delectation of the religious devotees.

The scheme remains boldly conceived in the Indian and Ceylon examples. Even as it was difficult to fashion out of the rock shapes structurally perfect so was it laborious to convert the crude surface of large boulders suitable for painting. This feature is remarkable in the case of Sigiriya when it is known that the frescoes remain nearly five hundred feet above ground level. A more convenient approach to the rock surface has therefore to be assumed though no such traces are preserved. Nevertheless the grandeur of the conception appeals equally in both examples. Unfortunately the paucity of the Sinhalese paintings stands out in contrast with the profusion of those of Ajanta.

Another point of common interest needs notice in this comparative study. The paintings bear no individual character but reveal a common feature and remain the result of considerable labour, skill and forethought of a school of painting. A band of artists have worked together in order to achieve unity of a preconceived purpose. The consummation of this skill and boldness of scheme remain not less fulfilled in Ceylon than in those examples of the Continent.

The technique employed in Ceylon and India resembles closely in their main principles with slight modifications in details. The chiselling was done with an iron point but in Ceylon the chips removed were smaller than in India as is evidenced by the marks. The quality of the rock decided this. Consequently smaller pittings had to be plastered in Ceylon. The Indian composition of plaster consisted of a greyish muddy coloured clay—powdered trap —mixed with cow-dung sometimes containing fine straw and rice husks. In Ceylon ant hill clay was used mixed with cow-dung, rice husk and even coconut fibre. The thickness varied according to the contours of the rock but remained between half to three quarter of an inch. The composition degenerated as time progressed. That of Polonnaruva was as weak as that of Ellora. A fine lime coating as a finishing touch remains in all cases but at Ajanta and Polonnaruva this surface is smoothed over to a polish whilst at Bagh and Sigiriya it remains somewhat rougher.

The outlines of the figures were drawn in a medium red colour similarly in all cases except at Dimbulagala where a dark grey almost amounting to black has been used. It seems doubtful whether the Sinhalese applied any thinnish transparent monochrome over the outlines though this may have been the likely practice in India. The corrected lines show later alterations visible in most of the examples. But at Sigiriya even altered positions of hands are noticeable. At Sittannavasal such superfluous lines seem absent.

From no site in India has it been possible to obtain any direct evidence regarding the brushes in use and the palettes that contained the pigments, since these, being made of perishable materials, have not even outlived the paintings. The Sinhalese paintings preserve figures of persons in the very act of portraying figures with the brush. A variety of brushes may have been used ranging from, coarse to very fine ones made of animal hair and even grass. The palm of the hand and clay vessels helped to contain the pigments in use.

About the definite technique of colour application difference of opinion prevails among scholars. It may be suggested that at Sigiriya at least true fresco elements are obtainable in a greater degree than at the continental sites, although it was a modification adapted to suit local conditions. For the most part the rest of the method remains similar in the two traditions as preserved at Ajanta, Bagh, Sittannavasal and Ellora. The colours at Sigiriya and Hindagala are limited and in tones lighter unlike those in India. This may have been due to their open positions where more light was present. But in all cases natural colours had been used. Perhaps casein was added to the pigments at Sigiriya whereas in other frescoes yolk of egg may have been mixed.

The flesh tints in the Sigiriya have been rendered in a lively golden yellow and delicate olive green. The golden yellows and reds resemble those of Ajanta. This continues throughout the Sinhalese paintings. But those of Polonnaruva remind one of the colours at Sittannavasal by their lightness and flatness. Whilst the colours at Sigiriya possess a trait different from all others in that here a fresh coarseness, specially in the greens manifests. Nowhere in Ceylon can be observed the dark yet refined body colours as used at Bagh. The same gradation of colour and tones are seen at Sigiriya. It may however be said that colour schemes as a whole differ in quality at each site. This may be due to the local setting and light effects. The gradation and tone with their lightness of application have been expressed at Polonnaruva in the fashion of Sittannavasal. The dull heaviness of Ellora cannot be said to be present anywhere in Ceylon.

The plastic effect of colour comes out at Sigiriya but never in the same degree as at Ajanta and Bagh. This effect is also obtained by modelling in dark and light colours not by play of dark and light surfaces. In all cases the hair treatment in a bold colour was probably a technical device common to the Indian tradition for enhancing facial beauty by the juxtaposition of dark and light colours. The figures in the Continent are painted against a dark background of colour which seems comparatively lighter at Sittannavasal and Ellora. In Ceylon no such backgrounds have been used except against one figure at Sigiriya. One feature common to all these frescoes is the strengthening of outlines in bolder strokes of the brush. This helped to impart a definition to the figures. The bold outlines emphasised the contours of form as well. The Sinhalese examples may not equal the effect at Ajanta and Bagh resulting from a similar device yet the element belonged to a common tradition. The strokes at Polonnaruva are lighter and more like those of Sittannavasal in this respect.

The pre-eminent position held by Indian art as a whole may be attributed to the excellence of linear draughtsmanship in painting more than to any other quality of it except its deep spirituality. This tradition in common with that of Ceylon was purely an element of line drawing. It attains excellence at Sigiriya but at Ajanta and Bagh it can hardly find a rival. But the art of line continued up to XII A.D. Polonnaruva where the Pallava tradition brought by the Colas appears to have influenced considerably. The mastery of line in the Indian tradition derived its quality and expressive character from perfect training and continuous observation of natural forms. Each figure was similarly well drawn and so represented by a few careful lines as to suggest a deal of meaning. In all these cases definite strokes of the brush, controlled and moderated, conveyed deep meaning. The gradation and quality were so well conceived as to render an immediate form by translating its essentials into a few expressive lines. This linear language varied in quality and utterance more so than colours in the suggestion of relief effects and modelling.

The figures are drawn in varying sizes but the best are those of life size or slightly overlife size ones. The fine contours expressing roundness, the delicate strokes inducing deep sentiment and the qualified lines suggesting mental outlook have been well combined in some of the best figures at Sigiriya, Ajanta and Bagh. Though the same tradition prevails in general yet certain points are expressed differently. These may be detected in the face. In the Sigiriya frescoes the eyebrows are drawn in one wavy line or two separate curves. It is not so at Ajanta. Similarly drawn are the eyes, nose, lips and breasts. In the case of Polonnaruva the eyebrows, nose and eyelids resemble those of Sittannavasal figures except the mode

of drawing the eyebrow and nose in one continuous line. That element is peculiar to Sittannavasal. The figures at Polonnaruva are more athletic whilst those of Sittannavasal lean towards the plump side. The joints of the figures at Sigiriya are drawn similar to that of Ellora. So are the elongated noses in some figures. This may have been obtained from an older tradition common to both. There was a pre-delection for the three quarter face but a few fine side views are found at Sigiriya also. The poses of the Polonnaruva figures specially those of the worshippers are not unlike those at Sittannavasal in respect of the flexions of the body.

Another characteristic feature of Indian painting and one that is shared by all alike is the treatment of gesture applied to all parts of the body specially pertaining to the hands. Such a symbolical usage helped in the delineation of moods and attitude. By this means the painter was able to convey deeper meaning than could have been expressed by any language. The painter also manipulated the hands of the figures so as to produce a harmonious balance in the whole composition. Certain gestures later became stereotyped and were applied with specific meaning in the Buddhist religious paintings both in India and Ceylon.

What is seen at Sigiriya may be a stage prior to codification but nevertheless belonging to the same tradition. In almost all cases more meaning is conveyed by this gesture language which has been well expressed with skilled knowledge. In Sigiriya the pose of each figure itself as well as the hand and the swaying bodies enter this symbolism particularly the fingers not unlike those seen at Bagh. They were not empty hands. At Ajanta and Sittannavasal the hands carry flowers. So are those at Sigiriya and Polonnaruva. The flowers themselves form a part of this symbolism but these remain unexplained. In the paintings subsequent to Sigiriya the other developed forms of this symbolism like asanas, mudras and hastas can be seen even as at Ajanta.

The Sigiriya paintings though presenting a variety of ethnological types represented by the figures these have been determined according to a pre-conceived standard of form and beauty which in the main conforms to the Gupta literary tradition as recorded at Ajanta and Bagh. That these should show local peculiarities is but natural. Accordingly the Pallava standard remains impressed differently with an element of its own. Nevertheless the strong similarity Sigiriya bears to Ajanta in this respect goes beyond that of being a product of a common source. There obviously is something more which cannot be explained wholly by a direct influence. With the two schools the ideal beauty of womanhood remained according to racial types though agreeing in the main physical proportions and shape of the limbs. It was nothing but the literary ideal such as a

thin waist, broad heavy hips, round exaggerated breasts, thick luscious lips and long tapering eyes and eye-lashes.

The golden colour was the ideal body complexion in both. This should not be taken to mean that other colours were less beautiful. Here again in this respect the Pallava art has influenced the Polonnaruva painting only. Undoubted claims to nobility of birth and dignity of bearing in the figures of the literary art tradition may be stressed in all examples of preserved frescoes. It is therefore convenient to describe this art as belonging to the court of the day. The literary form cannot but present such an element as the growth of the literature itself was due to the patronage of the court. Nevertheless the canons of the art of painting restricted them within wide limits as otherwise the anatomical inexactitudes cannot be explained. The Gupta literary form was an ideal conception which reached perfection in the spiritual culmination of the age.

The Sinhalese frescoes specially those at Sigiriya may also have belonged to the court for indeed the Gupta tradition seems too strongly impressed here. There is the same grace and princely luxury. At Sigiriya the symbol is the flower and that too the lotus. So is it at Ajanta and Sittannavasal. The lotus stalk with its sinuous curves issuing from the bosom as it were of the lady with Mongolian looks at Sigiriya does remind one of the lotus stalk in the Ajanta figures. Also at Polonnaruva a similar lotus appears in the Galvihara. The position is like that at Sittannavasal but the lotus differs.

The elaborate head-dresses betray similar elements of a common tradition in their conical towering shapes, intricate detail and rich floral combination. This is the one never failing item of all the figures. The other body ornaments may belong to a general cultural pattern. These bear a marked uniformity with each other. The necklaces, large round earrings, bracelets, armlets and string ornaments belong to the same tradition. The breast band at Sigiriya is a local form. Here again the armlets and necklaces at Sittannavasal, which are characteristic of the Pallava art do not obtain at Sigiriya. The waist cloth in a variety of beautifully coloured patterns and the close fitting jackets enhance the natural figure of the Sigiriya ladies even as those of Ajanta and Bagh. The male dress and ornaments found in later Sinhalese paintings resemble also the continental types.

The popular tradition of painting as seen at Polonnaruva goes back to very ancient times. But how far the Indian canons of art influenced it at the early stages the extant material does not permit us to know. The Jataka tales are found painted at Ajanta and

these could not have altogether failed to influence the early popular paintings of Ceylon. Even when we compare the Jataka paintings at Polonnaruva with those of Ajanta of a much earlier period there is a striking similarity that cannot be explained away as due to mere accident. Even as at Ajanta the popular and the literary art prevail side by side so in Ceylon the two movements existed together side by side. Only Polonnaruva preserves them in Ceylon but other temples may have certainly employed the same method as early as first century B.C. Anuradhapura.

The fact cannot be denied that this popular phase borrowed much from the literary tradition. Though the presentation, aim and style differed yet the technique was the same. Even in the case of certain figures like that of the Bodhisattva it may be added that the popular artists followed the literary style. Such figures were portrayed according to standard norms. The special moods and attitudes were observed almost in detail. The court personages and the palace atmosphere were depicted according to the correct requirements but of course not with the same elaborate extravagance as in the literary tradition. The ordinary subjects and common animals and natural life have been shown in a very similar way to that found at Ajanta. In this respect the painters at Ajanta and Ceylon were catering to the same sections of society who came to the temples as votaries of religion and not as dilettantes or connoisseurs of art. Of course at Ajanta the subjects are of a multifarious nature and preserve a larger element of the popular social life than at Polonnaruva.

The stylistic features of the paintings at Sigiriya suggest a close connection and common elements with those of Ajanta and Bagh. But this should not be mistakenly interpreted as a work done by the same hands. Far from it being so the Sigiriya frescoes may be described as a provincial derivation of the same school of painting. It is difficult in any art to point out definitely in precise detail that all points of style can be equated with those of another. But the main spirit and style are what really matter and in these respects the two phases resemble. There are common elements which bind them as well.

The figures are arranged according to importance, the central position being assigned to the important character of the composition. How far this is obtainable at Sigiriya is not apparent but even here it may be noticed that one of the figures in a group is the chief unit. Later in the religious art such a feature is conspicuous. It is most conspicuous in scenes showing the Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Further emphasis has been given to such central figures by depicting them in a size bigger than the others and out of

proportion with the rest of the figures in the whole composition. It is noticeable at Ajanta and Bagh as much as at Hindagala and Polonnaruva.

In the arrangement of figures no true perspective is observed in the Indian tradition as a whole. Figures were arranged in rows one behind the other to show depth. This may have been followed at Sigiriya if there had been such groups. But certainly at Hindagala and Polonnaruva it occurs. The stories have been depicted in narrative style, starting from left to right. This method can be very well seen in the Buddhist religious frescoes. In the Jataka scenes the narrative effect emerges clearly. This is so at Ajanta, Hindagala and Polonnaruva. There is no break. One incident merges into the other with the easy manner of the story teller, continuity being stressed by the repetition of a main figure. Certain individual figures at Ajanta are portrayed in a style and beauty far surpassing earthly ideals. These are spiritual ideals and remain unique and incomparable. Sinhalese painting does not equal that of Ajanta or Bagh in this respect but as regards the rest of the work at their best the Indian and Sinhalese attain similar lofty heights of excellence in style and conception within national limitations.

In spite of many points of resemblance in style, technique, draughtmanship, colour and spirit there still manifests a feeling of difference from the Continental paintings. Not all the elements seen at Ajanta, Bagh, Sittannavasal and Ellora can account for the Sigiriya paintings, or any other. Each school contributes a trait or a complex of traits. Of all these Ajanta bears to the largest extent common traits with Sigiriya. This intrinsic feeling of difference remains undiscovered in the Indian examples or may be it has not entered them except perhaps in the Pallava paintings in a subtle form. What that is it is difficult to describe. But the freedom, gay vivacity, the buoyancy and " marble " finish may perhaps be some of the factors that contribute to this feeling prevalent at Sigiriya. In all other respects the provincial development can be said to be easily understood. This can only be accounted for by the capture and perpetuation in the Sinhalese painting tradition an element that was once found in India probably at Amaravati but was later lost before any other site was able to imbibe it. To explain such a missing link a school of Andhra painting located in the Kistna area has to be assumed as that and that alone could have been the likely source of its origin.

Such a feature may be explained thus. The first wave of art influence—including painting—reached the Island from the north very closely following the arrival of Buddhism. The architecture and sculpture bear this out. Then in about the second century A.D. the Kistna tradition no doubt influenced the art of the country. In

sculpture specially in marble this school developed a tender feeling in its art. There may have been a school of painting as well. In Ceylon the elements of this art may be recognised from early times up to XII A.D. A few marble plaques datable to XI A.D. have also been found. It is therefore most probable that Sinhalese painting received elements from this most developed Andhra school. That was for a time. Before long the Gupta tradition swept everything before it and impressed its strong character on all branches of art. Ceylon underwent this phase and developed its paintings and other arts on the flourishing Gupta ideal. Very late in the course Pallava painting came to be introduced. But this was not before X or XI A.D. for Sigiriya has escaped it altogether. But we see it unmistakably at Polonnaruva.

