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# “THE PEOPLE OF THE LION”

## ETHNIC IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY AND HISTORICAL REVISIONISM IN CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKA\*

**K. N. O. Dharmadasa**

The question of group ideology among the Sinhala people has engaged the attention of scholars in recent times. How did the Sinhala identity originate? What were its transformations in the course of history? What factors influenced it through time and change? Only a few original studies have been made in this field. Among them R. A. L. H. Gunawardana's "The People of the Lion: The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography"<sup>1</sup> stands out as a detailed exposition on the subject and it has become an important point of reference in this regard. The present study is an attempt to evaluate some of Gunawardana's conclusions in the light of historical sources and other studies on the subject.

Gunawardana argues that the Sinhala identity in the very early stages was only the identity of the ruling dynasty of Anuradhapura. At a second stage it was extended to cover the dominant social strata in society, deliberately excluding "the service castes" and the common agriculturists, thus assuming a class-character. He believes that it was only at a third stage, as reflected in the *Dharmapradīpikāva* of the 12th century, that the Sinhala identity encompassed all the Sinhala-speaking people in the island.

For Gunawardana the Vijaya myth represents the embodiment of a state ideology which sought to unite the dominant elements in society and to bring them under a common bond of allegiance to the ruling house. Chronicles such as the *Mahāvamsa* served as media for the propagation of this myth. But during

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\*This paper has an unusual origin. I had submitted a monograph on the Sinhala language and the development of nationalism in modern Sri Lanka to a publisher abroad. His "reader" had commented that I seemed to have either ignored Gunawardana's article in my work or to have taken a totally different view from him on the themes of his paper. In the course of my response I had to explain why I rejected many of Gunawardana's conclusions in his essay. My criticisms were so many and so far reaching in rejecting his views that I thought it best to write an independent critique of these. Hence this essay.

I take this opportunity to thank the friends and colleagues of mine who have helped me with critical comments and observations. They are too many to be named here. The views expressed here are, however, entirely mine.

1. In the *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* Vol. 1 & 2, (1979) pp. 1 - 36.



the early stages there were tensions within the dominant social group, as reflected by four different versions of the "colonization myth".

According to Gunawardana, the period after the 12th century up to about mid 19th century was characterized by a cosmopolitan culture, where the Sinhala ideology, although it existed among certain sections of literati (such as the authors of *Pūjāvaliya* and the *Cūlavamsa*), was not propagated by the state. Nor did it possess a specific class-character as during the preceding period. Thus, the anti-Tamil invective found in works such as the *Kirala Sandēsayā* and the *Vadiga Hatana* at the tail end of Sinhala kingship (1815), does not reflect an ideological current which existed in Kandyan society at the time.

Gunawardana argues that the Sinhala identity underwent a radical transformation and began to assume its current form in the 19th century under the influence of intrinsically racist linguistic theories which originated in Europe. The most influential figure in this field was the great German Indologist, Max Muller. According to Gunawardana, scholars in late 19th century Sri Lanka took up Max Muller's theories and injected a racist content into Sinhala nationalist thinking. Gunawardana believes James de Alwis as the most significant embodiment of this transformation, and he contrasts de Alwis's "hesitant" presentation on the origin of the Sinhala language in the *Sidat Sangarāva* (1852) with his strident assertion of the Aryan theory in a later work, the "On the Origin of the Sinhalese Language" (1866).

Like most revisionists, Gunawardana has many original and interesting things to say. But, as with many revisionists, the question that needs to be posed is whether the theories propounded could be sustained on the basis of the evidence available.

## I

The use of the term "Sinhala" has been discussed at length by Gunawardana. Firstly, he refers to three words, *Kaboja*, *Milaka* and *Damedā* found in the earliest inscriptions in Sri Lanka, which seem to denote group-identities. He is keen to point out that "the term *Sinhala* is conspicuous by its absence" - inferring thereby that the Sinhala identity had not emerged by the time of these inscriptions, i. e. circa 3rd cent. B.C. to 1st cent. A.C. He also points out that the earliest occurrence of the term *Sinhala* (Pali: *Sihala*) is in the *Dīpavamsa* (4th-5th cent.) and that there too it occurs only once. Also, he wants to draw attention to the fact that, even in the *Mahāvamsa* (assigned to the 6th cent., but, according to Gunawardana, possibly of a later date) it occurs only twice. With regard to the terms *Kaboja* and *Milaka*, he believes that they were possibly "tribal groups", and the term *Damedā*, according to him, means "Tamil". He adds: "Whether the term was used in this period to denote a tribal, linguistic or some other group deserves careful investigation". We are not told why the same should not apply to the other two terms - *Kaboja* and *Milaka*. Indeed Paranavitana, who first drew our attention to



these teams, listed three others, *Muridi*, *Meraya* and *Jhavaka*, and argued that they referred to "ethnic groups".<sup>2</sup> He gave reasons for thinking so.<sup>3</sup> Gunawardana does not give us any reasons why Paranavitana's interpretation should be rejected.

When we come to the term *Sinhala* we have two problems. One concerns the numerical aspect raised by Gunawardana. He has highlighted the fact that the word is absent in the earliest inscriptions in the island. Here we must remember the fact that Paranavitana himself had made this observation in the *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon* and given a plausible explanation for this, viz. "for the very good reason that there was no need to distinguish any person by referring to him as such when the people as a whole were entitled to that name".<sup>4</sup> Gunawardana seems to have overlooked this. In fact the very absence of the term *Sinhala* can be used as an argument to show that only the "out-groups" *Kaboja*, *Milaka* and *Dameda* - were distinguished by specific reference to their group-identities, and that the identity of the "in-group", *Sinhala*, was taken for granted. (This, we may add here, further strengthens Paranavitana's opinion that these were "ethnic" labels). It should interest us to know that Paranavitana had identified *Kaboja* as *Kamboja* - a group of people in the Rajori region to the south of Kashmir.<sup>5</sup> *Milaka*, according to him, was derived from *mlechcha*, and referred to the autochthonous inhabitants of the island,<sup>6</sup> *Dameda* meant "Tamil";<sup>7</sup> *Muridi* was from Skt. *Murunda*, *Meraya* from Skt. *Moriya*, and *Jhavaka* from Skt. *Jhavaka*.<sup>8</sup> In this context Paranavitana was keen to point out that "where a donor named in an inscription belonged to an ethnic group other than Sinhalese, we find the ethnic name associated with his personal name".<sup>9</sup>

Gunawardana would have helped his readers greatly if he had only given them an indication of how many published inscriptions of the period 3rd century B.C. up to the 1st century A.C. there are. Let me supply the answer. It is a very substantial number - one thousand two hundred and thirty four in all. Only a person conversant with this very specialised field would know this. We can see the problem in its correct perspective if we ask how often, or in how many inscriptions the words *Kaboja*, *Milaka*, *Dameda*, *Muridi*, *Meraya*, and *Jhavaka* occur. The answer is very illuminating. *Kaboja* occurs in only five of these, *Milaka* in two and *Dameda* in four. *Muridi*, *Meraya* and *Jhavaka* each occurs only once.<sup>10</sup> Had Gunawardana revealed this, as he should have done, the flimsiness of his argument would have been immediately obvious to the reader. The vast majority

2. S. Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, Vol. 1, Colombo, Dept. of Archaeology (1970) p. lxxix.
3. See the discussion below.
4. UCHC Vol. I, pt. i (1959) Chapter VI "The Aryan Settlements : The Sinhalese", p. 67.
5. *Inscriptions of Ceylon* Vol. 1, p. xci.
6. "Used without any stigma of inferiority", *op.cit.*, p. xci.
7. *op.cit.*, p. xc.
8. *op.cit.*, pp. xci - xcii.
9. *op.cit.*, p. lxxxix.
10. *op.cit.*, pp. lxxxix - xcii.



of the donors referred to in the inscriptions were Sinhala ethnics, and, as Parana-  
vitana pointed out years ago, there was no need to proclaim their identity.<sup>11</sup>  
That was taken for granted. On the very few occasions when somebody who was  
not a Sinhalese made a donation, the distinct "ethnic" identity of the donor was  
indicated in the inscriptions

The second problem with the term *Sinhala* is its meaning. Gunawardana himself  
has provided us with references to the occurrence of the term and its derivatives  
in Chinese, Javanese and South Indian sources, even going as far back as the 1st  
or the 2nd century of the Christian era. We know that there are so many Indian  
sources, northern as well as southern, including the epic *Mahābhārata*, where the  
people of this island are called *Sinhala*.<sup>12</sup> As Parnavitana has pointed out, "it is  
by the name 'Sinhala' or its dialectical forms, that this island and its people  
are generally referred to in classical Sanskrit literature"<sup>13</sup> The question is, what  
did it mean? Did it refer to the people of the island in general? Gunawardana  
does not think so; not at least until a clear reference to that effect in the  
*Dharmapradīpikāva* in the 12th century.

He believes that only a specific group among the island population, namely,  
the royal family of Anuradhapura, was referred to by this term initially. At a  
second stage, he thinks, the term's reference was extended to cover the notables –  
"the most influential and powerful families in the kingdom". Gunawardana finds  
this dominant social stratum being referred to as *Māhajana* in the Vijaya myth.  
We infer from his conclusions that this period where the term *Sinhala* assumed  
a caste/class character spanned a very long stretch of time. In fact during the whole  
of the Anuradhapura period the term *Sinhala* seems to have been used with this  
caste/class connotation, if we are to go by his conclusion.

To support his contention that the term *Sinhala* referred initially to the royal  
family of Anuradhapura, Gunawardana cites evidence from the *Cūlavamsa*, where even  
as late as mid 10th century the term *Sihalavamsa* was used as a referent to the royal  
family. Let me quote the relevant extract from Gunawardana's article:

After describing the matrimonial alliance that Mahinda IV formed with Kalinga  
and his elevation of members of his lineage to high positions in the Kingdom the  
*Cūlavamsa* states that he thereby strengthened the Sinhala lineage (*Sihalavamsam*)

Gunawardana's conclusion, following on this, is that obviously the term was being  
used here to denote the dynasty.

11. UCHC, Vol. I, pt. i, (1959) p. 67.

12. *The Mahabharata of Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa*, tr. into English by Pratap Chandra Roy, Calcutta,  
Baharata Press, (1899) pp. 61, 100, 155, 503,. The epic is believed to have assumed the pre-  
sent shape by about the fourth century A.D. See Krishna Chaitanaya, *A New History of Sanskrit  
Literature*, London, Asia Publishing House (1962) pp. 200-1.

13. UCHC Vol. I, pt. i, p. 82.



I find it difficult to agree with him. Since he has left out certain pertinent facts, let us get the complete story on this episode direct from the *Cūlavamsa* :

*vijjamānēpi lankāyaṃ khattiyānaṃ narādhipō  
Kālingachakkavattissa vamse jātam kumārikā*

*ānāpetvāna tam aggamahēsim attanōvakā  
tassa puttā duvē jatā dhītā ēkā manōrama*

*ādipāde akā puttē dhītaram vōparajinim  
iti sīhala vamsam ca paṭṭhapēsī sa bhūpatī*

(ed. H. Sumangala and Batuvantudave, 1977, (54 : 9-11)

“Although there were *ksatriyas* in Lanka, the Lord of men brought and made his chief queen a princess born in the lineage of Kalinga Chakravarti. And she begot two sons and one beautiful daughter. He appointed the sons as Adipadas and the daughter as Deputy Queen. The Sinhala lineage too was thus made secure by the Lord of the Earth.”

The reference here is to Mahinda IV (956-972). He is known as the first Sinhala king to have contracted a matrimonial alliance with the Kalinga kingdom. The results of this move, most probably a political alliance as an extension of the Sinhala-Pandya front against Cola, were far-reaching. It led to the establishment of a Kalinga faction in the Sinhalese royal family.<sup>14</sup> Sena V (972-982), one son of the above marriage, brought the country to chaos. The *Cūlavamsa* records how “the Damilas plundered the whole country like devils” during his reign.<sup>15</sup> Mahinda V (982-1029), another son of the same marriage, claimed to have descended from the Kalinga dynasty.<sup>16</sup> As recorded by the *Cūlavamsa*, his was an inglorious reign. He himself was addicted to intoxicating drinks and behaved “like a wild beast gone mad” when drunk.<sup>17</sup> He was the unfortunate ruler with whom ended the long line of Anuradhapura kings. He himself was captured by the Cola armies along with the queen and the royal treasures, and he died a captive of the Cola king.<sup>18</sup>

When one considers these background factors, it seems very unlikely that the author of the *Cūlavamsa* saw in the Kalinga marriage alliance a strengthening of the Sinhala royal family. The meaning of the word *Sinhalavamsam* in the above account has to be derived from the context in which it occurs. It is stated beforehand that this marriage with Kalinga was contracted *in spite of the availability of Ksatriya maidens in Lanka*. Thus, the author of the *Cūlavamsa* is keen to point out that the Sinhala lineage had not suffered as a result. It is eagerly reported that the security of the *Sinhalavamsa* had been guaranteed. The reference is thus to *Sinhalavamsa* as distinct from the foreign *vamsas*. Note the conjunctive particle *ca* after *Sinhalavamsa*. It is the ethnic affiliation of the royal line that is emphasized, not its exclusivism from the general populace, as suggested by Gunawardana. Indeed, as I shall presently

14. Sirima Wickremasinghe. *The Kalinga Period of Ceylon History: 1186 - 1235 A.D.*, M. A. Thesis, University of Ceylon (1956) unpublished, pp. 7-8.

15. *Cūlavamsa*, tr. by Wilhelm Geiger, Colombo, Govt. Press (1953) 54 : 66

16. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV, pp, 61-2.

17. *Cūlavamsa*, 54 : 71.

18. *Cūlavamsa*, 55 : 15-19, 33.



show, there is irrefutable evidence to support the exact opposite of Gunawardana's view. The Sinhala identity was considered as encompassing all the Sinhala-speaking inhabitants of the island long before Mahinda IV came to the Anuradhapura throne.

According to Gunawardana, evidence for the broad-based Sinhala identity, encompassing all the Sinhala-speaking people of the island, appears only by the 12th century. To support this view he refers to a passage in the *Dharmapradīpikāva* where he says "the view of dynasty > island > inhabitants > their language sequence indicates this stage in the evolution of the Sinhala identity". Gunawardana is either ignorant of, or completely ignores, other Sinhala sources which would place this convergence long before the 12th century.

Firstly, I would like to cite a passage from the *Dhampīā Aṭuvā Gūṭapadaya*, written by King Kassapa V (914 – 923).<sup>19</sup> This reputed work bears unmistakable testimony to the fact that, by the time of its compilation, the Sinhala identity in its widest implications was an accepted fact. Kassapa paraphrases the Pali word *dīpabhāsāya*, meaning "in the language of the island", as *helu basin*, which in Sinhala means "in the *helu* (Sinhala) language"

Next he proceeds to explain the origin of this term:

"How do (we) obtain (the term) in the *helu* language?. That is from the fact that the island people are *helu*. How does (the word) Helese (*helaha*) come about? King Sinhabahu having killed a lion was named Sihalā... Since prince Vijaya was his son, he (too) was named Sīhala... The others since they were his (Vijaya's) retinue (*pirivara*) (they too) came to be called Sīhala"<sup>20</sup>

There is no mistaking here that "the island people" (*dīpa vāsin*) as a whole are identified as *helu* (Sinhala). The linguistic group is the same as the "ethnic" grouping. The reference is to all the island people and no sub-category, caste or class is excluded. This is irrefutable evidence that by the time of its writing the Sinhala identity encompassed all the inhabitants of the island, except of course the *Damila*, the Veddas and any others who were by definition ruled out. The *Dharmapradīpikāva*, quoted by Gunawardana, was recording the same tradition two centuries later.

Moreover, it is very likely that there were other works, Sinhala and Pali, extant in the tenth century, which had similar things to say on this subject. Possibly the author of the *Dhampīā Aṭuvā Gūṭapadaya* was repeating something found in earlier works as well. Judging from the *Vamsatthappakūsinī*, the commentary to the *Mahāvamsa*, written during the eighth or the ninth century, there were many such historical works extant at the time. For example, the *Uttara Vihāra Mahāvamsa*, the *Vinayaṭṭhakatha*, the *Dīpavamsaṭṭhakathā*, the *Sīmākathā*, the *Cetiyaṭṭhakathā*, the

19. There is general agreement on the authorship of the *Dhampīā Aṭuvā Gūṭapadaya*. See D. E. Hettiarachchi (ed.), *Dhampīā Aṭuvā Gūṭapadaya*, Colombo, Sri Lanka, University Press Board; (1974), p. xviii; P. B. Sannasgala, *Sinhala Sahitya Vamsayā*, Colombo, Lake House (1960) p. 65, G. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, Colombo, Apothecaries, (1955) p. 31.

20. Hettiarachchi ed. p. 6.



*Mahā Bōdhivaṃsakathā*, the *Sumēdhakathā* and the *Sahassavatthu Aṭṭhakathā*, all of which contained historical material.<sup>21</sup> In any case, we know for certain that the author of the *Vaṃsaṭṭhappakāsini*, who used “Lanka”, “Tambapanni” as well as “Sihaladipa” in referring to this island, uses the word “Sihaladipa” in a crucial passage in the *Dhātu Nidhāna Paricceda* (The Chapter Dealing with the Enshrining of the Relics in the Mahathupa). Here the Buddha, prophesying the construction of the Mahathupa, is recorded as telling one of his devotees,

*Tvṃ Nanda anāgatē mayi parinibbutē Sihaladīpē Duṭṭhagāmini numā raññā karāpita Maha Thūpassa parahatthagataṃ Nāgabhavanato mama sārīrikam dōnappamānaṃ dhātum āharitvā dassasi*<sup>22</sup>

“In the future, when I have attained Parinibbana, when in the Sihaladipa the king named Dutthagamini builds the Mahathupa, my relics amounting to about a *drona*, which are meant for it, will be in others’ hands; and you, Nanda will bring them forth from the Naga Bhavana”.

It is very significant that the author of the *Vaṃsaṭṭhappakāsini* imputes the use of the word “Sihaladipa” to Buddha himself. It can be taken as a clear indication of the coalescing of the Sinhala ethnic identity with the Buddhist religious identity.

Be that as it may, Gunawardana’s contention that even by the time of Mahinda IV (956–972) “there is still no evidence to suggest that the service castes were now being considered members of the group” is baseless, since the *Dhamplā Atuvā Gātapadaya* was written several decades previously by king Kassapa V (914–923) and we have word from the head of state himself that the *hela* group included all *dīpavasin*.

As suggested earlier, Kassapa no doubt was putting on record a fact which had been well established in his time. Hence, the question may be posed “How old are these identifications, *Sihala (Hela)* and *Sihala bhāsā (Helu basa)*”? The available evidence would appear to suggest that the earliest reference to “the Sinhala language” is in early 5th century. Buddhaghosa, the famous Indian scholar, who translated the Sinhala commentaries to Pali, refers to *Sihaladvīpa* as well as to *Sihalabhasa*. Referring to the Buddhist commentaries he says that they were

“brought to *Sihaladīpa* by Maha Mahinda (who was) endowed with self-mastery, and were made to remain in the *Sihola bhāsā* for the benefit of the inhabitants of the island”.<sup>23</sup>

It is generally agreed that Buddhaghosa worked in Anuradhapura during the reign of Mahanama (406–428).<sup>24</sup> Apart from identifying the language as *Sihala bhāsā*, he pays tribute to it, calling it *manōramā bhāsā* “a delightful language”.<sup>25</sup>

21. See G. P. Malalasekera (ed.), *Vaṃsaṭṭhappakasini*, London OUP (1935), pp. lvi–lxxii.

22. *op.cit.* p. 563.

23. See the prologues of *Sumangalavilasini* (ed.) Dharmakirti Sri Dhammananda, Colombo (1923); *Papancaśudani* ed. Dharmakirti Sri Dhamananda, Colombo (1933); *Saraththappakasini*, (ed.) Widurupola Piyatissa, Colombo (1924).

24. For the date of Buddhaghosa see G. P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, London RASGB (1928), p. 76; B. C. Law, *A History of Pali Literature*, London, Kegan-Paul (1933) p. 389.

25. See the eighth verse in the prologue of the work cited in. fn. 23.



Thus we may say that the identity of the Sinhala language was acknowledged by the fifth century. This is corroborated by linguistic evidence. We note that by the time the earliest inscriptions appear, i.e. *circa* 3rd cen. B.C. to 1st cen. A.C., the "Sinhala Prakrit", as the earliest form of the language is called, has certain individual features, making it distinct from the Indian Prakrits, deviating much more from the norm of Sanskrit than any of them.<sup>26</sup> By about the third or the fourth century these peculiarities are more marked, leading to what language historians call "Proto-Sinhalese".<sup>27</sup> As the history of Sinhala literature indicates, there were many books written in it by the fifth century. We hear of a *Sihalaṭṭhakathā Mahāvamsa*, *Maha Aṭṭhakathā*, *Maha Paccariya Aṭṭhakatha*, *Kurundī Aṭṭhakatha*, *Sihala Dhammapadaṭṭhakatha*, a Sinhala translation of the Buddhist *Sūtras*, a Sinhala *Dalada Vamsa* and a Sinhala treatise on medicine. In fact Adikaram lists no less than twenty eight works, mainly in Sinhala, which served as sources for Buddhaghosa.<sup>28</sup> Thus we see that by the fifth century Sinhala had emerged as a distinct language. The language could have served as a basis for a distinct ethnic identity. It is in that context that the statement in the *Dīpavamsa* that the island was called *Sihala* "on account of the lion"<sup>29</sup> becomes significant as being suggestive of that identity. Furthermore, the fact that even people of a kingdom as far away as that of the Guptas in North India referred to the island as *Simhala*<sup>30</sup> indicates how well established this identity was by the fifth century.

Gunawardana's opinion that at a certain stage the Sinhala identity encompassed only the dominant stratum in the island society, thus assuming a class character, is also open to doubt. To support his view Gunawardana uses two arguments: (a) that there was at this stage a dominant social class who were known as *Mahājana* and (b) that the *Mahāvamsa* and its commentary, the *Vamsaṭṭhappakāsinī*, "specifically exclude" the lower social strata from the group denoted by the term *Sinhala*. These two assertions need careful examination with reference to the sources in question.

Gunawardana tells us that the word *Mahājana* "in the ancient texts did not carry the meaning that its phonetic equivalent *Mahajanayā* conveys today, but denoted "great men". By "great men" he means a "ruling class." He proceeds to assert that "while the great men of non-*ksatriya* status may force the ruling family to govern

26. See K. R. Norman, "The Role of Pali in Early Sinhalese Buddhism" in Heinz Bechert (ed.) *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries*, Gottingen, Vanderhock and Rupert (1978) pp. 28-47, esp. pp. 30-31. Norman has a different view about the phrase *manōramā bāhsa*. But I agree with N. A. Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidana*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vol. XXI, London, Luzac & Co. (1962) p. xx.
27. D. B. Jayatilaka, *The Sinhalese Dictionary* Colombo, Govt. Press (1937). pp. ix.
28. E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, Gunasena (1953) p. 78; D. E. Hettiarachchi, "Sinhalese Literature", in *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, Colombo, Ceylon, University Press (1959) p. 394; P. B. Sannasgala, *op-cit.* p. 35-6.
29. *Dīpavamsa*, ed. H. Oldenberg, London, Williams and Norgate (1879) ch. 9, v. 12.
30. The Allahabad Inscriptions of Samudragupta, J. F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of Early Gupta Kings and their Successors*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. III, Varanasi, Indological Book House (1963) p. 8.



justly without harassing them they may not aspire to kingship". Next he cites different versions of the "colonization myth" to arrive at the conclusion that "the discrepancies between different versions of the myth, reflecting probably their different social origins, points to the tensions within the dominant social group and the problems of political power in the country at the time".

This contrived picture of ancient Sri Lankan society seems to rest on one crucial factor: the interpretation given to the word *mahajana* as it appears "in the ancient texts". What these texts are has not been specified, nor have we been given reasons for attaching the meaning 'great men', connoting social dominance, to the word. In any case, the two most important texts, the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Vamsatthappakāsini*, do not seem to be of any avail in this interpretation. For example, note how the *Mahāvamsa* records the arrival of the Madura princess and her retinue of ladies meant to be brides for Vijaya and his followers, along with a group of "craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds".

*sabbō s'ōtari nāvāhi Mahātittihē mahājanō  
tenēva paṭṭhanam tan hi Mahātittihan ti vuccati*

(*The Mahāvamsa*, ed. Wilhelm Geiger Ch. VII, verse 58)

"All this multitude of people disembarked at Mahatittha; for that reason is that landing place known as Mahatittha".

This is elaborated and reiterated in the *Vamsatthappākāsini* as follows :

*sabbō s'ōtari nāvāhi tō sō mahājanō Pandurājēna visaṭṭhō  
nāvāyō āruyhā samuddam āruyihī, sō sabbō mahājanō tēna  
mahajanssa uttinnakarān 'eva paṭṭhanam Mahatittham ti vuccati ti attho*  
(*The Vamsatthappakāsini*, ed. G. P. Malasekera, pp. 263-4)

"That multitude of people (*mahājana*), having been released by King Pandu, got on to ships and entered the ocean. All those *mahājana* in those ships in which they were travelling arrived at Mahatittha. It is because of the arrival of those *mahājana* that the port came to be called 'Mahatittha' in accordance with the meaning."

Clearly the reference in both texts is to "the multitude of people and not to a segment of it. The group consisted of, as mentioned before, the would-be queen of Vijaya and an unspecified number of brides for his seven hundred strong retinue, as well as several thousands of others. Assuming that the brides amounted to only seven hundred and one, they would have been a clear minority among several thousand others. If we adopt Gunawardana's interpretation of the word *mahājana*, we have to assume that the group of craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds, the preponderant majority of the group, were considered invisible because of their "low" social status. Without recourse to such a contrivance we can take the description as it is. The *mahājana* would have referred to the group as a whole, and "thousand" perhaps was



a round number which denoted the tremendous impact the arrival of this large group would have made on the minds of the observers for them to have named the port itself by this incident.

Secondly, presenting his own view about the social stratification in early Sri Lankan society, Gunawardana claims that "both the *Mahāvamsa* and its commentary specifically exclude a substantial section of the population of the island from the social group denoted by the term (*Sihala*)". In order to arrive at this conclusion he juxtaposes two sets of statements from the *Mahāvamsa* and its commentary, *Vamsatthappakāsinī*. This is how his argument goes : The *Mahāvamsa* speaks of the coming of a thousand families "of the service castes sent by the king of Madura"; but it specified that the Sinhala group are the descendants of "the seven hundred who formed Vijaya's retinue"; and, this exclusion of "the service castes" is further emphasized in the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*.

There are two aspects of Gunawardana's contention which need comment. It is not clear why he used the label "service castes" for the thousand families who came from Madura. In anthropological literature "service castes" are those who "serve" the higher social order, "washermen", "drummers", "potters", etc.<sup>31</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* reference, however, is to "eighteen *sēni*". Judging from the interpretation obtainable from comparable Indian sources, *sēni* (Skt. *srēni*) are identified as 'guilds', principally of merchants. Thus, Ellawala has suggested that *sēni* in this context would have been "merchant guilds (*vaiśya*)"<sup>32</sup> Ellawala also states that at a later stage *srēni* became guilds of workmen such as carpenters and artisans, and that at yet another stage it denoted "people who followed occupation of less social recognitions"<sup>33</sup> But, judging from the period when the incident occurred, he prefers to identify *sēni* in the *Mahāvamsa* as guilds of merchants. It could also possibly be, as suggested by Walpola Rahula, that the thousand families were people engaged in different arts and crafts and that they arrived in the island because there was an urgent need for their services as the early settlers were mainly agriculturists<sup>34</sup> In any case, the question we are concerned with is : were the craftsmen and the thousand families of eighteen guilds considered as belonging to "service castes" of low social status? Gunawardana has not been able to provide any convincing evidence of that. No doubt that identifying them as a "low" social category, who were discriminated against, helps in painting the pictures of a dominant ideology perpetrating a caste/class system of oppression, which "deliberately left out a considerable section of the linguistic group including craftsmen-agriculturists and others who performed 'low' service functions", as suggested by Gunawardana.

31. For example see Nur Yalman, "The Flexibility of the Caste Principle in a Kandyan Community" in Edmund Leach ed. *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and North-West Pakistan*, Cambridge, CUP (1960) pp. 78-112. esp. pp. 82-7.

32. H. Ellawala *Social History of Early Ceylon*, Colombo Dept. of Cultural Affairs (1969) pp. 28-29.

33. *op. cit.* p. 29.

34. Walpola Rahula *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, Gunasena (1966) p. 24.



No doubt too, many social scientists of the twentieth century will feel quite happy with such an early classic example of *homo hierarchicus* in operation. But it is extremely doubtful whether facts, as available in the chronicles, permit us to reach such a conclusion as the one Gunawardana would wish us to reach. Furthermore, as I shall point out later, inscriptional evidence from early Sri Lanka (circa 3rd cen. B. C. to 1st cen. A. C.) bear clear testimony to the fact that some craftsmen were far from being an oppressed social category.

Apart from the unwarranted use of the label "service castes" for the people in question, there is another crucial flaw in Gunawardana's argument. In the *Mahāvamsa* the arrival of these people is mentioned in verse 57 of Chapter VII. But the "exclusion" about which Gunawardana complains occurs with verse 42, i.e. fifteen verses previously. Let us have a look at the two verses in question :

King Sinhabahu since he had slain the lion (was called) Sinhala, and, by reason of the ties between him and them, all those (followers of Vijaya) were also called Sinhala - (verse no. 42.)

(The King sent his daughter and other maidens) ... and craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds, entrusted with a letter to the conqueror Vijaya - (verse no. 57)

The *Vamstthappakāsini* gives a long commentary on verse no. 42, stating that beginning with Vijaya and his *parivāra* "their sons, grandsons, great grandsons, etc. up to the present day" are included in the Sinhala fold. But it remains silent on verse no. 57, which refers to the craftsmen and the thousand families of the eighteen guilds. Hence, if we agree with Gunawardana, we have to believe that the authors of both *Mahāvamsa* and *Vamsatthappakāsini* "excluded" beforehand a group, whom they were expecting to mention later. That, I should say, is reading too much into the texts. If any exclusion was intended, the author of *Vamsatthappakāsini*, which is the later text, and which was intended to give explanations and comments, could have done so quite explicitly, right at verse no. 57, where the group to be "excluded" is referred to. But, as I mentioned earlier, the author has no comment to make about this episode.

Perhaps we need an explanation about this awkward situation found in the *Mahāvamsa* and its commentary. It seem to reflect a problem faced by the ancient historians: that of explaining the origins and kin connections of the diverse population groups in the island and categorizing them. Apart from the group that could be categorized broadly as descended from the *parivāra* of Vijaya, which included their imported wives and their progenies through generations, and the easily explainable Veddas (by recourse to the Vijaya-Kuveni legend), there would have been others whose origins would have been obscure. Yet, their presence had to be explained. (Recent immigrants would have posed no problems.) It is probably this dilemma that is reflected in the *Vamsatthappakāsini*, when firstly it has to elaborate on a straight fact that the Sihalas were those directly connected with (*sambandhū*) the prince named Sīhala



(i.e. Vijaya). We should note in this connection that the author of the *Vamsatthappakāsini* gives the widest possible interpretation to the cryptic statement of the *Mahāvamsa*. Later, when it comes to talking about the artisans and “the thousand families” who arrived subsequently from a different region of India, he is in difficulty. Possibly he was not decided whether to include them or exclude them from the Sinhala group. If he had any intention of asserting the “purity” / “supremacy” of the Sinhala group, he would have specifically excluded the artisans and the thousand families of the *seni* when referring to them. There is no motive of wilful exclusion that we can see here. In fact we can well argue that his silence here is an indication that he was not unwilling to accept these people as belonging to the Sinhala fold.

The question may now arise whether we do not have any indication about social gradations in early Sri Lankan society. For this we need not go searching among later immigrants, because we have evidence from the Vijaya legend itself. Although specific details about the social composition of Vijaya’s seven hundred followers are hard to come by, there are scattered references in the *Mahāvamsa* and its commentary which would support the view that it was a socially mixed gathering, consisting of people from different social strata. For example, in the description of the founding of the villages, the *Mahāvamsa* says:

Here and there did Vijaya’s ministers found villages. Anurādhagāma was built by a man of that name near the Kadamba river; and the chaplain Upatissa built Upatissagāma on the Gambhīra river, to the north of Anurādhagāma. Three other ministers built, each for himself, Ujjēni, Uruvēlā and the city Vijita (Chapter VII, verses 43-45).

The *Vamsatthappakāsini* commenting on the above, refers to Anurādha as *mahamacca* (the chief minister) while the others are referred to as *amacca* like in the *Mahāvamsa*. We also learn that Upatissa was a *purōhita*, obviously of the Brahmin caste.

Secondly, we get a glimpse of the social gradations in the midst of the seven hundred followers of Vijaya at the selection of the Madura maidens to be distributed among them :

When Vijaya had offered hospitality and bestowed honours on the envoys he bestowed the maidens, according to their rank, upon the ministers and retainers (*Mahāvamsa* Ch. VII, verse 70).

Obviously, there was a ranking involved; and we learn more about the ranking from the commentry :

*jātīdīhi tēsam tāsam yathānuviccakaṃ ñatvā va kaññāyo  
amaccēnan ca janassa ca adāsi* (*Vamsatthappakāsini*, p. 266)

The king gave the damsels away to the ministers and other men only after ascertaining their suitability to one another according to caste etc.



I have translated Pali *jāti* as “caste”. It can also mean “ranking by birth”, an ascriptive status, meaning something similar. Note the emphatic particle *va*, which lays stress on the fact that before deciding on each couple the relative “birth” (caste) ranking of the people was ascertained. So there were social gradations, based on *jāti* among both Vijaya’s *parivāra* and Madura maidens to be taken into account

Thirdly, we obtain a glimpse of the social gradations, this time among the Madura maidens, in the manner in which they were brought together to be sent to Lanka :

The king of Madura took council with the ministers, and since he was minded to send his daughter (to Lanka) he, having first received also daughters of others for the ministers (of Vijaya), nigh upon a hundred maidens, proclaimed with beat of drums ‘those men here willing to let a daughter depart for Lanka shall provide their daughters with a double store of clothing and place them at the doors of their houses’ (*Mahāvamsa*, Ch. VII, verses 52 - 4).

If we go by this description, there were about a hundred high ranking people (ministers) among Vijaya’s retinue, who were provided with brides of equal status. The others probably were a mixed group of different social gradations, which is signified by the selection process mentioned in verse no. 70 of the *Mahāvamsa* and the corresponding section of the commentary we quoted earlier.

As mentioned in verses 52 - 54 quoted above, there was a selection in Madura according to rank, and this is again reiterated in verse no. 56, where we are told that before dispatching them to Lanka the king had all the maidens “fitted out according to their rank”. One can well argue that only a class distinction is reflected in the whole episode - the ministers on the one hand the ordinary folk on the other (*amacca/jana*). But the reference to *jāti* carries the distinction to the ascriptive area,

In any case the problem with Gunawardana’s argument is that he starts with the premise that the seven hundred strong *parivāra* of Vijaya were a socially uniform group, who *en masse* and immediately assumed the dominant position in the island society. Then he picks up the cause of the later immigrants, the artisans and the worker communities, and assumes that they were relegated to a low social status and that the dominant group did not want the latter to be included in the Sinhala fold. To prove this he juxtaposes a positive statement in the *Mahāvamsa* (VII : 42), which described who the Sinhala were, with a later neutral statement recording the arrival of artisans and and worker groups. He hopes thereby to establish that the imagined “low” social category has been wilfully excluded from the Sinhala fold. It is another example of ideology seeking supporting evidence, and, finding such evidence difficult to come by, relying on very flimsy and ambiguous, if not dubious, data.

If we examine the earliest Sinhalese inscriptions, i.e. those belonging to the period 3rd cen. B.C. to 1st cen. A.C., we find a picture quite contrary to what Gunawardana



wishes us to see. There are many instances of people who have to be categorized as "craftsmen" appearing on par with kings, princes, chiefs and merchants as donors of caves to the Buddhist monkhood. Thus, for example, copper-smiths, (*tabakara*), iron-smiths (*kabara*), workers in ivory (*datika*) and weavers (*pehekara*), who reveal their identity while donating caves<sup>35</sup> These inscriptions were carved during the very period in which Gunawardana sees the craftsmen being relegated to a low social position. But we see no stigma of inferiority being attached to their professions. And we cannot for certain apply the modern label "service castes", with its connotations of labour exploitation and social discrimination, to these groups.

Thus, Gunawardana's exercise appears very much like an attempt to see in ancient Sri Lanka some modern conceptualizations about ethnicist perceptions and social hierarchies. Indeed such an exercise fits neatly into the ideological requirements of *Ethnicity and Class Conflict in Sri Lanka*, which presume to see in the Sinhala national psyche an inherent propensity for harassment of minority groups.<sup>36</sup> Fortunately or unfortunately, historical sources do not support these typifications.

To come back to our problem, the fact that the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Vamsatthappakāsini* most positively include the seven hundred followers of Vijaya, belonging to different social strata, in the Sinhala fold goes against Gunawardana's contention that the Sinhala identity at that stage was exclusivist, been confined to a "higher" social stratum.

Two other assertions of Gunawardana with regard to the Vijaya myth are : (a) that it embodies a political definition of the Sinhala identity, wherein the ruling house is taken as Sinhala *par excellence*, and (b) that it embodies a state ideology which sought to unite the dominant elements in society. How tenable are these assertions ?

These views of his on state ideology derive directly from his opinions about the exclusivist *Sinhala vamsa* and the *mahājana* theory which we discussed earlier. Seen in the light of the insubstantial evidence which he provides in support of those two ideas, the state ideology theory too is open to doubt. We need to repeat the point that the very basis upon which Gunawardana's theories are constructed is extremely brittle.

Gunawardana believes there was a pressing need for uniting the dominant social group in its loyalty to the royal house because there were tensions within. The proof for these tensions is found in the different versions of the "colonization myth", namely

35. See Paranavitana (1970) pp. xcvi - xcvi.

36. Kumari Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, (Colombo, Centre for Social Analysis (1985) which concentrates on how Sinhala chauvinism affected other ethnic groups.



the *Dīpavaṃsa* version, the *Mahāvamsa* version the *Divyāvadāna* version, Hiueng Tsang I version and Hiueng Tsang II version.

While it is interesting to compare and contrast these different versions, we must not forget that our task here is to ascertain the beliefs of the island people. As far as they were concerned, there were only two versions which should be taken as reflecting their thinking – the *Dīpavaṃsa* version and the *Mahāvamsa* version. When we examine the core element in these two versions, we see no discrepancy between them – only that certain details are found in one which are not found in the other. And the account in the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, the commentary of the *Mahāvamsa*, adds further details. As such we cannot make much out of the “discrepancies found in these three texts regarding the Vijaya story.

As for the *Divyāvadāna* story, the question arises whether we should take this “colonization myth” found in Indian sources as reflecting beliefs and perceptions of the people of Sri Lanka. Hence its validity as a reflection of ideological tensions within the island society is open to doubt. As for the Hiueng Tsang versions, they have even less credibility than this. Can we give the two “colonization myths” recorded by Hiueng Tsang the same validity as that in the *Mahāvamsa*? This Chinese traveller never came to Sri Lanka, and his knowledge about the island was gathered from others in India. The two stories found in his writings appear to be distorted versions of the *Mahāvamsa* story and the *Divyāvadāna* story rather than two different myths which existed independently. Seen in this light Gunawardana, in attempting to see tensions within Sri Lankan society on the basis of differing “colonization myths”, is reading too much into very little.

Gunawardana also asserts that “at no period do they (i.e. the Sinhala identity and the Buddhist identity) appear to have coincided exactly to denote the self-same group of people”. To support this view he has three arguments: (1) When Dutthagamini fought Elara, there appear to have been Sinhalese who took the side of Elara. (2) In the 5th century, when Tamils occupied the throne of Lanka for some time, some of these Tamil rulers appear to have been Buddhists and were evidently supported by some Sinhalese. (3) Even during the 10 century, when Kassapa V propagated the idea that the Sinhala royal line belonged to the same royal line as the Buddha, although “nearly all the Sinhalese were Buddhist, there is still no evidence to suggest that the service castes were being considered members of the Sinhala group”.

It is obvious that Gunawardana confuses issues. An identity may be related to reality. But it is not reality itself. It is a mental construct by a people. The fact that some Sinhalese sided with Tamil invaders means that, as far as these people were concerned, the Sinhala and the Buddhist identities were not strong enough to prevent them throwing in their lot, for some reason or the other, with the aliens. And the fact that there were Tamil Buddhists reminds us of the reality that Buddhism was no ethnic monopoly of the Sinhalese. The third argument falls flat in the light of the untenability of Gunawardana’s portrayal of the social stratification in the early Anuradhapura period.



We must also remember that the instances cited by Gunawardana were random and isolated ones, which would not have made a qualitative impact on the overall definition of the situation which as Obeyesekere has pointed out, was "Sinhalese as defenders of Sasana versus Tamils as opposers of Sasana."<sup>37</sup> Myths, as Gunawardana himself would agree, are often not in accordance with the facts of history. Yet, they can have tremendous potency. Thus, as far as the Sinhalese are concerned, their historical role was that of the defenders of the Sasana, and, as pointed out by Obeyesekere, they could be mobilized by their rulers to fight the foreign invaders by appealing to the identity of interests between ethnicity and religion.

One of the critical flaws in Gunawardana's paper is his failure to deal with the vicissitudes of the Sinhala ethnic identity over a period of thirteen centuries from the sixth century A.D. to the eighteenth.<sup>38</sup> He provides no information on this long period of Sri Lanka's complex history, which saw dynastic changes, the rise and fall of kingdoms and capital cities, and a whole series of destructive invasions. It saw long periods of Sinhala resistance, survival and recovery. We are provided with no clues as to the fate of the concept of Sinhala identity during this long period of time. I do not intend to fill that gap through this present essay, but to move on to the second phase in Gunawardana's analysis of the emergence of Sinhala identity, where he leaps from the 6th century A.D. to the day of the Kandyan kingdom in the 18th century.

In a paper entitled "Sinhala-Buddhist identity and the Nayakkar Dynasty in the Politics of the Kandyan Kingdom: 1739 - 1815" published in 1979<sup>38a</sup>, I identified signs of what could be typified as "a Sinhala-Buddhist ideology" affecting the plots and conspiracies against the Nayakkar rulers during the last phase of the Kandyan kingdom. The evidence I adduced to support my view was derived from a variety of sources. Namely,

- (a) *Kirala Sandēsaya*, written immediately after the dethronement of Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe in 1815.
- (b) *Vadiga Haṭana Hevat Āhalēpola Varnaṇava*, written between 1815 and 1817.
- (c) *Mandārapura Puvata*, Part III, written during the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinghe (1747 - 1781).

37. Gananath Obeyesekere, "The Vicissitudes of the Sinhala Buddhist Identity Through time and Change" in George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, ed., *Ethnic Identity, Cultural Communities and Change*, Palo Alto, Mayfield (1975) pp. 231-58.

38. Micheal Roberts, "Sri Lanka: Ethnic Conflict and Political Crisis, a review article on K.M. de Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka, 1885-1985*", *Ethnic Studies Report*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1988) pp. 40-62.

38a. In Micheal Roberts ed., *Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Modern Sri Lanka*, Colombo, Marga, (1979) pp. 99-128.



- (d) *Sāsanavatīrṇa Varṇanāva*, a history of Buddhism written during mid-nineteenth century.
- (e) An unpublished *Rājavallīya*, again written during the 19th century. (In 1815, according to one authority, and in 1869 according to another).
- (f) A Dutch document written in 1761, which reports the banishment of the Sangaraja *bhikkhu* Saranankara, for his compliance in the conspiracy against the king in the previous year.
- (g) An Account by De La Nerolle, one time a "gentleman-in-waiting" of the Kandyan king, who later settled in Dutch territory.
- (h) A letter of 1762 addressed to the Dissava of the Three and Four Korales by the Dutch authorities in Colombo.
- (i) The *memoir* of Jan Schreuder, the Dutch Governor in Colombo at the time of the conspiracy of 1760.

The most explicit anti-Nayakkar documents we have from this period are the *Kirala Sandēsaya* and the *Vadiga Haṭana*. The fact that both of them appear after the king had been removed explains why such forthright sentiments did not find expression earlier.

I should digress here to point out that these two poems are not the work of one author, as Gunawardana believes. As I have clearly stated on p. 101 of my earlier paper, the author of *Kirala Sandēsaya* was *bhikkhu* Kitalagama Devamitta, and the author of *Vadiga Haṭana* was Vāligala Kavisundara Mudali.

Both the *Kirala Sandēsaya* and the *Vadiga Haṭana* support the claim of the former First Adigar Āhalepola to the throne of Kandy. Judging from precedents, this is an unusual incident in Kandyan politics. In the paper referred to earlier I have pointed out that there were two previous instances when the claims of Sinhala ethnics were advocated as against the Nayakkars to the Kandyan throne. On both such occasions the Sinhala ethnics thus sponsored had some claim to *ksatriya* status. On the other hand, in the case of Āhalepola, he had none. Yet his name was eagerly sponsored by people such as *bhikkhu* Kitalagama and Vāligala Mudali, who belonged to the literary elite. It is clear that in their mind at least the *ksatriya* criterion was secondary to the ethnic factor. When we look back to 1739 at the death of Narendrasinghe, the last King of Sinhala ethnicity (when the question of a successor came up), and to 1760 (when there was a conspiracy to remove Kirti Sri Rajasinghe, the second Nayakkār ruler, from the throne) there were people among the Kandyan elite who also placed great weight on the ethnic factor. Thus, in 1739 some sponsored the cause of Unambuve Bandara and in 1760 some wanted to make Paṭṭiye Bandara the King. But the fact that they did not persist in their viewpoint and the fact that they eventually reconciled themselves to the situations that developed later would have been due to the peculiar nature of court politics. What we note in any case is that there was a strand of opinion which supported a Sinhala ethnic who, even though he did not fully qualify as a *ksatriya*, was regarded preferable to a *ksatriya* Nayakkar as the king of Kandy.



With regard to the *Kirala Sandēsayā* the *Vadiga Hatana*, the most striking feature of their contents is the condemnation of the Nayakkars as a group. While Sri Vikrama is castigated as a person, no pain is spared to condemn and vilify the *demalu* who were “destroying” the land of the Sinhalese.

In verse no. 18 of *Vadiga Hatana* the author calls Sri Vikrama “a villainous”, wicked, heretical eunuch of a Tamil” (නපුංසක දිටු අරිටු මිසදිටු කුදිටු දෙමළෙක්). Before coming to that there are four references to *demalu* :

දෙමළ කදෝ කිමි හැරියෙය වනයා (5)

“(Ahalepola, the sun) destroyed the Tamil fireflies.”

දෙමළ සපුන් හැම වැනසිය නොතබා (7)

“(Ahalepola) destroyed all Tamil snakes not sparing a single one.”

දෙමළන් උරහුන් බිය මන් සපුරා (10)

“(Ahalepola) filled the minds of Tamil snakes with fear.”

දුරපන් කරමින් දෙමළන් අදුරු (11)

“(Ahalepola) dispelled the Tamil darkness (in Lanka)”

Similarly, bhikku Kitalagama in his *Kirala Sandēsayā* chastises the king's relations as follows :

නසමින් ගම් නියමගම් රට දන මඩුළු

බෙහෙවින් රැස්ව සිටියෝ දිටුතර දෙමළු (43)

“The most obsinate Tamils were gathered in large numbers, plundering all the hamlets, villages, districts and provinces.”

How the Buddha Sasana suffered in their hands is also highlighted:

මෙලෙසින් පසිඳු ලක්දිව සාසනය මැඩ

බෙහෙවින් කරන අනඳර දෑක දෙමළ ජඩ (47)

“(Ahalepola) having seen the the immense ill-treatment effected by the scoundrel Tamils in ruining the reputed Sasana of Lanka.”

The condemnation of “the Tamils” as a group is more pronounced in *Vadiga Hatana* :

අරිටු කෙළෙස් ගුණ නපුරු දහස් ඇති දෙමළු (109)

“Tamils with vile sinful qualities and evil intentions.”

රට නොබලා සැඩී දෙමළ කැලා තැන තැන බලලා ගමබිම සවිලා (117)

“The wicked group of Tamils were residing in various places, having taken possession of lands and villages.”

විකරන් වෙස් ගත් ගුණ නැති යක් රකුසන් වැනි ලක උන් දෙමළ (129)

“The Tamils who were in Lanka taking weird guises resembling demons and devils without any good in them.”



Vāligala sometimes make a direct reference to the fact that it was *the Sinhala people* who were being harassed by the Tamils :

නසා සිංහල රටුන් සේරම ගෙන දෙමළ (155)

“The Tamils taking over everything having destroyed the Sinhala people...”

Both Vāligala Mudali and *bhikkhu* Kitalagama hark back to history to invoke memories of the most famous Tamil war in antiquity - that of Duṭṭhagamini against Eāla. Vāligala compares Āhalepola's entry to Kandy at the deposition of Sri Vikrama to the entry of Dutthagamini to Elāra's stronghold, Vijithapura :

මෙලක පොරණ ගාමිණී රජු දස මහයෝ බලසෙන් ගෙන

නිසැකව සැඩී දෙමළන් උන් විජිතපුරට ගොස් වන් මෙන (86)

“Just like king Gā nini of ancient Lanka, who with his ten great generals and his powerful army unhesitatingly entered Vijitapura, where the wicked Tamils were...”

Interestingly, in Vāligala's estimation the victory of Āhalepola was superior to that of Duṭṭhagamini. For, while it took king Gamini several years and months to vanquish the Tamils. Āhalepola was able to accomplish his feat within seven days (see verse 123). *Bhikkhu* Kitalagama also sees the parallel between Duṭṭhagamini and Āhalepola several times (see verses 48 and 49). Since it was Kitalagama's intention to boost up the image of Āhalepola it is pointed out :

පොරණ ගැමුණු නරවර සැඩී දෙමළ

සුද

කරන සඳ වැදුන සැරයෙන් පමණ

කොද

නරන රාජතුරු පළ කළ මෙරණ

මැද

මරණ නොම දුනිය දෙමළකටත්

එකද (53)

“Āhalepola who displayed the mild qualities of the moon in the midst of the battle field used only a fraction of the force used by King Gāmini of yore in battling the wicked Tamils. He (Āhalepola) did not cause the death of a single Tamil.”

This wide range of extracts from *Kirala Sandēsa* and the *Vadiga Hatana* are set out above in order to show that the resentment against Sri Vikrama was much more than personal: It was, in fact, an expression of a deep-rooted ethnic animosity. When reading Gunawardana's summary of my paper, one gets the impression that the resentment against Sri Vikrama was merely personal. He selects a quotation which highlights the *personal animosity* and ignores the references in the extracts I have quoted in my paper, which illustrate the antipathy of the two poets to Sri Vikrama's people - the *demalu* - as a group. This is an example of one of the crucial flaws in Gunawardana's paper, his practice of selective reporting and quotation, to which I shall return later on in this present paper of mine.

As it should be clear now, there was by 1815 a strong hostility to the *demalu*, who, it appeared, had taken the upper hand in the Kandyan kingdom. Vāligala, as shown above, explicitly states that the *demalu* had destroyed the Sinhala people. At another



instance he says that Āhalepola was the saviour, as it were, of the Sinhala people.

වංග කුද්දි අකලංග දෙමළ මැන බංග කරපු යන ලෙස නොරද,  
සිංහල දන බල එංගලන්තෙ යන රංග දිනුම් බල ගනිය සද (110)

“destroyed completely the powers of the crooked, wicked, ugly Tamils and made the power of the Sinhala people so victories even as to reach England.”

Ethnicist sentiments such as above found in the *Kirala Sandēsaya* and *Vadiga Haṭṭana*, I maintain, were not isolated, impromptu and singular. No doubt these two supporters of Āhalepola were making a great deal of effort to justify the despolement of Sri Vikrama. At the same time, in their minds Āhalepola was a hero who was engaged in a righteous war, fighting the *demalu*, the cause of much hardship to the Sinhala people and the Buddhist dispensation. Sri Vikrama had been deposed. Now the enthronement of Āhalepola appeared to them a matter of course. In any case, what concerns us here is not the political affiliations of Vāligala and Kitalagama. We are focusing attention on the ideological weaponry they were brandishing in support of their hero and patron.

One can cite many instances in the history of the Kandyan kingdom during the previous hundred years or so when the ethnic disjunction between the Sinhalese and the powerful bloc of Nayakkars came to the fore. I believe that Kitalagama's and Vāligala's ethnicist invective is an ideological follow-up of those previous incidents. In my previous paper I referred to three such incidents :

- (1) When Sri Vira Parakrama Narendrasinghe (1707-1739), the last king of Sinhala ethnicity, who had no son from his chief queen, designated his brother-in-law, a Nayakkar who had the *ksatriya* qualifications, to succeed him, a section of the aristocracy sponsored the cause of Unambuve Bandara, the king's son by a non-*ksatriya* lady.
- (2) A revolt by the Kandyan ministers in 1749 in resentment against the high-handed activities of Narenappa, the father of king Kirti Sri Rajasinghe, the second Nayakkar ruler in Kandy.
- (3) The conspiracy of 1760, in which some high-ranking officials of the court got together with some *bhikkhus* of the Malvatta temple and planned to do away with Kirti Sri who was branded a “heretical Tamil”

Here I need to meet the objections of Gunawardana to my claim that there was an ideological (i.e. Sinhala-Buddhist) consciousness behind these incidents. Gunawardana points out that on the question of ascension of Sri Vijaya, ritual status turned out to be the decisive criterion, and that “even the leading courtiers who supported Unambuve's claims later accepted office under the Nayakkar king.” The answer to that should be that there is nothing spectacular about this reconciliation in the eighteenth century Kandyan court, for, even at the tail-end of the twentieth century we find politicians doing the very same thing, even in democracies where protest and dissension have much freer scope.



Apart from that, it should interest us to know that Leuke, considered to be the leader of the faction sponsoring Unambuve, was given "special favours,"<sup>39</sup> and that there were patently deliberate attempts by the new king to keep him in good humour. Leuke was not only elevated to the very important post of Disava of the Three and Four Korales but also lavished a handsome *paraveni* land grant, to be enjoyed by him and his descendants. The *sannasa* making the land grant stated that Leuke "faithfully served the king from childhood", a fiction which was convenient for both parties to play their respective roles after the rapprochement. There are other interesting facts about Leuke, to which we shall return later.

Gunawardana summarily dismisses the evidence from *Sāsanāvātīrṇa Varṇanāva* on the grounds that it was written "in the reign of Queen Victoria when ... an altogether different intellectual milieu had come into being."

It is unfortunate that Gunawardana completely ignores the four contemporary documents I have cited and picks up the 19th century document alone, which very conveniently can be labelled "Victorian" – a word with many connotations advantageous to his position. We shall return to this typification of Victorian milieu later.

Two factors are crucial in determining the reliability of the account given in the *Sāsanāvātīrṇa Varṇanāva*. Firstly, we have to determine the date of its writing. On the penultimate page of the printed version we have the following statement, which is the only internal evidence available regarding its date :

තවද ඉන් පසු රාජධානි දෙකක් පසු උන තැනදී මිථ්‍යා දුෂ්ටි එරෙජ්ජුකාර කුමාරිකාවක් හෙවත් මහේසිකා කෙනෙක් ක්‍රිස්තියානි ආගමෙන් රජ ශ්‍රී විදිමින් එකල්හි බුඩ්ධාසනය වටන්නට රජ්ජුරුවෝ නැත.<sup>40</sup>

"After the lapse of two kingdoms since that time (i.e. time of Kirti Sri), a heretical European princess, in other words a queen, was enjoying the royal splendour by means of the Christian faith (and) at the time there was no monarch to sponsor the Buddhist dispensation"

What does the not so learned author of the *Sāsanāvātīrṇa Varṇanāva* mean by the word රාජධානි (kingdom) in this context? It would appear that he meant "regnal period", as we understand it today. If that is so, two reigns after Kirti Sri we come to the time of George III, the first British ruler of Sri Lanka. The capital was shifted to Colombo in 1815 and remained so till the late twentieth century. Since he is quite explicit about the fact that a queen was ruling, the possibility is that the reference is to Victoria (1837-1901). In any case we should take note of the author's ignorance about the British monarchs prior to her ascension. We know that after George III (1760-1820) there were the reigns of George IV (1820-1830) and of William IV (1830-1837) as well before we come to the reign of Victoria

39. L. S. Devaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom, (1707-1780)* Colombo, Lake House (1972) p. 82. The following account is based on pp. 82-3

40. *Sāsanāvātīrṇavarṇanāva*, ed. C. E. Godakumbura, Moratuwa, Dodangoda & Co. (1956) p. 26.



In dismissing the evidence provided by the *Sāsanavatīrṇa Varnanāva* Gunawardana seems to suggest that its author, writing as he was during the reign of Victoria, was influenced by the "intellectual milieu" that had emerged at the time. Let us now examine what its characteristics were and its influence as described by Gunawardana.

After Sir William Jones pointed out (in 1786) the structural affinities between Sanskrit and the classical languages of Europe, Latin and Greek, many studies were done about the origin of these Indo-European or Aryan languages. Eventually, in the hands of some scholars, there emerged the notion of an Aryan race. Max Muller's writings popularised this idea, and, although he had misgivings about it later, it influenced many writers, in Europe as well as South Asia. According to Gunawardana, James de Alwis, who was "hesitant" in calling Sinhalese an Indo-Aryan language in his Introduction to the *Sidat Sangarava* in 1853, came out strongly with the Aryan theory in 1865/6 due to the influence of Max Muller. Gunawardana also seems to suggest that this new "climate of opinion" influenced the author of *Sāsanavatīrṇa Varnanāva* as well.

I wish to take up these two assumptions of Gunawardana separately. Let me turn first to the *Sāsanavatīrṇa Varnanāva*. When one reads the inelegant and highly colloquialised prose of this work, one has serious misgivings about the author's learning. There is no doubt about his knowledge of Buddhism and the life and times of Saranankara, however. The evidence suggests that he was a *bhikkhu*. But given the short-comings of his own intellectual background, it seems most unlikely that he was conversant with the works of Max Muller.

My contention is that the information about the plot of 1760, recorded in the *Sāsanavatīrṇa Varnanāva*, and which significantly does not appear in contemporary Sinhala writings, was kept alive in the oral tradition among the *bhikkhus*. Until after 1815 it would have been dangerous to put such information to writing - which explains the silence in Kandyan sources in spite of the abundance of writings at this time, some dealing with contemporary events.<sup>41</sup>

It is here that the other evidence I have adduced in my paper, especially from material compiled in Dutch territory, becomes useful. This evidence, which supports the account in the *Sāsanavatīrṇa Varnanāva*, has been completely ignored by Gunawardana. Apart from the evidence from writings done outside Kandy, which throw light on the specific events of 1760, evidence from Kandyan sources themselves can be adduced to support my general view about the ideological motivation behind the plot and conspiracies against the Nayakkar rulers.

As I have mentioned in my earlier paper too, we have to accept the limitations of contemporary records in this respect. Kandyan monarchy being what it was, we can

41. The *Rājōvada* (Advice to kings) written in the 18th century states that "since the words of kings are weapons their very frowning is capable of destroying people and takes effect immediately". N. Mudiyanse, "The Rajovada; Advice to Kings", *The Buddhist*, XVI, I (1974) p. 30. Another reason given by Devaraja is the reluctance of writer so tarnish the image of Saranankara. See Devaraja (1972) p. 109.



never expect direct reference to the ethnic (and sometimes religious) antipathy to the Nayakkars in contemporary Kandyan writings. Regarding the conspiracy of 1760, the only contemporary evidence explaining the ideological motivation is available from the four documents written in Dutch territory by foreigners. One possible objection to the three records left by the Dutchmen is that they were seeing in the Kandyan court what they were wishing to happen. But there is one document, the account given by De La Nerolle, a one-time *appuhāmy* (gentleman-in-waiting) to the king, to which we may not impute such a motive. In any case we have further evidence to prove that there was a long-standing strand of anti-Nayakkar feeling in Kandyan court circles, and this is from a Sinhala work written in Kandy itself. I believe that the evidence from these independent sources should be put together in coming to a conclusion on the question we are investigating.

In my earlier paper I mentioned only three anti-Nayakkar outbursts that occurred in Kandy, and all of them were during the period of Nayakkar rule, 1739–1815. In order to recognize the under-current of anti-Nayakkar feelings in Kandyan circles during the era, we have to go a few years back, when we have the first signs of the Nayakkars creating problems for the Kandyans.

As recorded in the *Mandārapura Puvata*, compiled some time during the middle of Kirti Sri's reign,<sup>42</sup> there was a serious rebellion against king Narendrasinghe due to his appointment of a “*vaḍiga* Tamil” to a high-ranking position in the court.

Narendrasinghe, the last ruler of Sinhala ethnicity, married two Nayakkar consorts and it appears that each of these marriages was followed by the influx to Kandy of a large number of *vaḍiga* kinsmen. Their exclusivism, “heathenism” (being Hindu), and the fact that they seemed to form a power block over the native aristocracy, would have provided considerable provocation to the Sinhala courtiers. To bring the crisis to a head the king in 1732 appointed a “*vaḍiga* Tamil” to the responsible post of Maha Gabada Nilame (Chief of the King's Stores) :

... නේවා හැටත් දුම්බර දෙනුවර ද	වෙන
සිව්සිය පත්තු මතුරව පියස සම	ගින
මහදන බාර මහමැති පදවිය දෙ	මින
සරුවන සියළු ගබඩා බාර කර	මින
දෙමළකු වඩිග පෙළපත පත් කළ	බැවින (468-9)

“Since the king appointed a Tamil of the *vaḍiga* lineage to the post of the chief minister in charge of the Great Treasury, along with the custodianship of the provinces of Hevāhata, Dumbara, the two Nuwaras (Udunuwara and Yatinuwara), Hārispattu and Maturata, handing over to him all the precious stores...”

42. *Mandārapura Puvata*, a historical poem compiled in three stages by different authors: the first part during the reign of Rajasinghe II (1634-84), the second part during the reign of Vimaladharmasuriya II (1684-1706), and the third part during the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinghe (1747-81). See the edition by Labugama Lankananda (1958) p. ix. The citations in the present study are from the third part.



A serious revolt ensued in protest against this appointment and the foreigner and his retinue were killed (verse 470). The king, unable to cope with the revolt himself, enlisted the support of the Dutch and crushed it with great violence. Hevāhāta and Maturata were burnt down. Two thousand men of rank were executed and their properties were confiscated (verses 471-477). After the king's anger subsided the senior ministers took counsel with him and told him :

ලක්දිව පැවැති තෙක් හිමි සඳිනි පින්	සර
පරදන ඇමති නනතුරු ලද මෙයින්	පෙර
නැත ඇසුමට වන් මෙම හැර කිසිම	වර (479)

“For all the time of the existence of the island of Lanka we have not even heard, except on this occasion, of foreign people(*para dana*) having obtained ministerial position”.

The rebellion of 1732, significantly, had the desired effect, “for never again, not even when a Nayakkar sat on the throne, do we hear of an administrative appointment being given to a Nayakkar, at least not in the higher ranks of the services.”<sup>43</sup>

The above account is indicative of the fact that those South Indians had been a cause of vexation to the Kandyan elite for quite some time. We learn that it was Rajasinghe II (1635-1687) who started the practice of bringing Nayakkara ladies as royal consorts.<sup>44</sup> According to one source, he had two Nayakkar Queens.<sup>45</sup> His son and heir, Vimaladharmasuriya II (1687-1707), continued the same practice and had as his queen a Nayakkar princess.<sup>46</sup> Narendrasinghe (1707-1739), on his part following his father and grandfather, brought down two brides from Madura.<sup>47</sup> Of special interest here is the fact that the Madura family which was thus matrimonially linked to the Kandyan royal family at the time of Narendrasinghe was not one with much wealth or influence.<sup>48</sup> The result was that Kandy became “a far more congenial home than their own, for thither they flocked with their kith and kin.”<sup>49</sup> It is the resentment against the cumulative effect of this South Indian presence that is vividly reflected in the *Kirala Sandēsayā* and the *Vaḍiga Haṭana*. In fact the *Vaḍiga Haṭana* specifically refers to Sri Vikrama as having, “in fond concern for his diverse *demala* relations, who were starving, obtained many lands and villages” (verse 172). [Here we should take note of the fact that the predicament of the Nayakkar at home (in South India) was not unknown to some sections of the Kandyan elite.]

Let us return to 1732, when Narednrasinghe paved the way for the Nayakkar dynasty to occupy the throne of Kandy. In spite of the king's wish to have his

43. Devaraja *op. cit.*, p. 74.

44. Devaraja *op. cit.*, p. 28, relying on the *Culavamsa* and Robert Knox.

45. Devaraja *op. cit.*, p. 28.

46. *op. cit.*, p. 29.

47. *op. cit.*, pd. 31-2.

48. Even their *Ksatriya* status is open to doubt. See Devaraja *op. cit.*, pp. 33-4.

49. *op. cit.*, p. 34.



brother-in-law, the Nayakkar prince, as his successor, and in spite of receiving the sponsorship of the influential *bhikkhu*, Saranankara, there was a faction led by Leuke who put forward the claim of Unambuve, the son of the king by a Sinhala lady. We have to understand the position taken by Leuke and others in the context of the anti-*Vadiga* feeling that had been brewing in Kandy for some time and erupting in a serious revolt only seven years earlier.

Since we are talking about an ideology, it is important that we focus attention on certain significant facts about the people who figure as the leaders among those striving against the Nayakkars.

Leuke, the leader of the Unambuve faction in 1739 was an ex-*bhikkhu*, and was popularly known as *vihāre rālahimī*<sup>50</sup> He was one of the few Pali scholars in early eighteenth century Kandy, and it was from him that the young *bhikkhu* Saranankara, who was later to lead a revival of Buddhism and literary activity, had his first lessons in Pali. Leuke was no great favourite of Narendrasinghe, and we learn that he served a prison sentence for an offence about which we have no clear information.<sup>51</sup> But by 1732 he had been pardoned and he was holding the important post of *mohottāla* (secretary), definitely a position bestowed on him for his erudition. After Sri Vijaya ascended the throne in 1739, the king made a special effort to reconcile with Leuke,<sup>52</sup> which is perhaps indicative of the respect he commanded and the influence he wielded in Kandyan society at that time. Leuke on his part "had the interests of his religion and country at heart" and never betrayed the trust placed in him by the king.<sup>53</sup> His erudition, seniority, and abiding interest in Buddhism was duly acknowledged. Thus we see him being appointed to a three-member tribunal which in 1745 sat in judgement over the anti-Buddhist activities of the Catholic priests in Kandy, who had been provided refuge from Dutch persecution by Narendrasinghe, and whose activities had caused much vexation among the Buddhists.<sup>54</sup> Leuke, being a Buddhist scholar himself, fully sympathised with Saranankara's revivalist endeavours, and he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the latter's attempt to revive the *upasampadā* (higher ordination). He was constantly in touch with Hollanders in Colombo on the matter of obtaining senior *bhikkhus* from Pegu for the ceremony, and it was in the course of these negotiations that a decision was reached to bring down *upasampanna bhikkhus* from Siam instead of Pegu.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Leuke stands out as a learned aristocrat who would have been conversant with the history of his people and the Buddhist *sāsana*. His commitment to a particular cause in 1739 has to be understood with this background in view.

50. The following account is based on Ven. Kotagama Vacissara *Saranankara Sangaraja Samaya*, Colombo, Ratnakara (1960) pp. 158-9, 261 and Devaraja, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

51. Devaraja, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

52. See the discussion above.

53. Devaraja, *op. cit.*, p. 83 53.

54. *op. cit.*, p. 93.

55. *op. cit.*, p. 89.



Leuke died in 1751. The two other members of the tribunal which convicted the Catholic priests in 1745, the second Adigar Samanakkody and *bhikkhu* Weliwita Saranankara, <sup>56</sup> now elevated to the dignity of Sangharaja (the highest Buddhist dignitary in the island) were to figure prominently in the plot of 1760 to remove the next *vadiga* ruler from the throne of Kandy. This incident has been described in detail in my earlier paper. <sup>57</sup>

Not only Saranankara, but the chief high prelate of the Malvatte Viharaya, Tibbotuvave Buddharakkhita too was involved in the conspiracy of 1760. Tibbotuvave was considered to be a brilliant pupil of Saranankara. Highly respected for his erudition and piety, he was selected over and above the other *bhikkhus*, some senior in age, to be appointed head of Malvatta and the Deputy Sangharaja. <sup>58</sup>

Saranankara and Tibbotuvave rank among the foremost scholars in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit in eighteenth century Sri Lanka. Apart from being the initiator of the religious and cultural revival of the day, Saranankara was the author of nine books *Munigunālanakaya* (Pali), *Abhisambōdhi Alankāraya* (Pali), *Sārārtha Sangrahaya* (Sinhala), *Ratnatraya Praṇama Gāthā Sannaya* (Pali and Sinhala), *Bhēsajja Manjusā Sannaya* (Pali and Sinhala), *Satara Baṇavara Sannaya* (Pali and Sinhala), *Mahābōdhivamsa Sannaya* (Pali and Sinhala), *Rūpamālāva* (Pali) and *Pāli Sandēsaya* (Pali). He was also said to have been conversant in six languages. <sup>59</sup>

Tibbotuvave was second only to his teacher in scholarly reputation. His writings were : *Srī Saddharmāvavāda Sangrahaya* (Sinhala), *Satipaṭṭhāna Sūtra Sannaya* (Pali and Sinhala), *Saddhammōpāyana Sannaya* (Pali and Sinhala), *Syāmōpasampadā Vata* (Sinhala), and his *magnum opus* was the fourth part of the *Mahāvamsa*, in which he narrated the history of the island from the time of Parakramabahu IV (1302-26) to the middle of Kirti Sri's reign. This Pali composition consisting of 500 verses is a testimony to his wide knowledge of historical material and his mastery over the Pali language.

Tibbotuvave died in 1773, having been restored to his position as Head of Malvatte. Saranankara, who also was restored, survived his pupil and died in 1778. It is towards the end of Tibbotuvave's life that the king entrusted him with the task of updating the *Mahāvamsa*. Here, politics being such, Tibbotuvave glorifies the king in most laudatory terms :

Dowered with faith and many other virtues, devoted to the Buddha, his doctrine and his order, collected, mindful of what is worth and of what is worthless, ever performing meritorious works, such as almsgiving and the like; distinguished by splendid virtues, piety, wisdom, mercy, shining over the island with faith in the

56. *op. cit.*, 93.

57. Dharmadasa (1979).

58. P. B. J. Hevavasam, *Matara Yugaya Sahityadharayan Ha Sahitya Nibandhana*, Colombo, Dept. of Cultural Affairs (1968), pp. 35-6; Vacissara, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

59. Vacissara, *op. cit.*, p. 236.



Enlightened One living according to the good doctrine of the Sage, dowered with the ten powers, ever giving alms and performing other meritorious works unweariedly and full of zeal, mindful of what is worth and what is worthless, he ever acted in this way for the welfare of all men”

(*Cūlawamsa* Geiger's translation, Ch. 99, verses 66-68).

This was the man who appeared to Tibbotuvave and other conspirators in 1760 as a “heretical Tamil” (*mityādrstī demalā*), with whom the *sāsana* could no longer be sustained.<sup>60</sup> To be fair by Tibbotuvave, Saranankara and the others, who would have held such an opinion at the time, we have to continue with the story and record what happened in the aftermath of the abortive conspiracy.

According to the *Rājavalliya*, Samanakkodi Adigar and three other courtiers were beheaded, and the two prelates, Saranankara and Tibbotuvave, were imprisoned in two remote villages.<sup>61</sup> As reported in the *Sāsanāvātīrna Varṇanāva*, having punished the conspirators, the king relented and brought back Saranankara and Tibbotuvave from their places of imprisonment. He begged their forgiveness. “It is no fault of the venerable *bhikkhus*,” he said, “the fault is entirely mine. Who would have thought of killing me if I did not annoint myself with ash.” Having thus put the blame upon himself not only did he give up the practice of annointing himself with ash but even prohibited the use of soot in blackening the letters of ola manuscripts!<sup>62</sup>

Crucial to my argument is the fact that Leuke, Saranankara and Tibbotuvave belonged to the literary elite and that they were aware of the historical role assigned to the Sinhaladvīpa as the island of destiny – the Dhammadvīpa – by the chronicles such as the *Dīpavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*,<sup>63</sup> edificatory works such as the *Pūjāvaliya* and other *vamsa* literature, such as the *Dhātuvamsaya* (The Chronicle of the Buddha's Relics), the *Daṭṭhāvamsaya* (The Chronicle of the Tooth Relic), the *Mahābodhivamsa* (The Chronicle of the Great Bodhi Tree), the *Thūpavamsa* (The Chronicle of the Stupa) etc. The underlying theme of these compositions is the unique role the island and its people were destined to play in the preservation of the Buddha's doctrine. For example, the *Dhātuvamsaya* states in a passage where the historical sequence has been reversed :

The Buddha placed his sacred footprint adorned with one hundred and eight auspicious signs, on top of Sumanagiri (mountain), as if placing a seal on the door of that treasury of the island of Lanka which was filled with the gems of (the Buddha's) Body Relicts, the eighty four thousand heaps of the doctrine and innumerable *bhikkhus* with eightfold achievements.

(ed. Munidasa Kumaratunga. 2483 B.E. p. II.)

60. For details see Dharmadasa (1979).

61. Devaraja *op. cit.*, p. 113

62. Godakumbura ed. (1956) pp. 25-6. In the preparation of ola manuscripts, the surface is cut into by an iron stylus and letters made visible by rubbing up on it with soot. As recorded in the *SV*, thereafter the rubbing was done with saffron.

63. For this aspect of the chronicles see Sirima Kiribamune, “The Dipavamsa in Ancient Sri Lankan Historiography,” *Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities*,<sup>3</sup> V. 1 & 2, (1979) pp. 89-100.



The Kandyan literati of the eighteenth century, fresh with their revivalist zeal would have time and again read these passages and the history of "the people and the sasana" (*lōka sāsana*) would have been a live factor in their minds. For instance, we know for certain that Tibbotuvave consulted the *Pūjāvaliya* (13th Century) before writing his *Srī Saddharmāvāvāda Sangrahaya*.<sup>64</sup> And the following passages could not have escaped his attention :

Since it is definite that the right branches of the Bodhi Trees, the precious Doctrine and the Dispensations of innumerable Buddhas will be established here, this island of Lanka decidedly belongs to the Buddhas. It is like a treasury filled by the Triple Gem. Therefore the sojourn of wrong believers in this island of Lanka will indeed not be permanent, just as the sojourn of the *Yakkhas* of yore here was not permanent. If a king of false beliefs (*mityāḍṛsti gat rājek*) was to rule here by force the fact that his dynasty will not take root is due to the special powers of the Buddhas themselves.

(ed. Walane Dhammandanda, 1916. pp. 656-7)

In Chapter XXXIV the author of the *Pūjāvaliya* describes the offerings received by the Buddha from one hundred and fifty three "Royal lords of Sinhala" (*Sinhalādhipti rajahu*).<sup>65</sup> In its course references are made to nine instances when the Tamils invaded the island. The word *demala* is specially used at each instance, even when referring to the Colas, and to the invasion of Magha of Kalinga.<sup>66</sup> In describing the reign of Magha, which was one of the longest periods of foreign occupation it is said :

(He) made Sri Lanka adopt false beliefs ... made Lanka like a house on fire ... (and) got it plundered by the Tamils and reigned forcibly for nineteen years (p. 690).

With such "lessons" from history it would have been surprising if Tibbotuvave and other revivalist scholars were not sensitive to the implications of a "heretica Tamil" occupying the throne of Sinhale.

I should mention here that Vāligala Kavisundara, whose anti-Tamil invective is unparalleled for this period was a pupil of Tibbotuvave.<sup>67</sup> Bhikkhu Kitalagama, the author of *Kirala Sandēsaya*, about whose mentor we have no information seems to have belonged to the Malvatta faternity. Following the practice usually adopted by *sandēsa* poets, he describes what would have been his own temple in the most copious terms. Thus, we have a long description of Malvatta (verses 87 to 107), where the Head of Malvatta at the time, Kobbekaduve Siri Nivasa (1811-19) also receives laudatory praise.

64. *Sri Saddharmāvavavada Sangrahaya*, ed. Ven. Weragoda Amaramoli, Colombo, Ratnakara (1956) p. 6.

65. Ed. Walane Dhammananda, Colombo, Jinalankara (1916) p. 676.

66. Thus "එළාර නම් දෙමළ රජෙක් ලක්දිව ලෝ සසුන් නසා ලක්දිව බැස;" p. 680 "සොළි රටින් දෙමළ සත් දෙනෙක් සත් සෙනගක් ගෙන සත් තොටින් ලක්දිව බැස;" p. 685. "එකල සොළි රටින් පසානු දහසක් දෙමළ නැවත ලක්දිවට බැස ලෝකසාසන නැසූහ;" p. 690. "මාස නම් කළිඟු රජ සුවිසිදහසක් දෙමළ බල සෙනග ගෙන ලක්දිව බැස ලෝකසාසන නසා . . ." p. 676.

67. Sannasgala. *op, cit.*, p. 459.



The ideological stances of Vāligāla and Kitalagama therefore have to be understood in the context of the *gurukula* (lineage of teachers) tradition. These writers were not only influenced by their teachers and the ideological and intellectual milieu in which they received education and training, but were also affected by the ideological themes found in the literary and scholarly tradition coming down from antiquity in the *vamsa* literature (the *Dīpavamsa*, *Mahāvamsa*, etc.), and edificatory writings such as the *Pūjavalīya*, which embodied the *Sinhaladvīpa* and the *Dhammadvīpa* concepts.

The fact that there was such a strand of opinion in Kandyan society did not mean that everybody subscribed to it. It appears to have been confined to a small section of the literati. Among the bulk of the population, on the other hand, the Nayakkar kings were "the divine lords who had come down in the lineage of Mahasammata" through Vijaya and the other illustrious rulers of Lanka. Hence the potency of the Nayakkar connection when several pretenders appeared obtaining wide support during the post - 1815 period.

The question can be raised as to why the conspirators of 1760 selected a Thai prince to replace Kirti Sri - the implication being that there was no concern about the ethnic factor. But this question does not take into account the fact that there was a group who sponsored the name of Pattiye Bandara. Here I must say that Gunawardana's argument that "the leaders of the plot could not decide on a Sinhala noble to replace the Nayakkar king" is sidetracking the issue. We are concerned here with what happened in history and not what should have happened. The group who sponsored the cause of Pattiye Bandara possibly thought that the *ksatriya* factor was less important than the ethnic factor.

This view did not prevail because of the nature of court politics at the time: Furthermore, it appears from the evidence available that the choice of the Siamese prince was no mere matter of convenience. There were certain calculations behind it. We are informed that the conspiracy to bring down the Siamese prince took some time to take shape.<sup>68</sup> There were consultations with the Siamese *bhikkhus*, who were living in Malvatte and other temples; letters were sent to Siam; and the Siamese prince came down disguised as a *bhikkhu* for the specific purpose of ascending the throne of Kandy.<sup>69</sup>

The Siamese *bhikkhus* by this time had made a strong impact on Kandyan society. In the first mission to Sri Lanka in 1753 twenty five Siamese *bhikkhus* arrived, along with five lay envoys, and officiated in the re-establishment of the *upasampada*.<sup>70</sup> They are said to have established twenty five "consecrated" *sīma* (buildings necessary for Buddhist ecclesiastical rites) in various parts of the kingdom and they stayed in

68. According to Devaraja "the plot had been brewing for a considerable time, perhaps for several years", *op. cit.*, p. 110.

69. Devaraja, *op. cit.*, p. 110; D. A. Kotalawala "New Light on the Life of Sangaraja Weliwita Saranankara," *Vidyodaya Journal of Arts, Sciences and Letters*, Vol. I (1968) pp. 53-57.

70. Vacissara, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-8.



the island for some time, visiting places of worship such as Anuradhapura and Mahiyangana.<sup>71</sup> It is said that during this period seven hundred Sinhala *bhikkhus* including Saranankara and Tibbotuvave, received the Higher Ordination and that three thousand Sinhala youth entered the Order.<sup>72</sup> Three years later, twelve other senior *bhikkhus* and nine novices arrived from Siam. According to available information, only few of those who came here returned home. They stayed in various temples, teaching the Sinhala *bhikkhus* the doctrine, meditation techniques as well as the Siamese and Cambodian languages. Also the Sinhala *bhikkhus* learnt from these Siamese mentors the style of *pirith* recitation.<sup>73</sup> Thus the relations between the two groups became so close that, according to one Buddhist historian, they “appeared to belong to one and the same country”.<sup>74</sup>

The plot to do away with the “heretical Tamil” and place a Siamese prince on the throne of Kandy was hatched at this time. It was with the third mission that the aspirant to the throne arrived in the island disguised as a *bhikkhu*.<sup>75</sup> Not only did the Siamese prince have *ksatriya* qualifications, but he also belonged to a nation which had become so very close to the Sinhala *bhikkhus*. Furthermore, coming from a country far away, he did not have a horde of parasitic kinsmen as well as the unsavory memories associated with the South Indians.

In concluding my arguments for the possible existence of a Sinhala-Buddhist opinion working against the Nayakkar rulers, I wish to reiterate a point I made in my earlier paper. In looking for this ideological motivation, we have to put together the information available in different sources and place them in the context of a long-standing tradition of antipathy to the South Indians – all *demalu* in the Sinhala conceptualization. Then, the fact that some sections of the Kandyan elite were motivated by an ethno-religious ideology would seem very much plausible.

### III

Finally, we come to Gunawardana’s typification of modern Sinhala nationalism as a construct heavily indebted to some ideologies propounded by nineteenth century Europeans. He finds this, in particular, with regard to the assumption that the Sinhalese are “Aryans” who are “superior” to the Tamils – labeled as “Dravidians”. He traces the earliest stage of this influence to the writings of the nineteenth century Sinhala scholar, James de Alwis (1823–78). Gunawardana argues that De Alwis, at first held a “hesitant” view about the origin of the Sinhala language, but became very much emphatic about “the Aryan connection” later on due to the influence of Max Muller’s theories on the Aryans.

71. Vacissara, *op. cit.*, pp. 149.

72. Vacissara, *op. cit.*, pp. 150.

73. Vacissara, *op. cit.*, p. 152-3.

74. Vacissara, *op. cit.*, 153.

75. *Ibid* and Devaraja (1972) p, 110.



To illustrate this change Gunawardana first quotes from De Alwis's Introduction to the *Sidat Sangarāva* (written in 1851 and published in 1852). This is Gunawardana's quotation.

To trace therefore the Singhalese to one of the Northern family of languages, and to call it a dialect of Sanskrit, is apparently far more difficult than to assign to it an origin common with the Telingu, Tamil, and Malayalam in the Southern family . . . the Singhalese appears to us either a kindred language of Sanskrit, or one of the tongues . . . which falls under the head of the Southern class. Yet upon the whole we incline to the opinion that it is the former. <sup>76</sup>

According to Gunawardana this is a "hesitant presentation" which "reveals that his views were not clearly formed at this time". Anyone reading De Alwis's Introduction carefully cannot help feeling that Gunawardana has reached this conclusion through a process of selecting some of De Alwis's phrases and omitting others which do not fit Gunawardana's arguments in his essay. The fact of the matter is that De Alwis was not at all "hesitant" in typifying Sinhala as an Indo-Aryan language in the work used by Gunawardana. Let me explain.

The extract quoted by Gunawardana is from p. xivi of De Alwis's Introduction. In earlier pages of the same work De Alwis goes into great detail in setting out his views on the origin of the Sinhala language, which Gunawardana omits in his paper. From p. xi to p. xxi there is a long discussion on the coming of Vijaya, on who the original inhabitants of the island were and what languages the two groups - that is to say Vijaya and his band, and the indigenes - spoke. De Alwis's conclusion is that Lanka was inhabited by people speaking Sinhala before the advent of Vijaya, and that Vijaya himself spoke Pali or Sanskrit. As for the origin of the Sinhala language he believes that "the original inhabitants of Ceylon had derived their language (now denominated the Singhalese) from the same source whence the Sanskrit and the Pali have been derived".<sup>77</sup> He ventures to suggest that Lanka was settled by the original speakers of Sinhala at the same time the first speakers of Sanskrit and Pali settled in India.<sup>78</sup> From p. xxii to p. xxvi he expands his views on the original Sinhala language and its later enrichment by accessions from Sanskrit and Pali after "the invasion of this island by the Sinha race", i.e. Vijaya and his followers.<sup>79</sup> From p. xxvi to the top of p. xxviii he argues at length in an effort to prove that the word *elu* is synonymous with the word "Singhalese". In the second paragraph of page xxviii he poses the question "Is it (Sinhala) a dialect of the Sanskrit?", and the next seven pages are devoted to demonstrating that the Sinhala language, instead of being "a dialect" of

76. Gunawardana, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29, quoting from the Introduction to James De Alwis's *The Sidat Sangarava: A Grammar of the Singhalese Language*, Colombo, The Govt. Printer (1852) p. xlvi.

77. De Alwis, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

78. *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

79. *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.



Sanskrit, <sup>80</sup> was in cognate relationship with it. Many arguments based on structural features of the two languages are advanced by De Alwis to support his conclusion that Sinhala and Sanskrit "are both cognate languages, derived from one and the same source, which is, now perhaps, irrecoverably lost".<sup>81</sup> On the following page he reiterates his conclusion that the two languages "had a common origin". The phrases quoted by Gunawardana appear on the page that comes after.

The summary of De Alwis's views given above would make it clear that if Gunawardana only read the early part of De Alwis's Introduction, he would not have used the adjective "hesitant" to describe De Alwis's portrayal of the kin connections of the Sinhala language.