The aim of Sigiriya painting was primarily to satisfy the mind by an appeal to emotions. Unlike at Ajanta no spiritual outlook prevails. But in common with Ajanta the sensual element is not lacking. Whereas at Ajanta, Bagh and Sittannavasal love and affection are expressed by direct representation of amorous scenes at Sigiriya such qualities are indirectly suggested by voluptuous forms of the human female. In the Indian examples the desired purpose may have been the creation of an atmosphere of royal splendour induced by the glamorous presence of graceful beauty, possessed of the majesty of queens and the sensual charms of nymphs. An absence of joyousness and a spirit of abandon characterise the ladies of Sigiriya in their perplexed but longing moods. The aim seems different here. That they are court ladies is indeed difficult to deny. What the artist's aim was in creating them is not too easy to be sure of still. Oriental pageantry of merriment and dance processions and court life attain a desired object in Indian painting but at Sigiriya the object seems different although the subject remains a part of court life.

In the religious scenes of Ajanta there prevails an atmosphere of spiritual fulfilment and deep religious emotion as the main aim of the paintings. With the same spiritual aim as the ultimate purpose the painter has carefully attempted to attain this by illustrating the previous lives of the Buddha. These illustrate not only a continuity of his life cycle but also inculcate the noble ethical code of the Doctrine. Next to these illustrations are shown the incidents from the actual life of the Buddha, the worship of the gods and men. Finally the devotee is led to the very presence of the Master. It is here in the sanctum that the best art may be expected and it is exactly here that we find the noblest figures.

The religious aim has been pursued in all later paintings of the Sinhalese. This is seen at Hindagala, Pulligoda, Dimbulagala and

later sites. Though the aim has been realised in one aspect of the emotional appeal to the popular sentiment the art yet lacks the deep spirituality and æsthetic sensibility of the Ajanta Bodhisattva figures. The impression of the Master's life and universal homage earned by him have been well exemplified.

The arrangement of the paintings followed by the artists at Polonnaruva is almost similar to that found at the Buddhist caves at Ajanta. We have the Jataka scenes at the entrance. The art here is popular and the aim was the inducement of the proper frame of mind by an appeal to the emotional sentiment of the devotee. The tedium is broken by floral decoration interspersed on the walls and pillars at intervals. Then comes the procession of devas, other gods and men all of whom pay homage to the Buddha. Nèxt there are the incidents such as the descent at Sankissa and the boat scene connected with the life of the Buddha. Finally we come to the colossal central image of the standing Buddha.

The painter has used his art with the understanding of a hypnotist and attains his supreme object by stages. It appears that such a conception as found at the Northern Temple—which is only one example—at Polonnaruwa is nothing less than the wholesale transference of the scheme and arrangement present at the Ajanta cave temples both in aim and spirit. Unfortunately, the Polonnaruva artists may not have been such clever masters as those of Ajanta and therefore may not have produced an Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva or the like—but we do not know. But we know that the spirit at both sites remain identical.

Unlike the Ajanta and Bagh frescoes which still preserve a considerable record of the life obtaining at the time the Sinhalese examples show few scenes that can help a reconstruction of the life of the people and the changing phases of the society. It is only at Polonnaruva that those few records are also preserved. Sigiriya which undoubtedly preserves scenes of the court life of early Ceylon yields no details beyond the feminine figures and their modes. No religious devotion appears to have troubled the mind of the regal authorities. It was a glamorous period that felt the full influence of the pageantry of the Imperial Gupta power. Life appears to have been gay at least within the court circle. There were the leisured classes who not only engaged in art but also appreciated art. This art may have had very little to do with religion. What is painted here was meant for the court in which the popular society had very little to do or say. Religion had been established and needed little support lest it lose its hold on the people and fade away. Religious needs found fulfilment at the populous capitals but in this neglected spot away from popular congregations the court established its venue for such a voluptuous art.

At this time women enjoyed freedom but seem to have moved about chaperoned by a companion. Much time and money were spent on personal beauty and costly attire. The dress and ornaments flavour of a South Indian taste nevertheless these constituted the general pattern obtainable in the Indian tradition. Very likely the fashion of the Kistna cities were in vogue and these are not unbecoming of the Sinhalese in any degree. The taste and selection, colour scheme and decoration speak of a highly developed female sense of refinement in jewellery and clothing. Whether the women of the day did anything but move about beautifully dressed, heavily ornamented merely to delight their male companions and also their personal vanity cannot be asserted. But they certainly adorned the court and were beautiful to look at.

The next period of four centuries (VII-X A.D.) remain barren of preserved material to paint the picture of the life of the day. It still remains the dark period of Sinhalese history. Fragments have been found isolated and these being purely religious paintings give us no information about the court and people. It may have been a time when the religion was in danger or in conflict. But the people appear to have participated in the art of the day. Hindagala scenes portray a very apt theme of alms giving probably meant to awaken the generosity of the richer classes. Anuradhapura of this day still had direct leanings towards the Indian Continent and the luxuriant exuberance of the decorative design may express the people's desire for religious fulfilment. At best art existed not with the court exclusiveness but as an instrument for serving the greater cause of humanity.

Coming to the society of XII A.D. the picture seems to have suffered a great change. It was a time of action when the people were again busy. We have more records both in painting and other arts to illustrate the movement that took place. A combination of the court and the people seems apparent. It was again a period when people enjoyed the fruits of freedom, security and peace ; when a literary awakening spread over the Island ; when art and architecture flourished and when Buddhism was again revived, revitalised and re-established. The Colas who wrought great havoc yet unconciously implanted at Polonnaruva the best in the Pallava traditions of painting and architecture which could have been easily observed by the Sinhalese because they had temples and palaces erected at the very site. It is natural to expect a great element of the South Indian culture penetrating into Sinhalese society at this time. How far Cambodian style influenced the art remains yet to be seen. It is obvious that various grades of society were united in one common purpose.

The paintings of this period are exclusively Buddhist in spirit and theme. The Sanskrit literary tradition was also current and the

literature of the day was a mixture of Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit elements. New subjects embodied in the Buddhist Sanskrit literature were also incorporated in the popular Buddhism. The literary art and popular art were equally exploited since the people's understanding increased. The peasantry had not suffered much change. They were still the same simple folk who lived on a modest scale, dressed scantily and followed whole-heartedly the religion in its emotional appeal. The scenes from the life of the Buddha that cover the walls of the Northern Temple illustrate clearly the religious needs of the day. It caters to a simple society of contented citizens longing for a higher spiritual life.

THE FOREIGN TRADE AND COMMERCE OF ANCIENT CEYLON

I.—THE PORTS OF ANCIENT CEYLON

By B. J. PERERA

(*Revised and enlarged from an article contributed to the Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Vo* XXXI)

THE PORTS of ancient Ceylon played an important role both in the foreign trade of the Island and in the inter-oceanic commerce between the East and West. Being situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean and to the extreme south of the Indian Peninsula, Ceylon enjoyed a strategic position commanding the sea-routes that linked one side of the ocean with the other. The fleets of Chinese junks carrying silks and ceramic ware to trading stations on the East African coast, and the Arabian vessels which carried the spices of the East Indies to European marts had of necessity to touch at these ports which lay conveniently half-way.

The accounts of Ceylon by foreign traders and travellers on whom we usually have to depend for our information on the foreign trade of the Island in ancient times, have hardly mentioned these ports, and whatever references we get in them are hardly sufficient to construct a connected story of their development. Fortunately however there is a wealth of references in the Pali chronicles and in Sinhalese literature, which supplemented here and there by inscriptions enable us to gain a glimpse of these ports, their development and organisation.

Jambukola and Mahatittha are the two ports most frequently mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* in its account of the earliest period of the Island's history. It is not possible to determine when exactly these ports came into use, but considering their position in relation to India, we may presume that they were in use long before the Aryan colonisation of the Island. The *Jatakas* contain a number of references to voyages to Ceylon by North Indian merchants. But none of these works mention by name any of the ports at which they landed. From the account of a voyage given in the *Valahassa Jataka* we may presume that at least one of these ports was situated on the north-western coast of the Island.[1]

Jambukola, identified as the modern Kankesanturai, served as the port to North India especially to Tamralipti in Bengal which

1. *The Jatakas:* Trans. W. H. D. Rouse. C.U.P. 1895. Vol. II., No. 196.

in its turn served as the port for Ceylon. In the pre-Christian era it was used exclusively for communications with Bengal with which Ceylon was at that time so intimately connected. It was from this port that the envoys of King Devanampiyatissa set out for the Court of Emperor Asoka.[1] It was also at this port that the sapling of the Sacred Bo-tree was landed.[2] From a reference in the *Mahavamsa* we know that it was connected with Anuradhapura by a highway. " King Devanampiya Tissa did cause the whole of the road from the northern gate even to Jambukola to be made ready."[3] After the time of King Devanampiya Tissa, Jambukola appears to have declined in importance. The distance of Jambukola from Anuradhapura is twice the distance of Mannar from Anuradhapura, and therefore Mannar gave better access to the capital than Jambukola. Jambukola is however occasionally mentioned in the Pali commentaries and Sinhalese works as the port of embarkation and landing for voyages of a religious nature.[4] Perhaps the Jambukola Vihare built at the site where the Sacred Bo-tree was landed in the Island was specially venerated and included in the itinerary of Buddhist devotees both from Ceylon and India.

Mahatittha is the first port to be mentioned by name in the *Mahavamsa*. It was at this port that the wives for Vijaya and his followers landed from South India.[5] An analysis of the references show that this port was used chiefly for contact with South India. Its close proximity to South India and to the Sinhalese capital Anuradhapura made it an important port from the earliest period of Ceylon history. Since the major exports of Ceylon were all royal monopolies the port nearest to the capital would have become the chief port of the Island.

Although Mahatittha is first mentioned in connection with the landing of Vijaya's second wife there is no doubt that it was used as a port by the Tamils long before the Aryan settlement in Ceylon. The existence of the temple of Tiruketisvaram the origin of which is not covered by any existing records is an indication of the antiquity of this port. Indeed Mahatittha is the only port in the Island which can be called a buried city. Today the site of the port presents a vast mound of piled up ruins on which coins and beads are laid bare by every shower of rain. The site of the

1. Ed. W. Geiger : *Mahavamsa*. P.T.S. Edition. Ch. 11, v. 23.
2. Ibid., Ch. 19, v. 23.
3. Ibid., Ch. 19, v. 25.
4. Ed. W. Stede : *Sumangalavilasini*. Part II., P.T.S. Edition, p. 695.
   Ed. J. Takakusu & M. Nagai : *Samantapasadika*. P.T.S. Edition, p. 100.
   Ed. Sorata : *Saddharmaratnakaraya*, p. 357.
5. *Mahavamsa:* Ch. 7, v. 58.

ancient town itself appears to have covered an area of about 300 acres.[1] One of its main roads recently excavated is almost 40 ft. wide.

The ruins of Roman pottery, coins and articles of foreign origin found here, are the first definite evidence to prove that Mahatittha was a great port in the early centuries of the Christian era. Next we have the references in the *Sangam* Literature of the Tamils which describe Mahatittha as a great port.[3] Mahatittha played an important role in the political history of the Island. Almost every invading Tamil army landed at this port,[4] and the invaders could always count on the large colony of Tamils settled there for help.

Although Mahatittha was generally used for intercourse with South India there are a few instances of voyages from North India to this port.[5] When the Tooth Relic was brought to Ceylon in the 4th century the Kalinga Prince who brought it landed at this port. The Pali *Dathavansa* does not mention this port by name but merely calls it the Lankapattana.[6] Perhaps its author was averse to give this port, which had such strong Hindu elements the honour of being the spot where the sacred paladium was landed. Also it is interesting to note that the *Daladavamsa* written about the 12th century uses the most disparaging terms in its reference to the port.[7]

Since Mahatittha was the port for South India there was a strong South Indian element here. Besides the ancient temple of Tiruketisvaram whose origins are veiled in the mists of antiquity there was also another temple named Rajaraja Isvarattu Mahadeva, so called after the Chola conqueror of Ceylon of the 11th century.[8] When the Kalinga Prince bearing the Tooth Relic landed at this port it was at a Hindu temple that he took shelter for the night.[9] The importance attached to this temple by the Cholas is seen by the change of the name Mahatittha to Raja-raja-puram during the period of their occupation of the northern part of the Island.[10] A

1. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report*, 1907, p. 28.
2. Ibid. *Annual Report* 1950, p. 15.
3. For a complete list of references *vide* C. Rasanayagam: *Ancient Jaffna*, p. 14*ff*.
4. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 25, v. 80 ; Ch. 33, v. 39 ; *Culavamsa*, Ch. 58, v. 14 ; Ch. 88, v. 73.
5. Ed. Dharmakirthi : *Sanga Sarana*, Colombo, 1929, p. 37.
6. Ed. Widurajothi : *Dathavanso*, Kalutara, 1939, v. 339.
7. Ed. E. S. Rajasekhara : *Dalada Sirita*, Colombo, 1920, p. 34
8. *Annual Report on Epigraphy, South India*, No. 616 of 1912.
9. *Dathavanso*, v. 340.
10. *Annual Report on Epigraphy, South India* No. 616 of 1912.

Chola inscription mentions still another temple named Tiruviramisvaram Udaiyar at this port.[1] Mahatittha was also held in veneration by the Sinhalese and it was considered a heinous crime to slaughter cattle here.[2] Mannar naturally was also a centre of internal trade. We have an reference in the *Saddharmalankaraya* to a trader of this port going to the interior of the country for the purpose of trade.[3]

Judging from the regular references to this port in literary works belonging to different periods we may infer that it continued to be the chief port for Raja-rata up to the end of the 12th century. There is not the least doubt that the great emporium of trade referred to by Cosmas was Mahatittha. The testimony of Cosmas relating to the importance of Mahatittha is attested by finds of different types and forms of pottery from Rome, Arabia and China.[4] Sundaramurthi Nayanar, the Hindu hymnist of the 6th century mentions it as a port with many ships.[5] The *Hudud al Alam* written about the year 982 A.D. states " there is a large city called Muvas ; it is situated at the extremity which lies towards Hindustan. Whatever this Island produces is carried to that city and therefore to the cities of the world."[6]

In the 12th century King Parakrama Bahu I assembled many ships at Mahatittha to launch an invasion of the Pandya Kingdom.[7] King Nissanka Malla in one of his inscriptions claims to have built an alms-hall at Mahatittha.[8] This indicates the continued importance of this port in the 12th Century inspite of the transfer of the capital from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa. The port also figures in the campaigns of the King Parakrama Bahu II and is referred to as an stronghold of the Tamils.[9] One of the latest references to it is found in an ancient glossary to the *Sasadavata* where it is mentioned as the landing place of a South Indian army.[10] By the 15th century however, Mahatittha appears to have ceased to be an important port. The *Kokila Sandesa* written in the reign of King Parakrama Bahu VI in the 15th century in giving an description of the important places along the western coast of the

1. Ibid., No. 618.
2. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, p. 133.
3. Ed. Gnanavimala : *Saddharmalankaraya*, Colombo, 1948, p. 675.
4. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report*, 1950, p. 15.
5. *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. X, p. 108.
6. Ed. Minorsky : *Hudud-al-Alam*, p. 57.
7. Ed. W. Geiger : *Culavamsa*, P.T.S. Edition, 2 Vols. Ch. 78, v. 85.
8. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report*, 1915, p. 105.
9. Ed. Saddhatissa : *Pujavaliya*, Panadura 1930, p. 739.
10. *Journal of the Ceylon Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXXI, p. 385

Island hardly refers to Mahatittha. The rise of Colombo as the chief port of Ceylon after the abandonment of Raja-rata and the shifting of the capital to Jayavardenapura-Kotte contributed to the decline of Mahatittha which had been the most important port of Ceylon for fifteen centuries. There appears to have been a revival of the port in the years prior to the arrival of the Portuguese for Queyroz gives Mantota in the list of the ports of the Island. In fact Mantota is given as one of the kinglets into which the Island was divided on the arrival of the Portuguese.[1]

Among the lesser ports mentioned in the chronicles was Uratota (modern Kayts). This port appears to have been frequented by foreign merchants. An inscription found at Nainativu mentions this port.[2] It is also mentioned in the *Pujavaliya* as one of the places fortified by Magha the Kalingan invader in the 12th century.[3]

Uruvela on the western coast is another port mentioned in the *Mahavamsa*.[4] As it is mentioned in connection with the discovery of pearls it must have been situated opposite the pearl banks and connected with the export of pearls. None of the Sinhalese chronicles mention the port. On the other hand the Sinhalese works mention a place called Magana which is not mentioned in the Pali works although it was important enough to give its name to a district.[5] From the references to Magana in the *Saddharmalankaraya* we know that it was situated in Raja-rata to the west of Anuradhapura. Two inscriptions found near the spot where we may locate Uruvela on the data of the *Mahavamsa* mention a place called Magana.[6] There is a very little doubt that the Magana of the inscriptions and the Magana of the Sinhalese works are the same. There is a possibility that Magana may be the Uruvela of the *Mahavamsa*. We know that the *Mahavamsa* does not always give the correct names of places, and very often the names mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* differ from the names found in inscriptions. The *Sanga Sarana* states that a king had to traverse 5 yojanas on his way to the Magana temple.[7] This agrees with the distance given in the *Mahavamsa* between Anuradhapura and Uruvela. Further we know that Magana had the status of a town being mentioned as such by Ptolemy.[8] Uruvela is also stated to be one of the towns

1. Fernao de Queyroz : *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon.* Translated S. G. Perera. Bk. I, p 32.
2. *Ancient Jaffna*, p. 208.
3. *Pujavaliya*, p. 739.
4. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 28, v. 36.
5. *Saddharmalankaraya*, p. 704.
6. *Journal of the Ceylon Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 54.
7. *Sanga Sarana*, p. 39.
8. J. W. McCrindle : *Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy*, p. 247.

founded by Vijaya's followers.[1] Thus it is clear that both Uruvela and Magana would have been two important places. If so it would be very strange if the Magana of the inscriptions and the Sinhalese literary works is not mentioned in the *Mahavamsa*. The absence of references in Sinhalese literature to Uruvela mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* is also equally strange. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the two places are identical. It is interesting to note that the *Saddharmalankaraya* gives the name "Mahavaligama" to the village which is named Uruvela in the *Mahavamsa*.[2] There is a single reference to Bhallatittha in the *Mahavamsa*. It is stated to be the port from which Abhayanaga, the brother of Voharika Tissa took ship to India.[3]

Trincomalee was another port of the *Mahavamsa* period. The chronicle states that Panduvasdeva landed at the mouth of the Mahakandara river.[4] The commentary on the *Mahavamsa* gives Gokanna as the name of the spot where he landed.[5] Although Geiger suggests that the Mahakandara river was a stream to the north of Mahatittha, it is clear from the account of the commentary that the Mahakandara river was none other than the Mahaveliganga. Later on in the same chapter the *Mahavamsa* states that Baddhakaccayana landed at Gonagamaka.[6] Neither Geiger nor Malalasekera in his *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* has identified this place. There is no doubt that the Gokanna of the earlier passage and Gonagamaka refer to the same place. Gona and Gokanna in Sinhalese and Pali respectively mean "deer". Thus it is clear that the commentary has given the Pali and Sinhalese forms of the same name in two different places in the same chapter. The identification of Gonagamaka or Gokanna with the present Trincomalee is not difficult. The name Trincomalee consists of three different words. "Tiru" and "Malai" in Tamil mean "holy" and "hill" respectively, and "Kona" is none other than the Tamil rendering of the Sinhalese "gona". The *Vayu Purana* refers to this port.[7] Like Mahatittha on the western coast Trincomalee appears to have been a centre of Hinduism. King Mahasena built a Buddhist vihare here after first destroying a Hindu devale which existed on the spot.[8] Other references in the *Culavamsa* connects this place with magic.[9] An inscription of

1. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 7, v. 45.
2. *Saddharmalankaraya*, p. 420.
3. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 36, v. 43.
4. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 8, v. 12.
5. Ed. G. P. Malalasekera : *Vamsattapakasini*, P.T.S. Edition, Ch. 8, line 23.
6. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 8, v. 25.
7. Ed. H. Apte : *Vayu Purana*.
8. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 37, v. 41.
9. *Culavamsa*, Ch. 41, v. 80 ; Ch. 57, v. 5.

Jatavarmen Vira Pandya claims that this king planted the Pandya flag with the double fish emblem on Konamalai.[1]

Pallavavanka, identified with Palvakki by Codrington[2] was the port from which Parakrama Bahu launched his invasion of Burma in the 12th century.[3] Since the term " Vanka " can be applied to a bay in Sinhalese, Codrington's identification of this port with Palvakki which is situated in a bay appears to be correct. Although this is the only reference to Pallavavanka, there is no doubt that this was a port of some importance as it would not have been used as a base for an invasion if it did not already have the facilities for the launching of an invasion.

We have only a few references to the ports of Ruhuna in the Pali chronicles. The *Mahavamsa* was chiefly concerned with the history of Rajarata and had very little occasion to refer to the affairs of Ruhuna. Thus we get only a few references to the ports of this province. Ilanaga is said to have landed at Sakkarasobha.[4] It is doubtful whether it was a port at all. The *Mahavamsa* refers to it as an haven.

An inscription of about the first or second century found at Godavaya speaks of a port at the mouth of the Valave-ganga called Godapavata. According to this inscription the custom duties collected at this port were granted to the monastery at the place.[5] This port is not mentioned in the Pali chronicles or the Sinhalese works. The *Saddharmalankaraya* refers to a port by the name of Golugama.[6] It appears to have served in the foreign trade and is described as a large town with streets. The information we get in the book is not sufficient to attempt an indentification of the port, except that it was in Ruhuna.

Galle was the great port of the south, and was the most important port of Ruhuna. References to this port in Sinhalese literature are very few. In fact all the references we get in Sinhalese literature to this place are found in the Sandesa poems. From this paucity of references to Galle in local literature one may be tempted to believe that this port did not play a very important part in the foreign trade of the Island. Fortunately however evidence from other sources come to our aid, and from these we know that Galle was an important port of call and rendezvous for Chinese and Arabian

1. *Annual Report on Epigraphy, Madras*, 1912, p. 39.
2. H. W. Codrington : *A Short History of Ceylon*, Revised Edition 1939, p. 62.
3. *Culavamsa*, Ch. 76, v. 47.
4. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 35, v. 28.
5. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Vol. II, p. 178.
6. *Saddharmalankaraya*, p. 755.

ships which crossed the Indian Ocean. Galle appears to have been a point of embarkation for China and the countries of the Far East. Masudi, the Muslim traveller of the 11th century has alluded to this. He states that there was no longer a direct connection between India and China in his time, but that the ships from either side of India came to Galle which was a halfway point from which Chinese ships sailed to Khanfu.[1] Galle became the port of embarkation for the Far East as there was a regular arrival and departure of Chinese ships which were carrying on an extensive trade with the East Coast of Africa.[2] In ancient times as there were no passenger ships, travellers accompanied merchant vessels to the port nearest to their destination. History has recorded the names and itineraries of a number of such travellers who passed through Ceylon on their way from India to China. To quote a few instances Prajna, a Buddhist teacher and a native of Kapisa and Vajrabodhi, both came to Ceylon to take ship to China.[3] Fa Hien too, took the same route.[4] Although Galle is not mentioned in connection with any of these it is reasonable to assume that either Galle or one of its neighbouring ports was the point at which traders changed ship. There is other evidence which proves that Galle was the resort of the Chinese ships. The name " China Town " which has survived to this day indicates a colony of Chinese settlers connected with the foreign trade. Moreover we have the Galle trilingual inscription written in Chinese Persian and Tamil.[5] This inscription indicates not only the Chinese influence here, but also shows that this port was a very cosmopolitan place.

Besides its position in relation to the sea-route, its fertile hinterland producing gems, cinnamon and elephants, which were in great demand at this period also contributed to its importance. Towards the end of the period Galle figures frequently in the Sandesa poems which describe the port as a centre of much commercial activity.[6] Galle continued to be an important port until the advent of large ships made the rock bound harbour no longer safe.

It was in the period of Arab ascendency in the Indian Ocean that Colombo begins to appear the important port it was destined to be. Even as early as the beginning of the 14th century it was an important city, for, states Ibn Batuta " Kalanbu which is one of

1. *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, Vol. I, p. 841.
2. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1909.
3. *Bulletin I'Ecole Francaise de Extreme Orient*, Vol. IV.
4. S. Beal : *Buddhist Records of the Western World.* Introduction, p. lxxix.
5. *Spolia Zeylanica*, Vol. VIII, Part 30, p. 122.
6. Ed. Leelasena : *Tisara Sandesa*, v. 52.
   Ed. Kumaranatunga : *Paravi Sandesa*, Colombo, 1933, v. 88.

the finest and largest towns of Ceylon."[1] It was the fact of its importance that prompted Alagakkonara to build the new capital Jayawardenapura commanding the roads converging on Colombo.[2] When the Portuguese arrived in Ceylon in the beginning of the 16th century they found Colombo to be the biggest and most prosperous port of the Island. According to Barbosa " the King of Ceilan resides in the city called Calmucho (Colombo in one version) which stands on the river with a great port whither sail every year ships from diverse lands to take cargoes of cinnamon and bringing gold and silver, very fine camboy cloth and goods of many other kinds such as saffron, coral, quick silver and cinnabar, yet is their greatest profit in gold and silver for they are worth here more than elsewhere. Likewise many ships come from Bengala, Coromandel and some from Malacca to buy elephants, cinnamon and jewels".[3]

About the middle of the 14th century, Colombo appears to have been the centre of a considerable piracy. Both Ibn Batuta and Wang Ta Yuan, writing contemporaneously refer to this, "Sailors who were so unlucky as to be wrecked or to put in at this place for a short sojourn are exploited solely for the benefit of the over lord. All the merchandise with which the ships are laden, mostly consisting of gold and jewels, is confiscated by the chief, who looks upon it as a gift from heaven. Little does he reck of the cold and hunger with which the sailors' wives and children are faced in consequence."[4] The name of the overlord is given as Jalasty by Ibn Batuta. He is described by him as the ruler of the sea. As a result of this piracy foreign merchants wishing to trade with Ceylon were forced to avoid Colombo and buy their goods from South Indian ports to which Ceylon's foreign trade was diverted.

The *Nikaya Sangrahawa* mentions a war between the Moors and Alagakkonar. Perhaps this indicates action taken by Alagakkonnar to stem the rising power of the Arabs who had taken advantage of the weakness of the Sinhalese kings to control not only the ports, but also the adjacent territory. Colombo was so much coveted by the Moor and Tamils that the Sinhalese kings were obliged to station troops in its vicinity.[5] The chief factor that led to the rise of Colombo as the most important port of the Island was its fertile hinterland from which the articles of commerce could be brought to the port down the Kelani river. The *Hamsa Sandesa*

1. H. A. R. Gibb : *Ibn Batuta, Travels in Asia and Africa*, p. 260.
2. Ed. W. F. Gunawardena : *Nikaya Sangrahawa*, Colombo, 1908, p. 25.
3. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Hakluyt Series. Vol. 44, pp. 109–120.
4. Wang Ta Yuan : Notices of Ceylon in Tao I Chih Lueh. Translated in *Journal of the Ceylon Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 32.
5. Ed. Kumaranatunga : *Gira Sandesa*, v. 71.

a 15th century poetical work describes the merchants who travelled to and from Colombo in their barges laden with merchandise.[1] The proximity of this port to Kotte the capital of Ceylon in the 15th century must have also contributed to its rise.

With the development of the south-western parts of the Island and the transition of the Island's economy from one of subsistence to trade, ports like Beruvala, Bentota, Wattala and Chilaw became of some importance in Ceylon's trade with India. The revenue that could be got from these ports roused the cupidity of Aryachakravarty, the ruler of Jaffna. From the *Nikaya Sangrahawa* we know that he had encampments at Colombo, Wattala, Negombo and Chilaw.[2]

Weligama however was an older port and together with Colombo, Mahatittha and Galle was one of the major ports of the Island. Weligama is first mentioned in the *Culavamsa* in the reign of King Parakrama Bahu I, as a port where rich merchants lived.[3] It was at this port that the Burmese ambassador Ramadutin was brought ashore by the storms when he was on his way to Ceylon from Burma in the latter half of the 15th century.[4] from the various descriptions given in the Sandesa poems we may infer that this port was an important port in the Kotte period and that its exports were gems and elephants. Besides Weligama, Francisco Rodrigues writing in the beginning of the 16th century has mentioned Galle, Negombo, Chilaw, Dondra and Colombo as being the chief ports of the Kotte kingdom.[5] The port of Beruvala is identified by Colonel Yule with the Pervilis of Marignolli. This port too was under the control of an Arab pirate during the 15th century.[6] The map attached to the Wu-pei-pi-shu a 15th century Chinese treatise on navigation has Negombo, Dondra and Colombo marked on it.[7] Dondra is first mentioned in an inscription where it is described as a sea port, and one of the important places visited by King Nissanka Malla.[8]

We have very little information on the internal organization of these ports. An inscription at the Vishnu Devale at Dondra belonging to King Parakrama Bahu II gives interesting information

1. Ed. Weerasooriya : *Hamsa Sandesa*, Colombo, 1936, v. 79.
2. *Nikaya Sangrahawa*, p. 25.
3. *Culavamsa*, Ch. 75, v. 45.
4. *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. III, p. 229.
5. *The Book of Francisco Rodriguez*, p. 84.
6. Yule : *Cathay and Way Thither*, Vol. II, p. 357.
7. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, North China Branch*, Vol. XX, p. 222.
8. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, p. 141.

on the administration of the port.[1] An inscription found at Godavaya datable to the 1st or 2nd century refers to the grant of the taxes collected there to the vihare at the place.[2] An inscription from Mahatittha refers to royal offices in charge of the collection of taxes at this port.[3] The Nandiya Vastu of the *Saddharmalankaraya* states that the king appointed a royal official for the collection of taxes at Mahatittha.[4] Besides the collection of taxes these officials may have been charged with the welfare of the foreign merchants arriving at this port. According to Cosmas when Sopatrus the Roman merchant arrived at this port he was received and conducted to the king by the custom house officials.[5] The more important ports were cosmopolitan places with communities of Arabs, Jews, Romans, Persians, Chinese and Indians. These foreigners were well treated by the king and were allowed to practice their religion without let or hindrance. Abu-Zaid refers to the religious tolerance of the king and to the settlements of Jews and Manicheans.[6] Sometimes there was thuggery at the port and the kings were not always able to keep these unlawful elements in check. Abu Zaid describes in detail the manner in which the rich merchants were kidnapped by Indian robbers in the market place.[7]

But these occasional glimpses are too fragmentary. It is hoped that when more sources are brought to light we will get a fuller view of the history and development of these ports which played an important part in the economic and cultural life of the country.