It is only after arriving at definite conclusions about the origin of Sinhala, which were backed by strong philological arguments, that De Alwis proceeded to pay attention to another opinion about its origin. Meticulous scholar that he was, he did not want to "omit to consider whether the Singhalese falls under the category of the Southern class of languages" <sup>82</sup> i.e. the Dravidian family. About that, he proceeded to state, "the Singhalese is unquestionably an Indian dialect; and looking merely to the geographical position of Ceylon it is but natural to conclude that the Singhalese owe their origin to the inhabitants of South India, and that their language belongs to the Southern family of languages". Next he writes the sentence, "To trace therefore the Singhalese . . . Southern family", cited by Gunawardana. Opening a new paragraph he proceeds, "But in view of all the arguments *pro* and *con* the Singhalese appears to us to be either a kindred language of the Sanscrit, or one of those tongues . . . which falls under the head of the southern class. Yet upon the whole, we incline to the opinion, that it is the former." Giving further reasons to support this view he concludes the paragraph with the following sentence: ". . . the similarity in the general framework of the two languages (i.e. Sinhala and Sanskrit) . . . and above all the resemblances which the prepositions and the numerous particles present . . . are so palpable and striking, that we are compelled to assign them a common origin". <sup>83</sup>

It would now be clear that Gunawardana has either failed to read De Alwis's Introduction as carefully as he should have or that he was resorting to selective quotation of extracts that would support his own arguments, while ignoring others which contradicted these. And it also should be clear that Gunawardana's selectivism has led to a drastic distortion of De Alwis's views on the origin of the Sinhala language and its place in the Indian linguistic area.

De Alwis had two tasks at hand. One was to establish that Sinhala was an Indo-European language; and, the second, his special contribution, was to show that

80. By "dialect" he meant a linguistic medium derived from another, a "daughter" language. See De Alwis, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix.

81. De Alwis, *op. cit.*, p. xliii.

82. *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

83. *op. cit.*, p. xlvi.



Sinhala, in genetic terms, was a “sister” rather than a “daughter” of Sanskrit. In fact his belief was that the relationship between Sinhala and Sanskrit is similar to that between Sanskrit and the reputed classical languages of Europe, Greek and Latin, to which the great orientalist Sir William Jones had drawn attention.<sup>84</sup>

Admittedly, De Alwis’s views cannot be sustained on the basis of later findings on these complex themes. I have summarized his arguments solely for the purpose of reporting what he believed in 1851 about the origin of the Sinhala language.

What appears to be the most striking feature of De Alwis’s views on the matter is the strong stand he took with regard to the relationship between Sinhala and Sanskrit. Indeed, he elevated the Sinhala language to a loftier position than any other scholar ventured to do in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>85</sup> Raising the status of Sinhala from that of a “daughter” to a “sister” of Sanskrit, a language with “a wonderful structure more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin and more explicitly refined than either”,<sup>86</sup> was undoubtedly a feat of intense language loyalty. De Alwis believed that his own language was not only closely related to but also was on par with the reputed classical languages of Europe and Asia – Greek, Latin, Pali and Sanskrit.<sup>87</sup>

‘The utter absence of all traces of the Singhalese in India’, he argued, “prove it to be a very ancient one”.<sup>88</sup> The crux of his argument was that the time in which it was in use in the mainland was too far off for it to have retained any traces in the present. In further support of his argument he adduced the fact of ‘the existence in it of many characteristics common to all *primitive* languages’;<sup>89</sup> the term “primitive” here meaning “original” or “early in date of appearance”. And, this imputation of hoary antiquity to Sinhala was again part of De Alwis’s intense language loyalty.<sup>90</sup>

The belief that the Sinhala language was so close to and on par with those reputed classical languages had other implications. If the original inhabitants of the island

84. *op. cit.*, p. xlv.

85. i.e. Not until Munidasa Cumaratunga came out with his “Helese” ideology in the 1930’s. See K. N. O. Dharmadasa “The Ideological Pinnacle of Sinhalese Language Nationalism: The Career of Munidasa Cumaratunga”. *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, viii, 2 (1978) published in 1981, pp. 1-16

86. These are the famous words of Sir William Jones which De Alwis quotes on p. xlv.

87. cf. “It is extremely humiliating for the nationalist to know that his tongue is not regarded as an independent language, but as a dialect of some other . . . It is psychologically rewarding on the other hand, to know that one’s language . . . is closely related to a greatly respected tongue of antiquity”. K. Symmons – Symmonolewicz, *Nationalist Movements: A Comparative View*, Meadville, Pa. (1970) p. 41.

88. De Alwis *op. cit.*, p. xlvii.

89. *op. cit.*, p. xlvii. Emphasis as in original.

90. See De Alwis *op. cit.*, p. xlvi. Also compare “It is psychologically rewarding . . . (for the nationalist) to know that his language has retained some very ancient characteristics.” Symmons – Symmonolewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 44.



used Sinhala as their language, before "the invasion" of the "Sinha conquerors",<sup>91</sup> i.e. Vijaya and party, the language would have had a longer history than ascribed to it on the authority of the *Mahāvamsa*. Thus viewing language as an index to civilization,<sup>92</sup> De Alwis wanted to see in the *Sīdat Sangarāva*, the ancient grammatical treatise he was translating, and the rules of grammar embodied in it, an insight into the greatness of Sinhala civilization.

Considering its (the Sinhala language's) antiquity, and the comprehensiveness of its rules, which present the rudiments of a correct and well defined Oriental language, bearing close resemblance to Sanskrit, Greek, Pali and Latin, we obtain indubitable evidence of the early greatness, and the civilization of the Singhalese.<sup>93</sup>

Scientifically untenable though such beliefs may be, what is of interest for our purpose is recognizing the nationalistic sentiment which prompted De Alwis in 1851 to view the Sinhala language as hallowed by an immemorial tradition and connected with a glorious civilization. Sinhala consciousness had prompted a Sinhala ethnic, a Christian at that and not a Buddhist, to express those ideas five years before the appearance of Caldwell's *Comprehensive Grammar of the Dravidian or the South Indian family of languages* (Madras, 1856) and ten years before Max Muller published *The Science of Language* (London, 1861). These are the two works which Gunawardana thinks influenced De Alwis and later scholars, who emphasized the distinctiveness of Sinhala Aryans from the Tamil Dravidians.

It should now be clear that De Alwis's later writings, including "On the Origin of the Sinhalese Language" (1865/6), where Gunawardana sees the influence of Muller and Caldwell, were mere elaborating on a theme which had been first expressed much earlier and indeed in the Introduction to the *Sīdat Sangarāva*, where Gunawardana saw only "hesitation". Of course De Alwis may have been influenced by Muller's writings later on, and as Gunawardana points out, the emphasis on the racial aspect of the Aryan theory found in the paper of 1865/6 could have been due to that influence. Be that as it may, my contention is that it is wrong to impute De Alwis's language nationalism solely to European sources. His inspiration came mostly from his own cultural heritage.<sup>94</sup> To prevent any misunderstanding I should mention here that in the

91. De Alwis, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

92. In this De Alwis was using a notion derived from European scholars. He quotes Macaulay's *History of England*, in this respect: "Rude societies have language, and often copious and energetic language; but they have no scientific grammar; no definitions of nouns and verbs, no names for declensions moods, tenses and voices". (De Alwis, *op. cit.*, cclxxxi.) Needless to say, such views are untenable in the light of modern linguistic scholarship.

93. De Alwis, *op. cit.*, cclxxx. Such a belief, apparently, is of immense value for the nationalistic self-image. Thus for example, the idea that Rumanian was related to the "esteemed" Romance languages, Latin and French, provided a strong stimulus to the Rumanian people who not only took pride in this "connection" but also were encouraged to seek closer ties with the French people. See Symmons-Symmonolewicz *op. cit.*

94. I have dealt with this in detail in a forthcoming paper.



religio-cultural revival during the last decades of the nineteenth century there was a very obvious inspiration from western sources, particularly in moulding what was called the ‘Arya-Sinhala’ identity. Gunawardana has cited several instances in this connection and I too have recognised that development in an earlier study.<sup>95</sup> No doubt these ideas gained wide currency in the years that followed and the Sinhala identity today is heavily influenced by the concepts thus elaborated. The question at hand is not that. It concerns the work of James De Alwis. As I have clearly demonstrated above, Gunawardana has both misunderstood and misinterpreted De Alwis’s views in his attempt to construct the central theme of his paper ‘The People of the Lion : The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography’.

In the final paragraph of his paper Gunawardana deplors the damage that ideology has inflicted on recent researches on the humanities and social sciences in Sri Lanka. He is critical of his fellow historians too in this regard. Let me quote the last sentence of his paper. It reads as follow: ‘The ability of these disciplines to grow out of the deformations derived from the impact of racialism and communalism would depend on the extent to which those engaged in research and teaching recognize the social function of their disciplines, and develop an awareness of the ideological underpinnings of research and other academic work’. These are indeed laudable sentiments. No doubt he has made a great effort to live up to these in his essay. But he has failed to live up to other ideals of scholarship. As reiterated, he has been very selective in his choice of evidence, and he has ignored large masses of evidence if they did not suit his argument. The result is that he has merely scratched the surface of this very important subject in his essay. It now needs one or a few more exacting scholars to give us a more objective study of the emergence of the ethnic identity of the People of the Lion.

I wish to conclude this study with one of my own observations. The phenomenon we have discussed - the vision of the Sinhala identity embodied in the *Dīpavamsa* and in the *Mahāvamsa* and the commentary of the latter, the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, the political activities in the cause of Sinhala ethnicity by some sections of the Kandyan elite, the strivings of James De Alwis with the Sinhala language as a nationalist focus - can be considered as periodic expressions of a continuous ideological tradition. Certain salient themes in it can be easily recognized, the most prominent being the Sinhala-dvipa concept. As could be expected of any ideologically motivated behaviour, the activities we examined were confined to an elite who at every stage were drawing inspiration from ideologues of yester-years.

95. Gunawardana, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32; K. N. O. Dharmadasa, *The Rise of Sinhala Language Nationalism : A Study in the Sociology of Language*, Monash University Ph.D. dissertation (unpublished) 1979, pp. 210-225.







# Kipling's Women of Imperial India

RAJIVA WIJESINGHE

“Whether, as has been argued *The Man who would be King* is a fable of Empire is not so sure . . . . You cannot be a god *and* a sensuous human being, the men losing their divine stature when Dravot insists upon acquiring a wife. Its parallel with the the British Empire is the setting of warring tribes to productive work, making some of them into an army, and establishing a central government administering laws . . . It is not to be suggested that the disastrous end of the story in any way pre-figured what Kipling thought would be the final withdrawal of the British from India.”<sup>1</sup>

So complacent an account of Kipling's view of the role of women in India cannot, I think, be sustained. With the benefit of E. M. Forster's later account<sup>2</sup> at hand too, criticism perforce cannot be so indulgent. At the same time it is necessary to make some discriminations between the two writers to understand better Kipling's distinctive presentation of the romance India had to offer, and the prerequisites for its proper fruition.

In the first place, it should be granted, Forster, was a misogynist, at any rate in the sense in which, if it could have been argued that women had only a negative part to play in the process of Empire, he would have seized upon the argument with relish. More importantly *A Passage to India* is in the end a book that illuminates rather than examines the particular effect of imperialism on relations between the races. Forster was concerned in general in his work primarily with a particular form of relationship between human beings that had, or perhaps could have had, one of its more interesting manifestations in the imperial context, but why this was so or why other relationships were difficult or impossible was not his subject. Thus, though his account of, for instance Mrs Turton, is both horrifying and instructive; though his analysis of the bridge-party shows an appreciation of relevant detail with regard to the cross-currents affecting relationships between races and sexes; though indeed he does in the end suggest through the book what the ideal imperial relationship might have amounted to, for Forster India was not essentially a basic concern. Even if *A Passage to India* is a great political novel, this is almost in despite of itself; its main protagonists are not the political figures, the administrators, or those who lived predominantly with the imperialistic framework, whose predicament is a more fundamental concern in Kipling's work.

1. Bonamy Dobree, *Rudyard Kipling - Realist and Fabulist* OUP, London (1967) p. 156.

2. See my article "Of Love and Development : A Passage to India in Fresh Connection" *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* Vol. VIII (1982) p. 66 - 86.



For the theory then as to why women were unsuitable in the Indian context we have to look more closely at Kipling's work only. My own view is that careful reading shows it up quite clearly, but the very different view expressed in the quotation above suggests that this will have to be argued in detail. In this respect it may be helpful then to place the matter in context, by glancing briefly at one of Kipling's contemporaries who was also particularly concerned with the principles that underlay human relationships in the context of Empire, albeit he did not deal with India in his work. I refer to Conrad.

Conrad indeed is scathing about the destructive effect of women on men in any context, and it should be granted that he too, like Forster, could be accused of misogyny.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless a great deal of his work does examine the role of white men in a colonial environment, and it is the failure of such men due to the effect wrought on them by women that dominates Conrad's early work and, I think, sets the tone for his later reiteration of the theme in different contexts. The reason for this, I would argue, is that in the early imperial context, Conrad's concern with duty could have full play, the distractions provided by women could be seen to be particularly damaging in view of the protagonist's domination of his environment; women were the inspiration for an alternative code of values that could obviously be seen to have no place in the stark situation in which the isolated protagonist had only his personal authority on which to rely. Without wishing to belittle Conrad's later work, I would suggest that the contemptuous attitude he adopts towards women there too is less convincing because there is no such clear-cut choice between an obvious duty and what is equally obviously primarily a destruction.

Happily that attitude of contempt is less obvious in the later work, though that it is still noticeably present suggests that its successful literary presentation in the early work owed as much to Conrad's misogyny as to a considered conviction about the effect of women in the context of the colonies. Kipling's case is quite different, which of course makes what similarities there are all the more significant. In the first place, the attitude is not so much one of contempt as of simple criticism; it is not, after all, their fault that these women are in a situation in which they are quite inappropriate. Secondly, in the later work, the work that deals, not with India but with a British environment the women are treated with love and affection and indeed sometimes even have a positive role to play. As such the fact that the treatment is generally very negative in the Indian writings indicates that Conrad did have some sort of a point, that the very basis of Imperialism, or rather its underlying aims and ideals, made the position of women and the demands they represented difficult, or even impossible.

There is, however, further difference between the two writers, which may go some way towards explaining and indeed mitigating Conrad's harshness in this later works

3. See my article 'The Horror, The Horror: Conrad's Attitude to Women' in *The Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities* Vol. VI (1980).



as well towards women. Conrad's protagonists are in the end fundamentally individualists, and their emotional commitments are to their private aspirations and ideals rather than to anything or anyone arising from the social circumstances in which they function. As Elliot L. Gilbert says in noting the difference between the two writers,

To put it another way, Conrad apparently felt that in a dark universe, some men have a greater obligation than others to penetrate the blackness, that some failures are more terrible than others; while Kipling's special gift was to recognize, and to place at the centre of much of his best fiction, the idea that an obligation to moral consciousness is universal.<sup>4</sup>

As such, even in contexts more conventional than the colonial, Conrad's characters had to be much more determined in their pursuit of their ideals. As a consequence women could much more easily and perhaps more justifiably be dismissed. At the same time, although it should perhaps be granted that it is this very intensity that makes one feel Conrad to be the greater writer, Gilbert's definition should be modified or expanded to make it clear that the obligations that concern Conrad are those of the individual towards himself. This does not make them selfish; on the contrary, it is often abnegation of the self that is required, and often the virtues Conrad's characters are called upon to display are those that contribute to the well being of society; yet it would be quite absurd to describe the values which they uphold as social values. The dark universe Conrad's heroes inhabit can be illuminated only from within, and in the end it is only the verdict they pass upon themselves that matters.

In a sense, though doubtless the predominant reason was that his acquaintance with it was minimal compared with his intimacy with the Far East, this makes it appropriate that Conrad did not deal with India. I do not mean to suggest that natives elsewhere could have been treated as of lesser consequence than the Indians; indeed, as should be obvious, having divided his characters into the chosen and others, Conrad does not distinguish to any appreciable extent as to race in the course of working out his moral perspectives; but in writing about India, the very romance of Imperialism, with capital letters as it were, which is how it was seen in that particular manifestation, made it necessary to look at, or at least assume, some sort of

4 *The Good Kipling: Studies in the Short Story*. Manchester University Press (1972) p 197, Gilbert had earlier (p. 102) in discussing Mrs. Bathurst, suggested Kipling's affinities with Conrad in the treatment of women - "Kipling's attitude towards women is idiosyncratic. Women as individuals may be charming and wholly innocent and yet at the same time be acting, unconsciously as the agents of a terrible power totally beyond their understanding or control. And though this power may originally have been generated by some overwhelming creative urge, its random mindless application can just as easily be deadly and destructive"; and again, and understanding now the true nature of that blind, corrosive, impersonal attraction he had felt and himself almost succumbed to, he "covers his face with his hands for a moment, like a child shutting out an ugliness". Outside the office car, waiting for their train, the picknickers sing of romance in conventional sentimental terms, offering an ironic contrast to Pritchard's belated revelation about the true nature of women's love... It makes a properly bitter conclusion to a story which might equally well have ended with Kurtz's despairing words. "The horror, the horror". (p. 112).



relationship between governors and governed as lying at the heart of the aspirations of the former.

At this point it is of course only the aspirations of the former that are important. When Forster wrote, the reactions of the Indians could, (though they did not have to as reactions to his book make clear), be taken into account, their attitudes to the British who were trying to govern them, give them laws and spare them, or simply make friends. In Kipling's time such distinctions were unthinkable, or at least were certainly not to be inflicted on readers. Yet the difference between the position presented by Kipling, and that of Conrad's protagonists who are concerned in their particular colonial context with their own exercise of authority only as it affects themselves, is marked. Kipling's administrators, on the contrary, and those who live within that milieu, are always aware that they are under observation. As the Latin tags he uses indicate, and indeed the fact that, having left India long behind he returned to Roman centurions to reiterate the Imperial theme, Kipling saw his colonial heroes as functioning within a tradition, so that the standards they had to uphold were emphatically not their own, but handed down to them to be preserved and passed on in the interests of something that lay beyond and above themselves.<sup>5</sup>

And it is within such a tradition that even Dravot and Carnehan, the disreputable adventurers in *The Man who would be King*, find themselves, in fulfilment it should be added of aspirations the general applicability of which they fully appreciate. Numerous critics have expounded the symbolic relevance of the work to the subject of British rule in India,<sup>6</sup> and there is no need to go again into what they have made clear. Two points, however, that may have escaped notice are worth stressing. The first is that, uniquely, we are able to see the reactions of the governed to the whole grand process of Imperialism, and to see it in a context in which that process is successfully cast aside. This, as been mentioned above, was not usual, and was doubtless only possible here because of the mythical nature of the work, the fact that it is set outside India proper in a land of fantasy, with two obvious adventurers as its protagonists, not individuals firmly within the tradition, whom it would have been unthinkable to show as being clearly criticized by those over whom they were set. This makes all the more remarkable the second significant point, that the rock on which they capsize, the temptation of women, is set so clearly within the tradition by devices that make clear to all careful readers of Kipling its importance to the writer.

The Biblical overtones alone, in the light of Kipling's use of them elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> would put beyond a doubt the intensity of his commitment to the point he is making here. After the adventurers have established their kingdom against all odds, Dravot

5. See for instance the discussion in T. R. Henn, *Kipling*, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh & London (1967) p. 9 - 13. of *imperas* and *parcere subjectis*

6. See for instance, apart from Cornell Louis, L. Dobree *Kipling in India*, Macmillan, London (1966)p. 161 - 4.

7. In addition to Dobree or Henn, see most recently Fr. Martin Jarrett-Kerr "The Theology of Rudyard Kipling". *The Kipling Journal*, (September 1976).



thinks he can now relax and take a wife, it is not only Carnehan who quotes the Bible against this but even the trusty native, Billy Fish : he indeed alludes to the pair as Gods, whereas Carnehan had referred only to Kings, in suggesting that diversions suitable for ordinary men would take away from their capacity as well as their mystique. Certainly both adventurers were aware at the very start of the limitations association with women would place upon their ambitions, as the contract shown to the narrator of the story at the beginning of the quest makes clear -

(2) "That you and me will not, while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman black, white or brown so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful".<sup>8</sup>

And that the female of the species was considered more dangerous than alcohol is apparent from the fact that when Dravot begins to weaken, Carnehan indulges him to the extent of suggesting that they "run in some good liquor; but no women".<sup>9</sup>

The sequel of course proves his point; but even without the melodrama of the chosen woman biting Dravot and drawing blood, so that the spell is broken and the natives, over whom they had managed to establish ascendancy, realize that they are vulnerable and rise up against them, the very act of taking a woman, it is clear from the initial reactions of the natives, has considerably diminished their stature. That it is bound to do so Carnehan indicates he realizes from the start by means of the contempt with which he refers to the proceedings : where Dravot talks about a wife, and then in response to Carnehan's reaction goes on to fantasize about "a Queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your side and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs."<sup>10</sup> Carnehan persists in talking about women. In passing he suggests that women might betray Dravot for people of their own race, but in reply to Dravot's argument that these natives could be identified with, he makes clear that his basic objection is that such a desire for women is a weakness, which will prevent the Kings they have made themselves into from fulfilling their task.

For Kipling then it was a sort of principle, this abstinence from women of men who had achieved for themselves authority over subject races; and though *The Man who would be King* is a fantastic story, it is a myth that is clearly applicable to the British Imperial adventure. and for that reason we should attempt to examine what lay behind the establishment of this principle in Kipling's mind. At one level, of course, as Philip Mason suggests in connection with the Freemasonry that also has a part to play in the

8. *The Man who would be King* in *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories*, Macmillan Pocket Edition, London (1907) p 215. All page references to Kipling's work hereafter will where possible be to the relevant volume in this edition, which will be cited without further bibliographical details.

9. *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories*, p. 239.

10. *ibid.*, p. 239.



tale, the reasons may have been psychological <sup>11</sup>, but it seems to me that there is sufficient practical detail in other stories about India to suggest that Kipling had good objective reasons for his view.

There are, it seems to me, several different aspects to Kipling's depiction of women in India, and the effect they have, and though most of these are destructive we should be careful to distinguish between them. At one extreme we have what might be called the dynamic sexual aspect of women, seen at its most vivid in stories such as *Love o' Women* and *Black Jack*, where passion of one sort or another leads to the death of a man. Here of course Kipling makes it clear that the fault is not that of the women, but of the insatiable, even self-destructive men concerned; but the framework of the stories, with their insistence on the endless repetitiveness of what might be called basic tragedy where women are involved sets the tone for the more subtle accounts we find elsewhere

At the next level too the women could be described as guiltless, even though there is a much greater sense of loss with regard to the effect they have wrought. I refer to Kipling's view that a good administrator, able to cope admirably with the people over whom he ruled, was lost from the very highest reaches of Parnassus once he got married. This did not mean that he could not do a relatively good job lower down in the scale - but Kipling was acutely conscious of what had been lost. The most famous example of this is the resourceful Strickland, who after he had won Miss Yougal through disguising himself as her syce, promised in marrying her to "drop his old ways, and stick to Departmental routine, which pays best and leads to Simla . . .;" he has, by this time, been nearly spoilt for what he would call *shkar*. He is forgetting the slang, and the beggar's cant and and marks, and the signs, and the drift of the under-currents, which, if a man would master, he must always continue to learn. But he fills in his Departmental returns beautifully. <sup>12</sup> A measure of the strength of Kipling's feeling about this loss is that twenty years later he reiterated it. Strickland has finished his Indian Service, and lives now at a place in England called Weston-super-Mare, where his wife plays the organ in one of the churches. Semi-occasionally he comes up to London, and occasionally his wife makes him visit his friends. Otherwise he plays golf and follows the harriers for his figure's sake. <sup>13</sup> And even the

11. *Kipling - The Glass, The Shadow and the Fire*, Jonathan Cape. London (1975) p 84-5. There is much that is relevant, but selective quotation will have to suffice here - "Freemasonry, as various people have pointed out, was bound to attract Kipling; he loved to belong to an inner circle, with secret passwords, where he could be safe from women who fascinated and frightened him. . . Freemasonry gave him occasional moments of the assured security he sought, but it was intermittent. Work was central to his view of life, and art was part of work. But work was loveless, art demanded a ruthless discipline, both were competitive. He needed a more sympathetic world of love to fall back on. He insisted, from the upper layer of consciousness, that a man must be independent before all things, but at a deeper level he longed for a warm emotional fortress . . . And, even more than most young middle-class Englishmen of the period who had been to a boarding school, he was in a muddle about women."

12. *Miss Yougal's Syce* in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p. 34.

13. *A Deal in Cotton* in *Actions and Reactions*, p. 171.



absurd *Story of the Gadsbys*, which begins like something out of Oscar Wilde's as the tale of a smart young man who married the daughter of the woman he had been courting, turns into a dirge about how marriage prevents him from doing his duty properly. One cannot doubt of course that Kipling, unlike Forster or Conrad, did see marriage as generally necessary but this did not prevent him from making clear what he saw as its unfortunate effects.

The reason for this state of inevitable misfortune, I think, was that Kipling was convinced that women were quite incapable generally of understanding or sharing in the world in which their menfolk functioned. Indeed, when they tried to share in that world, the results could sometimes be disastrous, as in *Watches of the Night*, which might be thought merely a funny tale, were it not for the bitterness Kipling summons up against the Colonel's wife who "manufactured the Station scandal, and . . . talked to her ayah."<sup>14</sup> In general however, the ill effects wrought by women are due to their innate separateness from the world in which menfolk they captivate have what seems a more valuable existence.

The examples given above of course are simply sad, or even just regrettable, rather than tragic. There are however other incidents, where the outcome is more unpleasant, and there is therefore a stronger hint of criticism of the woman involved. *In the Pride of his Youth*, for instance, is about a boy who got married before he came out to India, and therefore had a miserable life in trying to live up to commitments he could not properly sustain. Kipling twists the knife by suggesting, not only that the wife left behind cannot appreciate the boy's position out in India, but that she is also gratuitously selfish and takes advantage of him without really loving him. Again, in *Wressley of the Foreign Office*, ostensibly in the comic mode about a man who writes a learned tome, hoping through it to win the heart of a woman, we are fully aware of the absurdity of Wressley assuming his idol will have any interest whatsoever in the Indian customs he finds so fascinating. Yet Kipling does do his best to send the woman down in our esteem. "Miss Venner did not know what *magnum opus* meant; but she knew that Captain Kerrington had won three races at the Gymkhana."<sup>15</sup> All this could be described as cynicism or realism, but I cannot help feeling that in seeking to establish the great divide between men and women, Kipling wished to make it clear that men were much higher up in the social scale.

Indeed, Kipling's strongest criticism of women in this respect comes in two works that are not concerned with India which, together with the slightly stronger criticism cited above, may suggest that he was in fact a misogynist, contrary to what I suggested earlier on in this article. I would argue, however, that those two works also deal with men who are special cases, and it is because they are special, though in a sense different from the ordinary chaps who are good at the special roles they fill in India, that women have such a destructive effect on them. I refer first to *The Finest Story in*

14. *Watches of the Night* in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p. 86.

15. *Wressley of the Foreign Office*, *ibid.*, p. 316.



*the World*, where the literary inspiration of the young clerk dries up when he falls in love; while I would contest Stewart's view that this doctrine is no part of the essential excellence of the story, his other observations on the subject<sup>16</sup> make it clear that all we have here is the distrust of a man, who feels he has a special task, of what might distract him from it.

*The Light that Failed* I would grant is a more difficult case. Unlike the girl in *The Finest Story*, who never appears, and who is clearly guiltless, we are meant to feel that there is something wrong in Maisie for so determinedly rejecting Dick Helder, the painter who is the hero of the novel and who, as is clear from the opening of the novel, has a lot in common with Kipling. More startling perhaps, as Angus Wilson has pointed out, is the gratuitous destruction wrought by the model who, angry because Dick puts a stop to her affair with his friend Torpenhow, cuts to pieces the masterpiece he had just managed to complete before losing his sight. Wilson's thorough discussion however puts in context what he describes as "the blind, self-flattering misogyny of *The Light That Failed*"<sup>17</sup>, and to that I think should be added both Kipling's recent disappointment, whatever form it might have taken, with regard to Flo Gerrard, and also his recent association with Wolcott Ballestier, which may have led to greater reliance than the normally realistic Kipling would ordinarily have placed on the the world of men, the 'happy bachelor society' the extravagances of which Wilson criticizes in drawing attention to "the wretched sentimental mothering of each other with which Dick and Torpenhow and the Nilghai assuage each other's wounds received in contact with the deadly other sex." *The Light that Failed*, I would then argue, is very much a special case in which Kipling was working out his own personal problems, albeit in the light of his own artistry, rather than advancing general principles according to which he thought the world at large functioned.

As to those, while accepting that there may have been a particular period in the early 1890s when Kipling was going through a misogynistic phase, I would suggest that

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16. Fatally, he has fallen in love. "Charlie," the last sentence of the story tells us, "had tasted the love of women that kills remembrance, and the finest story in the world would never be written." We feel Kipling's lurking antagonism to women to be at work here; he is expressing the notion - which Bernard Shaw was later to make much of in *Man and Superman* - that there is something incompatible between the demands made on a man by art and sexual love, or at least by art and domesticity. It is a persuasion elsewhere expressed and generalized by Kipling in a single trenchant line: "He travels the fastest who travels alone". J. I. M. Stewart, *Rudyard Kipling*, Victor Gollancz, London (1966) p. 105 - 6.
17. Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling - His Life and Works*, Secker & Warburg, London (1977), p. 156. The extent of my indebtedness to this exciting work, which I first read in its American edition, may be apparent from the similarity of my account above to what Wilson also says about these particular works; although in writing this paper I could not find the passage in the original British edition of the book - 'This of course can be explained as arising from a particular individual experience, that had to be catharsised through fiction; but then at around the same time we have the symbolic account in 'The Finest Story in the World', of how feminine romantic interests are quite fatal to inspiration. I do not know whether there is any significance in these being written during the period of his association with Wolcott Ballestier. After Wolcott's death and the marriage to Carrie, Kipling does not reiterate this position, which in fact his own position rendered untenable.'



we get a better picture of his views by considering some of the later work, such as *The Wish House* or *The Gardener*, or most remarkably *An Habitation Enforced*. We get there a sympathetic understanding of the sufferings of women, and in the last named a forceful account of the power a woman can possess to recognize affinities that Kipling thought admirable. The story of the Americans who found themselves at home in England is an experience Kipling would have rated very highly, and the vital role the wife plays in the proceedings is, I think, ample evidence that in their proper place Kipling thought there was a lot women could do in the highest league too. In addition, when there are destructive associations, as in *Mrs. Bathurst* or *Mary Postgate*, we are back to the old formula where the woman is guiltless or [even more positively as far as Kipling's attitude to women goes], however upsetting we may find the story in itself, faced with a woman in the grip of an intense emotion which, we see from *Sea Constables*, for instance, Kipling attributed to men too with what seemed a sort of admiration when it finds fulfilment. In effect we can assume from the later work that in general Kipling felt that in England women had an important role to play that came much closer to that of their menfolk than had ever been possible in India; and this is the more impressive in as much as there is little doubt that he did feel in some sense limited by his wife's increasing control over him, and that to some extent his own life exemplified the sad story he had placed on general record in his account of Strickland.<sup>18</sup>

My claim, then, is that what I have characterized as the generally negative portrayal of women in the Indian works arises, not from any intrinsic dislike or distrust of women, but from an objective assessment of how difficult it was for them to contribute in the imperial situation. Indeed, though, as I have shown sometimes, Kipling was at pains to establish the inferiority of women, more often than not he is content simply to make clear the basic fact of their alienation from more important concerns. The suspicion of misogyny has arisen, I would argue, primarily due to the English work that has its roots in his personal situation, one that he soon got over. As to the Indian work, on the contrary, it might even be necessary to argue a bit further on behalf of the proposition I have advanced here, since I have so far ignored the works in which there is a very positive presentation of women; and amongst these are the stories about Mrs. Hauksbee, which are doubtless familiar to all devotees of Kipling.

The explanation of course for the favourite presentation of these women is that they function in a sphere that Kipling would not have thought of as Imperial in the sense defined above. Simla, as is clear from *Kim*, certainly had its part to play in the Imperial process, but Simla society, as the derogatory reference to it in the passage concerning Strickland quoted above indicates, was not for Kipling the real thing at all. Simla is where the men who run the Empire retreat to relax and recover from the real business of government, and though it may be best for a married man to fit into a routine that will lead to Simla, and though a great many important decisions may be

18. See the account in Lord Birkenhead, *Rudyard Kipling*, Weidenfeld Nicolson. London (1978) p. 323-5, which, though it attempts to preserve a balance, makes clear the intensity at times of Kipling's sense of deprivation.



taken there, which affect the individuals who have to do the work, it is all at a great remove from their true commitments, their absolute devotion to their duty. Mrs. Hauksbee then and A Second-Rate Woman can in their different ways dominate the individuals amongst whom they move, but as Mrs. Hauksbee's friend, Polly Mallowe, makes clear to her and to us when they are discussing the establishment of a *salon*, nothing she can do can have much effect in the great process in which they can never really partake -

"Surely, twelve Simla seasons ought to have taught you that you can't focus anything in India; and a *salon*, to be any good at all, must be permanent. In two seasons your roomful would be scattered all over Asia. We are only little bits of dirt on the hillsides - here one day and blown down the *khud* the next. We have lost the art of talking - at least our men have. We have no cohesions . . . One by one, these men are worth something. Collectively, they're just a mob of Anglo-Indians. Who cares for what Anglo-Indians say? Your *salon* won't weld the Departments together and make you mistress of India, dear. And these creatures won't talk administrative 'shop' in a crowd - your *salon* - because they are so afraid of the men in the lower ranks overhearing it . . . They can talk to the subalterns though, and the subalterns can talk to them."<sup>19</sup>

In short, wonderful companion though Mrs. Hauksbee can be, the support the men who actually run the Empire require in the field of their work has to come from elsewhere, from their subalterns rather than from her.

Apart from in Simla, however, there are a few occasions in which women have a constructive role to play, and these are perhaps more important in considering whether Kipling did think women could contribute to the day to day business of Empire. There is, for instance, heroism attributed to Ould Pummeloe in *The Daughter of the Regiment* which is almost as adulatory and somewhat less irritating than the excellence of Bobby Wick in *Only a Subaltern*; and there is even more importantly the sustained portrayal of Dinah Shadd as understanding and providing some sort of support to her husband, Mulvaney, the most articulate of the Solders Three, over a long period of time. Yet the important feature these two portraits have in common is that they occur amongst Other Ranks; not that that is not important enough, given that in general the women portrayed in the depiction of the lives of Other Ranks have the destructive effects sketched out above; but it does mean that, though their exceptional qualities are to be registered, we should not see them as contributing to the process of Empire, as they might have, had they associated with Imperialists with greater responsibilities.

Again, what little we do see of these women is in terms of them providing creature comforts as required, certainly at moments of great stress, so that their dependability in a crisis or otherwise is never in doubt; but the sort of comradeship that I

19. *The Education of Otis Yeere* in *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories* p. 9-10.



think Kipling would have thought of as the best support possible and which was doubtless essential in conditions of relative isolation, does not seem even in these cases to have been the prerogative of women to provide. Certainly we are told that Dinah Shadd had been the saving of Mulvaney, and doubtless this was true in that it saved him from engaging in the furtive affairs he describes so often, that so often seem to have had disastrous consequences; certainly we see them together later on in life, having come contentedly together through a great deal; but as for the companionship that seems essential during the long, hot, dreary days of an extended Indian service, in the "brooding, sad, lost interior world of the three musketeers: the world of the desolate river bank and idleness and regret and pot shots; the world of the prison cell of the long-term servicemen"<sup>20</sup>, this is provided for Mulvaney by the other two of the Soldiers Three. I shall return to this later; for the moment, with regard to Dinah Shadd, the point seems to be that, wonderful though she might be, she cannot share in this life and has nothing to contribute, only a presence that can occasionally provide relief, but not of the sort Mulvaney requires day in, day out, from those who do share his life.

So it seems to me that in the end, of all the apparently positive portrayal of women in India, or rather of the British women in India, there remains only one that can be said to be a depiction of an actual contribution to the Imperial process, one that can take its stand next to the achievements of Strickland and the Infant and the British Heads of District and other heroes, military and civil, whose achievements are alluded to, whose authority and effectiveness are unquestionable. I refer of course to William the Conqueror in the story of that name, who assists her brother Martyn and his friend, Scott, to bring a whole district through a famine. As a woman she has to stay in camp with the Head of the Famine and his wife, while the two men travel about doing good; but it is made quite clear that she is worth her weight in gold, and does as much as she can in her own way to avert disaster from the subject races. When, at the end of the story, with emotions perfectly restrained but nevertheless clearly powerful, she and Scott go off to get married, there is little doubt that he has in every sense found a soul mate, who can assist him in every way to continue with his good work.

Yet, had the name not done so, an early description of William gives the game away completely, and we realize that this apparent exception only proves the rule that Kipling prescribed for himself in the description of women in an Imperial context -

"She looked more like a boy than ever when, after their meal, she sat, one foot tucked under her, on the leather camp-sofa, rolling cigarettes for her brother, her low forehead puckered beneath the dark curls as she twiddled the papers. She stuck out her rounded chin when the tobacco stayed in place, and, with a gesture as true as a schoolboy's throwing a stone, tossed the

20. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 83.



finished article across the room to Martyn, who caught it with one hand, and continued his talk with Scott. It was all 'shop'.<sup>21</sup>

It seems to me indubitably significant that this schoolboy vision represents the acme of Kipling's presentation of feminine attractions, not only in the Imperial context, but indeed altogether. There is certainly much more conviction to it than to another ideal presented in a story, also published in *The Day's Work*, which on the surface is meant to be about a far more romantic episode, which in the end does not have anything like the vitality that informs the developing relationship between William and Scott. I refer to the presentation of Miriam Lacy, in *The Brushwood Boy*, who has dreamed about her long before they were ever brought together. The description of her when the boy first sees her provides an illuminating contrast of the portrait of William -

"A tall girl in black raised her eyes to his, and Georgie's life training deserted him - just as soon as he realised that she did not know. He stared coolly and critically. There was the abundant black hair, growing in a widow's peak, turned back from the forehead, with that peculiar ripple over the grey eyes set a little close together, the short upper lip, resolute chin, and the known poise of the head. There was also the small, well-cut mouth that had kissed him".<sup>22</sup>

And that is all, except for the account of her lisping as a child in the Boy's imagination, and interminable conversations about Ducks and Policeman Day, which is how they register that they were meant for each other from the start. The difference between William and this is the difference between something real, based on experience, to which there is a forceful emotional attachment and a remote ideal to which one ought to aspire. It is not surprising that it was from Miriam Lacy that T. R. Henn made an envious generalization with regard to which the William depicted in the same book is so outstanding and illuminating an exception -

"But from another angle the heroine, Miriam Lacy, the steadfast companion of the dream, would seem to be Kipling's ideal woman, no more than outlined, for Kipling does not give more than the barest hints of the appearance of his women characters"<sup>23</sup>.

21. *William the Conqueror* - Part I. in *The Day's Work* p. 188. I am reminded in reading this of Lord David Cecil's remarks on George Eliot's presentation of Ladislaw in *Middlemarch* - Ladislaw flinging himself down on the hearth-rug with an enchanting impetuosity, wilfully tossing back his charming curls, is a schoolgirl's dream; and a vulgar dream at that. *Early Victorian Novelists*, Constable & Co., London (1934) p. 317. It is worth noting on the same lines that Henn *op. cit.*, p. 23, remarks illuminatingly with regard to *Stalky & Co.* that "No one but Kipling would have written of a rigger scrum as "the many-legged heart of things": "

22. *The Brushwood Boy* in *The Day's Work* p. 396-7.

23. Henn, *op. cit.*, p. 58. The artificiality of Kipling's approach in these respects is further pointed out by Henn when he writes *a propos* the travelogues, "In almost every country he falls in love, or pretends to, with one or more girls whom he calls, rather irritatingly, "maidens" . . . We are given the impression of a man who made himself out to be (for journalistic purposes) more susceptible than he in fact was, and there is no mention of a real love affair" (p. 110). Even if we do grant that the description of a real love affair, whatever that might mean with regard to a traveller, was hardly to be expected in that day and age, Kipling's awkwardness, together with the compulsion under which he seems to labour, reinforces my point here.



Yet despite the generally embarrassed reactions to *The Brushwood Boy*, as J. I. M. Stewart puts it, "It is certainly not the work of a naive craftsman, or of a shallow mind"<sup>24</sup>, and it seems to me we have an obligation to consider seriously the fate of "Kipling's perfect young man," of whom Mason goes on to rub in the point -

"There was never anyone who fitted Kipling's stereotype of the perfect young man so completely as George Cottar. He is like an advertisement for the hire of men's evening wear. Nor is companionship in dream adventures a good recipe for lasting marriage; it is boy's magic - and Kipling who had now lived among folk in houses and under Cold Iron (by which Mason means marriage) for five years, ought to have known better."<sup>25</sup>

The point, I think, is that in writing a story that skated on the borders of fantasy, when it was not floating within it Kipling saw no reason to be inconsistent. George Cottar is so clearly a schoolgirl's dream, or indeed a schoolboy's,<sup>26</sup> so that it makes perfectly good sense that the woman he marries should be a dream as well. What the reality might have been, Kipling makes no bones about, though he makes sure that 'fate' averts this - "There was, indeed, a danger - his seniors said so - of his developing into a regular 'Auntie Fuss' of an adjutant, and when an officer once takes to old-maidism there is more hope for the virgin of seventy than for him"<sup>27</sup>. Instead fate sends a campaign in which he wins a DSO, and a year's leave, so that he can go back to his ancestral home, which it is clear is waiting for him to take over; all that is required is a wife, which it is made crystal clear he had neither the time nor the inclination to find while he was actively and earnestly employed in fulfilling his duty in India. So he is thrust into fulfilment of the self-proclaimed sort of fantasy, and even though the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow might turn out to be merely paper

24 Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 104. I cannot however agree with Stewart's previous comments: "In fact they share an enormous dream-world in its a minutest detail. And it is a dream world-against the infinite dimensions and mysterious significance of which Georgie's exemplary waking life reveals itself as being as flat as paper. Or say rather that, although Georgie's career truly is honourable and enviable in quite a solid three-dimensional universe, he has access to some other universe where a further dimension is added. It is good to live in an English country house. It is possible to live somewhere else as well" On the contrary the country house goes together with Miriam Lacy: and, in referring earlier to Georgie as a 'dream hero', Stewart touches on the basic question Kipling poses for us, whether the hero's Indian or other experiences are more real.

25. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 203. Earlier in the paragraph Mason observes that here "Two fantasies have been combined, the perfect school-prefect and subaltern that Kipling would like to have been himself" (which I am not so sure of) "and that not-impossible-she . . . Both fantasies are really more appropriate at eighteen than at thirty-three, in a man five years married."

26. Mason, *ibid.* p 204, makes the historical point, but absurd though it may seem a hundred years later, it is a historical fact that the Empire and the need for an imperial class of rulers - unencumbered by families, hardy of body and selfless in service - had produced this as an ideal picture of what was to be admired. What is more, a great many young men identified themselves with the Brushwood Boy and tried to be as like him as they could. I have spoken to survivors from this period who have told me so."

27. *The Brushwood Boy* in *The Day's Work*, p. 381.



currency, a bundle of images without body, it is clearly all that is required for a country gentleman.