Note : This article will be the first in a series of four articles on the foreign trade and commerce of Ancient Ceylon. The second instalment to appear in Vol. I. No. 3., will be on Ceylon's trade with India.—Ed.

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1. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report*, 1950, p. 14.
2. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Vol. II, p. 178.
3. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, p. 105.
4. *Saddharmalankaraya*, p. 706.
5. J. W. McCrindle : *Christian Topography of Cosmas*, p. 364–372.
6. Elliott : *History of India*, Vol. I, p. 10.
7. E. Renandot : *Ancient Accounts of India by Two Mahometan Travellers*, pp. 83–84.

SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE AND CONTENTS OF 4th-6th CENTURY A.D. INSCRIPTIONS OF CEYLON

By W. A. JAYAWARDANA

INSCRIPTIONS ARE, by far, the most reliable source in the study of the history of Ceylon. They are normally contemporary records dealing with contemporary events and are comparatively free of the embellishments that mar the historical value of literary works.

Not many inscriptions belonging to this period have been edited and translated in the volumes of the *Epiraphia Zeylanica*.[1] A good many have been referred to in the epigraphical summaries of the *Ceylon Journal of Science* (Section G) Volumes I and II, while a few others have been published in journals like the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*. Muller's *Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon* also contain several inscriptions of the period, but both their texts and translations are regarded as corrupt as the work was done long ago when Ceylon epigraphy was yet in its infancy.[2] Besides the inscriptions mentioned in these works, many more remain yet unpublished.

Following general observations may be made as to the nature and contents of the inscriptions appearing in the publications referred to above :—

(i) Inscriptions of this period are comparatively rare particularly those of the 5th, 6th centuries.

(ii) All extant inscriptions are lithic records engraved on rocks, pillars or stone-slabs.

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1. iii. No. 7, pp. 120–126 Ruanvälisāya Pillar Inscription of the Reign of Buddhadasa.
No. 77, pp. 172–188, Tonigala Rock Inscriptions.
No. 21, pp. 216–219, Kataragama Inscriptions : Slab Inscriptions of Mahadäli Mahanā.
No. 26, pp. 247–253, Two Rock Inscriptions from Labuatabandigala.
iv. No. 13, pp. 111–115, Anuradhapura Slab Inscriptions of Khuddaparinda.
No. 14, pp. 115–128, Nagarikanda Rock Inscriptions of Kumaradasa.
No. 15, pp. 128–136, Four Rock Inscriptions from Vessagiriya at Anuradhapura.
No. 16, pp. 136–141, Inscriptions on the Steps near "Borrow's Pavilion", at Anuradhapura.
No. 37, pp. 285–296, Nilagama Rock Inscriptions of Dala Mugalan.

2. Published in 1883—London.

(iii) Characters are shallowly incised and consequently most of the inscriptions are badly weathered and worn.

(iv) The script generally represents a transitional stage between the Brahmi and the Medieval Sinhalese, and hence one of the chief interests of the inscriptions is palæographical.

(v) Contents of the inscriptions are mainly religious, the majority of them being short donative records. The common topic in inscriptions of 4th, 5th centuries, is grants made for the conducting of the "Ariyavasa" ceremony'[1] and those of the 6th, 7th centuries manumission from "Slavery."[2] As such their main value, like the literary works, is for the reconstruction of the religious history of the time.

(vi) Except supplying the names and occasionally the parentage of some kings who figure as donors or whose names have been introduced for the purpose of dating, the inscriptions are of little value for the study of the political history.

(vii) A few of the inscriptions, particularly the two rock inscriptions from Tonigala and Labuatabandigala shed some light on the economic and social conditions of the time.

(viii) Besides supplying the information to supplement the evidence from the other sources, the inscriptions have been of value to test the accuracy of the chronicles.

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1. For discussion on Ariyavasa ceremony see *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. I, pp. 59–68.
2. For discussion on Slavery see *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV. pp. 134–135.

RECENT INDIAN ARCHÆOLOGY

By T. VIMALANANDA

IT BECAME obvious that after the retirement of Sir John Marshall, the achievement of the Archæological Department of India reached its lowest level. So, in the year 1938 the Government of India appointed a one-man-commission in Sir Leonard Woolley, M.A., PH.D., D.LITT., LL.D., and he was required to advise on the following points :—

(1) " The most promising sites or areas for exploration."

(2) " The best methods and agencies for achieving the speedy and fruitful development of exploration activities in general ; consideration, in this regard, being not only to Government but to non-official agencies such as universities, learned societies, etc."

(3) " The best method of training or selecting officers for exploration work, including such points as are the most suitable for recruitment."

(4) " Any general points on the field of exploration and excavation not covered by items 1–3."

True, that the Department has been starved financially, but it was not so much the lack of money that was the principal cause or reason for the set-back in the progress of Archæology in India, but Sir Leonard found : " The Department is altogether lacking in men trained for the work which they have to do." This being so mere increase of grant, unaccompanied by other changes, would have done more harm than good. And there was none in the Department, who was competent to give training and tuition on the modern methods and principles of archæology. The selection of sites for excavation was found useless without a staff properly trained for the work. Men in the Department should have comprised of men possessing historical knowledge, architectural appreciation and good taste.

After Sir John Marshall's retirement, there was no outstanding figure in the field of Indian Archæology, who could draw up a coherent plan for anything, specially in the direction of the careful selection of sites for excavation. In a country so vast and extensive and containing so many ancient sites, careful planning on a fairly large scale was essential for the resuscitation of her past history. Now it has been reduced to such a state that to excavate a site just

because it "looks good" or because it might produce useful information, can be compared to carrying out a surgical operation on a patient at random in the hope of finding somewhere, the cause of an undiagnosed disease.

The problems of Indian Archæological history in the year 1938 were :—

(*a*) Mahenjo Daro and Harappa had illustrated richly and magnificently one phase of a culture about which no one could agree whether it was or was not Indian ; whether it was an isolated phenomenon of isolated parentage and progeny. Between the Indus Culture and the historic period of Indian history, there was a gap of some two thousand years of blank ignorance.

(*b*) In South India there were two, if not three, phases of pre-historic culture of which, not even the sequence of time relation had been ascertained.

Then again it is too much to expect that one site could produce all that is required in solving the problems of Indian Archæology. Hence the careful planning became all the more essential. The criterion with regard to the choice of sites for exploration should be based on areas inhabited by people for a long period with wide distribution of inscriptions and coins and other objects.

Sir Leonard Woolley, while recommending the immediate and drastic reforms for the betterment of the Department, said : "An increase of staff is obviously essential, if efficiency is to be secured, but the prospects of training recruits are *nil*, firstly because the present organisation of duties within the Department makes impossible demands upon officers and secondly because there is in the Department, no one capable of giving training . . . they are not themselves adequate to the task and naturally they are unable to train up their successors to higher standards than their own—indeed, as regards the students and junior members, it is a case of *the blind leading the blind*, and the quality of the Department is likely to deteriorate progressively. Outside help is necessary if any good is to come of the Department's work. I am not suggesting that direction of the Archæological Survey of India should be taken out of Indian hands and entrusted to a foreigner ; but expert help is needed and since it is not forthcoming from India, it must be sought from abroad. What I recommend, therefore, is that a European adviser in Archæology be appointed for a strictly limited term of years and I think that five years would suffice."

"To encourage effectively the public interest in Archæology it is most important that the Archæological Survey should collaborate

more closely with the universities and colleges of India. It is not enough that a member of the Departmental staff should give an occasional lecture to a university audience . . . the initiative must come from the Survey not from the universities."

Following the recommendation of Sir Leonard Woolley, the Government of India succeeded in securing the services of Dr. R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, C.I.E., M.C., D.LITT., F.B.A., F.S.A., the eminent British Archæologist, of the University of London, Institute of Archæology. (Dr. Wheeler is now the Professor of the Archæology of the Roman Provinces in the University of London.) With his appointment, archæology in India received a new lease of life. He pointed out that it was not a subject to be fobbed off with an odd lecture here and there, with history on fine arts. He raised it to the status of a Faculty. In his presidential address at the Indian Science Congress at Bangalore, Dr. Wheeler briefly gave an account of the planning of Indian archæology as an organised science. He laid the corner stone for the founding of an Institute of Indian Archæology on the general principles of some of the American Institutes, with the co-ordination and development of existing facilities and brought archæological research in India to attain the high international position which the astonishing wealth of India's cultural heritage justified and demanded. Wheeler concluded his historic address with the remarks " Amongst the youth of India, there is, as I well know, the zest to learn and the ability to achieve. It is for us of an older generation to provide the essential opportunities and necessary opportunity. Let us not fail. Now, I submit, is the time to act."

Dr. Wheeler started the first School of Indian Archæology at Taxila, a centre of Indian culture and civilization. This site offered an ideal spot for varied interest, specially as here one could see the stratifications marking the different phases of Indian culture. Furthermore, Taxila was provided with an excellent museum and workshop. These were supplemented by a lecture room and a chemical laboratory. The students themselves, of the first School of Archæology (sixty-one in number) represented all parts of India and all creeds, and worked together with a harmony which was, in iteself, an instructive lesson for the unifying influence of the pursuit of knowledge. Most of them were research students from the Indian universities.

Dr. Wheeler, next turned his attention to Mahenjo Daro and Harappa. He recorded in thirty-seven sites within a radius of one thousand miles, the relics of Harappa and Mahenjo Daro, and one remarkable feature of these sites, was that sites were rather loose and unconnected towards the East and more and more compact towards the west. This evidently proves it was not an isolated

phenomenon in an isolated parentage and progeny. The intensive explorations conducted under Wheeler at Harappa have contributed in finding materials much to the rise, growth and decay of the Indus Valley civilization. It appears that Harappa and Mahenjo Daro, enjoyed a supreme status with regard to their power and remained unchallenged domestically. Through excavations at Harappa was brought to the limelight the prolonged story of her civilization —its period of adolescence, its period of prosperity and its period of decay. Incidentally this epoch-making discovery at Harappa corrected one great accepted view with regard to Indian History. The Dasas or Dasyus, whom the Rig Vedic Aryans referred to as a class of people hostile in speech, their disbelief in gods, their failure to sacrifice, etc. These people, according to Rig Vedic Aryans had large herds of cattle, and whenever they were attacked took refuge in fortifications. The Rig Vedic Aryans, by repeated assaults, destroyed some of these fortifications. Rig Vedic Aryans used the epithet "Anasah", thereby meaning the "noseless ones". Indologists come to the conclusion that these people were Dravidians and were driven to the South by the Aryans. But the geographical researches made in recent times by Piggott, changed the situation wholly and brought down the age of the Indus Valley civilization, from the 3rd millenium B.C. to circa 350 B.C. He discussed quite a number of Harappa seals in association with Sargonid dates at Ur. (Sargon of Agoda, new dated circa 2350). Its significance is limited to the indication—an important one, so far as it goes—that in the period of Sargon the Harappans were in livelier contact with the west than at any other time. The careful digging at Harappa Citadel, brought to light undoubted continuance of the mature Harappa culture in terms of building constructions may well be even greater than can at present be calculated. The various indications suggest 2500–1500 B.C. as a possible inclusive date for the mature Harappa civilization. This date brings us to the invasions of the Rig Vedic Aryans in India and a formidable civilization arose on the ruins of Harappan culture. Wheeler, with a warning, accepted this as a working formula" . . . . And in the light of the new evidence associate the fall of Harappa with the proto-historic advent of the Aryans, then the Harappan civilization at last becomes an integral episode in the story of the Indian peoples. But in the present state of knowledge no undue stress is laid upon that possibility".

Second problem—South India, prior to the opening of this problem—Dr. Wheeler made a systematic and preliminary survey of her ancient sites. Arikamadu, Chandravali, Brahmagiri and Chitaldrug, were the fields of excavations in peninsular India. All these sites yielded materials of historical importance, pertaining to her trade with the Roman Empire, fixing chronological points to her megalithic tombs.

The creation of the Central Advisory Board of Archæology is another landmark towards the progress of Indian Archæology. This body constituted the distinguished scholars from Indian Universities (Prof. Sir C. V. Raman, Prof. D. M. Sen, Prof. S. N. Sen, Prof. R. C. Majumdar, Prof. Nilakanta Sastri, Prof. A. C. Altekar, Prof. C. S. Srinivasachariya, etc.). This Central Advisory Board adopted the resolution with regard to the control and traffic in historic relics. That whilst welcoming the diffusion of Indian culture by the loans of suitable works of art to Embassies and Legations over-seas, the Central Advisory Board of Archæology urges the extreme undesirability of sending out of the country any object of primary historic or artistic value, and asks for the strictest possible control in the implementing of the proposal referred to."

Another very interesting and useful resolution passed by the Inter-University Board of India is as follows :—" That as far as possible, the Headquarters of the Archæological Department should be located near the universities, so as to enable the universities to make the best use of their archæological work." The immediate result of this resolution was the arrangement made by the Department as soon as possible to transfer the Epigraphical Branch from Ootakamund to Madras, and so as to bring out the publication of the Epigraphia India quickly with the co-operation of the University teachers.

Dr. Wheeler laid down his office as Director General of Indian Archæology with a warning, " the absolute necessity for completing the written report of one season's work before resuming the field work in the next. If needed, a whole season's digging must be postponed to enable this essential task to be accomplished. Unrecorded excavation is destruction, and prompt and full publication must be regarded by the excavator as a point of honour. Archæology is today no mere pedantic abstraction. It presents a true measure of a nation's self-understanding and, unless a nation understands itself, its assessment of all values must be suspect. India's achievement in the past is her passport to the future, and nowadays it behoves one to see that one's passport is in order. Your work is of national and, indeed, international importance in the fullest sense of the term, it will be watched with friendly, but critical eyes by foreign nations, no less than your own. With single-mindedness and hard work and I would stress the over-riding importance of unremitting hard work, you can win and maintain for your Department and for India an outstanding place in world-scholarship. Hard work, and nothing short of it, will bring you the success which your ability deserves."

A HISTORY OF THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT IN CEYLON

WITH THIS issue we begin the publication of a series of five articles on the history of the working class movement in Ceylon. Considering the pioneering nature of these studies, on a subject not hitherto studied as history, they could by no means claim to be either comprehensive or authoritative. They are more in the nature of an attempt to weave out a connected line of development out of a vast store of scattered and unclassified data.

In introducing the series our first article traces the growth of labour as conceived under a capitalist economy from its rude beginnings under the Portuguese, through the Dutch and British periods to the year 1935. The year 1935 we have taken as marking the end of a period since it sees the mass of the working class movement being given a new direction by the advent of revolutionary Marxism. The year also saw the passage of the Trade Unions Ordinance which was to make a trade union a legally constituted body for the first time.

The four following articles will be devoted to a study of firstly the political aspects and secondly the trade union organization of the labour movement, special emphasis being laid on the period after 1935, but going back into the earlier period where necessary or where the introductory article has not been clear or comprehensive enough. The fourth article will be a study of social and labour legislation in reference to the working class movement while the concluding essay will connect up our labour struggles to world events and international movements.

In dividing up our studies in this manner with its emphasis on the period after 1935 we agree that sufficient attention has not been paid to the labour movements of the 'twenties, particularly to the Ceylon Labour Union, the Ceylon Labour Party and the All-Ceylon Trade Union Congress all of which were founded and led by Mr. A. E. Goonesinghe. The study of these labour movements are doubly interesting to the student of history not only because it sees the first phases of a real labour organization in the country, but also because of the many questions raised by its failure as a mass movement. How did the labour organizations of Mr. Goonesinghe, the strongest workers' combinations of the 'twenties become

a nonentity in a few years ? Why did the urban proletariat reject the Labour Party and the Labour Union in favour of revolutionary Marxism ? What were the effects of the depression on its decline ? And why was it that no socialist party on the lines of the British Labour Party emerge out of it ? Inaccessibility of material however has not allowed us to go into a deeper study of this period than has been done in our introductory article. If as we hope sufficient data becomes available, we intend carrying a special article on this subject.

Of similar interest perhaps are the organizations among the immigrant Tamil labourers in the plantations. They formed as our first contributer points out, the only real proletariat in Ceylon in the modern sense for well over eighty years. The emergence of organization among them has been dealt with in our first essay, but here again inaccessibility of data has prevented us from a more detailed study. A special article devoted to a study of immigrant plantation labour and its organization will appear if more information could be collected.

Lastly, in a country where historical scholarship is as yet in its infancy the objective non-partisan student of labour conditions has perforce to be substituted by the active participant in the labour struggle, a man however who, we hope, can not only relate the past from personal knowledge but also bring into his study the cold emotionless objectivity of the Marxist dialectician. To deal however with that small element of unconscious bias which is bound to creep in largely as a result of incomplete data, we have decided from our next issue to set apart a section entitled "Notes and Queries" in which our readers can give additional data or new interpretations on this or on any other article that may appear in our Journal.

EDITOR.

A HISTORY OF THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT IN CEYLON

I—LABOUR AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

AN OUTLINE TO THE YEAR 1935

By N. S. G. KURUPPU

THIS ARTICLE can in no way pretend to be an authoritative and comprehensive account of the history of labour organization in this country up to 1935, but it will attempt to give some of the more important facts and features regarding a subject, of which I believe, no systematic study has as yet been made. Further, by organization of labour we shall take for the purpose of our study mainly labour as conceived under the modern economic system of capitalism as it developed in this country.

I

INTRODUCTION

Although labour and labour organization under a more advanced system of industrial capitalism with its concomitant of wage labour makes its appearance only in the British period of Ceylon history, it would not be quite out of place here to make a few observations on developments during the earlier periods of our history.

In the early period of our history especially before the South-Western part of Ceylon came to be developed, and trade was of no direct importance to the kings as a source of revenue, industrial organization in the broad sense of the term, was necessarily based on the household or family system. This was especially so in a country where society was based on the caste system, with its unalterable division of labour, and the blending of agriculture and handicrafts. Labour needed by the State for the purposes of building irrigation works, temples or palaces was, of course, obtained on the basis of the age-old *rajakariya* system. The chief items of the Island's trade in these early times being spices (especially cinnamon), gems, arecanuts, ivory and elephants, it is probable that in connection with the production of articles like gems, which demand skilled labour, some sort of guild system did develop in which masters employing a few men under them produced their ware for an outside market. But even such a system must necessarily have been inextricably woven with the caste system. This may be

applied especially to the skilled craftsmen, native and foreign, who were needed in ancient times for painting, sculpture and architecture.

With the coming of the Portuguese we come to a period when trade was of great importance to the native rulers as a source of revenue. Cinnamon, of all the spices, came to be most in demand and the labour for the peeling of cinnamon had come to be organised on the basis of the caste system and *rajakariya*. Queyroz[1] in his work quotes a memorial presented by the "Chingalas" to the General Diogo de Melo de Castro, in which the Chalias, the cinnamon peelers, while complaining of being treated as slaves also refer to their origins as a caste of weavers who came from Malabar, and who later were made to do cinnamon peeling by King Rajasingha of Sitawaka. So, it was not the British Government or the European planter who first drew upon South Indian labour for working a staple industry in Ceylon.

The Portuguese although pioneer explorers and colonisers were far from being a nation of merchants and traders. Their social system in Portugal at this time was essentially feudal and in fact the entire colonial administration of Portugal was so ordered as to enable members of the Portuguese aristocracy to make as much money as possible for themselves in the colonies as viceroys and governors. It is therefore to be expected that they would retain in its entirety the ancient feudalistic system prevailing in Ceylon, which they did, without any important changes.

Labour Conditions under the Company

It is however with the Dutch rule of the Maritime Provinces that significant changes in the sphere of industrial organization become evident. Essentially a commercial and trading nation, the Dutch made a significant contribution to the rise and development of capitalism in its first stages in Ceylon. Apart from the cinnamon industry which was their major concern, the Dutch introduced though not on a very large scale, industries connected with sugar, indigo and cotton, and in Jaffna dyeing and weaving began to be of importance.[2] Labour itself though organized largely on the

1. Fernao de Queyroz : *The Spiritual and Temporal Conquest of Ceylon.* trans. S. G. Perera. Bk 6. p. 1018-1020.

2. Besides the forms of exploitation of labour resorted to by the Dutch dealt with above, it is interesting to note a feature connected with *Gam-Bandima* or the mode of founding a village given by Codrington in his *Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon* . (Appendix p. 64). In the Vanni areas the work of repairing a breach in the bund of the tank near which the new village is to be founded ; was done by the Tamil *Kulankatti* people. "The villagers pay the expenses of these labourers but give no food. If however food should be supplied, the amount of cash paid is diminished."

age-old basis of caste and *rajakariya* came to include significant modifications although on a small scale.

To begin with the Dutch Company employed a large number of slaves and Governor Van Rhee in his memoirs of 1697 mentions[1] the number under the Company as 1,741. The cinnamon industry was worked according to the traditional system. As Joan Maetsuyker, Commander-in-Chief wrote in 1650, " for the peeling of cinnamon a certain class of people of this Island has been set apart called the Chalias, a despised people among the inhabitants, but to be made much of by us owing to the profits they bring the Honourable Company, and the fact that no cinnamon can be obtained except through them, wherefore they are provided with good holdings and maintenance."[2] In spite of all this it should be noted that there were at least two occasions on which the cinnamon peelers rose against the Dutch in connection with major rebellions against the Company's authority in the Maritime Provinces. Maetsuyker also mentions that in addition there were the Pannayas or grass cutters " who in former times for some crime committed by them were condemned by the kings to supply yearly together with the Chalias, a certain assessed amount of cinnamon," which says Maetsuyker " according to ancient obligation was 2 bhars a man, one free of charge and the other for payment at $1\frac{1}{2}$ reals the bhar."[3] (1 South Indian bahar was 500 lbs. Dutch). The strength of the labour force connected with the cinnamon industry in 1697 according to Governor Van Rhee[4] was 1,446. The cinnamon worker then while essentially a serf also partook slightly of the nature of a piece-work wage earner selling his labour power. As regards the coconut plantations which flourished in Dutch times, the nature of this industry was such that the labour needed involved little regimentation or organization unlike in the case of cinnamon.[5]

It is however in the minor industries, that significant modifications in the basis of the employment of labour is to be found. According to Van Rhee the dyers, weavers and dye-root diggers of Jaffnapatam appear to have worked for the Company more or less as piece-work wage earners very much on the lines of the putting out system of production, by which the worker depends

1. The Dutch Records of the Ceylon Government. *Memoir of Van Rhee.* trans. Sophia Anthonisz. p. 50. Govt. Printer, 1915.
2. The Dutch Records of the Ceylon Government. *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker.* trans. E. Reimers. p. 10. Govt. Printer, 1927.
3. *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker.* p. 11.
4. *Memoir of Van Rhee.* p. 42.
5. The cultivation of coconut lands evidently was carried on on the basis of grants made to individuals who were bound to give a part of the produce vide. H. W. Codrington: *Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon.* p. 38-41. Govt. Printer, 1938.

for his materials on the entrepreneur (in this case the Company) while owning the tools with which he worked.[1] Van Rhee also mentions carpenters and smiths who worked for the Company on a somewhat similar basis.[2] Governor Van Imhoff writing in 1740 refers to the handicraftsmen employed by the Company in it's Colombo workshops—" 180 or 190 men have been permanently employed in the arsenal, the smiths', the braziers' and the coopers' workshops, and in the ship-building and house-building yard."[3] These workers all drew fixed salaries on a contractual basis. We may, I think justifiably infer that these are some of the earliest examples of the factory system of production in Ceylon, although on a very small scale and in an embryonic form.

Thus not only did the Company's rule of the Maritime Provinces involve a marked commercialisation of the economy but also distinctively capitalist forms of the exploitation of labour. This, as we have seen, marked the beginnings of a system of contract as opposed to the older more ancient system based on status, in economic production. In fact the introduction of Roman-Dutch law was nothing if not a recognition of the fact that the traditional custom and usage, on which the ancient system was based, was no longer adequate to regulate all social relationships.

Hence we may say that with the Dutch period of our history distinctively capitalist features are manifesting themselves within the old caste-bound feudalistic system of society, so characteristic of early Ceylon, effecting changes both in the economic sphere of industrial organization and in the legal sphere of statutory legislation by the introduction of Roman-Dutch law.

II

LABOUR CONDITIONS UNDER THE BRITISH

However the growth of the factory system of production under a system of free enterprise accompanied by the growth of a large working-class is to be seen only in the period of British rule. This is connected with the rise of the plantations and the development of the system of transport and communications in the country.

We may, for our convenience, study the development of labour and labour organization up to 1935 in three main sections. The first phase up to 1832 may be regarded as the period during which labour came to be organized on the modern factory system as purely wage-labour though serving within the old framework of

1. *Memoir of Van Rhee.* p. 16-19
2. Ibid. p. 8.
3. Dutch Records of the Ceylon Government. *Memoir of Baron Van Imhoff* trans. Sophia Pietersz p. 73-76. Govt. Printer, 1911.

the *rajakariya* system. The second phase up to about 1918 or so we shall characterise as the period during which the working class rose under a fully-fledged system of capitalist production on the basis of wage labour, connected with the plantations on the one hand and the development of communications, mainly under Government, on the other. The third period from about 1918 to 1935 we take as a separate phase because it marks the emergence of trade union organization among the working classes coupled with the beginning of its political consciousness.

The First Phase : Rajakariya and Free Labour

During the first phase when cinnamon plantations yet provided the main source of revenue, and coffee was beginning to be planted, labour continued to be exacted on the old *rajakariya* basis by the Government on its plantations. On the other hand, what few private plantations then existed had to be worked on the basis of wage labour. But it is significant that as early as 1828 Barnes and Bird finding that local labour was not sufficient, recruited 180 labourers from South India, almost all of whom deserted within a year.[1] Still more significant was the fact that even in 1831, i.e., before the legal abolition of *rajakariya*, Barnes raised a labour force of 660 men on the basis of daily pay for work on the cinnamon plantations. Apart from the plantations however Government found it necessary during this period to organize a labour corps which came to be regimented on a military basis for both military and civil purposes.[2]

This was mainly because the economic pressure on the Sinhalese peasant was not so great as to drive him to wage labour.[3] Had he been reduced to the level of a landless pauper with only his labour power to sell in the market, Ceylon might have seen the growth of a real indigenous proletariat on the plantations and in the employ of Government even from the beginning of the 19th century. There was also the additional fact that the Sinhalese peasant bound by the traditions of caste felt that manual labour for hire would involve a loss of caste. Sir Thomas Maitland writing at the beginning of the century declared that " there was no inhabitant

1. G. C. Mendis : *Ceylon Under the British*. Ch. 3. Sec. 3.
2. Colvin R. de Silva: *Ceylon Under the British Occupation*. 2 Vols. Vol. 11. p. 408.
3. It is true that Ceylon had her own version of an enclosure movement, and that the effects of such ordinances as the Crown Lands (Encroachments) Ordinance of 1840 and the Waste Land Ordinance No. 1 of 1897 on the condition of the peasantry were disastrous. However what appears to have taken place was that the peasantry were deprived of the village chena and forest land and thus causing theirimpoverishment but not reducing them to the level of landless paupers. Vide *The Kandyan Peasantry Commission Report*. (*Sessional paper* 18 *of* 1951) *pp*. 71-72.

in this Island but would sit down and starve out the year under the shade of two or three coconut trees, the whole of his property and the whole of his subsistence rather than increase his income and his comfort by manual labour."

Thus it was that North first organized a corps of pioneers consisting of Indian coolies. In 1804, under the exigencies of the Kandyan war this body was transferred from civil to military control.[1] In 1818 Brownrigg had a corps of 5,000 Indians to solve the shortage of cooly labour in connection with the Kandyan rebellion.[2] With Barnes, road and bridge building mainly for military purposes came to be of paramount importance, and in 1821 this Governor organized the pioneer force on a semi-military basis.[3] It consisted of skilled and semi-skilled labour from South India. Together with the unskilled labour of the Sinhalese peasant exacted according to *rajakariya*, this corps was responsible for building the road from Colombo to Kandy, and the roads from Colombo to Galle and Trincomalee, including the Victoria, Kalutara and Katugastota bridges.[4] As regards the coconut plantations which according to the estimate of Bertolacci[5] of the Ceylon Civil Service (1798–1819) amounted to about 100,000 acres, the labour employed was not on the plantations basis of cinnamon or coffee. The people were usually paid for the work of planting with a share of the trees.

The Second Phase : The Growth of Plantation Labour

In the second phase from 1832 to 1918, we witness the phenomenal growth of the coffee plantation industry between the 1840's and 70's. It was estimated that there were 5,000 acres of coffee before 1837 with about 10,000 Indian labourers working on them.[6] In 1841 there were 35,596 acres of coffee and in 1848, 367 plantations with 60,000 acres. As regards the labour, Fergusson's *Common Place Book* of 1861 informs us that between 1843 and 1859 there arrived 903,557 immigrants of whom 810,293 were men, 64,317 women and the rest children, while during the same period 449,180 departed of whom 422,413 were men, 18,405 women and

1. *Ceylon Under the British Occupation.* Vol. II p. 405
2. Ibid. Vol. I. p. 179.
3. Jackson : *Report on Immigration* (*Sessional paper* 3 *of* 1938) p. 13.
4. *Ceylon Under the British Occupation* Vol. II. p. 406
5. A Bertolacci : *A View of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interest of Ceylon.* 1818.
6. For this and the subsequent information regarding recruitment and the *tundu* system, vide K. Natesa Aiyar : *The Indo-Ceylon Crisis,* a gestetnered publication of the Ganesh Press. Hatton 1941.

7,290 children.[1] According to the early census reports the estate population is recorded as follows :—

1871	.. ..	123,654
1881	.. ..	206,495
1891	.. ..	262,262
1901	.. ..	441,601
1911	.. ..	513,467

Of these we may safely say that at least 80% were Indian Tamils. Thus it was that the bulk of the working class of Ceylon came to consist of immigrant Tamil labour which was to create a crop of social and political problems in time to come.

It may be asked why with such a growth in the number of estate workers, no trade union organizations developed. The explanation is to be found in the caste-bound paternal tradition of the Indian and Sinhalese social systems, the cultural backwardness of the worker and the method of recruitment which exploited both the above mentioned factors.

Although in theory estate labour was supposed to be employed on the basis of a free contract between the employer and the labourer there was a rigid regimentation under the *kangany* system, and for all practical purposes, as we shall see, the estate labourer led the life of a semi-slave. Viewed in its historical perspective, this fact can be well understood when we realize that up to 1832 in this country, governments had exploited a feudalistic form of serfdom for commercial and industrial purposes. The Indian worker in his own country led a life of near starvation and was a villager who had been accustomed to age old traditions of a degrading serfdom. He was not used to a way of living in which individual rights and liberties mattered but lived as a member of a family group within a larger caste group.