What is inconceivable is that Miriam Lacy should return to India, to what "was not a married mess, except for the colonel's wife."<sup>28</sup> The two dreams were not meant to mix, and Cottar, like Strickland, will find a new role, though another ideally beautiful one, since he is after all perfect. The other sort of perfection, which of course Kipling valued highly too, even higher, I would suggest, given its practical applications, was not for Cottar, for there is, in the end, about William a slight trace of vulgarity. The companion who could share one's work and roll cigarettes for one and toss them accurately across the room would not have done at all for the Brushwood Boy; nor indeed someone capable, as William was, of looking at her loved one and beholding "with new eyes, a young man, beautiful as Paris, a god in a halo of golden dust, walking slowly at the head of his flocks, while at his knee ran small naked cupids."<sup>29</sup> That sort of practical and earthy appreciation of reality was not for the ideally beautiful who lived in a land of dreams or in England; but there seems to me little doubt which Kipling thought superior, as a glance at any page of *William the Conqueror* will indicate -

"and above, immeasurably above all men of all grades there was William in the thick of the fight, who would approve because she understood . . . 'I've given the Government the impression - at least, I hope I have - that he personally conducted the entire famine. But all he wants is to get on to the Luni Canal Works, and William's just as bad. Have you ever heard 'em talking of barrage and aprons and wastewater? It's their style of spooning, I suppose'."<sup>30</sup>

Yet though William then is the only woman in the Indian tales to have proved satisfactory in every way, this is with regard to British women; and with regard to the Indian women, on the few occasions on which they are shown as romantically involved with their governors, there is surely a case for suggesting that they are not only vividly real in a way Miriam Lacy is not, but also that within the limitations under which they function they provide an extremely satisfactory sexual relationship. My argument, of course, in accordance with the thesis I have been developing, is that the limitations are such that we cannot speak here of romance in the sense in which I have defined it as lying at the heart of the Imperial relationship; but before considering that aspect, we should first register the tremendous sexual fulfilment that Kipling appears to record, and try to understand why this seems much more satisfactory than in the case of the British women whose involvement with men we have looked at before.

An interesting feature in this respect, I believe, is that a far more vivid sense of sexual satisfaction than in cases involving only the British is conveyed even when the final outcome is not a happy one. I refer to two stories, in addition to the classics about

28. *ibid.*, 373.

29. *William the Conqueror* - Part II in *The Day's Work*, p. 205.

30. *ibid.*, p. 219, 225.



inter-racial affairs. *Without Benefit of Clergy* and *Beyond the Pale*, namely *Lispeth* and *Georgie Porgie*. They are different from each other, in that the first is about not really an affair but a flirtation, while the second records a protracted relationship, at the conclusion of which Georgie marries a British woman and abandons the native Georgina, who is left to weep for him, just as Lispeth grows bitter waiting for the Englishman who never comes back. The stories therefore are in essence tragic; but what strikes one about them is the very free and easy relationship that does develop between the couple, the tender feelings of the woman that are very movingly conveyed, and the satisfied response to them of the man. The same thing strikes one about a similar story that has a comic conclusion, though doubtless many of Kipling's readers at the time would not have thought so. *Yoked with an Unbeliever* is about a man who married a hill girl while in India, and when his fiancée, who married someone else when it was clear he was not going to send for her, goes out to him after her husband died, she joins the ménage. Kipling does not have very much to say here about the relationships, but what he does say is symptomatic –

“Dunmaya was a thoroughly honest girl, and, in spite of her reverence for an Englishman, had a responsible estimate of her husband's weaknesses... Now the particular sin and shame of the whole business is that Phil, who really is not worth thinking of twice, was and is loved by Dunmaya, and more than loved by Agnes, the whole of whose life seems to have spoilt”<sup>31</sup>

In short, what we have here is an assertion of adoration, which we had in the two minor stories mentioned above, and which we see also in the two major stories as well as in *William the Conqueror*, who is permitted to adulate, physically and otherwise, her companion and mentor in a way that is not permitted to the standard British woman functioning within conventions of restraint. The response of course is not always certain or secure; but when it is satisfactory, the result is a sort of bliss that leaves an enduring impression. It is for this reason that, though fate or the society in which the liason takes place disrupts the idyll, I referred to the final outcome of the affairs in *Without Benefit of Clergy* and *Beyond the Pale* as happy: though Ameera dies, and Bisesa is mutilated and Trejago can never see her again, the relationships that Kipling depicted have a much more forceful quality than anything he had written before or was to write since about relationships between the sexes.

That having been said, there is of course nothing more to these relationships except reciprocal sexual bliss – which is doubtless the reason we are not materially affected by their unfortunate conclusions, for there is no further really that they could have gone. Much as we might for instance love Ameera, there is nothing more that she could have done for Holden, and though he could conceivably have been satisfied

31. *Yoked with an Unbeliever* in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, p. 39. 41.



with that, the chances are that at some stage he would have wanted something more.<sup>32</sup> The basic point is that an idyll is all very well, and the devotion between the couple as depicted by Kipling is a necessary part of an ideal romance; but apart from anything else, there is also necessary some form of communication, a capacity to share ideas and experiences that arise out of other aspects of the individual's existence, and this the women of these episodes cannot provide. Indeed, perhaps the reason Dunmaya survives is that she can, and that is because Phil Garron is merely a planter, not really worth very much, who requires a great deal of improvement which she is apparently in a position to provide. For characters in whom Kipling was seriously concerned, on the contrary, a native attachment was clearly inadequate, for it precluded the sort of constructive spooning, if one might coin a term, in which William and Scott indulged.

The interesting point here however is not that these Indian women cannot communicate with their loved ones, for naturally there was a great gulf, linguistic and intellectual as well as social, between them and the men to whom they were attached, but that all the British women we have seen, apart from William, cannot communicate either. As the case of William indicates in theory, they might have been able to communicate, and therefore the fact that they do not arises either because Kipling was a misogynist who did not want them to share in the great process of Imperialism or because in actual fact they just did not do so. I have shown already that the first quality cannot readily be attributed to Kipling; but as Kipling is much more obviously depicting things as they really are, we must assume the second of the alternatives. For Kipling of course this does not really present a problem, and we have to look elsewhere for the reason insofar as it is possible or necessary to find one. Forster suggested later that it was due to a need on the part of the memsahib to preserve her own identity, which may have been a function of preserving the racial sanctity of a family that would continue to have its roots in England, a phenomenon that developed in the 19th century with steamships and the regular conveyance of women to and from India; it may on the other hand have been in response to what was seen as the need of their menfolk to preserve something on a pedestal, untarnished by their own involvement in this strange land. I do not myself think it necessary to go further into the question here, so long as we register that alienation from Imperial concerns insofar as they affected the natives – which of course according to my definition of Imperial

32. George Eliot in *Middlemarch* presents an incisive analysis of the inadequacy of the sort of satisfaction Ameerah had to offer as a basis for protracted or permanent companionship. The story of Lydgate's tragic failure is of course well known, but it may be worth quoting here from the passage in which George Eliot first shows him inclined to reject Dorothea, who might have proved the ideal choice, for frivolous reasons – "To a man under such circumstances, taking a wife is something more than a question of adornment, however highly he may rate this; and Lydgate was disposed to give it the first place among wifely functions. To his taste, guided by a single conversation here was the point on which Miss Brooke would be found wanting notwithstanding her undeniable beauty. She did not look at things from the proper feminine angle. The society of such women was about as relaxing as going from your work to teach the second form instead of reclining in a paradise with sweet boughs for bird-notes and blue eyes for a heaven." *Middlemarch*, Pan Edition, London (1973) book I, ch. II, p 83. Kipling, like George Eliot, one trusts, would have found teaching the second form paradise.



is what it was all about - was in affect a sort of principle as far as the women were concerned.

But what the depiction of Indian women and their relation to their loved ones shows is that this failure of communication ought not to have precluded some sort of close personal relationship. I would suggest that the sort of Imperial romance I believe was ideal for Kipling, involved certain relations between individuals that arise from the Imperial situation; parallel to all this, however, arising from the very usage of the word romance, is the concept of - whether it comes before or after or is sublimated - sexual passion. This we find where Indian women are concerned, but not with regard to white women, or rather not in a state of grace; we have lot of cases of adultery which lead to catastrophe, but there is never any sense of sanctuary, of what might be called the satisfaction of the wedded wife syndrome which Kipling manages to convey romantically only in the cases involving Indian women mentioned above. I would suggest therefore that for Kipling, where his Imperial administrators were concerned, for this aspect of romance to be present there had to be the relationship of patronage that came naturally in the Imperial context.

This of course could not have been a principle based on observation, and the fact that it is apparent in Kipling's work tells us more about his attitude than about the situation as it was. However what arises from this factor of patronage and its concomitant dependance rouses conviction, for it allows for much more emphatic assertions of devotion than might otherwise have been possible. Bisesa, and even Lisbeth and Georgina, can show themselves so absolutely committed, fully absorbed in the men for whom they live, that the impact of the relationship while it lasts comes across much more powerfully than would have been possible with a white girl who had her own distinct view of herself. Ameera's reaction when Holden tries to send her away from the cholera that finally kills her is only the most extreme manifestation of an attitude that, rash though it was, would certainly have provided more satisfaction in terms of sexual identity than the reaction of a British wife who would doubtless have gone away to the hills and whom her husband surely could not have kept behind in the face of peer group pressure -

"Thou art only all the desire of my soul to me. How shall I depart when I know that if evil bafall thee by the breadth of so much as my littlest finger-nail - is that not small? - I should be aware of it though I were in paradise . . . My lord and my love, let there be no more foolish talk of going away. Where thou art, I am. It is enough." She put an arm round his neck and a hand on his mouth.<sup>32</sup>

This, in the ordinary sense of the word, is romantic in the extreme; and it is also not unreal as the ostensible romance of the Brushwood Boy is, because once again we feel the reasons for the commitment, the relations between the couple have been visibly constructed for us. As I mentioned before, since they cannot share each other's lives more fully, the idyll cannot last: the minor tales make that clear, as do the hints of

33. *Without Benefit of Clergy in Life's Handicap* p. 175.



what is inevitable that arise in the conversation of the couple; yet, by killing Ameera off, Kipling manages to convey an illusion of permanence so that *Without Benefit of Clergy* remains as far as the orthodoxies go, the most romantic piece he wrote.

Yet, as I have suggested, the orthodoxies were certainly not enough, not as far as Kipling was concerned, and not as far as the depiction of the most satisfactory sort of romance with regard to India. We touched on the question of communication above, and examination of Kipling's treatment of it in wider contexts may make clear how important a part it plays in the ideal relationship that could be constructed. We should begin by establishing a distinction between communication in Kipling and what occurs in Conrad, who is as definite as Kipling about the general incapacity of women to understand or appreciate the finer aspirations of the men with whom they are connected. This distinction arises from what was mentioned above, Conrad's concern with man as an isolated individual; his men come together to discuss the experiences they have been through as individuals, and though they can supply sympathy and understanding to each other, what they have been through are private rather than public concerns. With Kipling, on the other hand, it is the sharing of experience that makes men able to comprehend and thus support each other. This of course is why the incapacity of Conrad's women to understand is culpable, whereas in Kipling it is not: it is because the women cannot in practice share the experience that they are so hopeless, whereas with Conrad there is the suggestion that they could try, were it not that they inhabited a totally different moral - rather than merely physical, as is the case with Kipling - universe.



# Sri Lanka As Known To Strabo

D. P. M. WEERAKKODY

In this paper I propose to examine a number of references to Taprobane (the ancient Greek name for Sri Lanka) occurring in the *Geography* of Strabo (64 B. C. – A. D. 21 at least) <sup>1</sup> in order to understand the extent of the knowledge possessed by the educated Romans in the early days of the Empire. It will be shown that although these Romans had considerable opportunities of acquiring up-to-date information concerning Sri Lanka and other countries of the East, they were prevented from doing so by restrictions enforced by a highbrow attitude to the classical literary tradition.

Strabo came from Amasea, a Greek town in the kingdom of Pontus, and lived during the reign of Augustus and at least into the first five years of Tiberius; for he mentions the great earthquake of Sardis which occurred within that period. <sup>2</sup> He was a historian as well as a geographer, but his *Historical Sketches*, which were in 47 books, have not survived. <sup>3</sup> What we do have is his *Geography* in 17 books.

Much of his information came from personal observation during his wide travels, but the *Geography* also reflects his extensive reading and critical study of earlier authorities. "I shall accordingly describe," he says in the second book, "partly the lands and seas which I have travelled through myself; partly what I have found credible in those who have given me information orally or by writing" <sup>4</sup> He goes on to claim that he has travelled more widely than any previous geographer.

The basis of his treatise was the geographical work of Eratosthenes (3rd century B. C.) which he examined, analyzed, criticized and corrected, while at the same time making additions of his own. But between Eratosthenes's day and his own, much material of a geographical nature had been added by historical writers and adventurers by sea and land. Roman conquests revealed new lands of which Eratosthenes and his contemporaries knew little or nothing. Strabo could have drawn much of value from the memoirs of Roman generals and historic accounts of Roman campaigns: he does in fact make some use of Julius Caesar, Assinius Pollio and Fabius Pictor. But in spite of his admiration for

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1. For text cf. *The Geography of Strabo with an English Translation* by H. L. Jones, in eight volumes. (London & New York, Loeb Classical Library) 1917-1932.
  2. Strabo xiii.4.8; cf. Tacitus *Annales* ii.4.7
  3. This work is cited by some ancient authors, e.g. Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* xiv. 7.
  4. Strabo ii.5.10.



the Romans and their empire, Strabo had only a poor opinion of their geography (and, no doubt, posterity is in agreement with him on this point); and so his sources are predominantly Greek. However, by the time he wrote, Eratosthenes and the Alexander historians, whom he utilized, had become "classics" and a new work, if it was to command any respect, had to derive from them.

It comes to us as no surprise, therefore, that Strabo should prefer to use the earlier and respected writers rather than the accounts of more recent travellers who, as he himself says, were men without education and therefore unreliable.<sup>5</sup>

"As for the merchants who nowadays go from Egypt to India by way of the Nile and the Arabian Gulf, those who have gone round the coast of India as far as the Ganges are few. They were all moreover people without education, and therefore useless for giving any information about the geography."

To accommodate the accounts of these uneducated men would have been unthinkable for Strabo; after all it was imperative that his work should be a respectable one. For he was not writing for the masses. His work was intended for the educated, particularly for those engaged in the higher departments of public administration.<sup>6</sup> These persons would derive from it the geographical and historical information about each country indispensable to their careers. That is why the physical characteristics of a country were supplemented with notices of its chief cities, illustrious men, and important political events.

His work is thus a sort of highly readable historical geography, highlighting what is most characteristic and interesting in a country. But this also meant that he would deliberately suppress whatever he thought was not useful to the class of persons for whom he was writing. Thus the role of astronomy and mathematics in geographical description is undervalued, and no attention is paid, for instance, to the determination of positions by means of co-ordinates.

One important feature of Strabo's work is that it has preserved extracts from authors who have long since perished. It is in this manner that we have preserved for us two of the earliest Greek notices of Sri Lanka, namely those of Onesicritus and Eratosthenes. These are quoted in the fifteenth book within the description of India.<sup>7</sup>

"They say that Taprobane is an island in the ocean seven days sail distant towards the south from the southernmost regions of India around the Koniakoi; that its length is about eight thousand stades in the direction of Aethiopia and that it has elephants too. Such, then, are the statements of Eratosthenes. But the additional statements of others, also, wherever they are accurate, will characterize

5. Strabo xv.1.4.

6. At i.2.2-6 Strabo emphasizes the importance of geographical knowledge in public affairs. At ii.5.17, he maintains that accounts of obsolete constitutions and modes of life are still useful as object lessons for imitation or avoidance.

7. Strabo xv.1.14-15.



my description. For instance, concerning Taprobane Onesicritus says that it is five thousand stades in size without defining its length or breadth; that it is twenty days voyage distant from the mainland, but that ships sail badly since their sailing gear is inefficient and they are built without belly-bolts on both sides; that there are also other islands between it and India, though that island is the southernmost; that amphibious creatures exist around it, some similar to oxen, others to horses, and others to other land animals."

Since I have commented elsewhere at greater length.<sup>8</sup> I shall confine myself to observing that the sentence which links the notice of Eratosthenes to that of Onesicritus gives the impression that Strabo is checking one source against the other. Onesicritus, who got his information most probably somewhere in northern India, gave the distance to the island as one of twenty days journey by sea, whereas Eratosthenes, who specifies the point of departure as the most southern parts of India, the land of the Koniakoi, gives the distance as one of seven days voyage. Similarly, whereas Eratosthenes noticed only the elephants of Taprobane, Onesicritus spoke of amphibious creatures resembling cows, horses and other land animals. Again, while Eratosthenes recorded the length of the island in the direction of Aethiopia, that is to say from east to west, Onesicritus gave the size, (*megathos*) without specifying length or breadth.

A modern observer might be tempted to imagine that Strabo preferred the sober facts of Eratosthenes to the "romantic fables" of Onesicritus. Yet it is interesting to note that he considers the account of the latter as containing "more accurate information" worth adding to what he has learnt from Eratosthenes. The context shows that his judgment is meant to apply to the entire description of India as well. With regard to Taprobane it is even possible that he actually preferred Onesicritus's figure of five thousand stades to Eratosthenes's eight thousand, seeing that he gives the lower figure earlier also when describing the island in the second book.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, one important consideration which appears to have been overlooked, not only by Strabo, but also by modern critics of Onesicritus. Unlike the geographer concerned with the length and breadth of a land, Onesicritus as a navigator would have been more interested in the circumnavigation, so that the figure of five thousand stades may represent the circumference of the island than its length or breadth. In that case it may also be noted in passing that the figure is hardly an exaggeration of the reality.

One interesting feature of Strabo's information on Taprobane, one that came to be perpetuated by subsequent Greek geographers, is the comparison of the island

8. D. P. M. Weerakkody: 'The Earliest Greek Notices of Sri Lanka' *S. L. J. H.* x. 1 & 2 (1984) pp. 1-26.

9. Strabo ii.1-14. In a note to the Greek text at xv.1.14. Jones says that Meineke, following Groskurd, proposed to emend the figure for the length of Taprobane to "five thousand" to bring it, I suppose, in line with the present passage. However, what Meineke says in his Teubner edition of 1913 (p. 962) is that a figure of five thousand stades for the breadth should be added, following Bernhardt.



with Britain. According to him, Taprobane is no less in size than Britain.<sup>10</sup>

“In this southern sea there lies in front of India an island not smaller than Britain, namely, Taprobane.”

A similar statement is also found in the cosmological work known as the *De Mundo*, which had been falsely attributed to Aristotle. According to its author Taprobane, situated beyond India and lying aslant to the inhabited world, is not smaller than Britain.<sup>11</sup>

However, whereas Strabo and later geographers frequently make the island lie to the west of India, this author places it beyond India. This is probably not due so much to accurate knowledge as to the prevalent notions of Taprobane as a land outside the inhabited world. We know that Pomponius Mela, following Hipparchus, thought that Taprobane was either a rather big island or the first part of another world, one reason for his indecision being that, though inhabited, the island had not been circumnavigated.<sup>12</sup> Within half a century of Strabo's death the elder Pliny could still speak of Taprobane as “banished by nature to the confines of the world.”<sup>13</sup> The Roman poet Ovid, who was Strabo's contemporary, knew of Taprobane as a remote tropical place in the Indian Ocean, but whether he knew of its insularity is a difficult matter to decide owing to divergences in readings in the various manuscripts of his *Letters from the Pontus*<sup>14</sup>

We have no means of tracing the origins of the comparison between Taprobane and Britain. We cannot even determine which Greek geographer was the first to use it; this is because the date of the *De Mundo* is uncertain. Did one author borrow from the other, or were they both following a common source? It is not possible to give a definite answer. We know, however, that Strabo was considerably influenced by the teaching of Posidonius, while the same philosopher's impact on the *De Mundo*

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10. Strabo ii,5.32. As far as we know, Julius Caesar (*B.G.* v.12) was the first to give any definite measurements for Britain, and according to him (*B.G.* iv.20) that island, up to his time, was pretty well unknown.
11. Ps. - Aristotle : *De Mundo* 3.393 B 14. There is also a Latin translation of the *De Mundo* by Apuleius, author of the celebrated *Golden Ass*. As we have it, this Latin version displays outstanding ignorance either on the part of the scribes or on the part of the author himself. The relevant phrase reads : *Minores vera ultra Indos Bromane atque Zone*. The Greek word *loxe* (“aslant”) in the original has been misread as *Zoxe*, and taken to be the name of an island. P. Thomas emended “*Bromane*” to “*Taprobane*” (Cf. *Apuleius De Deo Socratis*, etc. ed. P. Thomas, *De Mundo* cap. 7 p. 70.) This correction is no doubt supported by the Greek text, but the rest of the passage does not approximate to the original. Not only did the author of the Latin version misunderstand his original, but evidently he knew nothing of the regions that were being described. The work therefore deserves nothing more than passing mention.
12. Pomponius Mela : *Chorographia* iii. 7.70.
13. Pliny *N. H.* vi. 89.
14. Ovid : *Ex Ponto* i. 5. 80 : *Aut ubi Taprobanen Indica tingit aqua*. *Tingit* (“bathes”) is supported by the best manuscript tradition, but less reliable readings include *cingit* (“surrounds”) and *pingit* (“paints”). For discussion of this problem cf. D. P. M. Weerakkody: “Sri Lanka in Greek and Latin Verse”. *Navasamskriti : Cultural Quarterly* i. 3. (1986) pp. 39-46.



has also been recognized. It is therefore tempting to speculate whether the comparison might not go back ultimately to Posidonius. But the extant geographical fragments of Posidonius, which have no references to Taprobane, cannot support any such speculations.

One fact, however, is certain. From now on the comparison becomes natural and standard to the Greeks and Romans. Britain and Taprobane, the two ends of the known world come to be thought of as possessing parallel characteristics, thus giving the inhabited world some sort of symmetry. Britain, like Taprobane, was sometimes thought to be the first part of another world. Even after the insularity of the two islands was known, their size was exaggerated and, just as the northern part of Britain was turned east, by Ptolemy for instance, and made to hug the coast of the European mainland, so, too, the southern part of Taprobane was made to extend westwards until it almost touched the eastern shore of Africa.<sup>15</sup>

Ideas regarding the size of the two islands appear to have undergone some transformation with time. What was maintained by Strabo and the *De Mundo* was that Taprobane was not smaller than Britain. However, in the next century, Ptolemy says that of the most noteworthy island, the first is Taprobane, and the second is Albion of the British Isles, the implied criterion being clearly that of size.<sup>16</sup> Britain was better known to the Graeco-Roman world of Ptolemy's time owing to the exploits of the Romans. Thus Taprobane, being the less known of the two, came to be thought of as the larger.

Unlike many of his Roman contemporaries, Strabo, as we have seen, believed that Taprobane was not a region outside the inhabited world, but that it was part of our own world. In supporting this conviction, interestingly enough, he relied on the reports of the navigators of whom, at least of those who sailed to the far east, he elsewhere expresses such a poor opinion. He thus locates Taprobane opposite the Cinnamon-bearing Land (i.e., Somalia) and places it towards the east on the same parallel. It is also on the south in relation to India.<sup>17</sup>

15. cf. *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 61.

16. Ptolemy *Geography* viii 5, 1.

17. Strabo ii. 1. 14. Almost all ancient Greek and Roman writers who have dealt with the subject attribute cassia and cinnamon to Arabia and East Africa. Herodotus (iii 110 - 111) has a story of how cinnamon and cassia are protected by fierce birds in southern Arabia. According to Agatharchides (fr. 187, Muller, *G. G. M.* i, p. 186) these spices were produced among the Sabaeans, and he is followed in this by Artemidorus (apud Strabo xvi. 4 19), while Pliny says that both spices came from Aethiopia. According to Hipparchus, (apud Strabo ii. 5.35) the Cinnamon-bearing Land was in Africa, south of Meroe, while Strabo himself (xvi 4 14 and xvii. 1. 1) places it inland from the East African port of Daphnus. Today, these lands do not produce any cinnamon or cassia. These spices are known to have been used widely for embalming; but chemical tests have not reported anything in surviving mummies other than resinous substances akin to myrrh and frankincense, and it has even been suggested that the words *cassia* and *cinnamomum* probably did not designate the same spices we know under those names today. (cf. M. G. Raschke: "New Studies in Roman Commerce with the East" *A. N. W. R.* ii. 9. 2 (1978) pp. 604-681; cf. p. 655 with notes.) I feel that the problem of the reticence of early foreign writers concerning cinnamon in Sri Lanka should be studied against a similar background rather than one concerned with professional trade secrets jealously guarded.



“Let us pass on to the region which rises up opposite to the Cinnamon-bearing Land and lies on the same parallel towards the east. This is the region around Taprobane. It is firmly believed that Taprobane is a large island in the Ocean which lies in front of India towards the south. It stretches lengthwise towards Aethiopia more than five thousand stades, as they say, and from it, both ivory is brought in abundance to the markets of the Indians, and tortoise-shell and other merchandise. If we allot to this island a breadth corresponding to its length, and include the crossing from India, the distance would come to not less than three thousand stades as much as that from the boundary of the inhabited world to Meroe, if indeed the capes of India are to rise opposite Meroe. But it is more convincing to put down even more than three thousand.”

In this description, Strabo is proceeding eastward from Africa; therefore the words “lie in front of India” (*prokeitai tēs Indikēs*) imply that he thought of Taprobane as lying to the west of India as well as being to the south of it. This is also confirmed by his statement that it extends in the direction of Aethiopia. A similar view is also expressed in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. It is therefore possible that while some geographers placed Taprobane too far to the east and south, even taking it beyond the limits of the inhabitable world, others brought it too close to the shore of eastern Africa. These latter writers, who include Strabo and the author of the *Periplus*, appear to be indebted to the actual experiences of navigators, whereas the theoreticians locate the island far away beyond anything reached by Alexander the Great. It is also worth realizing that these navigators, who doubtless had first hand experience of the regions they were describing, have probably preserved an echo of the trans-oceanic trade route between East Africa and south East Asia. We may also note that, as late as the sixth century A. D., Cosmas Indicopleustes also spoke of Taprobane as one of the “outer” countries, i. e. lying to the west of India: and he too had been a practicing navigator.<sup>18</sup>

As we have seen, Strabo generally adopts a somewhat snobbish and mistrustful attitude towards information supplied by merchants and others who have sailed to the east. However, when it suits him, he does not hesitate to use their evidence in support of his general geographical arguments. Thus the point he wishes to establish in citing their evidence on Taprobane is that the island, though further south from India, is still in the inhabitable world. We have already noted the opinion of those Hellenistic and early Roman geographers who believed that Taprobane was part of a southern continent. Against them he cites the report of navigators that Taprobane is much to the south of India, and that it is nevertheless inhabited and is situated opposite to the Island of the Egyptians and the Cinnamon-bearing Land, and that the temperature of their atmospheres was similar.<sup>19</sup>

18. Cosmas Indicopleustes : *Topographia Christiana* xi. 448 A. (Winstedt).

19. Strabo ii. 5. 24; cf. also i. 4. 2 and ii. 1. 17.



“For, (those who have sailed to the east) tell us that the island called Taprobane is much further south from India, though inhabited for all that; it rises opposite to the island of the Egyptians and the Cinnamon-bearing Land; for the temperature of their climates is very much alike.”

Passages such as the above show that accounts of personal experiences were available to Strabo, had he chosen to use them. Strabo's point is that, if Taprobane has the same climate as the Cinnamon-bearing Land, then it must be on the same parallel and not further south and beyond the inhabitable world as some Hellenistic geographers had thought.

Elsewhere, <sup>20</sup> he defines the parallel of latitude applicable to Taprobane as the parallel of the Cinnamon-bearing Land, a definition which leaves no doubt that he wished to locate the island within the parallels of the inhabited world. For the island, or at least its southern-most inhabitants, would, come within this parallel.

“This parallel is produced on the one side just about to the more southerly parts of Taprobane or to its furthest inhabitants, and on to the other side to the southern-most parts of Libya.”

J. Filliozat <sup>21</sup> is of the opinion that Taprobane and the Cinnamon-bearing Land were identical. This opinion is based on a misinterpretation of certain passages in the *Natural History* of the Elder Pliny. Thus, when Pliny says <sup>22</sup> that cinnamon is brought to southern Arabia across a wide expanse of sea by the Troglodytes, who were often linked by marriage to certain Aethiopians, Filliozat thinks that by the Troglodytes and Aethiopians we should understand, not the inhabitants of the western shore of the Red Sea, but the people of Sri Lanka, India, and even Southeast Asia, in whose lands cinnamon is most abundant, and who might be designated as Aethiopians in the widest sense, i. e. ‘people with burnt faces’, since they share many traits of appearance with the peoples of Africa. He also cites the opinion of certain authors quoted by Strabo <sup>23</sup> to the effect that most of the cinnamon exported by the Arabs came to them from India. He further points out that Strabo attributes to the Cinnamon-bearing Land the same latitude and characteristics as Taprobane making it the last of the inhabited lands, and compares this last point with Pliny's statement that Taprobane was long considered to be another world. <sup>24</sup>

Although later Greek and Roman authors did sometimes confuse Aethiopia with India, there can be no doubt however that the passages of Pliny and Strabo

20. Strabo ii. 5. 35.

21. J. Filliozat: “Les échanges entre l'Inde et l'Empire Romain aux premiers siècles de l'ère Chrétienne” *Revue Historique* cci. (1949) pp. 1-29; cf. p. 7-8.

22. Pliny *N. H.* xii. 42.

23. Strabo xvi. 4. 25.

24. Pliny *N. H.* vi. 81.



which Filliozat has cited to confirm his interpretation actually refer to East Africa and not to South Asia. Moreover, the complete silence of Greek and Latin authors concerning the cinnamon of Taprobane is matched by a similar reticence on the part of the early writers of Sri Lanka; the obvious implication being that the commodity was, in all probability, not produced in the island on a commercial scale before the late middle ages. Therefore the Cinnamon-bearing Land of Greek geographers could not have been the same as Taprobane. Strabo thus agrees with the general Greek tradition of not associating Taprobane with the production of cinnamon.

But he does associate the island with other well known exotic products of antiquity, namely, ivory and tortoise-shell. These were apparently produced on a commercial scale at this time, for he specifically says, "both ivory is brought in abundance to the markets of the Indians, and tortoise-shell and other merchandise."<sup>25</sup> What the other merchandise consisted of, Strabo does not tell us; the *Periplus* mentions pearls, transparent stones, and muslins in addition to tortoise-shell, while a century later Ptolemy could mention rice, honey, ginger, beryl, and other metals as well as elephants and tigers.<sup>26</sup>

Strabo tells us that these products of Taprobane were brought in large quantities to the Indian markets. This was one piece of evidence that led Warmington to conclude that at this time the Greek merchants did not come directly to Sri Lanka, but were content to buy its products from the markets of India where all of them were available.<sup>27</sup> As a corollary he cites the scarcity of Republican and early imperial Roman coin finds in the island and believes that it was Tamil middlemen who brought these goods from Sri Lanka to India.

There may be more than one reason for the absence of early Roman coins on the island (such as melting, re-exporting, and extensive use of barter). There is however little doubt that at this period Tamil influence over Sri Lanka was considerable. Five Tamil kings are recorded between 43 and 29 B. C., and their influence appears to have lasted still longer.<sup>28</sup> These Tamil kings are thought to be of Pandya origin. Now we know that the Pandyas had by this time achieved a significant position in international commerce. Strabo himself mentions an embassy sent by one of their kings to the Roman emperor, Augustus, offering friendship and the right of access to his kingdom.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore not altogether improbable that Sri Lanka's dependence on South Indian intermediaries for its international commerce must have continued at least up to the time of the emperor

25. Strabo ii. 1. 14.

26. *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 61; Ptolemy : *Geography* vii. 4. 1.

27. E. H. Warmington *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge 1928) p. 10.

28. *Mahavamsa* xxxiii. 38 ff. (Geiger).

29. Strabo xv. 1. 4.



Claudius (A. D. 41-54) when Sri Lanka was able to send an embassy directly to Rome.<sup>30</sup>

The reference to tortoise-shell is interesting. In literature, this product often had the epithet "Indian", and since such references become frequent with the beginning of the Roman empire, it appears that by that time it had come into use as an article of luxury in the West. It was chiefly used by wealthy Romans to provide a veneer for their rich furniture, and ivory bedsteads were especially decorated in this manner.

Strabo's statement leads us to believe that the tortoise-shell of Taprobane was known to the Romans as early as the utilization of monsoon navigation for trade with India, if not from earlier times. That the trade in tortoise-shell increased greatly with the utilization of monsoon navigation is clear from the increase of references in classical authors of the subsequent period. According to the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, which is now generally believed to date from mid first century A. D.,<sup>31</sup> the best of all tortoise-shell came from the Malay Peninsula; but the supplies from Taprobane still remained sufficiently important to attract the attention of the author. Moreover, according to Pliny,<sup>32</sup> large tortoises formed the chief object of fishing in Taprobane, where the occupation was pursued with considerable pleasure. What is surprising, however, is Pliny's further statement that their shells formed the roof of houses. (As *testudo* may denote "vault", "tile", or "shelter" as well as a tortoise-shell it is possible that there is some linguistic confusion here.) This statement is also given by Aelian with considerable exaggeration and elaboration for rhetorical effect.<sup>33</sup>

"Now in this sea turtles of immense size are hatched, and their shells are made into roofs, for a single shell measures fifteen cubits across, so that quite a number of persons can live underneath; and it keeps off the most fiery sun and affords a welcome shade; moreover it resists a down-pour of rain, and being stronger than any tiles, it shakes off pelting showers, while the inmates beneath listen to it being pounded, as though the water were descending upon a tiled roof. Yet they have no need to exchange old for new as you must with a broken tile, for the turtle shell is hard and resembles a rock that has been hollowed out on the roof of a cavern vaulted by nature."

It is very probable that Aelian is here writing under Pliny's inspiration. The alternative is to assume that both authors derived from a common original, now lost.

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30. Pliny : *N. H.* vi. 84; cf. D. P. M. Weerakkody : Sri Lanka's diplomatic mission to Rome in the first century A.D. *Palma ii : Classical Association of Ceylon Golden Jubilee Commemoration Volume (1935-1985)*, pp. 66-80.
31. *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 63 and 61; cf. Warmington, *op. cit.*, p. 166. On the date of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* see especially pp 663-664 of the article by M. G. Raschke cited in note 34 below.
32. Pliny : *N. H.* vi. 91 : *Esse et in piscatu voluptatem testudinum maxime. quarum superficie familias habitantium contegi : tanta reperiri magnitudine.*
33. Aelian *Historia Animalium* xvi. 17 (Scholfield).



but I am not aware of any evidence in favour of such a hypothesis. There are other instances of correspondence between these two authors, even within their accounts of Taprobane. Strabo, on the other hand, appears to have followed a different tradition.

Recent scholarship is inclined to consider the use of the southwest monsoon for commercial voyages to India as beginning before the time of Strabo, <sup>34</sup> probably going back as far as the two voyages of Eudoxus of Cyzicus. <sup>35</sup> The author of the *Periplus* attributes its discovery to one Hippalus, and this attribution appears to be implied also in Pliny's account of the voyage to India. <sup>36</sup> The effects of this discovery, however, came to be fully realized only with favourable economic conditions brought about by the "swift and dramatic return of wealth and prosperity to the Mediterranean world after 30 B C, which led to the enormous increase in Red Sea and Indian Ocean commerce of which we know from Strabo, Pliny, and the *Periplus*."<sup>37</sup>

The existence of works such as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* leads us to believe that this growth in commerce was no doubt reflected in a corresponding increase in the flow of knowledge concerning eastern lands. But reverence for the time-honoured tradition of the "classics", particularly the writings of Alexander's companions and of Hellenistic writers such as Megasthenes, Eratosthenes and Hipparchus, prevented Strabo and his contemporaries from making full use of this material, which they rejected because it was different from what the old masters had written. <sup>38</sup> Strabo's all too brief notices of Taprobane are a sad reflection of what could have been achieved, had their author thought better of his contemporary informants.

34. M. G. Raschke ; *op. cit.* p. 660 ff. with notes.

35. Strabo ii. 3-4 = Posidonius, *F. Gr. Hist.* no. 87, fr. 28. 4; cf. also Pliny ; *N. H.* ii. 168. Onesicritus (apud. Strabo xv. 1. 34) seems to have been aware of the southwest monsoon (though not using it for navigation), but Agatharchides (fr. 106, Muller. p. 193) is not aware of it at all.

38. *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 57; Pliny ; *N. H.* vi. 100-104.

37. Raschke *op. cit.* p. 662.

38. A. Dihle: 'The conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman literature' *P.C.P.S.* cxc = n.s. x, (1964) pp. 15-23.



# NEWTONIAN VISION :

## Its Origin, Significance and Problems

R. D. GUNARATNE

\* Newton once said that he was able to achieve what he did because he had stood "on the shoulders of giants." It was rarely that Newton acknowledged the specific contributions of others so that this statement itself, which was perhaps made out of modesty, could also have been an attempt to pacify Robert Hooke, with whom he had quarrelled a number of times, and who charged Newton of plagiarism in connection with the inverse square Law of Gravitation.<sup>1</sup>

Hooke had mentioned the idea of the inverse law to Newton in the 1670's but his charge seems unfair, for there is evidence that Newton himself had arrived at it somewhat earlier, that is, in the 1660's and more importantly, it was only Newton who mathematically derived it from the quantitative statement of the centripetal force and Kepler's Third Law, and thereby also related it to observations. But that his predecessors and contemporaries contributed vastly to the development of the Newtonian vision is undeniable.

Science has been, by and large, a collective enterprise, and it is increasingly become so. One thing more than any other that a study of the origins of Newtonian vision shows is this collective contribution which led to it. At the same time the philosophical and methodological issues which Newton's work raised three centuries ago, with the publication of his *Principia*, have continued to remain issues up to our own day and age. But neither the fact that he stood on the shoulders of giants nor the problems and the controversies his work raised impair in any way the significance of the monumental achievement of Newton's scientific genius. What these indicate is the immensity of the task that he faced and the magnitude of the change that his work finally brought about.

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\* This essay is partly based on a paper at a seminar on "The Newtonian Vision: the Epistemological Origin, Mechanical Age and its Social Significance Today" organised by the Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science on 22nd June 1988 at the SLAAS Auditorium Colombo. The seminar was a part of the tercentenary celebrations commemorating the publication of Newton's *Principia* in 1687. I am indebted to my colleague, Prof. Merlin Peris of the University of Peradeniya, for suggestions for the improvement of an earlier draft of this essay.

1. cf. *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards, Paul. The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, New York (1967) Vol. 5. p. 490.



Sometime in 1664, when he was twenty-two years of age and was studying at Cambridge, Newton began a notebook on *Quaestiones Quaedam Philosophicae* (Certain Philosophical Questions) and immediately under this title subscribed the words: *amicus Plato, amicus Aristoteles, magis amica veritas*, which translates: "Plato is my friend, Aristotle is my friend, but my best friend is truth"<sup>2</sup> This statement seems to throw some light on the development of Newton's thought. For although Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626) in his *Novum Organum* (1620), emphasized nearly a half century earlier the usefulness of the inductive method for gaining new knowledge, and although on the European continent the basis of the scientific revolution was already being laid by such intellectual giants as Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Descartes, the English universities had remained conservative. Cambridge, to which Newton went as an undergraduate, still clung to Aristotelianism; Oxford for some time even after Newton.

Newton's maxim quoted above shows the close acquaintance he had with the thought of Plato and Aristotle. More significantly, as we shall see, it also suggests that he has also come into contact with the revolution that was taking place in continental Europe, for he now distinguishes truth from what Plato and Aristotle had taught, and pledges himself to truth. As is well known, what Newton ultimately did was to replace the Aristotelian world-view with a new one - the Newtonian.

A world-view provides or lays down the basic principles and concepts which orient the way in which one understands the universe and functions within it. The change in world-view that Newton brought about resulted in the greatest conceptual revolution in the history of Western society.

It is the crises encountered by the old vision so strongly influenced by Aristotle which made men look for a new one. The Aristotelian world-view pictured a "two-sphere" universe, i.e. a universe which combined a celestial sphere with a terrestrial sphere. For Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) and the other ancients of the West, different concentric spheres carried the Moon, the planets including the Sun, and the stars. Every point inside this sphere was full of matter - for existence of any vacuum was an impossibility in the Aristotelian conception. Outside the sphere carrying the stars there was nothing, no space, no matter. The greater part of the Universe was thought to be filled with aether, the celestial element, which fills the space between the sphere of the stars and the sphere carrying the lowest celestial body-the Moon. Aether, being the celestial element, was pure and unchangeable, transparent and weightless. The concentric spherical shells carrying the stars and the planets rotated, which accounted for the celestial motions, and these shells as well as the stars, planets, the Sun and the Moon were made of aether. Aristotle needed fifty-five celestial spheres to account for the celestial motions. These spheres were in contact with each other and the motion of the consecutive spheres in contact provided the drive for the whole system. The sphere of stars, the outermost sphere, drove its nearest interior neighbour, the outermost of the seven homocentric spherical shells that moved Saturn. It moved the next

2. cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition Macropaedia, Vol. 13, p. 17.



shell of Saturn and this process continued until the motion was transmitted to the lowest celestial sphere - the sphere of the Moon.

The original conception of Aristotle did not last in the same way and from about the beginning of the Christian era through the Middle Ages a very simple version of this view was believed by the people. This version had one shell for the stars and one for each planet, and thus allowed a nest of eight spheres to fill the entire celestial region.<sup>3</sup>

Astronomers calculated the distances of the celestial spheres from the Earth, and it was known in the Middle Ages that the celestial region was very large in comparison with the terrestrial region, that is, the space below the (underside of) the Moon's sphere. But this fact did not reduce the importance of the terrestrial region, as it was man's abode, the nucleus of the entire system - and, after all, all this was made for man!

The terrestrial region itself was filled with the four elements, earth, water, air and fire. These formed into four concentric spherical layers. Earth, the heaviest element, was at the centre of the universe, the concentric layer of water was next, and those of air and fire followed in that order to extend up to the sphere of the Moon. But although this was the natural position of terrestrial elements in accordance with the Aristotelian laws of motion, the terrestrial sphere gets disturbed. The motion of the Moon's sphere pushes the fire below, setting up currents which make the four terrestrial elements mix, and mix continuously in various proportions, giving rise to different substances on Earth.

3. In the original Aristotelian system each planet had a number of concentric spheres (e.g. Saturn had seven) that carried it and rotated in opposite directions etc., this being necessary to account for the retrograde motion of the planets. In the system of eight spheres, which was the simplified version of the original Aristotelian system, each planetary shell was thick enough for the planet to be at its inner surface when closest to Earth and at its outer surface when farthest from the Earth. The seven planetary spheres explained the average motion of the planets which, in the order of increasing distance from the Earth which was the centre were Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Planetary astronomers used epicycles, deferents, eccentrics etc. to account for each planet's motion within its thick shell.

The system of homocentric spheres is different from the system of epicycles and deferents which replaced the homocentric system and was used by Ptolemy. The simplified version of the Aristotelian system referred to above, which used one spherical shell for stars and one for each planet, might have evolved as a sort of a 'cross' between the original Aristotelian system and the system of Ptolemaic epicycles and deferents.

As to what made the outermost sphere - sphere of the stars - to move was variously answered; some maintained that angels were pushing the outermost sphere. There were other interpretations, for example, like that of Dante, who wrote, "... beyond all these (crystalline spheres) the Catholics place the Empyrean Heaven... And this is the reason that the Primum Mobile (or ninth sphere) moves with immense velocity; because of fervent longing of all its parts to be united with those of this most quiet heaven makes it revolve with so much desire."