In such a situation the *kangany* system was found to be the most convenient and profitable method of recruiting and organizing estate labour as far as the employer was concerned. As the report of the Clifford Commission on Immigrant Labour (1908) states, "this system provided the soundest basis for the recruitment and employment of labour and was of purely patriarchal character in its origin and principles. The *kangany* or labour headmen was in the beginning, and still is in a large number of the older and more solidly established estates, the senior member of a family group composed of his personal relatives, to whom may be added other families drawn from villages in South India, from the vicinity

1. Ibid.

of which he and his relatives also come." The labourer himself, as statistics show, was brought over not as an individual but in whole family groups.

Up to 1904, the method of recruitment was for individual employers to send a *kangany* with sufficient money to collect a labour force. What miseries the labourers and their families had to undergo may be realized when we remember that in those days they had to make lengthy marches to the Indian East coast from their villages, and at the ports had to suffer detention till they were shipped, while again in Ceylon they had to trek down to the plantations. Worse still was the conditions under which they worked. We shall not attempt to dwell on the wage rates which of course were designed to keep the labourer and his family on a bare subsistence level. Mention must be made however of the iniquitous *tundu* system (abolished only in 1921) which tied down the labourer to an estate and deprived him of mobility. By this system the miserably paid and exploited labourer who invariably incurred a large debt to the *kangany* and to his employer was unable to seek new employment unless he discharged his debt to his former employer. The manner in which the debt was incurred is in itself a telling comment on the whole system of semi-slavery which bound the labourer. Money spent while recruiting, i.e., any cash inducement paid to the immigrant to come over, the commission paid to the *kangany*, the cost of transport from India and other expenses incurred in that connection were all treated as advances paid to the labourer. This debt would be subsequently increased by further loans for festivals, marriages, etc., or by credit purchases at a shop, in which in most cases the *kangany* had a vested interest.

Moreover, under this system, all wages were paid not direct to the labourer but to the *kangany*, who paid the labourer. Ordinance 13 of 1889 authorized payment of half the wages into the hands of the person authorised by the labourer, who usually turned out to be the *kangany*, not making matters any better. It was not till Ordinance 27 of 1927 was passed that this system was altogether abolished and the whole wages was paid to the labourer direct.

In addition to this system of semi-slavery when we consider the cultural backwardness of the worker and the power of the employer to victimise any workers attempting to organize labour in unions to fight for their rights, and the absence of any legislation to safeguard trade unionism, we can understand clearly why this period sees no trade unionism of any sort arising amongst the estate workers.

Discontent, however, was always rife among the labouring population, and in the absence of any organised form of its expressing itself, was manifested in forms of direct action of a most drastic type—the bolting of labourers from the estates on which they were employed, or even open defiance of employers by individual workers. As there were periodical shortages in the supply of labour such desertions might sometimes have availed the labourer, but often it led to his demoralization and turning vagrant. We are told that in 1913 there were over 3,500 prosecutions of labourers by employers, which were mainly connected with offences like bolting, alleged neglect of work or insolence.[1] In a letter to the Rt. Hon. L. Harcourt dated 16th July, 1916, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam states that : " Cases have occurred where even women were repeatedly sent to gaol for refusing to go back to their employer on the estate, and where a labourer's remonstrance as to insufficient pay or erroneous pay has been punished as insolence, with imprisonment."[2]

What little was done for the labourer on the estates was partly due to the pressure of the Indian Government and partly due to the intervention of the Ceylon Government, which was itself recruiting labour for the P.W.D., and which had to act at least in the interests of the health and sanitation of the Ceylonese community as a whole. Another factor that helped were the developments in Britain. Thus in 1865 the Contract for Hire and Service Ordinance (a Parliamentary Committee had set in 1864 in connection with this subject in England), made it obligatory for a master to spend on a servant when he was sick, and in 1912 was passed the Medical Wants Ordinance which made it compulsory for medical attention to be provided in estates. But all this legislation in practice amounted to very little especially in the absence of any effective machinery of inspection by the Government, and it will suffice to quote Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in 1916. " It will be a surprise to learn that, in this the premier Crown Colony of the Empire, after over hundred years of British rule, there is a labour system which in some of its aspects is a little better than an organized slavery, though it lurks under the name of free labour."[3]

As regards labour connected with the other spheres of the economy this period witnesses the beginnings of the growth of a large labour force mainly under the Government in connection with the transport and communications that were fast developing in the latter half of the 19th century. Here too the Government

1. Vide *Administration Report of the Controller of Labour* 1931.
2. Quoted by K. Natesa Aiyar : *Indo-Ceylon Crisis.* p. 114.
3. Ibid. p. 115.

had to depend largely on Indian labour for some time and it was really not till the turn of the century that we see indigenous labour increasingly employed by Government.

The construction of railways began only in 1858 while the Colombo Harbour was completed only in 1882. In 1852 the pioneer force was transferred from military to civil control, while in 1867 it is said to have had a strength of 4,000.[1]

Finally, although by 1910 about 200,000 acres of rubber had been brought under cultivation both Indian and indigenous labour came to be employed, and in the case of indigenous labour it was a part time and subsidiary job.

Generally speaking then, this period saw the rise and growth of labour under a fully fledged capitalism, but it was capitalism connected with light industry. Thus while labour was regimented it could never be on the same scale as in the heavy industries where thousands of workers would be employed in one huge factory. The rate of employment of man per acre in a tea estate is a little less than a man per acre. This too perhaps was an additional factor in limiting the growth of trade union organization. Moreover in Ceylon it was against a tradition and background of political autocracy that capitalism and with it labour developed, while in a subject colony the concessions that can be given to the working classes will always in themselves be strictly limited for economic reasons. There was also the persistence of the old caste bound forms of serfdom inherited from the past. Hence it was that labour as an economic and social class makes its appearance in modern Ceylon heavily regimented with practically few or no individual rights and liberties, and with the burden of modern capitalist exploitation made heavier by the lumber of an outworn and ancient form of feudalistic serfdom.

During this period, we see then that labour which arose under a fully fledged capitalism in this country came to bear a number of distinctive and somewhat peculiar characteristics. This has to be mainly explained by the fact that in Ceylon, capitalism developed in a colony chiefly with a view to making her economy supplementary to that of Britain, involved also the breaking up of an age-old social system in which family and caste organization was of basic importance, and political autocracy the traditional form of government. Thus manual labour being generally despised most people in the country did not find a system of semi-slavery for labour so very intolerable, and that, also because it affected mainly an imported Tamil labour force. The Colonial Government of the country was also, in effect, more favourable to the employers

1. Jackson : *Report on Immigration.* p. 13.

and was itself recruiting and regimenting labour, though perhaps not with the same degree of harassment and exploitation as with the labourer in the plantations. Any question of legal safeguards for combinations of labourers in their interests did not even arise. Moreover the growth of the plantation industry which was essentially a light one, was mainly in a rural atmosphere involving no growth of big industrial cities and no great concentrations of workers in single concerns comparable with those of heavy industry. Thus it was that labour as a class makes it's appearance in modern Ceylon highly regimented and, for all practical purposes in semi-slavery with few or no individual rights and liberties, and all this with it's overwhelmingly foreign extraction.

The Third Phase : The Growth of Trade Unionism

The third phase of the history of the working class movement' from the end of the Great War up to 1935, is characterised by the emergence of trade union organization amongst the working class accompanied by significant class struggles and conflicts. Before we attempt to go into the details of this phase, however, it is necessary to consider certain factors largely political, and both external and internal, which influenced these new developments.

The Great War itself was responsible for depressing economic conditions throughout the world and Ceylon was no exception, the working class was undoubtedly affected by such adverse circumstances. The Russian Revolution of 1917 forcefully showed the ruling classes throughout the world the need for giving labour some consideration while the workers themselves were taught new political lessons. The influence of this great proletarian revolution was further accentuated, especially for the Asiatic masses by the struggles of the Chinese workers in the abortive Chinese Revolution of 1925–1927.

In India the growth of the Nationalist Movement for Swaraj under the great Mahatma Gandhi also stressed the need for giving the exploited classes in society some measure of relief. In England the rise of the Labour Party (there was the great General Strike of 1926) had as we shall see a direct influence on the rise of trade union organization in this country.

In Ceylon itself the rise of the indigenous middle classes led in the main by professional men, lawyers and doctors, came to acquire political consciousness and an organizational form when in 1919 the Ceylon National Congress was formed. But although in the earliest years of this period this body did give consideration to working class problems and it's leaders did inaugurate some organizations in the interests of the working class, it failed in the long run to give any effective leadership to a working class move-

ment in the country. The result was that the labour movement was necessarily diverted to independent channels under a more militant organization and leadership. Thus in 1919 was organized the Ceylon Workers Welfare League largely owing to the influence of men like Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam. It is noteworthy that in this year this association succeeded in getting the National Congress to adopt a resolution which demanded that—(*a*) labour laws should be amended by elimination of all provisions which do not fully recognise that labour is a form of social service, and that the labourer's welfare is of greater importance than the production of material wealth ; (*b*) criminal penalties imposed on labour for alleged labour offences should be removed ; (*c*) child labour should be abolished ; (*d*) minimum wages and (*e*) hours of work, should be fixed and regulated ; (*f*) the right of association be granted to workers ; (*g*) good working and living conditions be ensured to the workers ; and that (*g*) they be provided with rest and recreation ; and finally (*i*) that maternity benefits be granted.[1] Also formed during this time were the Ceylon Social Services League and of more importance the Ceylon Workers Federation with which also Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was connected and also Sir (then Mr.) D. B. Jayatilake. This organization was the parent of the present Railway Benefit Association. The name of the late Mr. Martinus C. Perera must also be mentioned in connection with the activities of this association as he appears to have been one of the most active of its members, leading even a few important strikes if we are to go on the recollections of some of his contemporaries yet living.

However it will be evident that this early phase of agitation and organization in the interests of labour did not result in the rise of real trade unions as such, but only in the attempts of middle class leaders who in a somewhat condescending attitude of social service felt that something should be done for the poor labourer by strictly constitutional and conciliatory methods. But even when labour as an independent force came to clamour for its rights it is significant that the leadership had to come from the educated middle class. Indeed in this country, or for that matter in all subject colonial countries, the cultural backwardness of the worker coupled with the fact that the administration was in the medium of a language (English) of which the working class had no knowledge, provided the basis on which labour discontent would be naturally led to assume organizational form under educated middle class leadership, revolutionary or otherwise.

The beginnings of a labour movement of any considerable proportions begins with the inauguration of the Ceylon Labour

1. Vide : *Report of the Asion Regional Conference* of the International Labour Organisation. Proceedings Jan. 1951. Speech by Mr. Peri Sunderam.

Union on 10th October, 1922. But it is noteworthy that in this phase the rise and growth of labour organization it was the City of Colombo in which most of the activity was centred. But even in Colombo a large proportion of the labour was Tamil, for Jackson in his Report on Immigration[1] states that as far down as 1936 a little over quarter of the labour attached to Government departments was Indian, while according to the statistics he obtained from 57 private companies a little less than half the labour force they employed was also Indian.

In the plantations where labour was regimented and in effect also segregated and far removed from urban centres, especially Colombo, trade union organization of any sort does not make its appearance till the last years of this period. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam however, was one of the earliest to champion the cause of the immigrant labourer although no trade unions as such were formed in the estates in his time. In his address to the Ceylon National Congress in November, 1919, Sir Ponnambalam declared : " The Immigrant Labourers Bill treats labour mainly as a commodity to be imported by Government and handed over to the employer. It retains in full force the barbarous provisions which subject men and women to imprisonment at hard labour and to fines for breaches of civil contract and other acts which are not offences under the ordinary law."

Partly as a result of the agitation of men like Sir Ponnambalam but more to satisfy the Indian Government, the monstrous *tundu* system was abolished in 1921. The Government of India after passing the Indian Emigration Act 7 of 1922 had an Indian Agent to look after the interests of Indian nationals in this country. In 1923 the Ceylon Government itself inaugurated the Department of the Controller of Immigrant Labour which after the Donoughmore Constitution came into force in 1931 gave place to the Department of the Controller of Labour. In 1927 the Minimum Wages Ordinance was passed regarding estate labour, on the basis of the calculations made by Mr. Rangunathan, the Indian Agent, regarding the requirements of Indian labour. But between 1931 and 1933 as a result of the depression the minimum wages were reduced progressively. Moreover the wages boards set up under the 1927 Minimum Wages Ordinance were a big farce from the point of view of the labourer, for his representatives on the boards were head *kanganys*, who were always prepared to arrange matters to the satisfaction of the employer.[2]

Thus although through the pressure of the Indian Government a little was done for estate labour, conditions yet remained

1. Jackson : *Report on Immigration* p. 16.
2. Vide : *The Indo-Ceylon Crisis.*

most unsatisfactory. Attempts began to be made by various Indian associations started in the country to make some representations on behalf of labour. During the Great War of 1914–1918 the Indian Association was started, and between 1925 and 1930 the Central Province, the Uva Province, the Northern Indian Association and the All-Ceylon Indian Youth League were started, but the activities of these essentially middle class associations which were mainly political in no way served the interests of plantation Indian labour effectively. Mention must also be made of the various *sangams* named after various Indian Congress leaders like Bose and Gandhi which at about the same time were set up amongst the labourers. These too however were more political in outlook than anything else and failed to provide any basis on which real workers trade union organizations could be built.

The first organizations, however which were set up mainly for the purpose of attending to grievances of Indian plantation workers were really those started by Mr. K. Natesa Aiyar, a Brahmin journalist who was a member of both the Legislative and State Councils. By about the late twenties or early thirties there was set up by him the All-Ceylon Indian Estate Labourers' Federation which was confined mainly to the Hatton District, and later the Ceylon Indian Workers' Federation. These organizations, however, were set up to be controlled and directed by one man but nonetheless were the first estate workers organizations to arise in this country. Mr. Natesa Aiyar himself worked in close association with the Ceylon Labour Union in Colombo but later broke away dissatisfied with Mr. Goonesinghe's policy towards Indian labourers, and even tried to set up a separate Indian Labour Union in the city. He followed mainly constitutional and conciliatory methods in organizing and fighting for labour and there were no instances of strikes on estates right through this period up to 1935, when there were well over 600,000 people constituting the estate labour population.

Far different was this period for the working class in Colombo, where rapid and far-reaching developments took place. Here the struggle for better wages and better working conditions took a very militant form. The Ceylon Labour Union inaugurated as we have seen in 1922 was in itself not a pure trade union but an organization which purported to combine both political and trade union activity in one body. Associated with it were men like Mr. Victor Corea, Mr. C. H. Z. Fernando and Mr. S. W. Dassenaike, but Mr. Goonesinghe soon came to be the most forceful and dominant figure of the Union and well may it be said that down to the thirties he was the labour boss in Colombo. The Ceylon Workers' Federation itself, which was opposed to the formation of the Ceylon Labour Union soon faded away, failing as it did to give a militant leadership to the working class.

On February 15th, 1923, there began a strike amongst the railway workers which soon spread to the harbour, the Wellawatte Mills, the engineering firms in Colombo[1] and even the scavenging workers, and assumed such vast proportions that involving well over 15,000 workers it is second only to the 1947 strike during the first half of the century. It ended by the close of March of the same year[2] and Mr. Goonesinghe and the Labour Union now occupied the foremost place in the labour movement. The Labour Union rapidly expanded by incorporating within it a number of branch unions in various districts like Negombo, Nawalapitiya and Badulla. In fact between 1923 and 1928 were formed a number of unions which may be regarded as the first trade unions in this Island. Among them were the Ceylon Chauffeurs' Union, the Ceylon Printers' Union and the Ceylon Naval Workers' Union. Although the 1923 strike brought no immediate gains to the workers, in 1925 they were as a result of various negotiations consequent to the strike given among other less important concessions an increase of 20% in their wages.