The ninth sphere, referred to in the quotation from Dante seems to have been added to the eight spheres of earlier cosmology by the Moslem astronomers. (The account given here is mostly based on Kuhn's *Copernican Revolution* (see footnote 12). See pp. 79-80 and pp. 111-113).



Aristotle taught that every body, when moved, sought to regain its natural position. This was the natural motion of a body, whereas any other motion leading to change of position was ascribed to externally applied forces and was "violent" motion. Since pure earth was the heavy element, heavy bodies naturally moved towards the Earth, which is at the centre of the universe. This conception was associated with the idea that the universe was finite and had no vacua.

The original Aristotelian conception as well as its simplified versions which men believed from about the beginning of the Christian era could be looked upon as the "two-sphere" conception of the Universe, in the sense that it consisted of a "celestial sphere" as different from the "terrestrial sphere", with the celestial being divine and changeless, and the terrestrial being the area where change, birth, decay and corruption take place.

Greek science, which was lost to the West from the early Middle Ages, reached European scholars through Arabic translations after about the tenth century. In the thirteenth century St. Thomas Aquinas amalgamated the Church doctrine with the Aristotelian universe. And it was this world-view, this amalgamation, which the scientific revolution had to overthrow to pave the way for a new world-view. The Aristotelian universe, in spite of the two-sphere view which had different laws operating in the celestial and terrestrial spheres, had also a unified conception of the two systems, in that the celestial motions cause the terrestrial changes.

The world-view that preceded the scientific revolution was thus based on the authority of Aristotle and the scriptures. It was also based on empirical observation or sense-perception, as the Ptolemaic System as well as Aristotle's own records of observation suggest. Of course, such observations and other conceptions were linked or co-ordinated by a lot of reasoning and interpretation used to develop the world-view in question.

At Cambridge Newton had read Aristotle, in particular, his *Physics*, in the light of its interpretation by 16th century scholastics. But by about the end of the second year of his stay there he appears to have been dissatisfied with what he read and understood of the world view presented therein. The change seems to have come in around 1664 - about the time that he decided in favour of friendship with truth over his devotion to both Plato and Aristotle. By this time he had given up the exclusive diet of ancient works and their commentators and turned to reading the moderns. From this time on we find his genius blossoming, as he gradually came to know the scientific writings of the men of his century. From them he took whatever tools or methods or concepts he could use to develop his own view.

The most prominent scholars whose works he read were Galileo and Descartes. He made notes on Galileo's *Dialogue on the Two Great Systems of the World* and Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*. He had read Euclid's *Elements* earlier in 1663 and following this he mastered Descartes' *Geometrie*. In addition to these, Newton also read Walter Charleton, an expert on ancient and modern atomism, and Pierre Gassendi, the Frenchman who revived atomism. He also read the philosophical



writings of Thomas Hobbs and Henry More and mastered the works of Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke. And hardly need we mention that Newton acquainted himself with Kelper's work.

Mathematician Abraham De Moivre, who knew Newton well, says that Newton persevered in attempting to understand Descartes' geometry and by dint of that effort, gained a clearer understanding of Cartesian geometry.<sup>4</sup>

The period 1663-1666 was thus Newton's formative period. By the end of this period he had laid the foundations of all the three fields in which he excelled, viz. the discovery of the binomial theorem and the differential calculus (method of fluxions) in Pure Mathematics, the work in Optics which analysed white light into colours and made him come up with the corpuscular theory of light and the work in Mechanics where he integrated the dynamics of the celestial and terrestrial bodies.

Every school-boy today learns the four principles on which the Newtonian world-view is built, three Laws of Motion and the universal Law of Gravitation. It is this world-view, this vision, which I intend to review briefly here. In what follows, I will therefore not dwell with his great work in Optics and his contributions to Pure Mathematics, except when these are relevant to the main theme. Newton also dabbled in Alchemy and Theology and I shall have occasion to mention the latter again as it also had some role to play in the development of his world-view.

As Newton did stand "on the shoulders of giants" it is not surprising that most of the ideas that go into the four principles on which Newton founded his world-view are ascribed to others. Let us begin with Descartes and consider what part he seems to have contributed to the origins of Newton's vision.

By the time Newton immersed himself in modern Physics, that is, around 1665, the Aristotelianism that was outlined earlier was falling apart. Copernicus had sent the Earth into orbit and Kepler and Galileo had stabilized the helio-centric view. Descartes (1596-1650) had come up with a world view to replace the dying Aristotelianism. Part of this consisted of his theory of vortices. Descartes considered space as a plenum of an all-prevading fluid. Certain portions of this fluid were in a state of whirling motion, as in a whirlpool or eddy of water. Each planet had its own eddy in which it whirled round and round, as a straw is caught and whirled in a common whirlpool. And Descartes explained gravitation as settling down of bodies towards the centre of each vortex.

Although Newton grew up when this view was spreading, this part of Cartesianism did not constitute the influence of Descartes on Newton. It was Descartes' mechanical approach to nature which Newton embraced, though again, not fully. According to Descartes' view phenomena are created by particles of matter in motion acting on each other. It is this aspect of Cartesianism which influenced Newton in his general approach to scientific activity. Newton thought that all explanation should be mechanical. A shining example of his approach in this respect is his work in

4. Cohen, Bernard, 'Mathematics, the Childhood of Isaac Newton's Science' in *Scientific American*, (January 1968) p. 139.



Optics – particularly the corpuscular theory of light. We know that his great system ultimately failed to give a mechanical vision of the world, for gravitation incorporated action at a distance, and he lamented over this. We shall return to this problem later.

Newton also benefitted immensely from Descartes' Analytic Geometry. Without what he gained from it Newton probably could never have written the *Principia* or made his greatest discoveries. Moreover, the deductive approach that Descartes used in his research and exposition probably had some effect on Newton. For the *Principia* is presented in the form of a deductive system.

Leaving such general influence, Newton is indebted to Descartes for his First Law of Motion. It is surprising that a number of writers of the highest standing have made the mistake of thinking that Newton's First Law of Motion was formulated by Galileo. Bertrand Russell, for example, has written.

“Galileo unified the earth and heavens by his single law of inertia according to which a body once in motion will not stop of itself but will move in a constant velocity in a straight line . . .”<sup>5</sup>

and R. E. Peirls, in his *The Laws of Nature* writes :

“The most fundamental law of mechanics is then the Inertial Law of Galileo which states that if left to itself a body will move with uniform velocity in one and the same direction”.<sup>6</sup>

But the first law is not Galileo's. For Galileo thought that inertial motion is in a circle and not in a straight line, although writers like Paul Feyerabend seem to suggest that Galileo perhaps subscribed to both these ideas on different occasions.<sup>7</sup> The first law occurs very clearly in Descartes in his *Principles of Philosophy*. Under principles of material things, Descartes listed the following rules :

The first law is: Every reality, in so far as it is simple and undivided, always remains in the same condition so far as it can, and never changes except through external causes. Thus . . . If it is at resting one thinks it will never begin to move, unless impelled by some cause. Now there is equally no reason to believe that if a body is moving its motion will ever stop, spontaneously that is, and apart from any obstacle. So our conclusion must be : A moving body, so far it can, goes on moving.

The second natural law is: Any given piece of matter considered by itself tends to go on moving, not in any oblique path, but only in straight lines.<sup>8</sup>

Bernard Cohen, a contemporary Newtonian scholar, mentions that Newton copied out an English version of the principles of inertia from Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*

5. Russell, Bertrand – *Unpopular Essays*, London, Allen & Unwin (1950) p. 170.

6. Peirls, R. E. – *The Laws of Nature*, New York : Charles Scribner's Sons (1956).

7. Feyerabend, Paul – *Against Method*, London, Verso (1983) p. 96.

8. Descartes – *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Anscombe, E. and Geach, P. T. London, Nelson (1969) pp. 216-17.



when he read it during the formative years, and this only later became the First Law of Motion.<sup>9</sup>

If some of the origins of Newton's work are thus traceable to Descartes some are no doubt traceable to Galileo. Galileo himself mentions his following the method of Euclid in his demonstrations so Descartes might not be the only precursor in the deductive method used by Newton. Again, Galileo's dialogues would have made Newton realise that quoting authority (as Simplicio quotes Aristotle) is not the best way to do science. Descartes was more mathematician and philosopher than experimental scientist, whereas Galileo was an experimental scientist. Like Galileo, Newton made gadgets and he conducted experiments in Optics and made observations in Astronomy and Mechanics.

It is also true that towards the end of Galileo's *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*, some statements close to the First and Second Laws of Motion occur. For on the fourth day of the dialogue, in discussing the motion of projectiles, the following statements, which have been interpreted as being close to the First and Second Laws respectively, occur :

1. Imagine a particle projected along a horizontal plane without friction, then we know, . . . that this particle will move along this same plane with a motion which is uniform . . .<sup>10</sup>
- 2, . . . the vertical motion continues to be accelerated downwards in proportion to the square of time . . .<sup>11</sup>

In late medieval science, the impetus theory had been advanced, particularly to solve the problem of the "violent" motion of the projectile. In Aristotelian physics, a stone thrown should reach this Earth directly in a straight line, but it is observed that the projectile does not follow that path. Aristotle thought that this was due to the fact that disturbed air pushes the particles after contact with the projector was broken. Those medievals who rejected Aristotle thought that the observed motion of the projectile is due to the fact that the projector impresses a certain impetus or motive force into the moving body as the projector loses contact with it. This impetus theory gave Galileo his principle of inertia that a body in motion will move with constant speed, but unlike Descartes, Galileo thought that inertial motion was in a circle. This was the state of affairs when Newton engaged himself in these problems.

Again, the idea of gravitation was in the air for quite some time, and although Newton had got on to the correct theory of gravitation in 1666, it was Robert Hooke who first published a qualitative account of gravity together with the law of inertia in 1674, where he said :

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9. Cohen, *op. cit.* p. 139.
  10. Galileo Galilei - *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*. trans. Crew, A., and Salvio, A. de. New York, Dover, p. 244.
  11. *op. cit.* p. 250.



- i. "all celestial bodies whatsoever have an attraction or gravitating power towards their own centres, whereby they attract not only their own parts, and keep them from flying from them, as we may observe the Earth to do but that they also attract all the other celestial bodies that are within the sphere of their activity . . ."
- ii. "all bodies whatsoever that are put into a direct and simple motion, will so continue to move forward in a straight line . . ."
- iii. "these attractive forces are so much the more powerful in operating, by how much nearer the body wrought upon is to their own centres. Now what these several degrees are I have not yet experimentally verified."<sup>12</sup>

This is not all. The inverse square law for gravitation had been suggested as far back as 1645 by Boulliau, and Kepler's third law as well as the law (known even to Kepler) that light diminishes its intensity with the square of distance from the source could have suggested it.<sup>13</sup> Newton himself seems to have thought that Pythagoras had anticipated him in discovering that the force of gravity varied inversely with the square of distance.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, as mentioned earlier, none of these reduce Newton's claim to greatness. Newton asked the correct questions and accepted the correct ideas whether it be of Galileo, Descartes, Kepler or any others in achieving his great synthesis, rejecting the wrong ideas of the same people with great physical intuition. Let us put ourselves for a moment in the position of Newton of 1666.

Aristotelianism was in shambles but a way to unify the celestial and terrestrial motions with the same laws applicable everywhere in the universe had to be envisaged. It would have been clear to Newton that the main attack should be directed to the task of bringing together Kepler, who gave the celestial laws, and Galileo who had given the terrestrial laws. But how? The two pieces did not appear to fit together.

One could not see how Kepler's and Galileo's laws could be linked but, the confusion was confounded by the fact that the views of "the giants" were contradictory. Kepler had shown that the planets move in ellipses, but Galileo thought they moved in circles. Kepler thought the planets were driven along by the "lines of force" issuing from the Sun, Galileo that they were not driven at all, as circular motion was, as inertial motion, self-perpetuating. Kepler thought that inertia of the planets made them lag behind, while Galileo thought inertia was the very thing that made planets continue to go round in circles. These contradictions were further enhanced by Descartes' position that inertia made bodies persist, not in circular motion but in motion in straight lines - a suggestion which looked quite wild - as it was very clear that the heavenly bodies, while they could be moving in circular or elliptical orbits, certainly did not move in straight lines.

12. Kuhn, Thomas - *The Copernican Revolution*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press (1957) p. 254.

13. cf. Koestler, Arthur - *The Sleepwalkers*, London Hutchinson (1957) p. 502.

14. See Kearney, Hugh - *Science and Change 1500-1700*. London, World University Library (1971) pp. 190-91.



How, it may be asked, did Newton become "the conductor who pulled the orchestra together and made a harmony out of the caterwauling discords."<sup>15</sup> In the answer to this I am now suggesting an idea which, if it has been presented before, has as least not been presented positively and with emphasis. The foundation of Newton's work was laid in the two or three years from 1664 to 1667. The contemporary Newtonian scholar at Cambridge, D. T. Whiteside, who edited Newton's papers, writes that from the beginnings in 1664, "Newton over the next two years was to develop a series of researches formidable in technical content and effervescent with still untested creative thought . . . Their detailed systematization, carried through by typically stubborn perseverance and massive power of mental concentration was to take most of the rest of his life".<sup>16</sup>

Almost all Newtonian scholars agree on this fact. But what is its significance? I am suggesting that Newton knew very early that to get away from Aristotelianism he had had to have a *full* philosophy. Aristotelianism was a full philosophy and it could not be overthrown by tinkering here and there. I believe that Newton saw this clearly. He had to decide what his world is going to be – or what he thought the world actually was. Aristotelianism was dying . . . He turned to the main contender to replace it, Cartesianism. He felt that the mechanical world-view of Descartes was correct. The world is like an intricate, impersonal, inert machine. He agreed that matter was divisible and the motion of, and interaction between, particles produced the phenomena, but unlike Descartes he did not want infinite divisibility of matter. He agreed with and borrowed Descartes' first two laws of material things, which he immediately took as his first principle – the Law of Inertia or the First Law of Motion.

Here again Newton did not go all the way with Descartes. He knew that Descartes' theory of vortices was unsatisfactory. It was mentioned earlier that Newton read Pierre Gassendi, himself a mathematician and an arch-critic of Cartesianism. Gassendi was reviving atomism. The trouble with Descartes was that he thought that matter was infinitely divisible – the division did not stop at any level. For Descartes, as for Aristotle, a vacuum is an impossibility. Ancient Greek atomists like Democritus had made the existence of atoms the basis for the possibility of vacua. Newton tilted towards Gassendi's atomism. Newton's corpuscular theory of light shows that he accepted corpuscularism. He probably knew the work of Galileo (1564-1642) and Torricelli (1608-1647) on vacua. He wrote that Aristotle was still his friend. Aristotle had said, "If there were a vacuum any body would continue its motion at uniform velocity in a straight line – which is absurd; therefore there cannot be a vacuum." Newton by his First Law accepted that inertial motion was in straight lines, so the possibility of vacua then follows even on the Aristotelian conception. Newton drew from Aristotle, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes and Gassendi and corrected them and formed the principles of his philosophy: a mechanical view of nature, with the possibility of atoms and vacua, and perhaps most important of all – the principle of inertia borrowed from Descartes; but based on his own reasons and conceptions.

15. Koestler, *op. cit.* p. 496.

16. Cohen, *op. cit.* pp. 139-40.



We must raise a question of some importance before we proceed. Descartes had considered extension as the essential characteristic of matter. This made space and matter coalesce, leaving no room for vacua. Newton gave up this idea, separated space from matter - and was it this that led him to posit an absolute space and, together with it, an absolute time? Or was this conception a later development? This is a difficult area but we shall touch upon this again later in this essay.

Newton was at home in Woolsthorpe in 1666 as the Cambridge University was closed during this time due to the Great Plague. The story that the fall of an apple from a tree in his home garden gave him insight into the work of gravitation might well be literally true. But it was certainly metaphorically true. For the problem of unifying celestial and terrestrial force was linked up with heaviness or weight of bodies which make them fall to the ground.

It was seen that in the Aristotelian system bodies fell to Earth as Earth was the centre of the Universe, and thus Earth was the natural place of heavy bodies. But as Earth, after Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo was no longer the centre of the Universe, why did bodies continue to fall to the Earth any more? This fall of bodies was also associated with heaviness or weight. What then is weight? Moreover, if the Moon and planets are similar to Earth and bodies on Earth, then these celestial bodies must have weight. But what is the meaning of the weight of a planet and where does a planet fall due to its weight?

Galileo thought that weight was an absolute quality of matter which requires no cause, and associated it with inertia. And for him inertia made the planets continue to move in their circular orbits. Here again it was Kepler who had the right insight. For he was the first to explain weight as the mutual attraction between two bodies. He also attributed the tides to the attraction of the Sun and the Moon. I have not tried to detail how much Kepler's ideas would have helped Newton, but Newton's indebtedness to Kepler's findings as well as his ideas probably surpasses what he owes to any other single person. Thus, for example, Kearney says, "... if such a distinction is possible Newton built upon the work of Kepler."<sup>17</sup>

There was a further element which added to the confusion. This was the association of gravity with magnetism. William Gilbert (1540 - 1603) had propounded the view that the Earth was a massive loadstone, and magnetism was the only phenomenon which exhibited directly the tendency of one body to attract another. One could observe that it also acted at a distance, without any perceivable medium or mechanism. It was not surprising that even the great Kepler was deceived into thinking that the attraction that the Sun exerts on planets was magnetic.

But once Newton had accepted the First Law of Motion the rest of the riddle begins to fall into place. Kepler says that planets move in ellipses. What force drags them away from their natural motion—motion in a straight line? Newton's note books for 1664-1666 show that he had formulated the law of centrifugal force (as the force when a body moves uniformly along a circle is at once directly proportional to

17. *op. cit.*



the square of speed and inversely proportional to radius) before Huygens, to whom the credit for the discovery of this law is given.<sup>18</sup> Equating the centripetal force that should balance the centrifugal force so that the planets do move as they do, Newton probably realized that on the basis of Kepler's third law the centripetal force needed to hold the planets will be a single force emanating from the Sun and varying inversely with the square of the distance.

There is evidence that Newton believed, even during these formative years, that the gravity of the Earth extends up to the Moon. This probably originated in him due to the work on the path of projectiles that Galileo had studied earlier. The way Newton combined the centripetal force, gravity and the motion of the Moon is seen in Definition 5 of the *Principia*.

Definition 5 :

"A centripetal force is that by which bodies are drawn or impelled or any way tend towards a centre. Of this sort is gravity by which bodies tend to the centre of earth's magnetism, by which iron tends to the loadstone; and that force, whatever it is, by which planets are perpetually drawn aside from the rectilinear motions, which otherwise they would pursue . . ." <sup>19</sup>

That Newton's unification of the celestial and the terrestrial motion was achieved by extending the terrestrial projectiles to the celestial Moon's orbit is seen from his writings. In Definition 5 itself we read,

"If a leaden ball projected from the top of a mountain by the force of gun powder with a given velocity, and in a direction parallel to the horizon, is carried in a curved line to the distance of two miles before it falls to the ground, the same, if the resistance of the air were taken away, with a double or decuple velocity, would fly twice or ten times as far. And by increasing the velocity, we may at pleasure increase the distance to which it might be projected and diminish the curvature of the line, which it might describe, till at least it should fall at the distance of 10, 30 or 90 degrees, or even might go quite round the whole earth before it falls; or lastly, so that it might never fall to the earth, but go forward into the celestial space, and proceed in its motion in *infinitum*. And after the same manner that a projectile, by the force of gravity may be made to revolve in an orbit, and go round the whole earth, the moon also, either by the force of gravity, if it is endured with gravity, or by any other force that impels it towards the earth, may be perpetually drawn aside towards the earth, out of the rectilinear way, which by its innate force it would pursue, and would be made to revolve in the orbit which it now describes; nor could the moon, without some such force, be retained in its orbit. If this force was too small, it would not sufficiently turn the moon out of a rectilinear course; if it was too great,

18. Kearney, *op. cit.* p. 194.

19. See Hurd, D. L. and Kipling, J. J. ed. - *The Origins and Growth of Physical Science*, Penguin Vol. I., p. 181.



it would turn it too much and draw down the moon from its orbit towards the earth. It is necessary that the force be of a just quantity and it belongs to the mathematicians to find the force that may serve exactly to retain a body in a given orbit, with a given velocity; and *vice versa*, to determine the curvilinear way into which a body projected from a given place, with a given velocity, may be made to deviate from its natural rectilinear way, by means of a given force." <sup>20</sup>

It was this artificial satellite, created by thought experiment, that gave direction to Newton's reasoning. And, to believe Newton, he seems to have calculated the centripetal force that could keep the Moon in its orbit by balancing the centripetal force with the centrifugal force so that the resultant is the Moon's orbit. But not quite satisfied with the values that he obtained in 1666, he did not publish his work. That is partly why the charge of plagiarism levelled at Newton by Hooke, mentioned in the opening paragraph of this essay, is not justifiable.

These are some of the sources, the origins, of Newton's vision. Before moving on to look at his vision from a different angle, however, there is need to indicate the magnitude of Newton's achievement.

The unique genius of Newton was the combination of intuitive physical thought with great mathematical talent. It was significantly the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* which he presented. The great individual achievement of Newton was in synthesising the laws of terrestrial and celestial motion, giving the mathematical or quantitative precision, thereby also giving definite meaning to the interrelated set of concepts and relating the grand system to observable facts, making it testable. It was the culmination of the conceptual revolution triggered off by Copernicus. Within the short space of the three years between 1684 and 1687, during which time he finally put the *Principia* system into shape, Newton struck off the finite two-sphere universe of the Aristotelian middle ages and spread it over infinite space and infinite time; he split up the Aristotelian plenum, adopted the corpuscular view of the universe, and installed the possibility of empty space or *vaccua* in the universe; he created one universe, where the same laws of physics applied universally, and dropped any significant sense attributable to the distinction between the "heavens" and the Earth—for he made all bodies to be in motion, pulling and pushing each other, in an endless universe with no centre; he installed gravity to account for the fall of bodies near Earth and got rid of the conception of "natural" motion of bodies; he showed how gravity makes planets move round the Sun; he distinguished between gravity and magnetism with his Second Law of Motion, he dropped the impetus theory of the "medievals" and stipulated that a force is not that which changes the position but that which changes the motion of a body; he introduced the idea of action at a distance to account for the pull of gravity acting between distant bodies, although he himself could not believe in it. The universe was earlier a compressed globe, with man at the bottom. The new universe was a great clockwork, the mechanism

20. *op. cit.*, p. 182.



infinitely spread with Earth and man exhilaratingly free yet spellbound with wonder and awe. In short, in one great stroke of genius he removed Western man from the Aristotelian universe, where he had lived for two millenia, and put him in a new universe, thoroughly different from the old.

### Philosophical and Methodological Issues.

Let us now take a look at some of the more interesting philosophical and methodological aspects of Newton's work. This could also throw more light on the epistemological origins of his vision. Newton's new universe was not entirely acceptable at the beginning to many including Newton himself. The reason was that Newton had incorporated a ghost into his system - action at a distance. How could the massive forces of gravity required to hold the Moon or the planets act through empty space? it was an enormous, bold step that he took, but Newton was unhappy that he had to take it. The situation was not thought realistic or even conceivable at the time, in spite of the observed magnetic attraction without immediate contact. Newton himself wrote,

"It is inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else, which is not material, operate upon and affect other matter without mutual contact . . . That gravity should be innate, . . . so that one body may act upon another, at a distance through a vacuum, . . . is to me so great an absurdity, that I believe no man who has in philosophical matters a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall in to it . . ." <sup>21</sup>

This shows the great conceptual leap which Newton had to take; it also indicates how the limitations of the era weighed heavily on a giant innovator. Seeing no other way out he reluctantly freed himself from the bondage of the era, but as the above passage shows, he often returned to the ways of the times, looking for the transmitter of gravity- Copernicus did not publish his revolutionary work until he was pressurized by many a sympathiser and admirer, and when he published it, it was as good as a posthumous publication. Darwin was delaying publication until Wallace jumped the gun. Newton, even though he had his supreme insights far back in 1666, and even when, as we saw, Hooke came out with both the first law of motion and the idea of gravitation in 1674, never published his discoveries until he was coaxed into it by young Edmund Halley, who also bore the cost of the publication of the *Principia*. Men of original ideas, men who bring about conceptual revolutions, face such difficulties, as much innovation has to be made to jump from one world-view to another, at times at great personal risk.

Since Newton communicated his discoveries in optics to the Royal Society almost from the beginning, it is certain that although the conception of his brain-child took place in 1666, Newton had a number of misgivings about his world-view and hesitated to give it out. Action at a distance was not the only one of them. Another was the question why it was the case that a universe filled with gravity did

21. See e.g. Koestler, *op. cit.* p. 503.



not collapse and Newton, himself a great dabbler in theology, had to assign to God the function of counteracting gravity to keep the universe going. That was not all. While Newton could never overcome the problems of action at a distance and why the universe did not collapse due to gravity, he would have been emboldened to publish his theory later on by certain other difficulties which he was able to overcome with the mathematics that he developed.

The following is a striking example of a difficulty that he did overcome. Newton was unhappy with the details of his conception that the fall of objects near the surface of the Earth and the "fall" of the Moon towards the Earth are related. For, if gravity belonged to different particles (corpuscles) on the surface of the Earth, the object falling near the surface of the Earth will be pulled in different directions as these particles will act separately from their own locations on Earth. Therefore it is not possible to consider gravity as a force acting from the centre of the Earth, although that conception could be a good approximation for action on the distant Moon. Newton overcame this difficulty when he was able to show mathematically that the sum total of the gravitating forces of the particles acting from a (spherical) body have their resultant acting at the centre of the body. Again, through his mathematics Newton was also able to relate his theory to observation. Thus, for example, he could use his mathematics to show that Keplerian elliptical orbits of the planets were mathematically deducible from the conception of a force whose strength varies inversely as the distance from the Sun placed at one of the foci of the ellipse. He could also derive Kepler's third law, which equated the square of the ratio of the orbital periods of two planets to the cube of the ratio of the average distances of the two planets from the Sun, which again linked his theory of gravitation with data based on observation. In fact this would have suggested the inverse square law, as we indicated.

Much of the problems that Newton's gravitation faced emerged from the corpuscular conception of nature, which was the outlook of the times. As we saw, Descartes was partly originator of this conception and corpuscularianism led to Mechanism. The mechanistic view of nature conceived the transference of force to be by contact, and Mechanism was aimed at getting rid of ghosts like action at a distance. Newton himself believed in the corpuscular view. Thus his corpuscular theory of light, and his work in colour spectra is in the mechanistic tradition. But as notions of action at a distance and God's hand in preventing the collapse of the world entered his view, he failed to be a full fledged mechanist, for Mechanism entertained Deism, which believes that God has no hand in the management of the world after its creation.

Descartes, who undertook to reconstruct the universe, beginning only with matter and motion, created a universe filled with infinitely divided particles, all in contact and with no vacuum. We saw that, in his view, matter produced whirlpools in the skies, and the heavenly bodies move because they are carried in these different whirlpools. Gravity itself was due to these whirlpools sucking things down towards their centre. The immense influence that this Cartesian thought had at the time is unbelievable today. Descartes was dead by 1687, but his follower, Christian Huygens, although a friend of Newton who admired the mathematical beauty of the *Principia* systems, rejected it as untenable as it was non-mechanistic. Leibniz, who saw the



world as full of monads - a sort of universe of corpuscles somewhat similar to the Jaina souls, attacked the *Principia* saying, "what has happened in poetry happens also in the philosophical world. People have gone weary of rational romances, . . . and they are become fond again of the tales of fairies." Perhaps the fact that Newton, although he wanted to fall in line with the mechanists of his time, and was to that extent a product of his times, had a mystical, Pythagorean or Neoplatonist streak in him, as did Kepler before him, was fortunate for science.<sup>22</sup>

God and action at a distance were not the only controversial issues for Newton. The assumption of an absolute space and an absolute time, both infinitely stretching, was as controversial. It is true that matter has to be atomistic and space has to be distinct from matter, for inertial motion to be possible in nature. But the absolute conceptions of space and time came under the immediate attack of the monadist Leibniz, and much later of Ernst Mach (1838-1916).

Descartes, here again, had argued that all motion is motion of an object relative to others. The search for the 'real motions' thus lacks sense. Newton, on the other hand, argued that it was not senseless but only difficult. Newton's way out of the difficulty was his installation of absolute space, which is at absolute rest. "Absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar and immovable,"<sup>23</sup> he wrote. It is relative to this absolute space that 'real' or 'true' motions get meaning, but since absolute space cannot be observed, it is impossible for us to know the 'real' motion. But Newton himself claimed that there is observational evidence for absolute motion. The famous example that he gave is what is known as 'Newton's bucket experiment'. Newton also claimed that even in an otherwise empty universe we could determine from the shape of (say) a planet whether it was rotating. Ernst Mach, criticizing such experiments, objected to the thought-experiment of the planet's rotation in an empty universe, saying that we have no way of finding out what would happen if the universe was empty - for we have to take the universe as it is. This led to Mach's principle, which states the idea that our theories should deal only with what could be observed, that we observe only with relative motion and that empty space is only nothingness. It was Mach's writings that influenced Einstein in his formative years, although Einstein did not agree with some of Mach's more positivistic ideas later on.

Similar problems were posed by the absolute notion of time. It is of interest here that Newton, probably under the influence of Henry More, thought that absolute space and absolute time constitute the Sensorium of God - i.e. the way in which all times and all places are simultaneously present to Him. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in an attempt to elaborate and justify the Newtonian system in the transcendental aesthetic of his *Critique of Pure Reason* tried to make space and time *a priori* bases of our experience. Einstein's theories of Relativity make space and time relative to each other, but in spite of their generation being associated with matter

22 cf. Kearney, *op. cit.* pp. 188-196.

23. Newton, Isaac - 'Absolute Space and Time', Reprinted in *Problems of Space and Times*, Smart J. J. C. ed., New York, The Macmillan Company (1934) p. 81.



itself, it is still an arguable point whether an absolute concept of space-time is not a philosophically necessary conception for the Theory of Relativity.<sup>24</sup>

To turn to the three Laws of Motion – the Laws of Motion are in the corpuscular and mechanistic tradition, but we saw that Newton's conception of real motion was linked with absolute space. These laws have been argued to be a *priori* by Kant, d'Alembert (1717-1783) and James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879). Some have maintained that the laws are empirical generalizations, but this view faces difficulties. For example, according to Newton's own Theory of Gravitation, the necessary conditions for inertial motion cannot be realized even in principle as all bodies would exert forces on each other. Again, if one uses Mach's definition of mass, which holds that a particle has mass only in so far as it interacts with other particles, an isolated body in motion will have no mass, hence no inertia. Moreover, the criterion that determines for us whether a force is acting on an object is whether that object changes being in uniform motion in a straight line or at rest. But this makes the First Law a tautology; for then it says that 'Every body continues in a state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line - except when it does not'.

Similar criticism can be made of the other two laws, particularly in connection with their testability. This had made some assert that these laws are not mere generalizations, but contain theoretical terms whose meanings go beyond their observational meaning. Thus it is held that these laws are conventional and regulative. Extreme versions of this type of view of all high-level theories, and not only of Newton's laws, are held by the relativist philosophy of science which came into prominence during the second half of this century.

All these, while indicating the basic problems in the revolutionary steps taken by Newton, also raised issues about his methodology. This is particularly so in view of his statement 'hypotheses non fingo', i.e. "I feign no hypotheses" in the General Scholium to the *Principia*. This dictum perhaps provided an answer to critics like Leibniz that since the *Principia* offered no explanation (or cause) of gravitation, it was inadequate as a physical theory. But throughout his career Newton insisted on making a sharp distinction between doctrine consisting of those propositions inferred from the phenomena and hypotheses, that is, propositions which had not been so inferred. The possible criticism of his Laws of Motion and the Principle of Gravitation, indicated above, questions whether he could abide by such a distinction and maintain that he was not advancing hypotheses – even in his sense of the latter. It has been pointed out that the problem is not peculiar to Newton, for no general propositions can be inferred from the phenomena.

24. See e.g. Grunbaum, Adolf – The Philosophical Retention of Absolute Space and Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, *The Philosophical Review*. Vol. LXVI (1957), pp. 525-534, reprinted in part in Smart, *op. cit.* pp. 313-17.



It can be seen that even in the case of Newton's work on light the same problems rise. For example, Newton, in his *Optics* "proved by experiments" the propositions that 'The Light of the Sun consists of Rays differently Refrangible'. But the underlying assumptions and definitions made these inferences rest on extra-empirical bases. The proof here rests on a definition of Rays of Light, which I quote.

#### Definition 1.

"By the Rays of Light I understand its least Parts, and those as well Successive in the same lines, as Contemporary in several lines. For it is manifest that Light consists of Parts, both Successive and Contemporary : because in the same place you may stop that which comes one moment, and let pass that which comes presently after; and in the same time you may stop it in any one place and let it pass in any other. For that part of Light which is stopp'd cannot be the same with that which is let pass. The least Light or part of Light, which may be stopp'd alone without the rest of light, or propagated alone, or to do so suffer anything alone, which the rest of Light both not or suffers not, I call a Ray of Light."<sup>25</sup>

We see here a great attempt to "experimentalize" a Ray of Light, which concept is really an abstraction. This makes Newton make *substantive assumptions* about light and its nature. Newton's method, however much he tries to be inductivist (i.e. generalize from empirical facts), it more akin to deductivism (i.e. theory predicting the empirical facts). Indeed, the *Principia* is written in the pattern of Euclid's *Elements*, that is, in the form of a deductive system, but with less vigour. All the same when he lays claim only to propound mathematical principles which "co-ordinate" empirical data, one sees that an element of the present day positivist is also not lacking in him.

We could see that, to bring about the conceptual revolution which established the new world-view, Newton had either consciously or intuitively but unwittingly made a large number of assumptions - or conceptual innovations. In him seem to be the mechanistic and the metaphysical, the inductive and the deductive, interwoven. Critics found the Newtonian system metaphysical first, but men forgot its mystical elements later on and Newton's *Principia* came to be regarded as the basis of the new mechanistic view of the universe. For the system therein worked, it led to new discoveries like that of Neptune. Not only in mechanics, even in the other branches of Physics like heat and thermodynamics, the mechanistic model reigned supreme. The eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century saw the world as a machine - a great clock work - whose blue-print as well as the handbook was the *Principia*.

#### Conclusion

That science has been, in general, a collective enterprise, this paper would have indicated. It has not remained static on one conception, however successful that

25. I reproduce this from the abstracts of a paper read by John Worrall on 'Newton and Hypotheses' at the History and Philosophy of Science Seminar in Cambridge University, 1983.



concepton might have been. Falsifiability is a characteristic feature of science. Newton's work was, as we saw, not readily accepted. Then it became, as it happened only for the second time in the history of the West, the paradigm of knowledge. But already minor dark clouds were gathering. There was no planet Vulcan to account for the perturbations of the orbit of Mercury. Some scientists like Kelvin (1824-1907) were thinking of returning to the earlier mechanistic view of the universe again with no action at a distance. But more importantly, field theories in physics were catching up to the second part of the nineteenth century, particularly after Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879). It was then that the irresistible Ernest Mach criticized the basic notions of the Newtonian system, in his *Science of Mechanics*.

Young Einstein, who was already contemplating on the foundational problems in Physics, had read Kant without being impressed, but Mach's *Science of Mechanics* fired his imagination. In two strokes of genius which spread a little over a decade - the Special and General Relativity - Einstein rid physics of the mechanical model, absolute space and absolute time, and the action at a distance, which last, as we saw, Newton had tried unsuccessfully to evade.

With what better thought, then, could one end this essay than Einstein's own salute to his great predecessor, written when Einstein was reaching seventy, in a piece which he himself called *his 'obituary'*.

“Newton forgive me; you found the only way which, in your age, was just about possible for a man of highest thought and creative power. The concepts, which you created, are even today still guiding our thinking in physics, although we now know that they will have to be replaced by others further removed from immediate experience, if we aim at a profounder understanding of the relationships.”<sup>26</sup>

26. Schipp, P. A. - *Albert Einstein, Philosopher Scientist*, Vol. I., New York, Harper Torchbooks (1959) pp. 31-32.



# The Pythagorean Background To "Pythagoras Opinion" In Shakespeare

MERLIN PERIS

All the allusions to Pythagoras by name in the works of Shakespeare - and we should find three of them - invariably associate the philosopher with his doctrine of transmigration. In two of these, i.e. *The Merchant of Venice*<sup>1</sup> and *Twelfth Night*,<sup>2</sup> this is unambiguously 'the opinion of Pythagoras', while in *As You Like It*<sup>3</sup> an instance of previous existence is said to have taken place "in Pythagoras' time". All of which go to show that, if transmigration was not the only teaching which Shakespeare thought his audience was familiar with as of Pythagoras, it was certainly what they considered to be the most striking and idiosyncratic of the lot.

How much Pythagoreanism the dramatist himself knew is hard to guess *e silentio*. I am sure it was fairly considerable. But some material, such as the well-known passage on the Ages of Man in *As You Like It*<sup>4</sup>, some mythological allusions and certain phrases have suggested to some commentators on Shakespeare that his source - or at least his principal source - for Pythagoreanism must have been the Latin poet Ovid.<sup>5</sup> On the strength of this it has been conjectured - and somewhat loosely at that - that Shakespeare's (exclusive) source for the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration in each of the specific allusions to it cited above must have been, ultimately if not directly, the same.<sup>6</sup>

1. iv. 1. 136-146

2. iv. 2. 52-62

3. iii. 2. 172-175

4. ii. 7. 139-166

5. For the Ages of Man cp. Ovid *Metamorphoses* xv. 199-236. Touchstone's complaint that Audrey in *As You Like It* does not understand his poetry recalls Ovid's complaint that the Getae did not understand his (*Tristia* iii. 14. 39-40; v. 12. 33-54). Several commentators thought Shakespeare derived his notion of the Golden Age as a perpetual spring from Ovid (*Met.* 1. 107 f), and the related notion of the 'penalty of Adam' as being the seasons from Golding's 'Epistle Dedicatorie' to his 1567 translation of Ovid *Met.* Porter and Clarke (ed. 1906) and Rick (ed. 1919) p. 44) think the 'old custom' (ii. 1. 2) refers to the Golden Age in Ovid, and that Duke Senior's words of pity for the death of the deer (ii. 1. 21 f) may have been suggested by *Met.* xv 99-110. Porter and Clarke think the Duke's philosophy of the simple life may have been suggested by the account in Pythagoras speech of *Met.* xv, and Rick (p. 43) think Rosalind's specific reference to Pythagoras (iii. 2. 172-175) and the Duke's joking reference to the transformation of Jaques into a beast (ii. 7. 1-2) play on the idea of Pythagorean metempsychosis in Ovid.

6. See Thomas Baldwin *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* Urbana (1944) p. 410. He suspects Shakespeare used Ovid directly in all his references to Pythagorean transmigration. But see H. H. Furness ed. *Twelfth Night or What You Will* [A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare] Philadelphia and London (1901) p. 263. He thinks these doctrines were familiar enough.



I do not think this is so. If the dramatist did not make a broader use of his acquaintance with Pythagoreanism (and he could very well have acquired that acquaintance, if we disabuse our minds of the notion of his "Small Latine and Lesse Greeke") he had either no occasion to bring such material into his writings, or perhaps thoughtfully kept it out of them from a doubt whether his audience was up to the same degree of knowledge of his allusions as he. For, the evidence of the brief reference to the doctrine of transmigration itself that we have suggest a somewhat wider familiarity with this opinion of Pythagoras' than is conceded by the substance and treatment of it in the *Metamorphoses*. At the same time, it may have been these very sources which cautioned him against indiscriminate reliance on a whole lot of spurious material that Ovid foists on Pythagoras from other Greek and Roman writers and philosophers, together with some fast and loose imaginings of his own. Perhaps the division of life into four ages corresponding to the seasons belongs with these.<sup>7</sup>

The attractive element in the doctrine of transmigration in the contexts in which Shakespeare uses it must surely have been the curiosity of it to an audience fostered in the Christian notion of special creation, which encompasses the beliefs that human beings alone possessed souls, and flowing therefrom, that they were superior in creation to animals, together with the tenet of a single life upon this earth followed by eternal bliss or eternal damnation. Transmigration, or metempsychosis, involving as it does a plurality of lives and the ability of the soul to occupy human or animal bodies, flies in the face of all this – a heresy which the Christian Malvolio knew but thought too nobly of the soul to accept.<sup>8</sup> But for all that, it afforded a challenging explanation of certain human experiences and traits which certainly did serve, even for a moment, to shake the faith of the Christian Gratiano.<sup>9</sup> By the same token, however, the doctrine seems to have lent itself to the possibility of ridicule and parody at the hands of detractors, which, as we shall see, goes back in tradition to the time of its propagation in Greece by Pythagoras himself.

This ambivalent attitude to the belief in transmigration, picked up in the allusions to the doctrine in Shakespeare, has hardly any traces in Ovid; he merely gives a bland enunciation of it. If he works anything at all into it beyond this, it is the revulsion

7. This is attributed to Pythagoras by Diodorus (x.9.5.), who appears to have been Ovid's source for Pythagoreanism. [The idea of Pythagoras being Numa's instructor is also found in him.] Diogenes Laertius (viii 10) gives each of these a span of 20 years. The conception is rather banal, and may really have grown out of Pythagoras' comparison of life to the Olympic games, which categorizes men themselves into seekers of honour, seekers of gain and seekers of knowledge (in a dialogue with Leoa of Phlius; Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* v. 3; Heracleid. Pont. fr. 88 Wehrli). Cicero gives this tied up with transmigration; it certainly accords with the tripartition of the soul popular with Plato (see *Rep.* 581c).

8. *Twelfth Night* iv. 2. 157-158

9. *Merchant of Venice* iv. 1. 130-133



from flesh-eating (and not even killing altogether),<sup>10</sup> which he raises to a frenetic cry more reminiscent of Empedocles than Pythagoras,<sup>11</sup> and enlists arguments in support of the avoidance of flesh which are palpably late and not to be traced in any worthwhile evidence of Pythagoras and early Pythagoreanism.<sup>12</sup>

1. Though none of the three references to Pythagorean transmigration gives any considerable account of the belief, that of *The Merchant of Venice*<sup>13</sup> has implications that cannot but be interesting. The passage itself occurs at the point of the play at which Gratiano, observing that Shylock, adamant in having his pound of flesh, whets his knife on the sole of his shoe "to cut the forfeiture from that bankrout there,"<sup>14</sup> exclaims:<sup>15</sup>

Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew,  
Thou mak'st thy knife keen ; . . . .

And when he finds that no prayers can pierce him, it may be this very animadversion to Shylock's soul through the pun which sets Gratiano to expatiate on its nature - which he does in accordance with the belief associated famously with the name of Pythagoras. For, in anger and frustration he cries:<sup>16</sup>

O, be thou damn'd, inexecrable dog !  
And for thy life let justice be accused.  
Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,  
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,  
That souls of animals infuse themselves  
Into the trunks of men : thy currish spirit  
Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter,  
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,  
And, whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallowed dam,  
Infus'd itself in thee; for thy desires  
Are wolfish, bloody, starv'd and ravenous.

10. xv. 174-175: 459-479. But see 477: *perdite sique nocent, verum haec quoque perdite tantum*. A similar weakening is found in *Met.* 451 in *aut hominum certe*, which is not conceded by metempsychosis if the soul can, and does, invest animal bodies as much as human. See also 108-110. In Empedocles the abstinence from flesh is without exception - it cannot have been otherwise as a general doctrine based on metempsychosis in Pythagoras, unless it was thought that the soul did not pass into certain kinds of animals. Of this there is no evidence whatever.

11. Cp. Empedocles fr. 136, 137 and 139.

12. That meat is food of animals - and of savage animals at that (xv. 83-87); the disgusting thought of stuffing flesh in flesh, with one greedy body growing fat with the food gained from another (88-90); that some animals killed served mankind (120-121; 141-142); that killing animals is not far short of murdering men (464-469) These and suchlike arguments belonged with the great debate which went on on the avoidance of flesh in post-Classical times between the philosophical schools and influenced such works as Plutarch's *De Esu Carnium* and Porphyry's *De Abstentione*. The controversial evidence on Pythagorean abstinence from flesh originates with Aristoxenus -

13. iv. 1. 136-146

14. iv. i. 131

15. iv. 1. 131-132

16. iv. 1. 136-146



The context in which Ovid gives the doctrine of Pythagoras is a verbose harrangue attributed to the philosopher [who was himself, incidentally, reputed for recommending silence on Pythagorean matters] <sup>17</sup> and introduced into the *Metamorphoses* as a part of its finale, in which metempsychosis is enlisted as a form and a part of universal metamorphosis. <sup>18</sup> Yet despite "this ramshakle attachment of the part to the whole," the Pythagorean digression has been seen as an intrinsic, in fact a vital part of the overall structure of the *Metamorphoses*, <sup>19</sup> representing metamorphosis as "the universal key to the secrets of both nature and history" and showing that this constant process of transition that runs through Ovid's *carmen perpetuum* is also describable in the language of science and philosophy. <sup>20</sup>

In the main two themes constitute the actual speech of Pythagoras. The first of these, with which the speech begins and ends (lines 75-142 and 459-478) condemns flesh-eating, and while it has everything to do with metamorphosis, has no connection with what has gone before in the poem. It may have been designed to characterize the historical Pythagoras and thus 'frame' his central philosophy. <sup>21</sup> Its second theme is the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and it is this which, as Little says, critics have regarded as a significant structural element which gives unity and coherence to the subject matter of the *Metamorphoses*, in as much as there are obvious affinities between the phenomenon of transmigration and the phenomenon of transformation. <sup>22</sup>

Talking of universal change (which he facilely presents as the foundation of the sort of magical or miraculous transformations he was drawing upon from mythology) Ovid builds transmigration too into all this with the observation <sup>23</sup>

*nos quoque, pars mundi, quoniam non corpora solum,  
verum etiam volucres animae sumus, inque ferinas  
possumus ire domos pecudumque in corpora condi.*

"We too (change), who are part of creation, since we are not only bodies but also winged souls, and since we can find a home in the forms of wild beasts and be lodged in the bodies of cattle."

17. Sometimes called *echemuthia*, Pythagorean silence was first referred to by Isocrates (xi. 29). and thereafter frequently by other writers. See Iambli, *V. P.* 68; 72, 94, Diog. Laert. viii. 5 etc. But some of the late sources mention addresses by him to whole populaces, including women and children.

18. Ovid glibly interweaves metamorphosis with metempsychosis, and both with change in nature (*omnia muntantur*). While these may find some loose unity in the poem by the fact that all of them involve change, the change is not all on the same plane, the first belonging to the magical, the second to the metaphysical, and the third to the realistic. See Douglas Little 'The Speech of Pythagoras in *Metamorphoses* 15 and the Structure of the *Metamorphoses*' *Hermes* vol. 98 (1970) p.341. He agrees with H Frankel (*Ovid. A Poet Between Two Worlds* University of California Press (1945), that the Pythagorean dialogue contradicts rather than provides an explanation for the phenomenon of transformation.

19. Otto Korn. See *Metamorphosen VIII-XV*, erklärt Otto Korn Neuausgabe der vierten Auflage von Rudolf Ehwald. Weidmann (1966); Luigi Alfonsi 'L'quadramento filosofico delle *Metamorfosi*', in *Ovidiana* ed. N. I Herescu (1957) p. 269, and 265-266.

20. Brooks Otis *Ovid as an Epic Poet* C. U. P. (1966) p. 297-302

21. Otis *op. cit* p. 298

22. *op. cit* p. 343

23. xv. 446-448



The presentation is typically misleading and shabby, giving the impression that souls can at death assume whatever bodies they please, moving from human to animal and animal to human, with no implication of anything like a moral or psychological determination – or at worst, even a mechanistic. For, among much else unevidenced of him, Pythagoras is made to say:<sup>24</sup>

*omnia mutantur, nihil interit: errat et illinc  
huc venit, hinc illuc. et quoslibet occupat artus  
spiritus eque feris feris humana in corpora transit  
inque feras noster, nec tempore deperit ullo.*

“All things suffer change: naught is destroyed. Our spirit wanders from this (body) to that, and from that to this, occupying whatever limbs it likes; from beasts it enters human bodies and (from human bodies) beasts – nor does it ever perish.”

If not the moralistic, certainly the psychological intention of the doctrine of transmigration is brought to bear in the instance of Shylock. His “wolfish, bloody, starv’d and ravenous” nature is a carryover from his prior existence as a wolf – and no ordinary wolf, but one that went for human slaughter, as Shylock does even now in the case of Antonio. Though we have no instance strictly from Pythagorean evidence, this sort of thing is reflected in the selection of new lives in the Myth of Er of Plato’s *Republic*, where, it will be recalled, Ajax opted for the life of a lion, Agamemnon for that of an eagle, and Thersites for an ape’s, in keeping with their character and experiences.<sup>25</sup>

There has been a suggestion – and a brilliant one at that, since it also reflects a prejudice entertained by some reincarnationists – that when Gratiano says ‘a wolf’, he shows he is thinking of a wolfish man, a murderer.<sup>26</sup> Furness goes along with this. He says,<sup>27</sup> “To me it is so singular that (coupled with its grammatical difficulty), I am inclined to suspect that there is some corruption here,” and feels it not inconceivable that the whole passage from ‘Thy currish spirit’ (line 141) to ‘Infus’d itself in thee’ (line 145) “is one of those actor’s additions which Hamlet denounces, and this would measurably account for its grammatical awkwardness.” Accordingly he thinks S. L. Lee may have something when he surmises a connection between this play and the hanging in

24. xv. 165–168

25. 619e–620c; see 620a: *Kata synetheian gar ton proterou biou ta polla hairesthai* for the most part they followed (in the choice of new lives) the disposition of their former life”).

26. Prof. George Allen unpublished notes, *ad loc.*, cited by H. H. Furness, ed. *The Merchant of Venice* (A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare) London (1888) p 207, n. to l. 42. Aristotle (*De Anima* A3. 407b20) asked with respect to Pythagorean metempsychosis how a chance soul could occupy a chance body. See W. Y. Evans-Wentz *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* 2nd ed, London (1949) introd, p. 49 f.

27. *op. cit.* p. 207.



1594 of Dr. Lopez (i. e. 'Wolf'), a Jew at Tyburn,<sup>28</sup> which could still have been fresh in the minds of Shakespeare's audience. Furness is therefore for omitting these words, which he says can be done without injury either to the sense or the rhythm.

I see no reason for such a course. The grammatical difficulty caused by the change of construction in mid-period (resulting in a *nominativus pendens* may be awkward, but is therefore also dramatically expressive of the immediacy with which the wolf's "fell soul" sped to Shylock. The lines suspected bridge the gap between the general doctrine, which Gratiano knew as of Pythagoras, and the manifestation of what appeared proof of it in the desires of the Jew. To abstract them would not only render the transition of thought from the one to the other more abrupt, but also make Gratiano's utterance lose a great deal of its venom.

But when Furness says soon afterwards that, if Lee's suggestion is correct, "the allusion here, vague as it is, is quite pointed enough to have been caught by an audience in whose minds the event was so recent", he must credit the brilliance of the allusion to whoever the interpolator was rather than to the poet himself. But whoever may be the author of these lines - and I don't see the reasoning strong enough to take them to be anyone else's and not Shakespeare's own - it is the strength of Gratiano's suspicion that it is the soul of a man-killer wolf that is in Shylock that inclines him to the Pythagorean belief as he expresses it, i. e. that souls of *animals* infuse themselves in the bodies of men. To construe Shylock's soul to be after all the soul of another *man*, be his name Lopez and be he a murderer, is hardly the direct implication sought by the allusion. Nor does it enhance the bestiality which Gratiano observes in Shylock if he were just another man, be he a Lopez, than an actual wolf.<sup>29</sup>

One recalls here Xenophanes frag 7, one of the earliest pieces of evidence on Pythagoras' doctrine of transmigration and perhaps published during the philosopher's lifetime. For we have here, even if in inversion, transmigration of the soul between man and animal.

For they say that he was passing by  
 When a dog was being smitten. And he said,  
 "Stop: do not beat him; for in his cries  
 I hear the voice of a man, a friend of mine".

28. See appendix 'Jews in England' p. 395-399 in Furness *op. cit.* Fredrick Hawkins, in an article on 'Shylock and Other Stage Jews' in *The Theatre* (November 1879) may have been the first to see a possible connection between the execution and the appearance of *The Merchant of Venice*. Lee's article 'The Original Shylock' appeared the next year in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

29. The reference would well have been to a practice in sheep-rearing communities of hanging wolves caught alive in their depredations: The same may have applied to vicious dogs, whence the the proverb: "Give a dog a bad name and hang him."



In another widely authenticated instance<sup>30</sup> Pythagoras is said to have recollected his own prior existence as Euphorbus in the times of the Trojan war by the sight of a shield hung in the temple of Apollo – an instance Shakespeare too would have been familiar with, if only from the evidence of Ovid.<sup>31</sup> Gratiano's claim to knowledge of Shylock's former life is based on this sort of thing, but purely conjectural and projected from the Jew's wolfish psychology. The immediacy of the transmigration ("even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet....") is more Buddhistic than Pythagorean (or Platonic), envisaging no in-between sojourns in Hades or anywhere else,<sup>32</sup> and could have been prompted by the way Ovid tells of transmigration, or simply by considerations of the dramatic. The insulting "unhallowed dam" for Shylock's mother, into the foetus of whose womb the wolf-soul "infus'd itself", continues to see Shylock himself as wolfish, and his mother as a she-wolf, notwithstanding their being clothed in "the trunks of men".

Such carry-over psychology as that upon which Gratiano bases his purported birth-recognition has been made much of by reincarnation advocates, not merely for explaining the otherwise unaccountable psychological traits in people but also of singular inborn talents. The strong presence of brutish qualities in human beings, as in the "bloody, starv'd and ravenous" desires of Shylock, easily lends itself to the conviction that here must be a case of such a nature. Indeed, as was observed earlier, it is so emphatic that Gratiano has cause to fear for his Christian orthodoxy in the face of this testimony in support of the 'opinion of Pythagoras'.

2. For Malvolio of *Twelfth Night*, however, there is no option to the Christian; for him the human soul is too noble a thing to pass into the body of an animal, so that he in no way approves of the opinion of Pythagoras. The question as put to him as a test of his sanity is, however, worded rather quaintly. Instead of being asked what Pythagoras' opinion was concerning the soul, it is put to him in an inverted form and specifically related to a bird, and a particularly foolish bird at that.<sup>33</sup>

30. Heracleid. Pont. fr. 89 Wehrli. See Rodhe *Psyche* Engl. transl. by W. B. Hillis, London (1925) appendix x, p. 598-599 for a list of ancient writers who repeat the story.

31. xv 160-164

32. For disincarnate souls occupying the air in Pythagorean eschatology, see Aristot. *De Anima* A2-404a16. Aristotle (*An. Post.* B11-94b33) mentions thunder frightening the dead in Hades; see also Aristox. fr. 12 Wehrli (Pythagoras reincarnated (only) every 216 years), Heracleid. Pont. *loc. cit.* Hieronymus fr. 42 Wehrli and parody in Aristophon's comedy *The Pythagorist* of Pythagorean dead in Hades. For Plato see *Meno* 81a-e, *Gorg.* 523a-526d, *Rep.* (Myth of Er) 614a - 621d, *Phaedo* 80b-81d and 107c-108e etc.

33. Theobald (Nichols *Literary Illustrations* vol II p. 357) in Furness *ad loc.*: 'Wildefowle', in *Twelfth Night or What You Will* (New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare) Philadelphia (1901) p. 264. The Wildfowl, i. e. woodcock, is a proverbially silly bird; see *op. cit.* ii 5.83



- CLOWN What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild-fowl?
- MAL. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.
- CLOWN What thinks't thou of his opinion?
- MAL. I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion.
- CLOWN Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness: thou shalt hold the opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits; and fear to kill a woodcock, lest thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. Fare thee well.<sup>34</sup>

Walker finds in this piece of dialogue between the Clown and Malvolio another instance of Ovid's influence on Shakespeare<sup>35</sup> Perhaps so. But there is here an element of satire which, while it may be self-inspired, could again very well trace back to the Classical tradition itself. Many have seen it already in the Xenophanes fragment referred to above.<sup>36</sup> But a second thing occurring in the context of such satirical treatment of the belief of transmigration clinches the likelihood that Shakespeare may also have been familiar with Lucian's excellent satirical sketch, *The Dream or The Cock*.<sup>37</sup> This is the wildfowl, or woodcock, for this bird may himself have had his origin in tradition as a prior incarnation of Pythagoras, though in the form of a somewhat different bird—a peacock.

The fragments and testimonia of a lost poem of Ennius (which itself involves a dream)<sup>38</sup> tell us that the shade of Homer, appearing to the Latin poet when he was "overcome by a gentle and peaceful sleep" (*sonno levi placidoque revinctus*)<sup>39</sup> on Mount Helicon (or it may be Parnassus) disclosed to him that his (Ennius') soul was none other than his (Homer's) own, and (no doubt because of this intimacy of relationship, indeed identity) revealed to him the secrets of the universe in accordance with Pythagoreanism. It was apparently in the course of this confidence that Homer told Ennius that he recalled he had become a peacock.<sup>40</sup>

*memini me fieri parvum*

"I remember I became a peacock"

34. *Twelfth Night* iv 11 52-63

35. Crit. 1.152; see Furness *op. cit.* p. 263

36. This fragment (apud Diog. Laert. viii. 54) is invariably treated as satirical, both on the grounds that Xenophanes was a bitter critic of beliefs to which he was hostile (frg. 11-16) and that the other five poetic passages quoted by Diogenes along with this all ridicule Pythagoras. See H. S. Long *A Study of the Doctrine of Metempsychosis in Greece from Pythagoras to Plato*, N Jersey (1948) p. 17 (I have my reservations, however).

37. *ONEIROS H ALEKTRUON*. Lucian of Samosata born c. 120 A. D. wrote around 80 satirical pieces in Greek. This is a dialogue between his popular character, Micyllus, and his cock, whose crowing had woken him up, and who claims to be the reincarnation of Pythagoras.

38. See O Skutch ed. *The Annals of Q Ennius*, Oxford (1955) for the fragments and commentary.

39. Liber 1. frg. 2 (5). Skutch *op. cit.* p. 70.

40. Frg. 11 (15) Skutch.



Homer's soul passing over to Ennius obviously imitates the passage of Euphorbus' soul into Pythagoras - a claim attributed to Pythagoras himself, which was widely enough known in antiquity for Ennius to have emulated it.<sup>41</sup> Only, where Pythagoras' recovery of this fact of his having been Euphorbus was by his remarkable power of birth-recollection (extolled by Empedocles in one of his fragments)<sup>42</sup> Ennius accredits his to a 'Pythagorean dream' (*somnia Pythagorea*).<sup>43</sup>

But what of the inspiration concerning the peacock? Especially since, as Tertullian sneers, a bird with such an unpleasant voice (for all the beauty of his plumage) hardly reflects well on Homer, not to mention the poetic heredity which Ennius seeks to establish between himself and the epic poet.<sup>44</sup>

Otto Skutch, in his study of Ennius, thinks the easiest explanation for the peacock in Ennius is that the poet has lifted the bird off a descent of Pythagoras, where he would have a natural place, "because in Pythagorean southern Italy and apparently elsewhere the peacock is the symbol of immortality, and because he is the bird of Samos and thus connected to Pythagoras".<sup>45</sup> He thinks the peacock incarnation would have been used in the Pythagorean descent to split the (roughly) 600 year span between Euphorbus and Pythagoras into 300 year intervals, just as Ennius was now doing in the case of the similar span between Homer and himself.<sup>46</sup>

What is surprising about Skutch's theory is that, notwithstanding his willingness to use the known peacock in the Homer - Ennius descent to interpolate a peacock (of whom there is no independent evidence) in the descent of Pythagoras, he is not prepared to see the quite easy possibility, in that case, of a conflation of the two separate descents through the identification of the peacock-births in the two (that is, if Ennius himself had not, through Homer's words intended to do just that). The resultant concatenation of births, including

41. See p. 89 and n. 30 above

42. Frg. 129, perhaps from his *Katharmoi*. Diog. Laert. viii 54; see also Iambl. V. P. 6; and Porph. V. P. 30.

43. Horace Ep. ii. 1.50 f.

44. *De Anima* xxxiii.

45. 'Notes on Metempsychosis' in *Studia Enneana*, London (1968) p. 151 (republished from *Class. Philol.* vol. 54 (1959) p. 114 f) See p. 153 and *The Annals of Q. Ennius* p. 164-165; K. von Fritz 'Ennius' *RE* vol. V (1905) col. 2604 W H Friedrich (*Philol.* vol. xcvi (1948) p. 280) thinks Ennius chose the peacock because the other noble birds were already adopted, the swan for Orpheus and the eagle for Agamemnon (Plato *Rep.* 620a - b)

46. *The Annals of Q. Ennius* p. 165. A 300 year interval is unknown and eked with difficulty by Skutch. The one popularly known is 216 (=6<sup>3</sup> called the 'psychogonic cube') given; by Aristoxenus and some others (fr. 12 Wehrli); another of 207 is also known. The reincarnations of Pythagoras mentioned by Heraclides (*loc. cit.*) roughly accord with these.



peacock and Ennius, is to be found in Ps. Acro. Hor. c 1.28.10, with the attempt at fusion quite evident in *hic ante et...*

*(Pythagoras) praedicavit se... Euphorbum...  
fuisse, qui interfectus .. iterum revixit,  
factus Pythagoras ...; hic ante et in Homerum  
dicitur renatus, postea in pavonem, postremo  
iam in Ennium poetam.*

(Pythagoras) proclaimed that he was Euphorbus, who was killed and came to live again as Pythagoras; prior to that he was reborn as Homer, and afterwards as a peacock, and now lastly as the poet Ennius.

What deters Skutch from conflating the two descents is perhaps his location of the peacock in either case between the two human incarnations so as to break the gap of roughly 600 years into two 300 year intervals; and he does this notwithstanding that most read Ennius to the effect that the peacock incarnation preceded Homer.<sup>47</sup> Besides, the evidence for 300 year intervals between births in the reincarnations of Pythagoras is rather far-fetched. However, he may be right that no pun was intended in *quintus* (as a numeral) when Perseus wrote:<sup>48</sup>

*"Lunae portum, est operae, cognoscite, clives",  
cor iubet hoc Enni, postquam destertuit esse  
Maeonides, Quintus pavone e Pythagoreo.*

"Acquaint yourselves with the port of Luna, now's the time, citizens," so bids the mind of Ennius when roused from dreaming himself to be Maeonides, Quintus from the Pythagorean peacock.

The chronologically acceptable sequence resulting from a conflation of the two descents and including a peacock should be: Euphorbus, peacock, Homer Pythagoras, Ennius. If this is rearranged, putting peacock before Euphorbus, it would allow a pun on 'Quintus' (fifth), while also making it possible for Homer to have recalled his having already been a peacock.<sup>49</sup>

47. For instance Mommsen, whom Skutch discredits; see 'Notes on Metempsychosis' p. 155. n. 21

48. Perseus *Sat vi*, 9. 11

49. The Scholiast saw a pun here, and Perseus, as John Conington (*The Satires of Perseus*, Oxford (1874) p. 118 n. 11 *ad. loc.*) says, might very well have intended one; but then, we should rather have had *a* than *ex* (*Quintus fiam e Sosia*: Plaut. *Amph.* 1.1 152) The series as given by Heracleides (*loc. cit.*) was Aethalides, Euphorbus, Hermotimus, Pyrrhus (a Delian fisherman) and Pythagoras, Dicaearchus (fr. 36 Wehrli) with Clearchus, has Euphorbus, Pyrandrus, Aethalides and then a beautiful harlot, Alco, before Pythagoras. (The substitution of Alco, judging by her profession, is surely out of pure malice, and may be the forerunner of Aspasia in Lucian.)



As far as is our present concern, what is important is that a bird has moved into the picture of Pythagorean transmigration, and strongly, even if he is still not quite the kind of fowl that Malvolio's woodcock is. But when next we meet the bird in Pythagorean metempsychosis, a dramatic transformation has taken place - the peacock has become a barnyard cock!

I refer of course to Lucian's excellent satire of Pythagoras and his teaching of metempsychosis, which, judging by its subject-matter, which brings in a dream, a bird and rebirth, must to some extent at least have been inspired by Ennius' famous poem. For in this sketch, *The Dream or The Cock*, Micyllus, woken up from a dream of feasting and riches by the impudent crowing of his cock, learns from the bird that he is none other than Pythagoras reborn - making Micyllus, already amazed at hearing the bird speak, exclaim.<sup>50</sup>

"Now here's a wonder that beats the other -  
a cock philosopher! Tell me, son of Mnesarchus,  
how you became a cock instead of a man, and a  
Tanagran instead of a Samian."

The parody of Pythagorean transmigration is further intensified when the bird goes on to assert that, after he was Pythagoras, he became the courtesan Aspasia.<sup>51</sup> Which makes Micyllus whoop with amusement:<sup>52</sup>

"Dear, dear! and your versatility has even changed  
sexes? My gallant cock has positively laid eggs  
in his time? Pythagoras has carded wool and spun?"

Lucian's own substitution of cock for peacock in the personal reincarnations of Pythagoras for his little dawn drama may have been occasioned by the context; but it could well have been from a knowledge of some special consideration the Pythagoreans showed for the bird, which Lucian may have known, which led to the taboo against the eating (and then perhaps also the killing) of white cocks.<sup>53</sup>

Be that as it may, from barnyard cock in Lucian to woodcock in Shakespeare is an easier transition than from Ennius' peacock to Lucian's barnyard cock. The satirical humour is now in the proverbial stupidity of the bird, and in the fact that it houses, not the soul of Pythagoras, but Malvolio's happy-to-be-rid-of grandmother. The Pythagorean prohibition against killing, which

50. 4

51. 19

52. *loc. cit.*

53. Alexander apud Diog. Laert. viii. The reason given for desisting from white cocks is that they were sacred to the Moon (god) and was his suppliant; it heralds the dawn. But see Aristox. frg. 194. He says cockerels were among the favourites of Pythagoras diet! see also Diog. Laert. viii 20, Diog. Antonius apud Porph. V. P. 36 and Iambl V. P. 150, where cockerels are mentioned.



Ovid renders with Empedoclean horror as being perpetrated against our own parents and brothers, also finds its parody in the fear of releasing thereby the soul of the dreadful old lady, now safely imprisoned in the bird.

The metaphorical 'darkness' ("Remain than still in darkness ..") in which the clown leaves a Malvolio who will not accept the 'opinion of Pythagoras' and harbours no fear of killing woodcocks (or anything else) is the darkness of the ignorance of Pythagorean matters, which is here equated with Hell.

"Madman, thou errest: I say, there is no darkness  
But ignorance; in which thou art more puzzled than the  
Egyptians in their fog".

says the clown.<sup>54</sup> To which Malvolio replies:<sup>55</sup>

"I say this house is dark as ignorance, though  
ignorance were dark as hell."

If Shakespeare was then here parodying Ovid by substituting 'grandam' for Ovid's 'parents and brothers', and finding humour rather where the latter expresses only revulsion, the spirit is still Lucian, and would have gone down excellently well with Shakespeare's Christian audience as it did with Lucian's non-Pythagorean pagan readers.

3. I turn now to the *As You Like It* reference. Soon after his inquiry about the cock's antecedents, Lucian's Micyllus asks the bird where he himself was at the time when Pythagoras was Euphorbus; was he too transformed? Yes, certainly, says the cock; "You were an Indian ant". And when Micyllus asks whether all that Homer says of the Trojan war was as it happened, the cock exclaims:<sup>56</sup>

"Why, where did he get his information from, Micyllus?  
When all that was going on, he was a camel in Bactria!

And what do we find when Rosalind of the *As You Like It*, prompted by the rhymes that Orlando had posted on trees, indulged in a bit of Pythagorean recollection? Says she,<sup>57</sup>

"I was never so berimed since Pythagoras' time,  
that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember".

54. iv. 2. 44-46

55. iv. 47-48

56. 16-17

57. iii 2. 174-175. Diodorus (x 6.1), like Ovid, says Pythagoras recollected being Euphorbus in Trojan times (see also Horace *Od.* I 28) and may have been one of Ovid's sources, if not Shakespeare's, for both metempsychosis and the simple life (*ten litoten zeloun*) which some (e.g. Porter and Clarke), take to be the basis of Duke Senior's philosophy in the play. As mentioned, the chronologically impossible association of Numa with Pythagoras is also found in Diodorus (viii 14. 1).



Memory of a past existence and the location of that existence in "Pythagoras time" refer the allusion to the familiar teaching. Rosalind's feat of recollection is also in character, being, even if weak, no ordinary one but a truly Pythagorean *mneme*, reaching as far back as two millenia. Pythagoras himself (according to Empedocles, who speaks of him with admiration amounting to awe), when he reached out with the full power of his mind, could see everything as far back as "ten or even twenty lifetimes of men".<sup>58</sup> It is upon the capacity for such *anamnesis* (the *pubbenivasananussati* of the Buddhists) that he claimed to recollect having been the hero Euphorbus in the time of the Trojan war, and that various other lives appear to have been attributed to him in tradition. Rosalind's imaginary parallel achievement is (as in the case of Pythagoras' recollection of having been Euphorbus, or his recognition of a friend as having assumed life as a dog, or for that matter Gratiano's recognition of the nature of the soul that had infused itself into Shylock's body) factitious; it is evoked by some object, quality or happening in the present existence - here the being rhymed. Her mock modesty in claiming to "hardly remember" is a pretence at realism that accentuates her jest.

But why of all rats an Irish rat? At first it appeared to me that, when taken together with metempsychosis and Pythagoras, Shakespeare may not only have known the tradition which existed among the Irish that some of their divine personages and national heroes underwent reincarnation,<sup>59</sup> but also that the origin of the belief among the Celts was associated in some way with Pythagoras himself. Caesar, writing on the Druids,<sup>60</sup> tells us that the cardinal doctrine among them was that souls do not perish at death but pass from one body to another, and that it is this belief that is the basis of their courage. He adds that they committed their sacred literature to Greek (he has his own reasons for why they

58. *loc. cit.*

59. Especially of the Tuatha De Danaan or Sidhe race. Practically all the principal figures of the Cuchulain or Red Branch cycle of Irish saga are regarded as reincarnations of earlier gods and heroes. Cuchulain is the god Lugh; Finn nac Coul was reborn after 200 years as Monagan, king of Ulster, and recalled the incident of his earlier birth of the killing of Fothad Airgdech. In the Irish Christian redaction of the legend of Tuan, Tuan informs Finnen that he was a stag, a bear, a vulture (or eagle) and a fish before he was born as the human being he was. The most notable study of the doctrine among the Irish is Alfred Nutt's 'Essay upon the Irish Vision of the Happy Other World and the Celtic Doctrine of Rebirth' in Kuno Meyer's *The Voyage of Bran* London (1897). See also W Y Evans Wentz's chapter on 'The Celtic Doctrine of Rebirth' (p. 358-396) in his *Fairy Faiths in Celtic Countries* Oxford (1911). In his *Buddhism in Pre-Christian Britain* (London and Glasgow (1926) p. 96 and 43) Donald Mackenzie finds the Celtic doctrine more like the Buddhist than the Greek and thinks (p. 39) that it could well have been carried there by Buddhist missionaries in Asokan times. See also Origen's statement in his *Commentary on Ezekiel* that 'The Island (Britain) has long been predisposed to it (Christianity) through the doctrines of the Druids and the Buddhists, who had already inculcated the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead.'

60. *De Bel Gal.* iv. 14. Diod. v. 28. 6; Divitiacus, friend and ally of the Roman people, was no less than Druid himself (*Cic De Div.* i. 90).



did this) and says that Britain figured prominently in Druid disciplines so that 'today those who would study the subject more accurately journey as a rule to Britain to learn it'. Later writers such as Diodorus Siculus associated this Celtic belief concerning the soul, construed as reincarnation, with the name of Pythagoras,<sup>61</sup> and depending surely to a great extent on Herodotus' account of this Greek philosopher having been the master of the Getan (daemon) Salmoxis.<sup>62</sup>

Any such reincarnation hypothesis for the Irishness of Rosalind's rat must however yield to the stronger claim of a widespread folk belief which is to the effect that in Ireland rats were killed by rhymes. Copious references to the almost proverbial practice of this rhyming of rats to death will be found in the notes *ad loc.* in the Furness edition of the *As You Like It*.<sup>63</sup> Apparently this was done by a particular variety of witches, called 'Eybiters', who had *mantrams* for the purpose, which gained their end by the 'drumming tune' of the incantation, as<sup>64</sup> much as by the 'gall and vinegar' of the imprecation<sup>65</sup> it carried. It must then remain an open question whether the Irishness of the Irish rat, as which Rosalind died in "Pythagoras' time", had, beneath its more obvious allusion, an elite reference to Celtic shape-shifting, and perhaps also its link-up in the Classical authors (surely Caesar at least) as a doctrine of transmigration with that great expounder of the it in the West, Pythagoras. The answer to this must rest of course on whether, and how much of this evidence was available to Shakespeare in translation, or he was otherwise able to acquire through that "Small Latine and Lesse Greeke" with which he has been notoriously accredited.

There are some who see an allusion to Pythagorean metempsychosis in Duke Senior's witticism in the *As You Like It* that the Jaques he and the Lords were searching for in the forest had perhaps been "transformed into a beast".<sup>66</sup> For instance Rick.<sup>67</sup> But what we have here is not metempsychosis, but metamorphosis, of which Ovid's work is full of mythological instances, which gives it its popular title. It is not metempsychosis where the new body does not originate biologically though birth and simply undergoes a change of form

61. v. 28-Amm. Marcel. xx. 9. 8. See also Strabo iv. 4. 4; Val. Max. ii. 6. 10; Lucan *Phars.* 454-457 and scholia. This may simply have been a notion of immortality. But there is also evidence of shape-shifting (*morphēs metastasis*) among these peoples. See Eur. *Hec* 1265 f, where Polymestor prophesies to Hecuba that on her way to Greece she will fall into the sea and become a bitch with fire-red eyes.

62. iv. 95.

63. p. 155 on lines 174-175: 'berim'd . . . Rat'

64. So in the address 'To the Reader' at the conclusion of Jonson's *Poetaster*, "Rhyme them to death as they do Irish rats In drumming tunes" Steevens (Johnson and Steevens ed. *ad loc.*

65. Azotus "And my poets Shall with satire steep'd in gall and vinegar Rhyme em to death, as they do rats in Ireland."- Rudolph's *Jealous Lovers* v, ii.

66. ii. 8. 1-2

67. p. 43, taking it with Rosalind's specific reference to Pythagoras in vs. 172-175



(*morphēs metastasis*), as was prophesied for Hecuba by Polymestor; if anything, the Duke is looking for a Jaques who has undergone metamorphosis, not metempsychosis. Nor is the compassion that the Duke feels for the 'venison' he proposes going out to kill,<sup>68</sup> and Jaques' for the wounded stag he sees,<sup>69</sup> evoked by any considerations associated with the belief in transmigration and referable to Ovid. What the Duke feels sad about is goring "the poor dappled fools" in "their own confines", and is accordingly accused by Jaques of being a greater usurper than his brother who banished him. As for the moralizing Jaques himself, the sight of the "poor sequester'd stag" provides him more with a subject for "piercing through"

The body of the country, city court,  
Yea, and of this our life.<sup>70</sup>

If he too does have any consideration for the hunted animals, it is no different from that of the Duke; we are "usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse"

To fright the animals, and to kill them up,  
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

The reflections are moralistic and political; they have no basis in the Pythagorean or, for that matter, any teaching of transmigration. Even as purely an argument against killing animals, it is not one that is to be found in Ovid.

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68. ii. 1.21

69. ii. 1.25

70. ii. 1.58-60

71. ii. 1.60-63; cp. ii. 1.22-25







# Pre-State Chieftains And Servants of the State: A Case Study of Parumaka <sup>1</sup>

SUDHARSHAN SENEVIRATNE

The *parumuka* are the single largest lay group mentioned in the early Brahmī stone inscriptions of Sri Lanka. Notices recording their endowments (mainly in the form of drip-ledge cave shelters donated to the non-city dwelling Buddhist monks) occur in large numbers and spread over a wide area within the Island approximately covering a period of three centuries (B.C. 2nd century to 1st/2nd century A.D.). <sup>2</sup> This study is an attempt to trace the emergence of the *parumuka* group during the Proto Historic period as pre-State clan chieftains and their subsequent status as a primary segment of the socio-political elite incorporated within the early state of Sri Lanka. In this total scenario the most crucial development was the structural transformation of the *parumuka* group from one epoch to another, <sup>3</sup>

The significance and the intensity of the 'historical problem' concerning the *parumuka* is reflected in the wide range of views expressed about the antecedents, functional role, and the qualitative status of this group within the socio-political structure of Early Historic Sri Lanka. <sup>4</sup> In this conglomeration of views, one stream of modern historiography actually faced a 'conceptual crisis' in its attempt to unfold the antecedents of culture dynamics associated with the 'beginnings of civilization' in Sri Lanka. The adherence to a basic premise of 'cultural

1. This article incorporates some supplementary themes emanating from a forthcoming study titled *The Political Ecology of Pre-State Chiefdoms: A Cross-Regional Study*. The present study was originally read at the Conference of the 11th International Association of Historians of Asia, Colombo, 1-5. August 1988.
2. Inscription number indicated otherwise, is from S. Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon Vol. 1*, Colombo, Archaeological Survey, 1970.
3. Sudharshan Seneviratne - *Social Base of Early Buddhism in South East India and Sri Lanka, c. 3rd century B. C. - 3rd century A. D.* Ph.D. dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1985, Chapter III.
4. For a comprehensive summary of these views see H. Ellawala, *Social History of Early Ceylon*. Colombo, Department of Cultural Affairs, 1969; Tilak Hettiarachchy, *History of Kingship in Ceylon*. Colombo, Lake House, 1972; C. W. Nicholas, "Some Offices and Titles in the Early Sinhalese Kingdom". *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. ii, 1950, pp. 116-128; Lakshman S. Perera, *Institutions of Ancient Ceylon from Inscriptions (2 Vols.)* Ph. D. dissertation. University of Ceylon, 1949; S. K. Sitrapalam, "The title Parumaka found in Sri Lankan Brahmī Inscriptions - A Reappraisal". *Sri Lanka Journal of South Asian Studies*, No. I (New Series), 1986/87 pp. 13-25. (Published in 1988).



implantation' either from north India or south India, underlining a donor-recipient interaction and the crude compartmentalization of language-cultural zones along racial lines, diluted any intellectual credibility associated with this school of thought. More often this school of thought tends to isolate the *parumaka* group in its intra-societal interaction. This methodological fallacy is essentially a consequence of the failure to grasp the significance of sub-stratum dynamics related to institutional formation. While on the one hand this school of thought underplays the vertical and horizontal transformations the *parumaka* underwent as a social group, it fails, on the other hand, to recognize the existence of this group within interacting and overlapping techno-cultural phases distributed in time and space (Table 1).

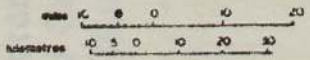
To some extent this situation has been remedied due to empirical and interpretative work conducted both in archaeological and historical studies in the last two decades. These studies brought into focus, not only the importance of the external dynamic but also the crucial significance of the internal dynamic in the process of institutional formation.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore imperative that the origin, relative status and the functional role of the *parumaka* be viewed beyond the narrow confines of a monolithic techno-cultural milieu and a single chronological context. The emergence and the structural transformation of the *parumaka* group therefore is organically linked to the transition from a non-complex to a complex society. This also entails a study of the resident community-ecosystem symbiosis, dynamics of community movement and techno-cultural synthesis, processes of acculturation, the vertical interaction between the Great Tradition (represented by decision-making groups in society) and the Little Tradition (represented by sub-stratum techno-cultural groups) and its dialectical contradictions related to continuity and change. Elsewhere, we have demonstrated the

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5. For some recent studies see W. Begely, "Excavations of Iron Age Burials at Pomparippu, 1970". *Ancient Ceylon*, No. 4, 1981, pp. 49-95; Siran Deraniyagala, "The Citadel of Anuradhapura 1969; Excavations in the Gedige Area". *Ancient Ceylon*, No. 2, 1972, pp. 48-169; R. A. L. H. Gunawardena, "Social Function and Political Power: A Case Study of State Formation in Irrigation Society" in Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Shalnik ed. *The Study of the State*. The Hague, Mouton, 1981, pp. 133-154; "Prelude to the State: An Early Phase in the Evolution of Political Substitutions in Ancient Sri Lanka". *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 1 and 2, 1982, pp. 1-39. (Published in 1985); P. V. B. Karunatilaka, "Early Sri Lankan Society - Some Reflections on Caste, Social Groups and Ranking" *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. IX, Nos. 1 and 2, 1983, pp. 108-143. (Published in 1986). Ponnampalam Raghupathy, *Early Settlements in Jaffna: An Archaeological Survey*, Madras, T. Raghupathy, 1987; Sudharshan Seneviratne, "The Archaeology of the Megalithic-Black and Red Ware Complex in Sri Lanka" *Ancient Ceylon*; No. 5, 1984, pp. 237-307; "The Baratas: A Case of Community Integration in Early Historic Sri Lanka" in A. R. B. Amarasinghe and S. J. Sumanasekera Banda ed. *Festschrift 1985 - James Thevataşan Rutnam*. Colombo, UNESCO, 1985, pp. 49-56.

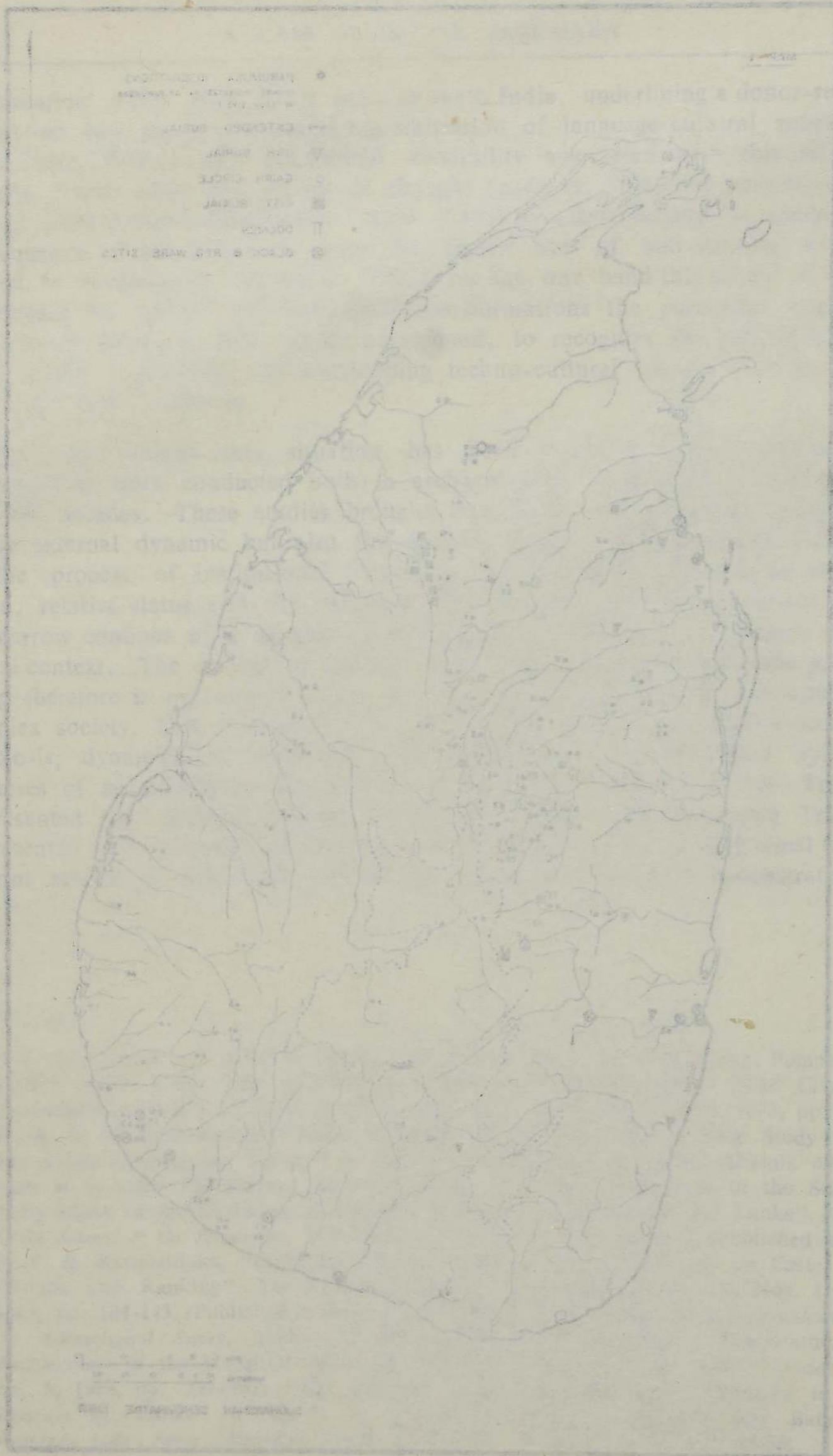


MAP I

- PARUMUKA INSCRIPTIONS  
(FIGURE INDICATES No OF PARUMUKA AT EACH SITE)
- ⇨ EXTENDED BURIAL
- ▼ URN BURIAL
- CAIRN CIRCLE
- CIST BURIAL
- ⊥ DOLMEN
- ⊗ BLACK & RED WARE SITES









**TABLE 1**

<i>Chronology</i>	<i>Technology</i>	<i>Dominant Culture</i>	<i>Primary Institutional Structure</i>
Pre 6th Century B.C. (Pre History)	Stone Age (Mesolithic)	'Balangoda Culture'	Hunting, gathering, fishing; tribal society.
7th to 4th/3rd Century B.C. (Proto Historic)	Iron Age	Megalithic-BRW	Swidden and plough agriculture, small tanks, pastoral activity, limited crafts. clan-based villages, household economy, chiefdoms.
3rd Century B.C. to 2nd/3rd Century A.D., (Early Historic)	Iron Age	Indo-Aryan	Urbanization, hydraulic civilization, the script and coinage in use, the emergence of craft and commercial guilds, long-distance trade, stratified society, state formation.