The years 1926 and 1927 saw also a number of strikes. On August 1st, 1926, the Wellawatte Mill workers struck work over the dismissal of two labourers. The strike appears to have lasted nearly two months. On February 29th, 1927, there began a two day strike of the Naval Yard workers over inadequate wages which was followed by a strike of the cargo loading and unloading workers in the harbour while on September 8th of the same year there was a lightning strike of the coal coolies of the harbour. All these struggles did bring the workers a certain measure of success especially being as they were the first organized efforts at combination and direct action on the part of the workers.

The year 1928 marks an important landmark in the history of the working class movement in Ceylon. On the one hand it marks not only the inauguration of the All-Ceylon Trade Union Congress but also in the political sphere of the Ceylon Labour Party.[3] The first appears to have taken place in August while the later event was in October.

As regards the formation of the All-Ceylon Trade Union Congress we can clearly discern an important part played in it by the British

1. The Engineering Firms involved were Walker & Co. Mutwal, Hutson & Co. and Brown & Co.

2. Most of the information regarding the Ceylon Labour Union and the Labour Party and the various strikes here mentioned, was obtained from a number of Press cuttings from 1922 downwards, appearing in *The Morning Leader, Independent, Times of Ceylon* and *The Daily News.*

3. At about this time was also formed the Independent Labour Party under the leadership of Mr. P. Givendrasinghe (who had broken away from Mr. Goonesingha's Labour Union) and Dr. R. Saravanamuttu who entered the First State Council as the sole representative of his Party in it.

Labour movement. In 1927, A. A. Purcell, a British Labour M.P. came on a deputation to India from the British Trade Union Congress to render assistance to workers in India to organize themselves into properly constituted trade unions. On his meeting Mr. Goonesinghe and the Ceylon Labour Union in Ceylon it was decided in January, 1928, by the C. L. U. to take steps to form a Trade Union Congress. In June of the same year Mr. Goonesinghe left for England to attend the Imperial Labour Conference and on his return in August, 1928, the All-Ceylon Trade Union Congress held its first sessions. By 1928, Mr. Goonesinghe claimed to represent about 40,000 workers, and besides the various branch unions of the Ceylon Labour Union and the unions mentioned above it is interesting to note that there were represented at the Congress, the Ceylon Domestic Servants' Union, a Buddhist Transport Workers Union and a Salpiti Korale Peasants and Workers Union. About 22 organizations in all were supposed to be represented in the Congress. No one of course would say that most of these organizations were on a systematic and well ordered basis but what was significant was that in a country where trade union organization had to contend with so many difficulties, this was the first occasion on which an important and large section of the working class formed one united workers organization through which it could work for its welfare.

The chief demands put forward on behalf of the workers were : (*a*) the right of combination and the legal recognition of trade unions ; (*b*) workmen's compensation and the employers liability for its payment ; (*c*) minimum wages ; (*d*) regulation of hours of work ; (*e*) arbitration courts ; (*f*) old age pensions ; (*g*) housing and rent restriction ; (*h*) maternity benefits. Here it must be added that most of the working class legislation so far passed by the government was with reference to the estate labourer and was largely due to the pressure of the Indian Government. Even such legislation however in effect did not mean very much to the estate labourer. The other sections of the working class not having even the benefit of such limited legislation in their interests had, perforce to win concessions for themselves by keen and bitter struggles.

On the political side the formation of the Labour Party was also of much significance during this period. From 1922 the newly formed Ceylon Labour Union which was itself uncompromisingly nationalist had worked together with the Ceylon National Congress. But with the coming of the Donoughmore Commission to Ceylon for investigation in 1927 it was decided at the fifth annual general meeting of the Ceylon Labour Union in September 1927 to demand adult franchise. Soon it was found that Congress nationalists, foremost among whom were D. B. Jayatilleke and D. S. Senanayake, were opposed to the granting of universal franchise.

The newly formed Labour Party with Mr. Goonesinghe at its head were the only people in Ceylon at that time to demand universal franchise, and it is now somewhat amusing to note that Mr. Goonesinghe then "exposed" Mr. Senanayake among others as a betrayer of the nation who opposed the grant of universal franchise to the masses in this country. So by October, 1929, the Labour Party and the Union severed their connections with the Ceylon National Congress.[1] Today of course we can only say: "How times do change and how we change with them."

With the economic depression deepening, the years 1928 and 1929 witnessed a number of strikes which we may say mark the closing stages of Mr. Goonesinghe's career as a militant labour leader. There was now, however, a growing tendency on the part of the erstwhile seemingly uncompromising hard-headed fighter for labour to resort to more conciliatory methods of bargaining with employers. In April, 1928, came the strike of the motor workers in the Armstrong Garages, and in July workers of the Colombo Commercial Company struck work. In December, 1928, there were strikes of the workers in the Grand Oriental Hotel, the Queen's Hotel, and by the printing workers of the Colombo Apothecaries. Within the first three months of 1929 there were strikes at the Galle Face Hotel, Walker & Greig's saw mills and in the printing departments of the Times, Lake House and Cave & Co. Overshadowing them all however was the Tramway strike in February, 1929, when the Maradana Police Station was burnt down. It sounds somewhat ironical now to read that in those days Mr. Goonesinghe was accused of trying to import Bolshevism into the country.

By the thirties however a new and significant development had taken place in the labour movement. In 1932 was inaugurated the Wellawatte Mill Workers Union of which Dr. Colvin R. de Silva was President and Mr. Vernon Gunasekera the Secretary. In 1933 about 1,400 workers in the mills staged a marathon strike from February to July. This may be said to mark the beginnings of Marxist influences in the working class movement, foreshadowing the phenomenal growth of the Sama Samaj movement after 1935 in this country. Significant also is this strike, in that Mr. Goonesinghe played the role of a supplier of scabs to help the management break the strike.

In 1935 was passed the Trade Unions Ordinance which made compulsory the registration of trade unions and legalised the position of trade unions, while also in the same year there came into force the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance of 1934.

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1. The Labour Party fought independently of the Congress at the First State Council Elections of 1931 and won two Colombo seats to which were returned Mr. Goonesinghe and Mr. S. W. Dassenaike.

Thus arose trade union organization amongst the working classes, together with some degree of political consciousness. The gathering economic depression after the wars in the twenties helped to accentuate the worsening conditions of the working class and make them take the road of militant struggle. For reasons, stated before the more radical elements of the educated middle class came to provide the labour movement in the country with its leaders. But trade union organization always proved to be somewhat unstable especially on the financial side for a number of reasons, although in this period once the labour movement got a start, setting up unions of a loosely knit type proved to be comparatively easy. For one thing since trade unions were not on a legal footing trade union funds could be easily misappropriated. Secondly the workers themselves were not in a position to contribute much towards a trade union fund while their cultural backwardness retarded the growth of an efficient trade union organization. In addition must be noted a feature peculiar to the indigenous Sinhalese labourer in the City of Colombo. A large number of Sinhalese workers although daily paid wage labourers had connections with the village from where they originally came, and often had a share however small in landed property. The old family system in many cases still holds good for a large number of workers and there was therefore a tendency for the worker to fall back for his security in case of unemployment and hardship on the family group. The trade union therefore would be regarded more as an *ad hoc* body for purposes of fighting for better conditions on specific occasions and less as a permanent well-organized society to which the worker could always look for the betterment of his conditions and his welfare. In this respect, even many an Indian worker could in the last resort go back to his village in South India. It is indeed with all these peculiarities and limitations that trade unionism arose in this country amongst the working class.

BOOK REVIEWS

British and Soviet Colonial Systems—By Kathleen M. Stahl. (Faber & Faber,—12*s.* 6*d.*)

Perhaps the most noteworthy phenomenon of contemporary history is the existence of two fundamentally divergent systems of economic and political thought, deeply affecting every sphere of human activity and consequently splitting the world into two opposing camps. Much has been done by eminent political thinkers to clarify the issues between these two conflicting ideologies. The above work makes a further contribution in this direction and sheds light on a hitherto almost unexpected aspect of the problem, namely, the effect of these two philosophies on imperial and colonial policy. Most works on the subject of colonial policy have been in the direction of explaining or commenting on the colonial policies of one or the other of the great empires of our time. This work takes the study a step further. It attempts to make a comparative study of British and Russian Imperialism and through this to draw certain principles which would serve to illustrate the fundamental difference of approach between the Western democratic and the Communist political philosophies to this problem. Thence it is as much a study in political theory as in history.

The book is divided into two major parts—the first seeks to deal with the British Colonial system and the second with the Russian. Each of these parts is further sub-divided into a number of sections dealing with different topics. It is so divided that each of the sections in the first part has a section corresponding to it in the second. That is to say that the section dealing with the British Commonwealth of Nations in the first part corresponds to that dealing with the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics in the second part, and so on.

In the first part of the book—that dealing with the British system—the Author sets out what she thinks to be the essential features of the development of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the British dependencies. Here the reader finds himself on familiar ground due to the fortunate fact that there has been, in recent times, a wealth of literature on this subject. Most of the points made are found to be new restatements of what has been already written on this subject. Dealing with the British Commonwealth of Nations she traces briefly the progress of the Colonies to Dominion Status and the stages by which the Dominions shed every vestige of dependence on the mother country. Next

the Author goes on to deal with the British dependencies which she splits into a number of heads such as the Colonial Constitution, Parliamentary Contact on Colonies, Colonial Legal System, etc. What she stresses throughout the discussion is that the British Imperial Government was following a policy of fostering the growth of self-government in these dependencies and helping them to advance step by step along the road to Dominion Status and full independence. It should be mentioned, here, however, that sufficient emphasis is not paid to the problem confronting most of the British Colonies of how best to effect the transition from representative Government to responsible Government—a problem that confronted us in Ceylon and India. Neither is the problem discussed nor a solution offered. The economic policy of the Imperial Government is also discussed and the Author describes how British policy in this sphere moved away from a strict adherence to *laissez-faire* and private enterprise and now recognises active state intervention to ensure a minimum standard of living for the colonial population.

Throughout this part of the book the main point that the Author is labouring to bring out is that British Imperial policy is empirical and does not follow a clear-cut pattern of theory. But in the background is discernible a clear trend in British policy moving towards making the Colonies more and more fit for self-government coupled with a gradual removal of restriction on the activities of the Colonial Governments. In other words, British policy in the Colonies is one of transplanting her institutions in Colonial soil, indeliberate and unconscious though it is. A point of interest to Ceylonese readers is the inclusion, at the end of this part of the work, of an appendix dealing with the constitutional development of Ceylon as a test case illustrating the evolution of British policy in the dependencies. The interest lies not so much in the discussion, which is very brief and common place, but in the fact of the choice of Ceylon by the Author to illustrate her point.

The second part of the work, is devoted to a discussion of the Soviet colonial system. While discussing the Soviet system the Author also attempts to bring out glaring points of contrast between Soviet and British Imperial policy wherever possible. Thus at the outset she contrasts the British Commonwealth of Nations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The main points may be briefly noted. While in the British Commonwealth there is no attempt to set down a clear constitutional pattern along which the members may advance, the constitution and the lines of progress of the Republics of the U.S.S.R. are definitely written down in precise terms. While the trend in the British Commonwealth of Nations is in the direction of its members becoming more and more independent of the centre, that in the U.S.S.R is for the constituent

republics to be more and more dependent on and under the control of thecentre. These differences, as the Author points out, spring from a fundamental difference in emphasis in the matter of Imperial policy. It could best be put in the Author's own words : " Britain has aimed at liberty, which goes naturally with her fostering of self-government and diversity in her territories. Russia has aimed at equality, fundamentally material equality, which goes naturally with unity and confraternity." (p. 67).

The second section of this half of the work deals with the Central Russian Republics of the U.S.S.R. which are contrasted with the British dependencies in S. Africa and Asia. There at the outset the Author admits the difficulty of making a proper study of Soviet policy in her Asian Republics due to the inaccessibility to reliable information on this topic. Within these limits, she seeks to do the best that could be done. What Communist policy seeks to achieve in these Republics is to make them realise their part as members of a nation and fulfill their role in the interests of the whole nation. It can be seen that this is an axiom of the Communist organic theory of the state. Hence the fundamental aim has been to rapidly develop the economic resources of these distant areas and thus raise the standard of living of the people. Unfortunately the Author cannot provide us with any idea of how far these pious intentions have been realised due to the fact that statistical or other information regarding these areas is not easily acquired.

Next the Author goes on to discuss the problem of group and race consciousness among these people and how it is tackled by the Soviet authorities. Here she includes an interesting discussion of Stalin's work on " Marxism and the National and Colonial Question," which sums up the Communist attitude on the above subject. The essence of Communist policy is that nationalism is essentially a bourgeois movement and is a characteristic of the era of rising capitalism. In the new epoch—the epoch of socialism—the claims of an economic class to allegiance cuts through and surpasses all barriers of race or nation and demand greater recognition than any nationalist feeling. The results of this on Soviet policy in Central Asia are immense and is complicated by the fact that these people belong to an Islamic civilisation and their group consciousness is particularly high. The Soviet authorities have given definite instructions to the Communist parties in these areas to discourage any such feeling, and all propaganda, all education is directed towards this end. The purges in the Central Asian Communist Parties in 1923 and in the 1930s, on grounds of nationalist deviation quoted with chapter and verse by the Author, are illustrations of this point. And this attitude contrasts glaringly with British treatment of the same problem.

A number of other subjects such as the nature of Imperial control, Colonial Legal System, Constitution of the Republics are contrasted with the British approach. In all these matters there is one underlying idea the Author wishes to drive home—that the constitution of Soviet dependencies and the nature of its relations with the Centre are definitely and clearly written down and there is no idea of an evolution to a more advanced stage of constitutional relationship between them and the Centre as is envisaged in the case of the British dependencies.

Finally, in the concluding section, the Author gives a short summary of her conclusions. She points out that both Imperial powers have, deliberately or unintentionally exported their own guiding political principles in their Colonies. This accounts for the difference in their imperial policies. Due to her emphasis on political liberty, rule of law and responsible government "Britain's greatest contribution to colonial rule is political, the export and adaptation of her highly perfected democratic art in the government of men by themselves". On the other hand, the Communist philosophy emphasises economic equality at the cost of everything else and as such "Soviet Russia's greatest contribution to colonial rule is not political but economic ; she has given a new time scheme to the process of raising the material economic life of colonial people".

It appears from the above brief survey of the main points in the book that it is noted not so much for its brilliance or penetrating analysis, as for its clear and simple exposition of the basic differences between British and Soviet Colonial systems. The discussion has been done in a spirit of detachment and objectivity. No attempt is made to criticise or make an appraisal of either system. All the more credit to the Author for having taken this stand at a time when every conceivable topic has been subjected to the vigours of partisan controversy.

S. ARASARATNAM

The Coming Defeat of Communism—By James Burnham. (The John Day Company, New York. $3.50.)