**Sudharshan Seneviratne, (1985)**



use of this conceptual framework in understanding transitional institutional structures associated with pre-State societies in south central Asia.<sup>6</sup>

## II

In order to understand the nature of the *parumaka*, one has to take cognizance of their origins along with their functional role and evolution as a socio-cultural group.

Perhaps one of the major problems confronting the historian is the question posed about the region of origin and the cultural antecedents of the *parumaka* in Sri Lanka. Attempts made by Goldschmidt to equate the *parumaka* with the *brāhmaṇa* and those of Paranavitana to identify the (*pramukha* > *pamuka* > *pāmokkha*) > *parumaka* as leaders (*jetthaka*) of corporate bodies (*śrēṇi*) of north India, who established the earliest settlements in Sri Lanka, essentially point to a north Indian (regional), Indo-Aryan (linguistic and cultural) and *varṇa* (socio-ritual) affiliation.<sup>7</sup>

The basic premise of the hypothesis advanced by Paranavitana concerning the antecedents of the *parumaka* group is questionable. It is a fact that the *parumaka* group did conduct commercial activities during the Early Historic period. However, Paranavitana's assumption that they were the descendents of guild leaders from north India who 'colonized' this island, does not stand on firm ground. In the first instance, as recent studies indicate, the very introduction of 'elements of civilization' to Sri Lanka from north India is now open to question. Further to this, if, as Paranavitana argues, guild leaders did function in Sri Lanka as early as the 6th century B. C., then it is also possible to assume the existence of a development commercial vortex, money economy and corporate organizations in association with production distribution - units and an urban infrastructure. Archaeological evidence indicates anything but rich material remains from pre-1st century B. C. habitation strata. Nor do the earliest inscriptions indicate the existence of a well institutionalized society or a developed guild system. There is in fact only a solitary inscription mentioning a *parumaka* in association with a corporate body (No. 990). Better developed hierarchically organized corporate bodies emerged in the post - 1st century B. C. context in Sri Lanka. The indigenous development of such institutions was a gradual one rather than as introductions from north India.

6. Sudharshan Seneviratne - "Kalinga and Andhra: The Process of Secondary State Formation in Early India", in *The Study of the State*, 1981, pp. 317-338; "Pre State to State Societies: Transformations in the Political Ecology of South India with special reference to Tamilnadu". Paper presented at the *Seminar on the State in Pre-Colonial South India*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1989.
7. P. Goldschmidt - "Notes on Ancient Sinhalese Inscriptions", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, Vol. 6, 1979, p. 2.; S. Paranavitana, "The Royal Titles of the Early Sinhalese and Origin of Kingship", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Great Britain and Ireland*, 1936, pp. 447-449.

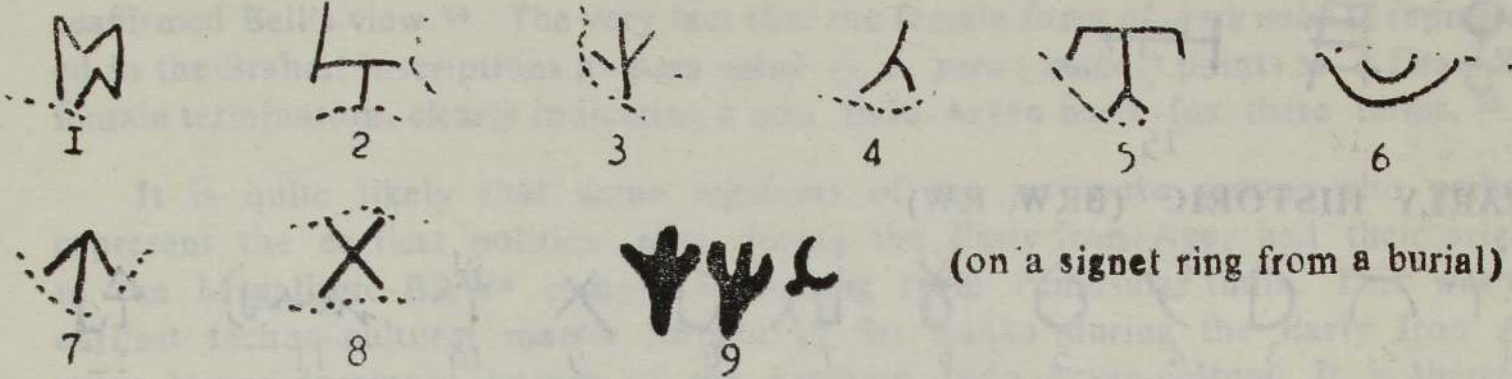


PLATE 1

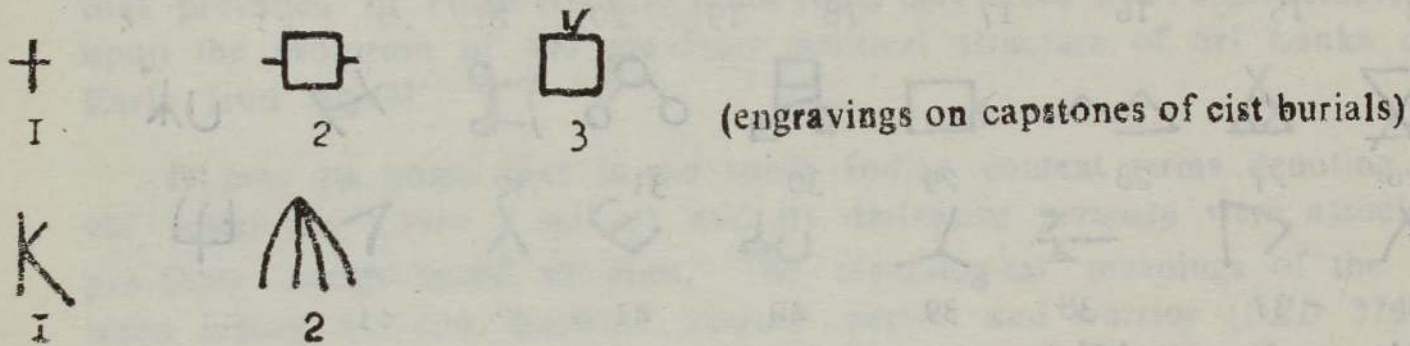
Post-firing graffiti symbols on pottery  
(Black and Red Ware, Red Ware)

(Not to scale)

Anaikodai



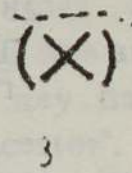
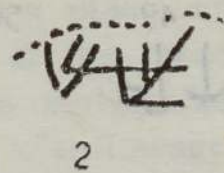
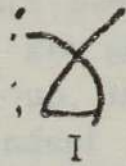
Ibbankatuwa



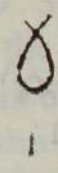
Kantadorai



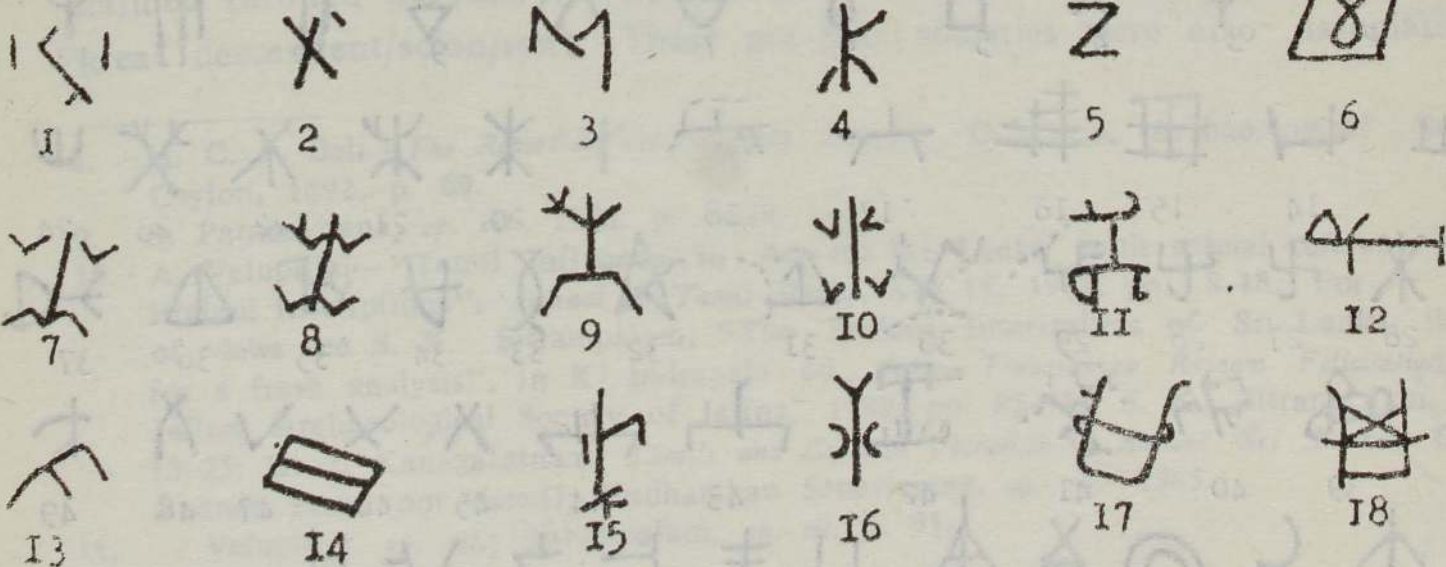
Karainagar



Kollankanatta



Pomparippu

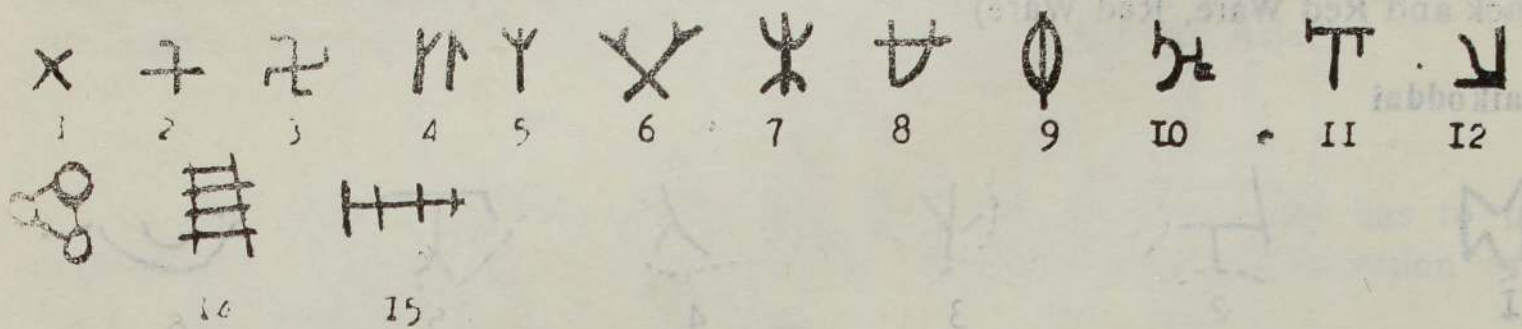


References

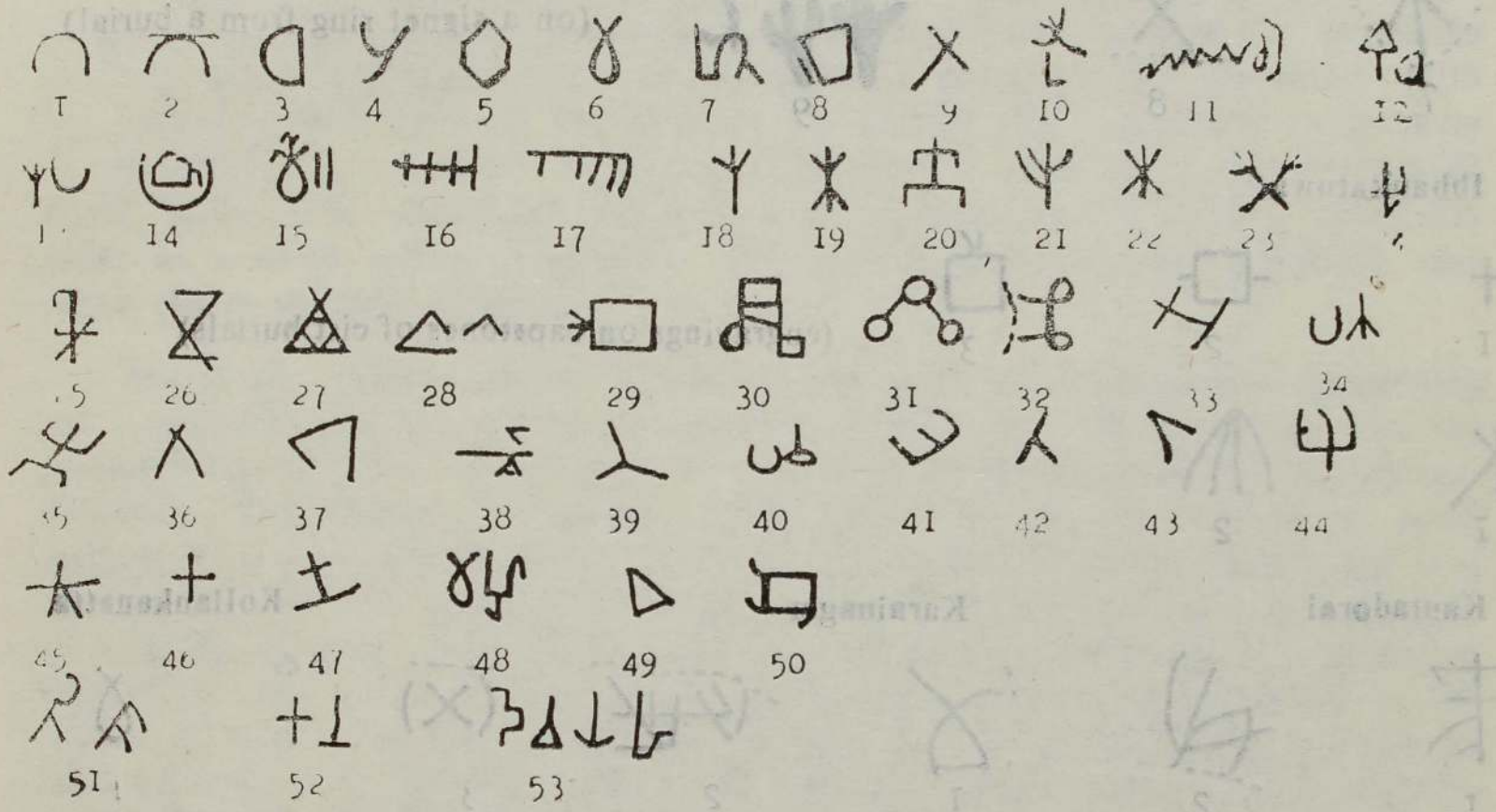
1. P. Raghupathy 1987
2. *ASAnR* 1957; *ASAdR* 1965-66; W. Begley 1981; S. Deraniyala 1972
3. Raj Somadeva (Pers. com.)



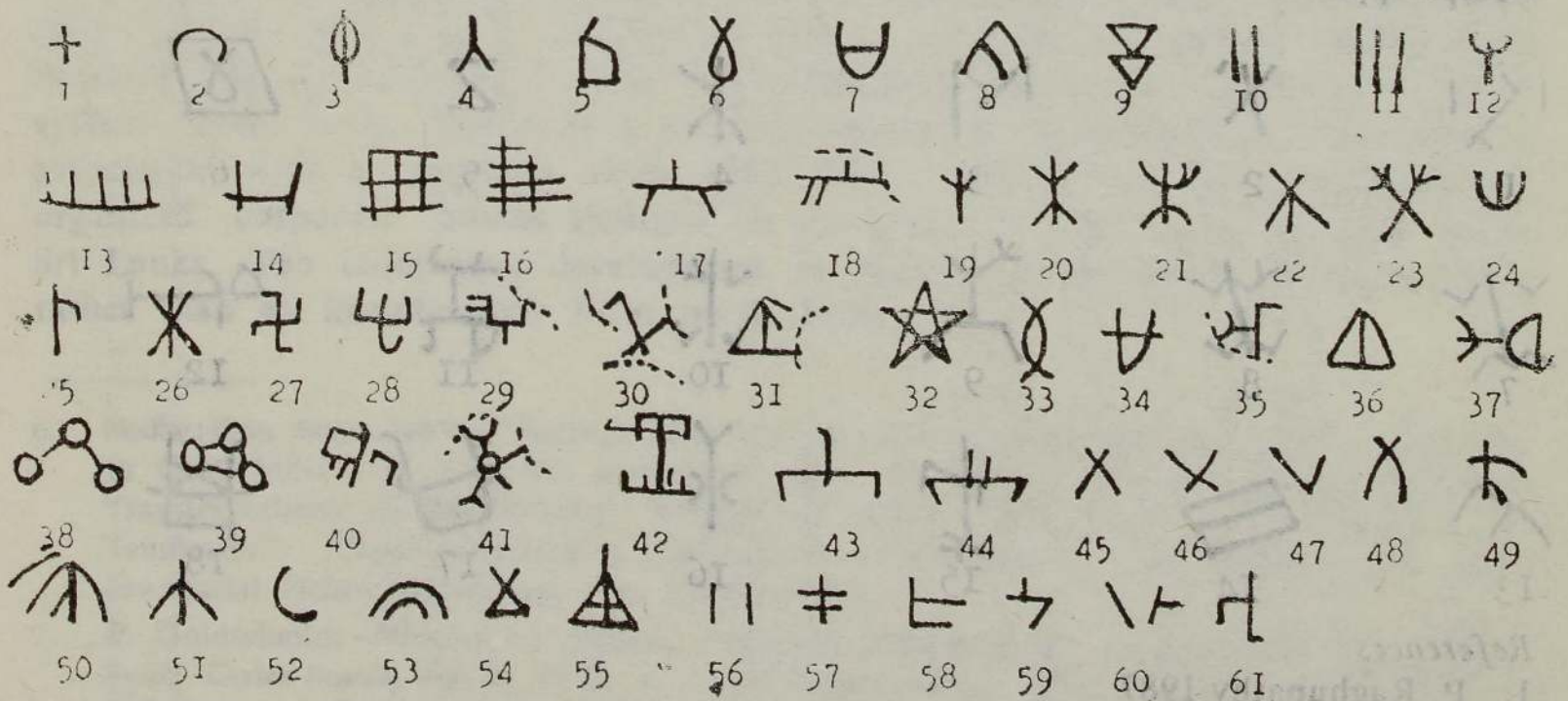
PROTO HISTORIC (Black and Red Ware, Red Ware)



EARLY HISTORIC (BRW, RW)



UNSTRATIFIED (BRW, RW)



Reference

S. Deraniyagla 1972; Field note books 1984, 1986.



As early as 1892 Bell pointed out to a possible link between the terms *parumaka* and *perumakan*<sup>8</sup> The latter refers to petty chieftains of Tamilaham featured in the south Indian Sangam text. Parnavitana did not accept this equation or its historical context,<sup>9</sup> though recent studies based on linguistic, historical and cultural evidence reaffirmed Bell's view.<sup>10</sup> The very fact that the female form of *parunaka* is represented in the Brahmi inscriptions as *paru naka!* (i. e. *peru+mako!*), points to a Dravidian female termination, clearly indicating a non Indo-Aryan basis for these terms.<sup>11</sup>

It is quite likely that some segments of the *parumaka* group, who perhaps represent the earliest political elite during the Early Iron Age, had their origins in the Megalithic-BRW\* complex emanating from Peninsular India. This was the earliest techno-cultural matrix formed in Sri Lanka during the Early Iron Age prior to any dominant impact of the northern Indo-Aryan culture. It is therefore reasonable to assume that certain elements of political leadership and authority that prevailed in Proto Historic south India may have had considerable influence upon the evolution of the pre-State political structure of Sri Lanka during the Early Iron Age.<sup>12</sup>

It may be noted that in the south Indian context terms denoting leadership viz. *perumakan* (*peru + makan*) and its derivative *perumān* were associated with pre-State lineage-based societies. The etymological meanings of the Dravidian word *makan* are son, husband, exalted person and warrior (*DED* 3768). In the same manner the prefix *peru* (*per* 'large' > *peru* 'to be large', 'great') conveys meanings such as big, large, powerful and greatness. Some of the etymological meanings associated with *perumān* are elder and elder brother (*DED* 3613). Among certain resident kin groups, if the leadership was associated with the head of the local descent group, the term *ma'kan* (son) may have well implied the rank designation 'descendent of the clan/lineage ancestor'. In this connection it is useful to take note of the megalithic burials in Peninsular India representing clan graves associated with ancestor worship. Thus, where leadership was claimed through descent, the epithet *perumakan* may have carried the meaning 'great descendent/scion/son'. These pre-State societies were also associated with

8. H. C. P. Bell - *The Report on the Kegalla District*. Colombo, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1892, p. 69.

9. S. Parnavitana, *op. cit.*, 1970, p. lxxiv.

10. A. Velupillai - "Tamil Influence in Ancient Sri Lanka with special reference to Early Brahmi Inscriptions". *Journal of Tamil Studies*, Vol 17, 1980, pp. 8-18. For a summary of views see S. K. Sitrapalam, "The Brahmi Inscriptions of Sri Lanka: the need for a fresh analysis", in K. Indrapala ed., *James Thevathasan Rutnam Felicitation Volume*, Jaffna, Archaeological Society of Jaffna, 1980, pp. 85-95; S. K. Sitrapalam, *op. cit.*, 13-25; D. J. Kanagaratnam, *Tamils and Cultural Pluralism in Ancient Sri Lanka*, Colombo, Ananda Press (not dated); Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1985.

11. . Velupillai, *op. cit.*; Sitrapalam, *op. cit.* p. 91.

\* Black and Red Ware.









12. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1985; "Kalinga and Andhra: the process of secondary state formation in Early India", in Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik ed. *The Study of the State*. The Hague, Mouton, 1981, pp. 317-338.



NON-BRAHMI SYMBOLS ON PARUMAKA INSCRIPTIONS.  
A COMPARATIVE CHART

No.	SYMBOL	SRI LANKA - MEGALITHIC	PENINSULAR INDIA - MEGALITHIC
1		APC	SAN
2		APC	TN
3		APC/POMP/KOL	TN
4			
5		AN	BK
6			BK
7			AM (Early Historic)
8		POMP/AN	ALG
9		POMP	SAN
10		POMP	
11		APC/POMP	HYD
12		APC	ALG/KOR
13		APC	SAN
14			HYD
15		APC	AD/ALG/TN
16			AD



17		APC/POMP	ALG
18			RGP
19			ALG/TN
20			BK
21		APC	SH
22			TN
23			TN
24			

**List of sites**

AD-Adichchanallur; ALG-Alagarai; AM-Amaravati; AN-Annaikoddi  
 APC-Anuradhapura Citadel; BK-Bakhera; HYD-Hyderabad; KOL-Kollankanatta;  
 KOR-Korkai; POMP-Pomparippu; RGP-Rangpur, SAN-Sanur; SH-Salihundam;  
 TN-T. Narasipur

A complete catalogue of the comparative symbols found in association with the Brahmi inscriptions, Early Historic coins, Proto and Early Historic pottery, cave and rock engravings/paintings and traditional cattle brandmarks of Peninsular India and Sri Lanka, edited by Sudharshan Seneviratne and Piyatissa Senanayake, is currently under preparation.

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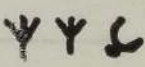
warfare in an effort to sustain their economies and in order to accumulate prestige items and also to demonstrate personal valour in a highly competitive situation. *Perumakan*, within such a context, may have implied 'great warrior and exalted person', which was an essential qualification for leadership, a situation that may be equated with the 'big man' status.<sup>13</sup> In view of this, if the epithet title *parumaka* did derive from the Dravidian *perumakan*, then it may prove useful to have a cross-regional perspective, especially about the pre-state political formation in south India, to ascertain the developments in Sri Lanka during the Early Iron Age.


There appears to be a relatively strong body of inscriptional and archaeological evidence linking the *parumaka* group to the Proto Historic Megalithic-BRW context in Sri Lanka and also to the south Indian techno-cultural context.

In the first instance the distribution pattern indicates that the *parumaka* inscriptions have a close physical bearing to the Megalithic - BRW sites in Sri Lanka (Map 1). It is perhaps more convincing to compare particular post-firing graffiti symbols on the megalithic ware with the non-Brahmī symbols found on the earliest Brahmī inscriptions (Map 2). A total of 49 non-Brahmī symbols are found on the inscriptions and 29 of these are associated with inscriptions situated north and west of the river Mahaweli, the region that may have witnessed the earliest Megalithic-BRW settlements. Further to this, parallel non-Brahmī symbols occur in a dual context. Some of the non-Brahmī symbols associated with the *parumaka* inscriptions (in some cases inscriptions of non-*parumaka* groups as well), do occur as post-firing graffiti symbols from the earliest levels of the Proto Historic habitational deposits and from the Megalithic burials in Sri Lanka.<sup>14</sup> The parallel forms are also found

13. *Ibid.*, p. 320.


14. In this connection it is important that we record some internal evidence from the Megalithic context. The bronze signet ring found within the extended burial at Anaikkottai,

Jaffna Peninsular, had one line depicting megalithic pictograms  and the

line below it  (*Koveta* i. e. literally 'king'). See P. Ragupathy, *op. cit.*, 119,

199-204. Similarly, in 1984 surface explorations at Ibbankatuwa, North Central Province,

revealed three pictograms  on three separate cist cap stones. In 1988,

the cist carrying the symbol  on its cap stone was excavated. The cap stone itself

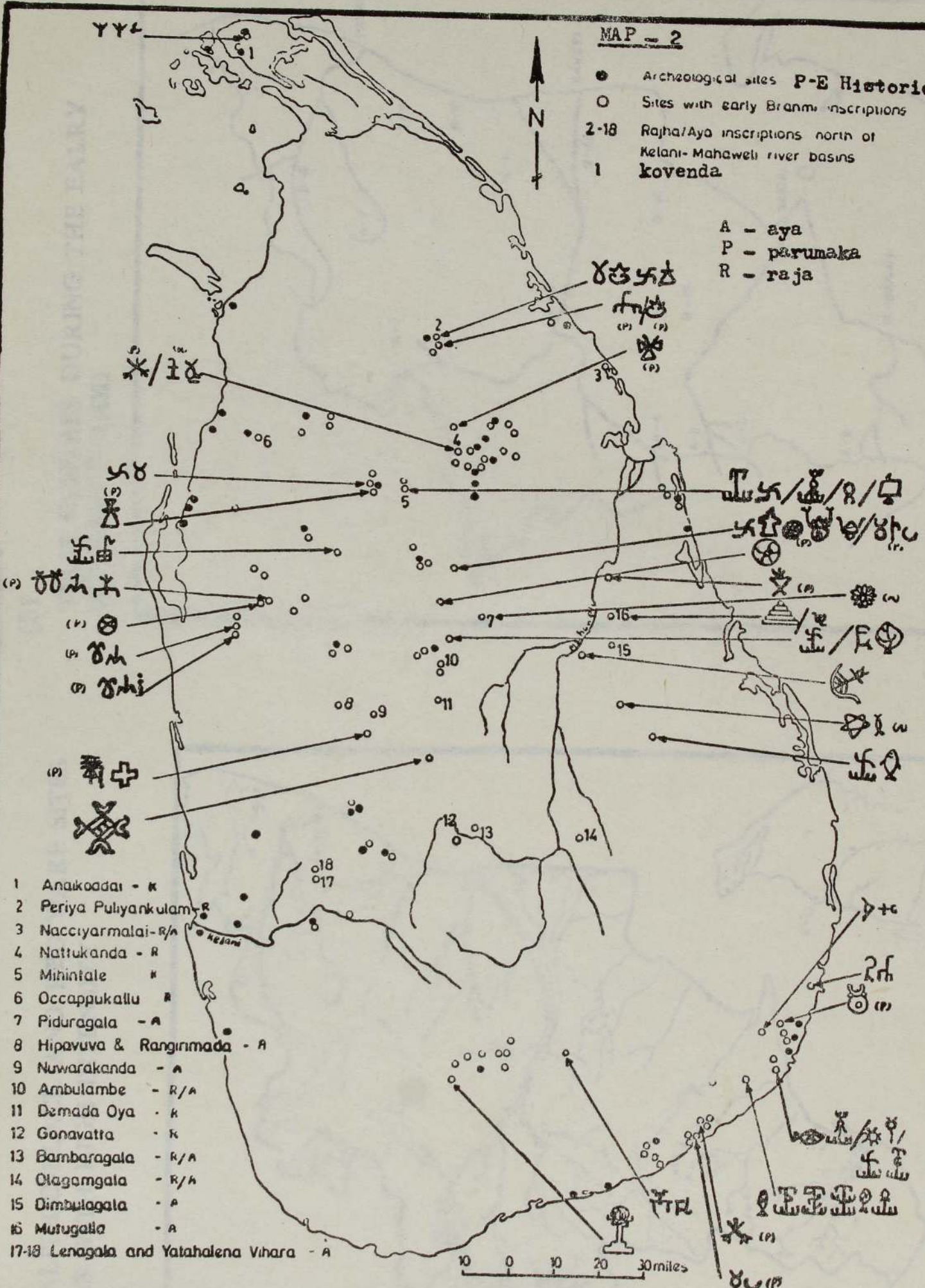
was large and the excavation revealed two large burial pots along with other offering pots of BRW. The large pots carried, among other things, carnelian beads and a gold fillet. Judging by the size of the cap stone, central location and grave goods, this may be identified as a 'special burial' belonging to an important person. Also see Sudharshan, Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 294-298.



MAP - 2

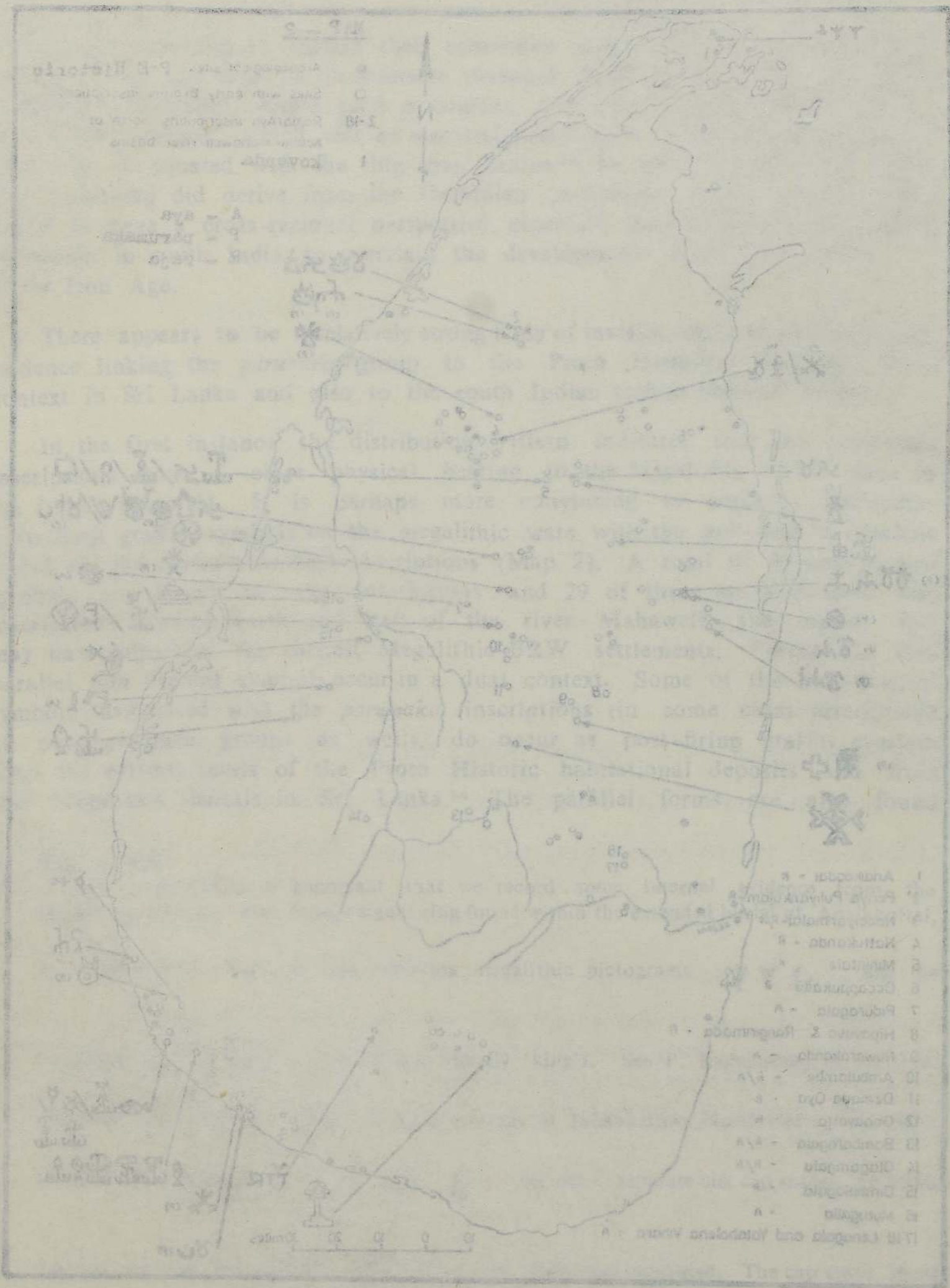
- Archaeological sites P-E Historic
- Sites with early Brāmi inscriptions
- 2-18 Raja/Aya inscriptions north of Kelani-Mahaweli river basins
- 1 kovenda

A - aya  
P - parumaka  
R - raja



- 1 Anakoodai - K
- 2 Periya Puliyankulam - R
- 3 Nacciyarmalai - R/A
- 4 Nattukanda - R
- 5 Mihintale - K
- 6 Occappukallu - R
- 7 Piduragala - A
- 8 Hipavuva & Ranginmada - A
- 9 Nuwarakanda - A
- 10 Ambulambe - R/A
- 11 Demada Oya - K
- 12 Gonavatta - K
- 13 Bambaragala - R/A
- 14 Otagamgala - R/A
- 15 Dimbulagala - A
- 16 Mutugalla - A
- 17-18 Lenagala and Yatahalena Vihara - A



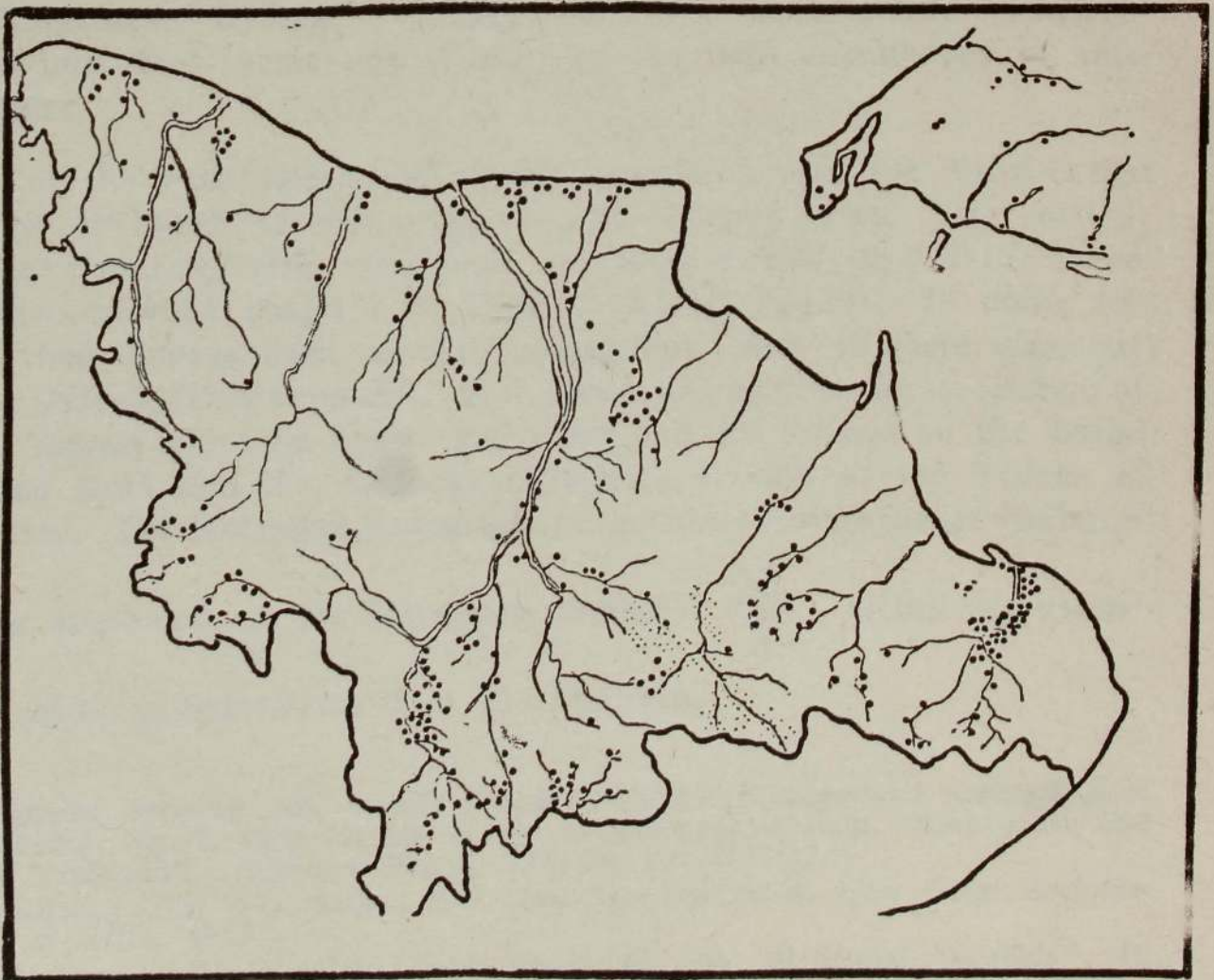




MAP 3 TAMILNADU

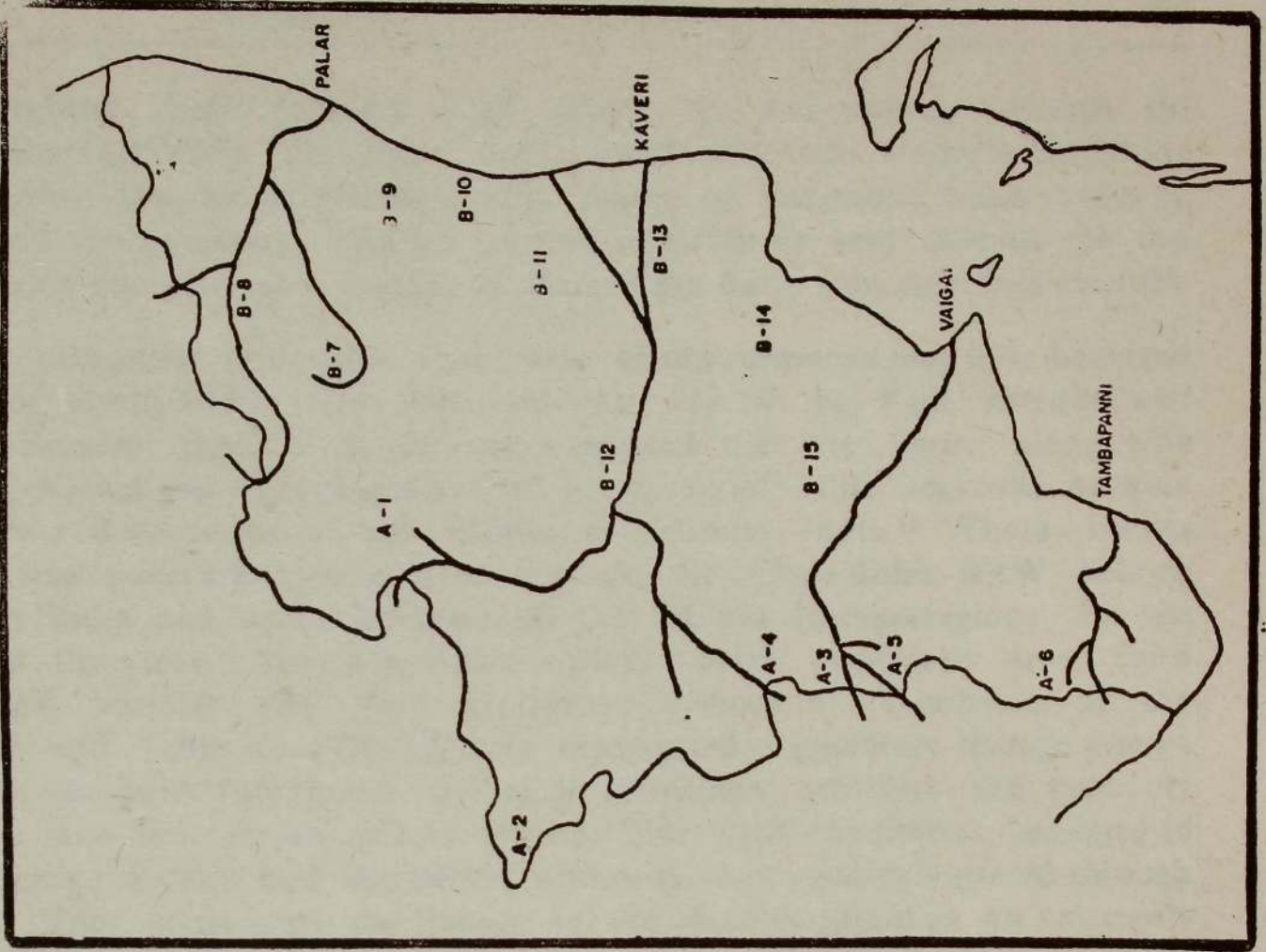
(A)

- MEGALITHIC-BLACK AND RED WARE SITES
- ⊕ AREAS WITH HIGH INTENSITY

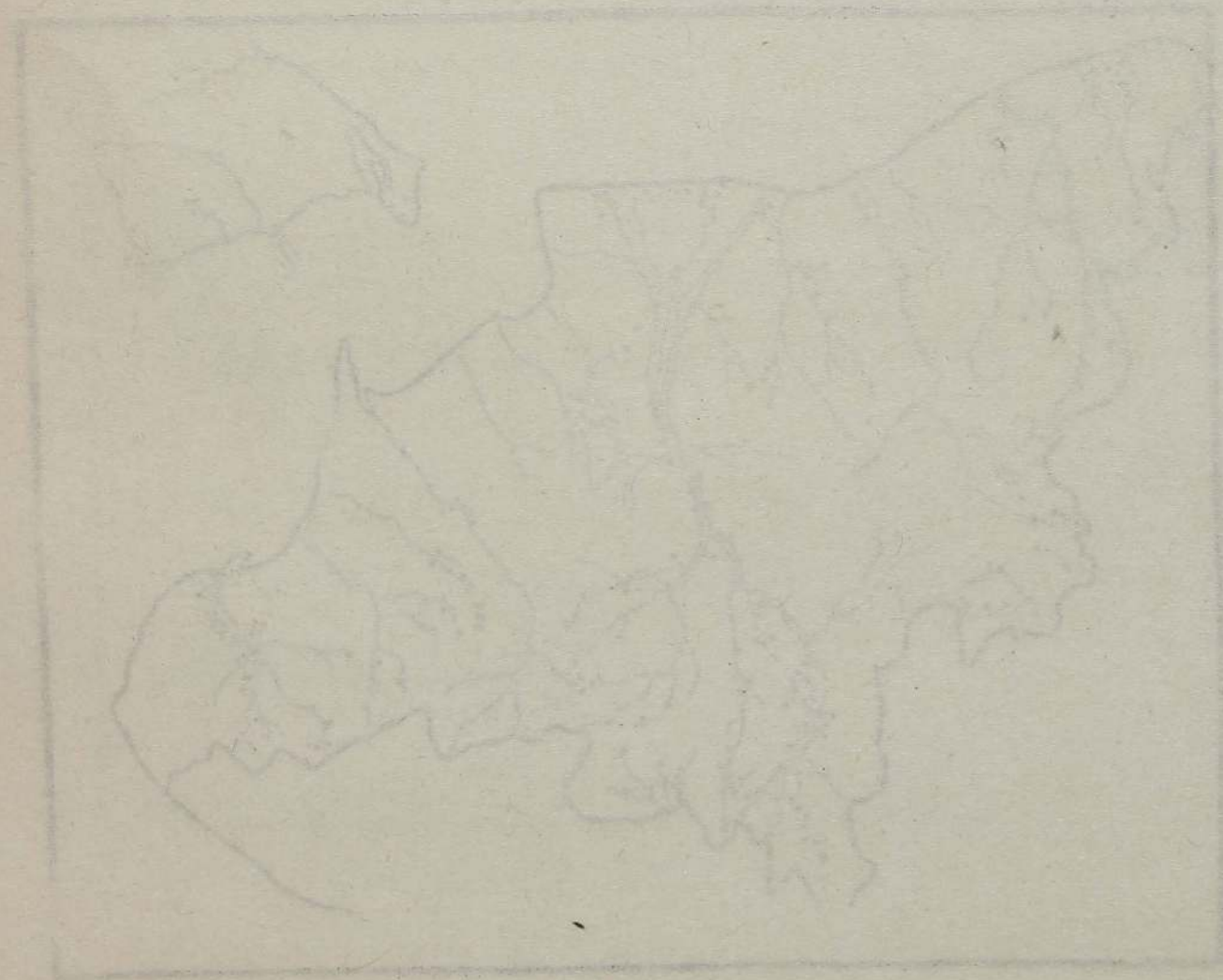
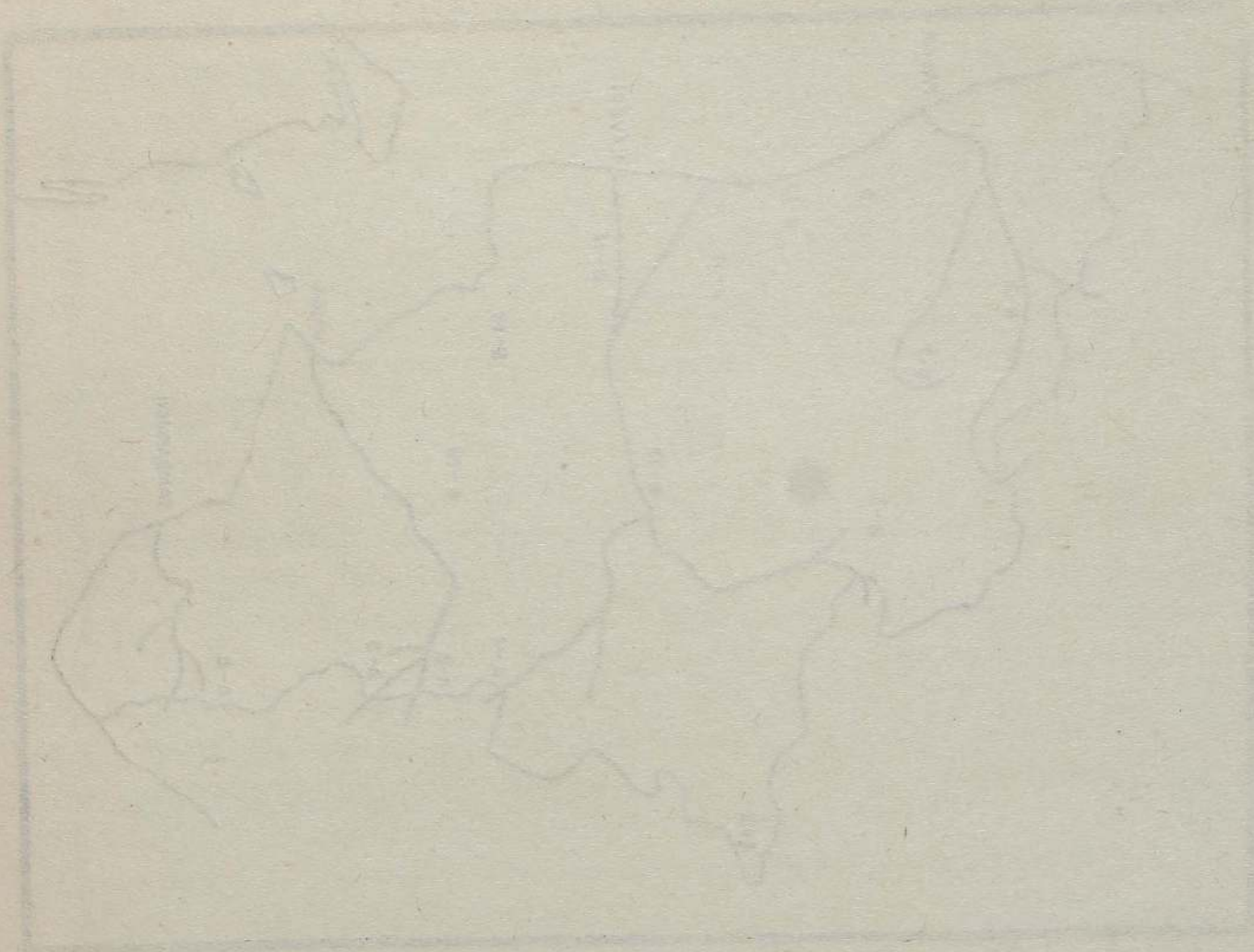


(B)

- VĒLIR CENTRES DURING THE EARLY HISTORIC PERIOD








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in the subsequent Early Historic levels (Plate 1). Interestingly enough, the identical symbols and their variations occur within the Proto Historic habitation layers and burial sites as post-firing graffiti marks in Peninsular India (Plate 2). Techno-cultural homogeneity implicit in this situation is very obvious. In our view, these represent clan and family symbols of the Early Iron Age communities.