Since his almost Pauline transformation, Mr. James Burnham has from time to time shared the fulness of his political experience with the reading public. His latest work "The Coming Defeat of Communism" seems to be the logical culminations of a process which had it's origins in his early disillusionment, which though he was so close an associate of Trotsky's remains a singular manifestation of a remarkable degree of intellectual integrity. In his latest book Mr. Burnham does not attempt to pick holes in the

Marxist philosophy, and of the fundamental weaknesses of dialectical materialism he seems to be only too well aware. Rather Mr. Burnham has made a concession to political necessity making his book in the best Machiavellian tradition a veritable guide to action—a political text book for Democratic nations in a Communistic and Atomic age. To the Marxists of course, Mr. Burnham is a dilettante—a parlour Bolshevik—or any of the many epithets which is so vital a part of the stock in trade of Marxian politics, and where Mr. Burnham indulges in any criticism of an academic nature it is noteworthy that he singles out this peculiar Marxist technique as his object. An examination of his correspondence with Trotsky immediately after his resignation from the party recalls that Burnham's disillusionment came when he was able to see through the verbal camouflage under which the deficient philosophy lay obscured.

Communism however presents another aspect of the same problem. Mr. Burnham in the " Coming Defeat of Communism " writes that : " All human beings exhibit a powerful tendency to verbalize their actions. They seek to discover an ideological structure—philosophical, moral, scientific or religious—which can be put into words and which will serve to 'explain' and to justify what they do." This tendency is especially strong in the Russian whom he alleges " develops a hypertrophy of this verbalizing function " to effect what in Communist terminology is called " the union of theory and practice". Marxism alone apparently can provide such a union. Thus the old " dictatorship of the proletariat, executed by the Communist party is, no matter how terroristic the most democratic form of government that has existed because it is exercised by the majority against the reactionary minorities. . . . ." But Mr. Burnham proceeds to examine the failure of this particular theory, and reveals in the process, all that is worst in the Communist regime, all that is therefore irreconcilable and so indicates in unmistakable fashion one of the many vulnerable weak-spots in the Communist Empire.

What then is this theoretic—moral crisis that has arisen from this partial breakdown of this union of theory and practice ? Whence is this vulnerability ? Russia prior to 1917 was an Empire. By their *coup d'etat* in 1917 the Communists obtained and consolidated state power in Russia, and Russia was looked upon as a single nation. But in the last year of the First World War the Russian Empire tended to fly apart, and the Communists reconquered the independent governments that had been set up, and subjected them to their own monolithic dictatorship. What then was to be the verbal counterpart for the real structure of the Communist State ? The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was the result—and this by the elaboration of a constitutional myth according to

which the actual monolithic State was a free federation, freely dissolvable, of autonomous units. Very deftly then Mr. Burnham here indicates the initial difficulty which the " National Question " introduced in both theory and practice. For not even the super-state nature of the Communist party and the presence of non-Russians in it, could prevent the " gigantic purges and liquidations in the Sub-Republics nor the policy of genocide which immediately preceded the last war. But whereas one can accept the historical concept of a Russian Empire in mitigation for the utter centralization which is perhaps the most degrading feature in the Soviet system, which fact Mr. Burnham makes no mistake in elucidating, the further complication arises when the Communists are confronted with a number of nations which are communistic but never a part of the Russian Empire. It is Mr. Burnham's irrefutable contention that Marxism-Lennism-Socialism, has not yet succeeded in providing an answer to this question and in this Tito gives him admirable support both verbally and as a living example. Communist theoreticians Mr. Burnham insists are thus impaled on the horns of a dilemma. Russia cannot have imperialist ambitions and yet remain Communist, and alternatively admitting these new nations to full equality would threaten the so very necessary monolithic unity of the Communist political structure. Mr. Burnham pursues his logical advantage—has Marxism-Leninism-Socialism provided a solution regarding the succession to Stalin ? But Mr. Burnham has won his point. He has proved without doubt that Marxism contains real theoretical weaknesses. The proving of them however is not Mr. Burnham's fundamental problem. He correctly dispenses with trifles. For if Communism rests on theoretical and philosophical validity alone, then Communism would have scarce lasted the day of it's conception. In his book " The Coming Defeat of Communism ", Mr. Burnham is pre-occupied with a more practical problem to which end the invalidity of dialectical materialism, as a philosophy and for historical analysis is only partly contributory.

Clarity of thought and expression are to be expected in such a person of Mr. Burnham's calibre. And in contrast to the vacillation of most contemporary statesmen, Mr. Burnham displays an outspokenness, the emulation of which where it is necessary, would render international diplomacy a service beyond repayment. Mr. Burnham is not averse to facts, or surely he would never have left the Marxist camp. He is aware that today history is at a critical juncture and that while the totalitarian governments have exploited the resultant crisis, the Democratic leaders have regarded them as abnormal exceptions in the flow of history. In the first part of his book Mr. Burnham reviews the world situation as it exists today, and makes no bones about the utter inadequacy of U.S. foreign policy. To him the Communists have held the

initiative ; they have played the pipes, and the Americans have danced to their tune ! But the dance has nought of the comparative sobriety that one associates with Russian folk music, were this so not even the most virulent critics of the Soviet Union, would have scarce forbade to cheer if only in æsthetic appreciation. Mr. Burnham naturally resents this, and consequently decries the traditional U.S. foreign policy of " containment " as being the cause thereof. One cannot help agreeing with Mr. Burnham when he points out the uselessness of traditional diplomacy for which there must be the prior qualification that there exists some basis of fundamental agreement. At a time when peace is the hope of every individual, even of those who have not been through the full gamut of wartime experience, this must seem a shocking thing to say. But though Mr. Burnham seems so blind to human desire, yet he is in reality only opening our eyes. Reconciliation if it is to serve any purpose must be effected if at all, on an ideological level, and this we know is impossible. One can suggest in purely abstract fashion that such a reconciliation could well take place in the use of democratic means to achieve the radical nature of the Communist ends. But for the purposes of his book that to Mr. Burnham is irrelevant. Is Mr. Burnham then suggesting, that with the suspension of the traditional diplomatic method there must be a recourse to war ?

Indeed Mr. Burnham opens the second part of his book, which he entitles " Analysis ", with the use of the Clausewitzian adage that " war is a continuation of politics by other means ". This is not intended to give the impression that Mr. Burnham accepts the principle that where diplomacy fails war follows—rather, by the rejection of traditional diplomatic methods, Mr. Burnham is merely trying to awaken the apathetic democratic consciousness to the startling fact that we are in an actual state of war already ! In fact we have actually misunderstood, the nature of the cold war and its implications. Mr. Burnham benefiting from his close scrutiny of Marxian politics writes of the military nature of Communism, the Communist tactic of engendering various resistance movements, the definite objective of world domination which is the basis of Communist action, and indicates that they are but symptomatic of the contemporary war which the Communists are actually waging, a war which to the Communist is perpetual.

There is hope however. The Communist regime is vulnerable at many points of which theoretical fallacies are not the only ones. By making full use of his experience in these matters, Mr. Burnham exposes the economic and cultural weakness in the system as well. But if Mr. Burnham is forthright and critical, he is also constructive as well. The third section of his book is devoted to a plan—and it is here that Mr. Burnham excels. It is true that most antagonists

of Marxism have a fundamental moral aversion to a system, which not only conceives of an order purely materially ordained, thus denying the concept of an absolute, so necessary, if only for philosophic expediency, the basis of which must presume through the individual conscience, the existence of such an absolute, but also, and thus consequentially, confuses means and ends to an extent that even Machiavelli would have shirked from. It is also to be expected that conscientious objectors to such a system, should to use an age-old maxim practise what they preach. But the question of practical politics, as it did to Marx, presents the inherent difficulty arising out of the problem of how much morality must be sacrificed to questions of expediency. It is not suggested that practical politics must be Machiavellian to be successful, but and Mr. Burnham reveals it to some extent, a reaction to such a system as Communism often calls for the use of Fascist methods which no doubt cannot be justified, in as much as Marxism is unjustifiable. There is again the contemporary problem of the Democracies with regard to the suppression or not, of revolutionary elements within its framework working for its overthrow. It is therefore ironic in a sense, where Mr. Burnham excels as he does when he plans for the defeat of Communism, and this by the use of methods which till Mr. Burnham's suggestions were the peculiar privilege of his Communist foes. But one cannot help but appreciate the blatancy with which Mr. Burnham makes his suggestions—the scope for resistance warfare, a propaganda attack, the control of the labour movement, the cultivation of political friends, and even the use of refugees and exiles in the cause of liberation. But there is an important consideration which is in Mr. Burnham's favour. While the Communist methods and lack of morality are the natural consequence of an uncompromising class hatred, the methods suggested by Mr. Burnham, though retaining a superficial resemblance to the former are not tainted with such an imperative demand for the taking of life. Moreover to accuse Mr. Burnham of inconsistency would be to misunderstand the limits which Mr. Burnham imposed on himself in the writing of his new book. To him the issue is a straightforward one. There is an enemy to the democratic world and that is Soviet Russia. There is only one way to preserve all that Mr. Burnham cherishes in the democratic system—and that not by appeasement but by playing the Communist at his own game.

Mr. Burnham ends his book, with a confidence that one can expect of him. To effect his plan, there must be organisation—to which end he is very critical of American business where relevant. But in the symphony of his rich political experience there is a recurring theme which he recapitulates once more—the inevitability of Communist defeat. But this inevitability to Mr. Burnham is ultimately an expression of the will. It is thus unfortunate that

Mr. Burnham should finish on what to all intents and purposes is such an anti-climactic note. One would have expected Mr. Burnham to administer his *coup d'grace* in more certain manner. But Mr. Burnham is too wary to fall into the Marxist slough. He realises that inevitability is never scientifically ascertainable, and by no amount of linguistic distortion is he going to make it so. This however detracts nothing from the full import of what Mr. Burnham has to say and what he says so well. His message is one of self-confidence and hope—and his hope, that " who says A, must say B."

P. S. Duleep Kumar.

The Commonwealth in Asia—By Sir Ivor Jennings. (O.U.P. 10*s*. 6*d*.).

This book, or rather booklet, is based on the Waynflete Lectures of 1949, delivered at Magdalene College, Oxford. As the title implies it is concerned with the three Asian countries of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon, which have had the " common experience of jumping straight from a status subordinate to the United Kingdom . . . into a state of equality and independence within the Commonwealth ". These three countries are characterised by a set of common problems derived from the impact of Western ideas of nationalism and democracy on a social structure where the elements of diversity arising from " race, language, caste, religion, class and education " are of greater importance than in Western countries. The book is therefore an examination of these problems and the " tentative solutions which have been adopted or suggested ".

The chapters that follow analyse these problems in greater detail. Chapter one entitled : " A Diversity of Peoples ", is concerned with the social factor as it emerged historically complicated as it was by the emergence of other factors of division like religion, language and education. Here, as with most of what follows, the function of reviewer is limited to agreement, due to the general competence of the analysis.

Chapter two is however more provocative and interesting, dealing as it does with the communal problem. It is rightly explained, " as an emanation of the diversity of the Indian peoples in all its forms . . . . The product of the impact of Western political ideas on the social organisation of the Indian peoples." The communal problem is not merely an emanation of a religious conflict, it is also the expression of social and economic rivalry. Indeed as Sir Ivor points out, in the communal riots of 1915 in Ceylon the economic faith was more dominant than the religious one.

Excellent as is this explanation of communalism in a long-term, historical sense, it is difficult to completely agree with the forthright

statement that : " The assertion that Britain created communalism through applying the Roman maxim of ' divide et impera ' is obviously false." While it cannot be argued that the British " created communalism " as some Indian nationalists would have it, yet it cannot be denied by any impartial critic, that they (at least in the time of Lord Minto) used communal rivalry to perpetuate the interests of British administration. Minto himself wrote to Morley of "a possible counterpoise to Congress aims". (Lady Minto : " *India, Morley and Minto*," p. 28). and his subsequent policy of trying to balance the pro-British (i.e., Muslims, Land-owners and Native Chiefs) forces against the anti-British (i.e., Congress, Middle Class, Extremists) does lay itself open to the charge of *divide et impera.* Indeed, it is maintained with some justification, that the Muslim deputation led by the Aga Khan, which led to the communal electorate of 1909, was as Moulana Mohammed Ali stated at the Congress Presidential Address of 1923, "a command performance". The justification for British policy, at this time therefore, cannot rest on the short-term factors, but must rely rather, as Dodwell recognises, in the long-term explanation of communalism which Sir Ivor himself develops earlier in this chapter.

Subsequent chapters analyse the other factors of diversity. Of particular interest is the analysis of Western education and the class problem. The large amount of illiteracy, the acute economic problems consequent on sharp differentiation of classes, and a low standard of living facing the mass of the population, furnish fertile ground for left-wing politics. Indeed the problems of class-war may prove, contrary to the high-falutin sentiments of the Montague-Chelmsford Commissioners, the ultimate solvent of communalism. " The problem of responsible government, therefore," as Sir Ivor himself recognises, " is primarily a problem of securing such an economic development that the ordinary man finds no reason to change the form of government."

It is in the light of these social, economic and political problems that the Constitution of Ceylon and India (that of Pakistan not being available) are examined. The Constitution of India in particular practically ignores the communal problem, depending for its solution apparently on a Bill of Rights and impartial administration. How adequate a remedy this would be, obviously only the future can show.

The final chapter examines the motives of these countries in preparing to remain in the Commonwealth, and comes to the realistic conclusion that very concrete advantages rather than sentiment furnish the links.

In general the book conforms to the high standards of the Author and furnishes a penetrating account of the three new additions to the Commonwealth. Its value to Ceylonese eyes would seem to lie in the critical and sharp account of our contemporary problems.

L. N. BANDARANAIKE.

NOTICES OF BOOKS

Government and Politics in Ceylon, 1931-1946—By I. D. S. Weerawardana, B.A. (Cey.), PH.D. (Econ.) (Lond.), Lecturer in Economics, University of Ceylon.

Publishers : The Ceylon Economic Research Association.

Printers : *Ceylon Printers.* Price : *Rs.* 8.

The text of this book was accepted as a thesis for the Ph.D. (Econ.) degree of the University of London. The author begins with a historical introduction from the beginnings of British rule to 1931, thus bringing the reader to the door step of his main analytical period 1931–1946. In this he discusses the constitution of 1924, the state of political parties, the significance of the national movement and the problem of communalism. He shows how the national movement up to 1931 was largely led and controlled by the middle classes and how the communal problem of this period was an off-shoot of these self-same middle classes angling for the spoils of political power.

The first three chapters of the book are devoted to an analysis of the non-autonomous section of the Government under the Colonial Constitution of 1931. These chapters show in detail what reserve powers of the Governor were exercised in actual practice and why and when they were exercised. Herein also the role of the Officers of State as watch-dogs of the Constitution is set out very clearly and he suggests reasons why the State Officers found themselves in a position to co-operate with the Ministers in the later stages of the Constitution.

The chapters that follow take the reader progressively through a closely reasoned and profusely documented analysis showing the working of the State Council, Executive Committees, Ministers, the Board of Ministers and the Administration and show to what extent the theory of the Constitution was profoundly changed in pratice by the growth of a multitude of conventions, habits and usages. Thus they peer into those subtle political relations which supply the flesh and blood to a working constitution. He tries to look for the means by which and reasons why this change of emphasis took place. He shows the significant developments

within the Executive Committee system and how most of the criticisms of committee-government are due to a misunderstanding of the real causes of the defects of our governmental system during the years 1931–1946.

This leads on to an explanation of the legislative powers and procedure of the legislative with comment and criticism. Here he discusses the political parties, the nature of their organisation, the way of elections, the issues at stake with a mass of data. In a final assessment of the constitution he shows how Governor Caldecott's criticisms were exaggerated, and tries to find the explanation of the known defects of the constitution in facts and situations far deeper than a mere superficial " form " of government.

The book is a very provocative analysis of a novel form of government. Others may find points of disagreement with the author, but his very exhaustive treatment of the subject merits careful study by student and general reader alike.