It is not altogether impossible that some of the *parumaka* may have belonged to the Vēḷir of South India. The historical antiquity of the Vēḷir extends well into the pre-Sangam period. It is now suggested that the Vēḷir, along with the Andhaka, Vṛshṇi and Cedi (ancestors of Kharavela of Mahāmeghavāhana-kula in Kalinga) are descendents of the Yādava of western India.<sup>15</sup> These studies also indicate the remarkable coincidence between the Chalcolithic-BRW bearing sites in north India and north Deccan and the Yādava lineage-regions on the one hand and the Iron Age Megalithic - BRW burials (especially urns, cairn circles and pit burials) and Vēḷir controlled regions of Tamiḷaham on the other (Map 3 and Table 2). The Yādava represented segmentary lineage groups and they seem to have functioned within a matrilineal structure and probably belonged to a non-Indo-Aryan culture stream. The Vēḷir themselves belonged to segmentary lineage groups and the power authority (and wealth?) passed through mother-right. They considered the lineage or the descent group as an extremely important legitimating factor in rank status. Thus, the Vēḷir often used the suffix *maḱan* or *mān*, e. g. Adigamān, Vēḷāvikōmān, *perumakan* Pēkan and proudly announced their preceding generations (e. g. 49 preceding generations of Irunkōvēḷ). They branched into several segments and called themselves Āy (Āvi, Āviyar), Adigamān, Oymān, Vēṇmān etc. The cross-cousin marriage system was an important cementing factor in the self-perpetuation of this segmentary structure.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects associated with the Vēḷir is the social exclusiveness attributed to this group in the Sangam texts. They called themselves 'ancient families/house' (*mudukudī, veḷ mudu makkal*) vis a vis the *vampa* Vēntar (new/upstart crowned king) i. e. Cōḷa, Cēra and Pāṇḍya. In doing so, the Vēḷir traced their lineage back several generations and to their ancestral 'home' Tuvurai or Dvārakā/Dvārasamudra. It is interesting to note the association of the sacrificial pot (*taḍavu*) with sage Agasti and Vēḷir and its linkage to the burial tradition on the one hand and the Andhaka (Āndhra) as well as the Yādava of Dvārakā on the other. The Harappan pictograms prominently feature the jar symbol,<sup>16</sup>

and one meaning attributed to the Harappan symbol  is the 'jar-bearer'

viz. *sva* (jar) + *vahana* ≡ Sātavāhana<sup>17</sup> i.e. the Andhaka.

15. For a well-compiled write-up see, Romila Thapar, "Puranic Lineages and Archaeological Cultures", *Puratattva*, No. 8, 1975-76, pp. 86-98; R. Champakalakshmi, "Archaeology and Tamil Literary Tradition", *Puratattva*, No. 8, 1975-76, pp. 110-122.
16. Iravatham Mahadevan - *The Indus Scripts: Text, Concordance and Tables*, New Delhi, Archaeological Survey of India, 1977.
17. Iravatham Mahadevan, "Study of the Indus Script through Bi-lingual Parallels", in Gregory L. Possehl ed. *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, New Delhi, Vikas, 1979, pp. 265-267.



TABLE NO: 2

Number	Sangam Site	Chieftain/Clan	(?)	Type of Megaliths	Approximate site	Modern Location	District
A 1	Tagadūr	Adigamāṅ	-	Urns/Other types	Dharmapuri Taluk	Dharmapuri	Dharmapuri
A 2	Kuṅṅūr		-	Urns/Other types	Cocnoor	Nilgiris	Nilgiris
A 3	Kōḍai	Porunaṅ	-	Urns	Kodaikanal	Madurai	Madurai
A 4	Podiyil						
A 5*	(Avināṅkuḍi)	Āviyar	-	Stone circles/Dolmens	Palani	Madurai	Madurai
A 6	Ajumbil	Mānaviral - Vēi	-	Urns	Kambam valley (?)	Madurai	Madurai
A	Vēnāḍu/ Nāṅjilnāḍu	Āy Āṅdiran	-	Urns/Cairn circles	Venad	(Kerala/Tamilnadu)	
B 7*	Seṅgaṅmā	Nanna	-	Cairn circles	Payyampalli (?)	North Arcot	North Arcot
B 8	Vēlūr	Oviyar	-	Urns/Stone circles	Vellore	North Arcot	North Arcot
B 9	Oymānāḍu	Oviyar	-	Dolmens	Tindivanam	South Arcot	South Arcot
B 10	Virai	Oviyar	-	Urns/habitation	Pondicherry	Pondicherry	Pondicherry
B 11	Tirukkeyilūr		-	Dolmens	Tirukkoyilur, Kollur, Devanur	South Arcot	South Arcot
B 12	Uraiyūr and Piḍavūr	Vēiir (aler)	-	Urns/Cists/habitation	Uraiyūr, Perur, Allur	Tiruchrappalli	Tiruchrappalli
B 13	Alundūr		-	Urns/habitation	Terallundur	Thanjavur	Thanjavur
B 14	Koḍumbai/ Koḍumbalūr	Irungo - Vēi	-	Urns/Other types	Pudukkottai area	Pudukkottai	Pudukkottai
B 15*	Parambunāḍu	Pāri	-	Urns	Madurai-Melur Taluka	Madurai	Madurai
C 16	Puhār		-	Urns/habitation	Kaveripattinam	Tanjore	Tanjore
C 17	Kuḍandai	Coḷa	-	Urns/habitation	Nandamedu Kumbakonam	Tanjore	Tanjore
C 18	Vallam	Coḷa	-	habitation (?)	(Solamaligai)	Tanjore	Tanjore
C 19	Tenūr	Pāṅḍya	-	Urns	Vallam	Tanjore	Tanjore
C 20	Ayirai	Pāṅḍya	-	Urns	Teni/Tenur	Madurai	Madurai
C 21	Korkai-Kāyal	Pāṅḍya	-	Urns/habitation	Kalugumalai Korkai-Kāyal	Tirunelveli	Tirunelveli

\* Our additions to the Tables of sites.


Group A . Vēiir of the peripheral highlands.

Group B : Vēiir of the lowlands (riverine plains and coastal)


I am grateful to Professor R. Champakalakshimi (CHS/JNU) for making available the original script containing the table of sites. This table did not appear in *Puralaiva* No. 8, 1975-76 : 110-122), due to an error on the publisher's part. We have arranged the numbers in geographical sequence.



The socio-ritual aspect of the Vēḷir is closely linked with burial tradition associated with ancestor worship and the cult symbol representing the *vēḷ*



(spear/trident ) , which is the symbol of Murukan i. e. god of war. The



high incidence of tridents and spears placed as offerings in burials and the occurrence of this symbol as post-firing graffiti from the Proto Historic context in Peninsular India is extremely significant. Interestingly enough, while the Harappan

symbol  is supposed to mean 'lance bearer',<sup>18</sup> the Yādava coins of the earliest

period carry the legend *āyudhajīvi saṅgha* (lit 'weapon-bearing clan') and depict the spear/trident-wielding god of war, Kārttikeya.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, the etymological meaning of the term *veḷ* and its derivatives convey meanings associated with elitism exclusiveness, great man, sacrifices, offering, earth/mud or land (agriculture), hero Murukan.<sup>20</sup> We have identified these pre-state chieftains as the earliest agrarian elite in South India.<sup>21</sup>

In Sri Lanka too a series of early Brahmi inscriptions carry the name *Veḷa*.

The Brahmi  is read as *Velu* by Paranavitana. However, the letter  is

read as  in south Indian Brahmi inscriptions,<sup>22</sup> and we read  as

*Veḷ* > *Veḷa* and not *Velu*. The *parumaka* in fact form the single largest group (12/22) having the name *Veḷ/a*, which quite obviously indicated the lineage and socio-cultural identity of some *parumaka* chieftains. The occurrence of a personal name in some cases along with the *parumaka* and *Veḷ/a* identity is a case in point, e.g. *parumaka veḷ/a s'umana puta parumaka veḷ/a* (No 647).

In further study of the cultural antecedents of the *parumaka Veḷ/a* group we may note the following. An early Brahmi inscription from Ritigala records the following, viz. *parumaka kutaragaya veḷaha lene* (No, 250). Paranavitana explains the term *kutaragaya* as the 'holder of the vase', a functionary associated with the sacred bo-tree.<sup>23</sup> The association between the Vēḷir and the jar may be noted in this connection. At Mullegama in north west Sri Lanka, a *parumaka* inscription carries

18. *Ibid.*, p. 266. Mahadevan suggests the following, viz. arrow/lance i. e. *s'aliya* + bearer i.e. *vahana* = *s'aliya-vahana* > *s'ali-vāhana* or lance bearer, another name for the Andhaka.

19. M. K. Sharan - *Tribal Coins: a Study*. New Delhi, 1972; John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*. New Delhi, Oriental Reprint, 1936 (1975 reprint).


20. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1985, pp. 692-698. Appendix V 'A Note on the *vēḷir*'.


21. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1981, pp. 322.



22. See Iravatham Mahadevan - *Corpus of the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions*. Madras, Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology, 1966.

23. S. Paranavitana. *op. cit.*, 1970, p. xciii.





the following symbols  (No. 1074). If we combine the first

symbol  with the other two, then we have the representations of the jar and

the lance bearer  , two attributes associated with the Veḷir. Another

series of early Brahmī inscriptions from Tonigala and Paramakanda, not too far from

Mullegama, carry the jar and man symbol combination  or 

(Nos. 1051-54) Some of these inscriptions associated with the above symbols mentioned a place by the name Tavirikiya-nagara, located in that region. Parana-vitana considers Tavirikiya as a variation of Dvārakiya or Dvārakā.<sup>24</sup> Dvārakā is the traditional habitation associated with the Yādava, the lineage ancestors of the Veḷir. These inscription-bearing sites are located close to the urn-burial site at Pomparippu, where the Megalithic pottery at the burial carry these symbols.<sup>25</sup> It is not altogether impossible that some of the Veḷir found in north Sri Lanka were the descendents of the Veḷir who arrived with their clans (bringing with them traditions about the jar and Dvārakā) under pressure from the Pāṇḍya, who apparently consolidated their proto-state in the Vaigai-Tambapannai region at a relatively early date.<sup>26</sup> On the basis of Map 3(B) and Table 2, one is compelled to question the non-occurrence of Veḷir groups south of the river Vaigai by the Early Historic period, though the upper Vaigai and the Tambapanni plains have profuse occurrence of urn, cairn/stone circles and BRW habitation sites.

### III

The spread and the evolution of the *parumaka* group forms the next important component in this study.

A relatively rapid growth in the associated forms of political institutions, leadership and authority in Sri Lanka was facilitated due to certain internal and external factors. The direct leap from the Mesolithic to the Early Iron Age, the intrusive culture from a more developed cultural context and an integration of autochthonous groups into the new socio-economic complex, the early inauguration of permanent settlements and paddy cultivation, the relatively rapid encroachment upon regions of mineral resources and the establishment of a network of communications linking the central hills with the settlements in the plains, and finally with the coast, facilitated in the formation of rudimentary political

24. *Ibid*, Nos. 1051-52.

25. ASAnR, 1957, p. 13, Nos. 6-9.

26. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.* 1985; p. 386.



institutions. However, it is important to bear in mind the uneven development of such formations in time and space.

The Early Iron Age (Proto and Early Historic period) may be identified as the Formative Period in the history of Sri Lanka. On the one hand there is for the first time a coincidence between the cultural zone and physical zone, and on the other the formation of recognizable social, political, economic and religio-cultural institutions.<sup>27</sup>

One of the most interesting developments that took place during the Proto Historic period was the emergence of micro eco-zones. Each zone became the primary habitat for a clan-based community thriving on a multi-resource broad spectrum subsistence economy. By the end of the Proto Historic period and the initial phase of the Early Historic period there was the emergence of specialized economics utilizing localized resources. It appears that these micro eco-zones had gradually evolved an interacting socio-economic network by the beginning of the Early Historic period. Another interesting feature noticeable during the Early Historic period is the gradual emergence of macro eco-zones, incorporating several micro eco-zones. Those macro zones, having development-oriented pre-conditions leading to a positive interaction between man and his environment, were able to sustain developed forms of institutional structure, and complex societies. The formation of the early state in Sri Lanka integrating several pre-existing clan-based chiefdoms occurred precisely within such macro zones. The evolutionary process of the *parumaka* group must be understood within the above developmental context.<sup>28</sup>

The spread of the *parumaka* group appears to have operated through two mechanisms, viz. the physical movement and acculturation.

In our view, the introduction of the epithet *parumaka* was from south India, and community movement from Peninsular India did take place at an early date to Sri Lanka. Some of those who arrived belonged to clan groups under the leadership of the Vēṣir chieftains, and introduced the Megalithic-BRW techno-cultural complex to Sri Lanka around the 7/6 century B. C.

The dynamics of the initial physical movement may have taken place as sporadic and seasonal visits to the coastal regions, most probably in search of

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-73.

28. These aspects have been brought into focus in the following studies: Sudharshan Seneviratne. "The Locational Significance of Early Iron Age Sites in Intermediary Transitional Eco-systems: A case study of the Upper Kala-Oya region, north central Sri Lanka". Paper presented at the *Seminar on Ecological History of India* (in press) Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, March 1988; "Iron Technology in Sri Lanka: A Preliminary Study of Resource, Use and Production Techniques during the Early Iron Age" *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. XI, 1985, pp. 129-178 (Published in 1987); "Mica Zones and the Early Iron Age Sites in Sri Lanka", *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. XII, 1986, pp. 121-132. (Published in 1988).



marine-littoral resources e. g. chank, pearl, etc. (Map-4). Instability, conditioned by political strife and environmental changes, are other important factors leading to migrations. Such movements may have led to more regular visits and seasonal camps and ultimately to permanent habitations. Conversely, we do not adhere to the view that there was a mass influx of people from the Megalithic context in south India to Sri Lanka. Our own studies and those of the physical anthropologists indicate that there was acculturation, community integration and techno-cultural adaptations between the intrusive Iron Age communities and sections of the indigenous Mesolithic community.<sup>29</sup> This community and techno-cultural synthesis not only took place in the coastal regions but also in the interior regions and had a strong impact on the institutional structure of the formative period.

Physical movement represented the penetration of the Early Iron Age culture to the hinterland from the marine-littoral ecological zones. It is quite likely that the *perumakan/parumaka* chieftains gave leadership and direction to the subsistence economy and community movement of such groups. The objective apparently was to reach the extensive fertile agrarian tracts in the north central plains and particular raw material yielding areas in the hinterland plains. The demographic factor, i.e. population pressure within the micro eco-zone as a mechanism triggering-off migration cannot be ruled out.<sup>30</sup> Clan groups headed by the *parumaka* most obviously provided a convenient social mechanism to this process of segmentation. The early settlement zones in the hinterland areas are associated with the Megalithic-BRW sites with which the *parumaka* inscriptions maintain a close physical proximity. These Proto Historic sites are not only situated in close proximity to marine-littoral eco-systems and the fertile Red and Brown Earth zones, but they have a very close bearing to certain micro-regions possessing mineral resources with prestige value (Map 4).

In order to elaborate our suggestion, we may indicate the following. For instance, the locational pattern of Proto and Early Historic sites in north west Sri Lanka indicates a clear bearing to oceanic resources found in lagoons. In addition, some of these sites in north west Sri Lanka are associated with resource zones having iron, stone, mica, quartz, chert and even chalcedony and opal (e. g. Kal-arū basin).<sup>31</sup> The megalithic sites of Karambambulam and Machchagama are located less than 10 miles north of the massive deposit of apatite at Eppawala. Similarly, the cist burial sites of Mamaduwa and the middle Yan Oya burial complex are in close proximity to the large deposit of mica at Kabitigollewa. This particular region is described as a gold-bearing region in the early texts,<sup>32</sup> and recent geological investigations proved this correct.

29. For a summary of such views, see Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.* 1984, pp. 283-286 *op. cit.*, 1985, pp. 129-178 on technological aspects.

30. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1985, pp. 173-189.

31. *Ibid*, p. 378; W. Begley, *op. cit.*, pp. 69. 71. 75.

32. *Mahāvamsa*, xxviii. 13-15.



MAP - 4

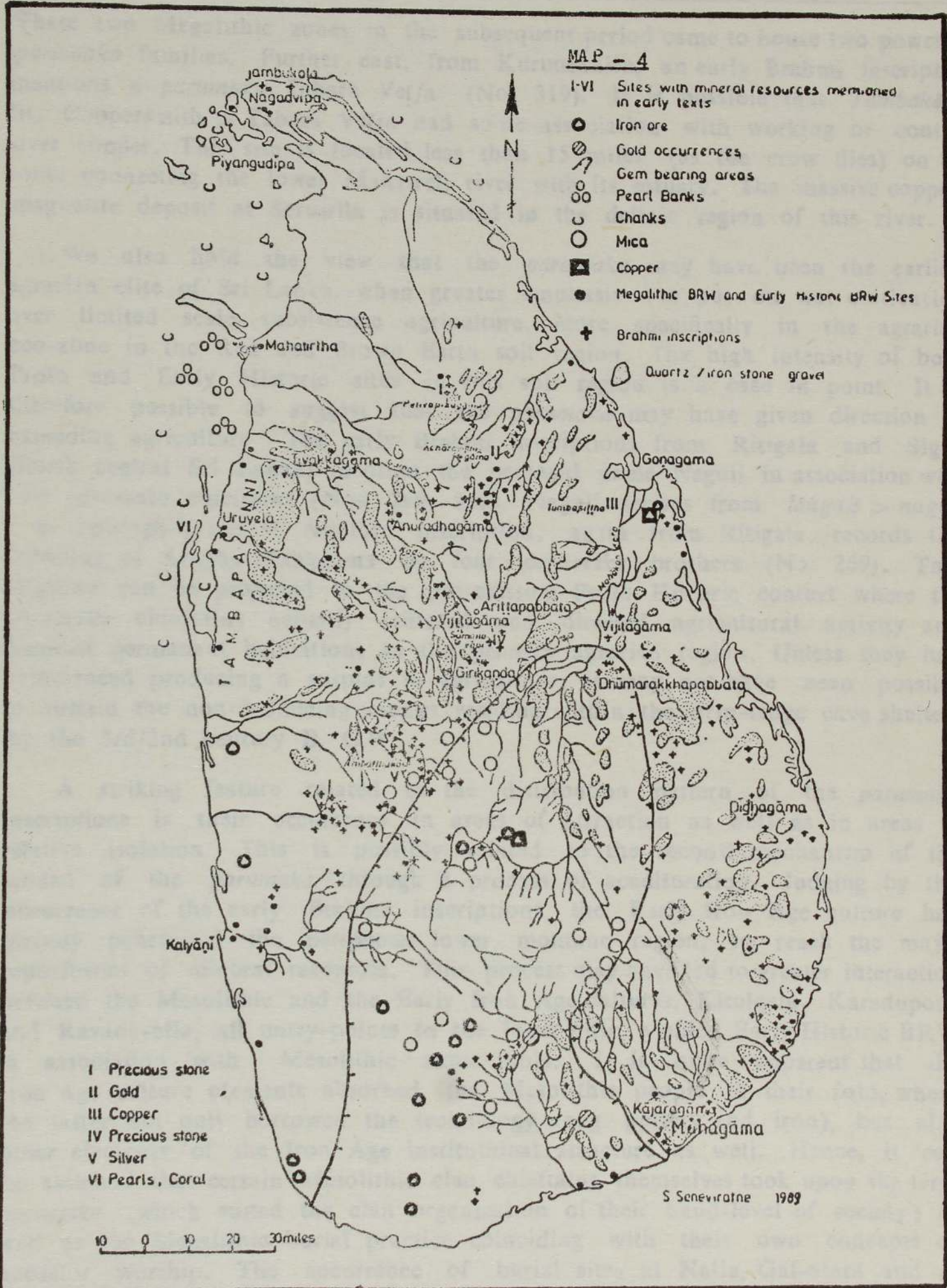
- I-VI Sites with mineral resources mentioned in early texts
- Iron ore
- ⊙ Gold occurrences
- ⊙ Gem bearing areas
- Pearl Banks
- ⊂ Chunks
- Mica
- Copper
- Megalithic BRW and Early Historic BRW Sites
- + Brahmī inscriptions

Quartz / Iron stone gravel

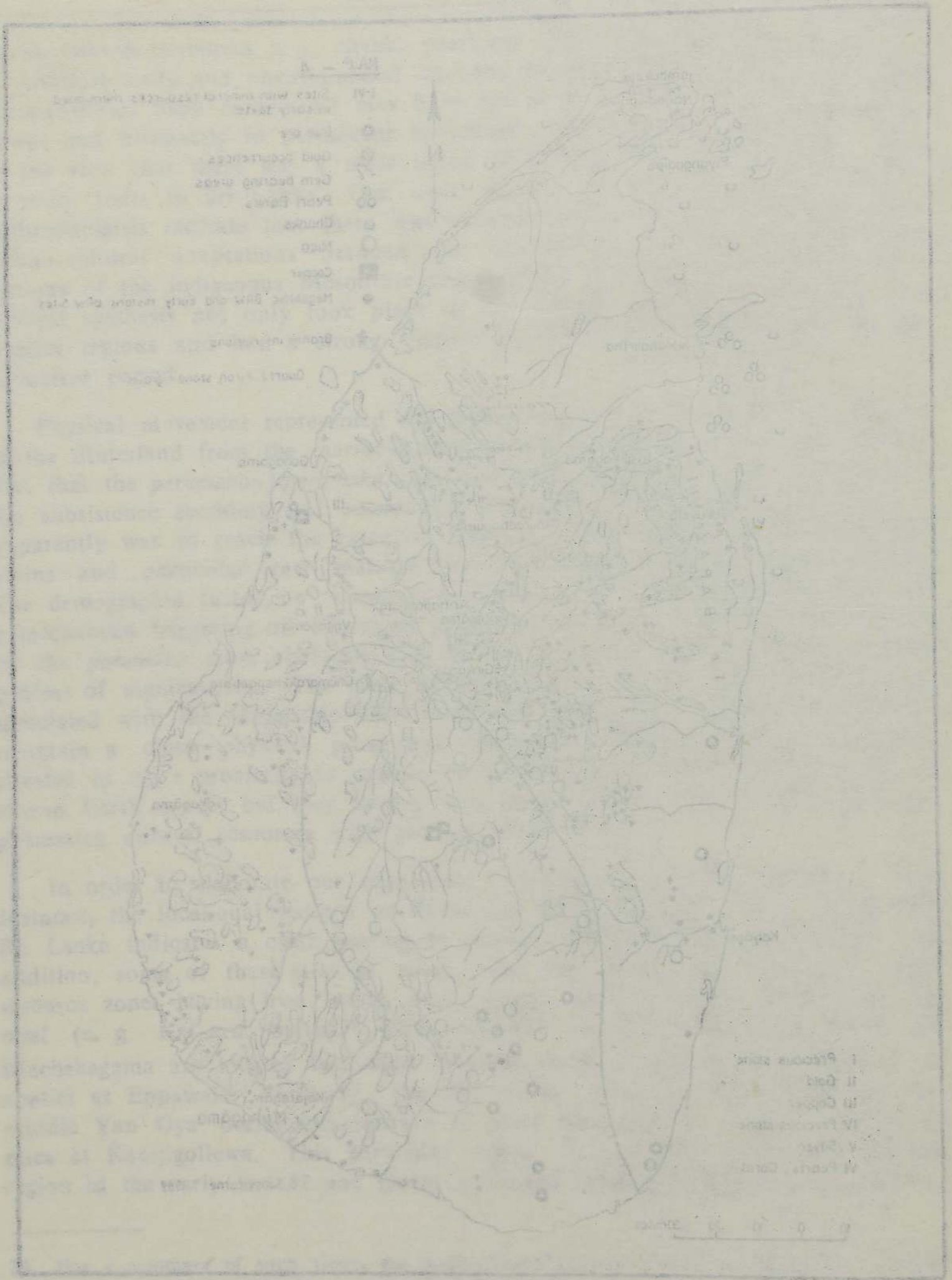
- I Precious stone
- II Gold
- III Copper
- IV Precious stone
- V Silver
- VI Pearls, Coral

S Seneviratne 1989

10 0 10 20 30 miles









These two Megalithic zones in the subsequent period came to house two powerful *parumaka* families. Further east, from Kurunekallu, an early Brahmī inscription mentions a *parumaka* Tabara Veṭṭa (No. 319). It is possible that *Tambakāra*, lit. Coppersmith > Tabara Veṭṭa had some association with working or control over copper. This site is located less than 15 miles (as the crow flies) on the route connecting the lower Mahaweli river with its estuary. The massive copper-magnetite deposit at Seruwila is situated in the deltaic region of this river.

We also hold the view that the *parumaka* may have been the earliest agrarian elite of Sri Lanka, when greater emphasis was put on wet cultivation over limited scale subsistence agriculture, more specifically in the agrarian eco-zone in the Red and Brown Earth soil region. The high intensity of both Proto and Early Historic sites in this soil region is a case in point. It is therefore possible to suggest that the *parumaka* may have given direction in extending agriculture. The early Brahmī inscriptions from Ritigala and Sigiri (north central Sri Lanka) mention the personal name Naguli in association with two *parumaka* chieftains (Nos. 260, 869). Naguli derives from *lāṅgali* > *naguli* i. e. 'plough-bearer'.<sup>33</sup> Another inscription, again from Ritigala, records the founding of Ariṭṭha-Mahāgāma by four *parumaka* brothers (No. 269). This situation can be projected to the pre-existing Proto Historic context where the *parumaka* chieftains actually initiated and directed agricultural activity and founded permanent habitations in the primary agrarian region. Unless they had commenced producing a surplus in agriculture, it may not have been possible to sustain the non-producing monks residing within the drip-ledge cave shelters by the 3rd/2nd century B. C.<sup>34</sup>

A striking feature related to the distribution pattern of the *parumaka* inscriptions is their occurrence in areas of attraction as well as in areas of relative isolation. This is possibly related to the second mechanism of the spread of the *parumaka* through a process of acculturation. Judging by the occurrence of the early Brahmī inscriptions, the Early Iron Age culture had already penetrated the peripheral lower montane region, to reach the major repositories of mineral resources. This process may have led to greater interaction between the Mesolithic and the Early Iron Age cultures. Kitulgala, Karadupona and Ravana-ella, all entry-points to the lower hills, yielded Early Historic BRW in association with Mesolithic stone tools. It is quite apparent that the Iron Age culture elements absorbed the Mesolithic people to their fold, where the latter not only borrowed the technology (e. g. pottery and iron), but also other elements of the Iron Age institutional structure as well. Hence, it can be assumed that certain Mesolithic clan chieftains themselves took upon the term *parumaka* (which suited the clan organization of their band-level of society) as well as the Megalithic burial practice coinciding with their own concepts of ancestor worship. The occurrence of burial sites at Nalla, Gal-atara and at

33. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

34. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 294.



Padavigampola, all situated on the middle and upper reaches of the Maha-oya may not be a coincidence after all. In the vicinity of Gal-atara and Padavigampola there are *parumaka* inscriptions (No. 801; page vi).<sup>35</sup> In addition, the area around Gal-atara contains relatively large resources of mica and amethyst. The cist burial site at Ibbankatuwa has a similar locational significance.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV

The evolution of the *parumaka* as a socio-political group is a more complex one. The problem actually revolves around two inter-related aspects, viz. their actual position as a status group and their sphere of authority.

The meanings attributed to the term *parumaka* (and its source word *perumakan*) and the association of these individuals (or their ancestors) with the Megalithic burials, may indicate their authority over clan groups, occupying micro ecological zones - thus their control over limited geo-political zones. The general distribution pattern of the *parumaka* inscriptions in fertile pockets, areas yielding raw material, along coastal zones and routes linking different ecological zones, may reflect the pre-existing situation during the Proto Historic period. By the 3rd century B. C. the *parumaka* were recognized as one of the leading elite groups in society, and economically they had sufficient surplus production to stand out as the chief patrons of the *Sangha*. This they announced by making endowments of drip-ledge cave shelters to the latter. We may therefore assume that some degree of resource accumulation through the acquisition of the surplus was in existence. The mechanism of resources movement, linking the politically powerful lineage group and the resident community composed of the clan groups, may have led to this situation.

It is possible to suggest that the method of succession followed by the early *parumaka* may reflect the authority of the lineage group over the resident clan group/s. There is evidence to show that succession to the title was by the eldest son. For example, we come across the names of *parumaka* Paḷikaḍa's sons as Maha Haruma and Haruma (Nos. 78, 81, 82). The inscriptions clearly attribute the title *parumaka* to Maha Haruma, whereas Haruma is not assigned with any title. It may be assumed that certain other inscriptions indicating the linear succession (at times going up to three generations) by sons, may reflect that the principle of primogeniture was in operation. However, as different technological groups had adapted this title/epithet after having undergone a process of acculturation, one is not sure whether this was the general practice of that time.

35. The Brahmi inscription at Asmadala, near Gal-atara, mentions one *parumaka* Tis'a, daughter of *parumaka* Dusajha. S, Paranavitana, *op. cit.* 1970, p. vi.

36. Sudharshan Seneviratne, 'The Locational Significance of the Ibbankatuwa Megalithic Burial Site'. Paper presented at the *First National Archaeological Congress*, Colombo, SLFI November 1986.



*Surakkhita-Paṭikaḍa lineage (Vessagiriya, Anuradhapura)\**

Pa. Surakkhita

Chittā

Pa. Paṭikaḍa

Pa. Maha Haruma

Haruma + Tissa

(Nos. 76-79, 81-82)

*Mala lineage (Kandakadu)*

Pa. Mala

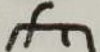
Pa. Namara

Pa. Naga



(No. 318)

\* Pa - *parumaka*, Pk - *parumaka!*

In some cases the daughters took up this title as well. There is an excellent example in the case of Pusa (daughter of *parumaka* S'ata Nas'ata), who is known in the inscriptions as the holder of the epithet *parunaka* and also the carrier of the (lineage?) symbol  (No. 331). Similarly, we have the cases of

*parumaka!* Dipani, the daughter of *parumaka!* Naguli (No. 260) and of *parumaka!* Tisa, the daughter of *parumaka* Dusajha.<sup>37</sup>

While the inscription of *parumaka!* Puṣ'a is situated adjacent to the Mamaduwa burial complex, *parumaka!* Tisa has her inscription near the Gal-atara burial site. It may have been the practice for a female to take up this title, provided she happened to be the eldest or the only off-spring. In any event, this is not

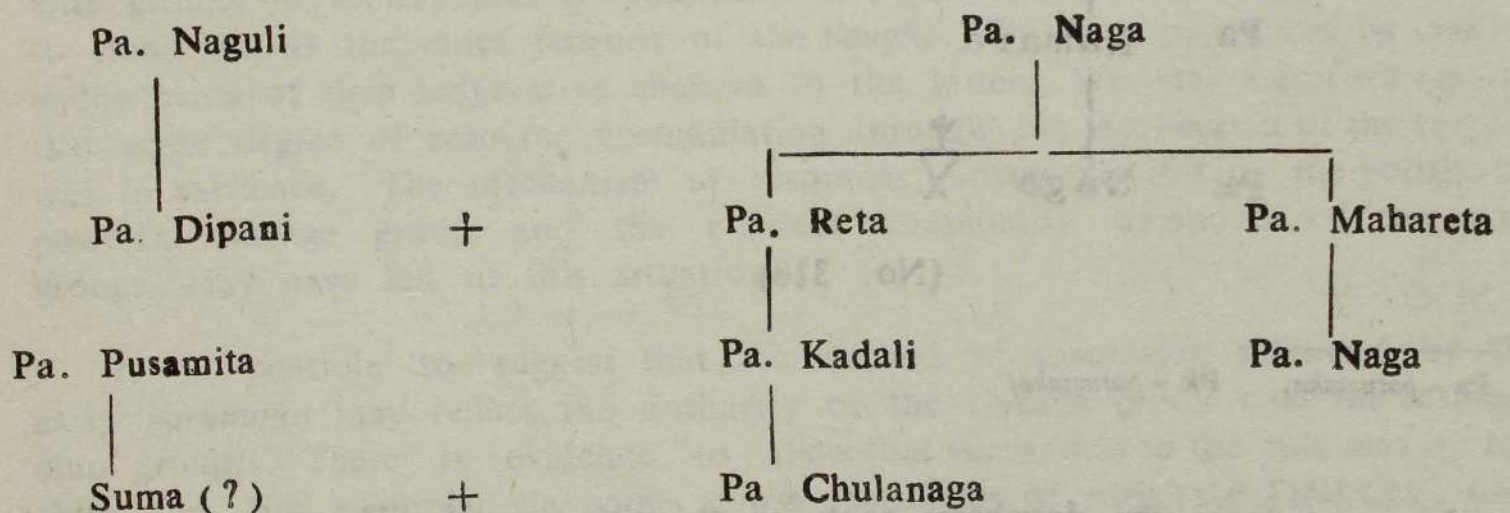
37. S. Paarnavitana, *op. cit.*, 1970, p. vi.



opposed or contradictory to the norms of succession to power and property transmitted through the mother. This form of succession apparently received strength from the cross-cousin marriage followed by the *parumaka* group. Significantly, in the *parumaka* inscriptions, the sister's son and son-in-law are known by the term *baginiyo* (Skt *bhāgineya*/ Pali *bhāgineyya* as well as *marumakana* (Drav. *marumakan*) (Nos. 148, 294, 1202). It may be assumed that in a dominantly clan system, where the lineage group held sway over the resident community, the above form of succession to the title may have been in force.

In the process of segmentation, the founding of intermediary and local/sub-lineages could not be avoided. The taking up of this title by more than one son was perhaps a natural process under such circumstances. The elder member of the resident community (household group) consisting of the extended kin group may have been recognized as the *parumaka*. It is possible that we may have a situation in relation to the Naga-Naguli lineage group.

*Naga-Naguli lineage (Marakkal Ulpota)*



(Nos. 260/266)

During the second phase, the *parumaka* group tends to become more complex in their composition. The occurrence of a large number of *parumaka* inscriptions indicating only first and second generation *parumaka* clearly reflect a proliferation of this title holders during the post 3rd/2nd century B C., who may be distinguished from the descendents of the lineage chieftains of the Proto Historic period. A larger group of first and second generation *parumaka* also points to a situation where individuals seeking status were now beginning to acquire this title as a prestige symbol. The new holders of this title may have emerged from clan groups recently absorbed to the Iron Age culture from the backward



Mesolithic techno-cultural groups<sup>38</sup> An inscription from south east Sri Lanka records the endowment of a *parumaka* Milaka Pusa, the son of *parumaka* Naga (No. 631) Paravitana derives *milaka* from Skt. *mleccha* > Pāli *millakha* (No. 119). Alternately, they may have been individuals assigned with the rank status of *parumaka*, perhaps by a political authority. To elaborate, there are instances when the father carried the title and the son had no title (No. 11), and conversely, the son was the title holder while the father had no title at all (No. 25). The gradual transformation of this title from a lineage to an official one, in turn implied that the earlier principles of succession to the title could not be implemented with much effort. For example, an inscription dateable to the 1st century B.C./A.D records that all four sons of a *mahānātya*, named Bamadata, held the title *parumaka* (No. 269).

We cannot rule out that some of the local chieftains, called *rajha* (*raja*) and *aya* in the early Brahmi inscriptions, had their origins in the Proto Historic *parumaka* group. It is possible that in some cases a clan leader politically more powerful or who had more resources than the other chieftains in the same eco-zone, may have taken up the title *rajha* or *aya* in an effort to display a mark of rank distinction indicating superior status over the rest. We have identified possible traits of this situation at least in two micro eco-zones e. g. lower Modaragam-aru and upper Parangi-aru.<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to note that a similar process prevailed in Andhra during the post Maurya - pre Sātavāhana period<sup>40</sup>

## V

In our view, economic and political factors may be shown as the basis of the impetus to this structural complexity of the *parumaka* group during this phase.

First, we may take up the economic factor. It may not be an exaggeration to state that the post 2nd/1st century B. C. commercial vortex clearly brought great economic benefits to the *parumaka* groups, who were already entrenched in strategic sectors of the economy. For instance, we may quote *parumaka*

38. An inscription from Situlpavva, south east Sri Lanka, mentions *parumaka* Calu from Vanakagama (No. 650). If *vana* is taken to be forest, then the location of this village may have been with a forest. Another inscription records the region/place of residence of *parumaka* Cuḍa-Ayimara as Ayibara-pavata (*pabbata* i. e. mountain/hill) (No. 908). It may be speculated that the *parumaka* having Mundari-sounding personal names may have originally belonged to the Mesolithic culture, e. g. names such as Pola, Naguli, Ruvala, Raki, etc. In addition, there are other personal names of the *parumaka* that do not belong to the Indo-Aryan group of languages, e. g. Bagali, Palikada, Mala, Naga, Namara, Hadaka, Nugaya, Sigara Malu, Paṭakana Sata, Haruma, Ayimara, Cuḍa, Poṭimasa, Palaya, S'bili, Kaḍali, Uba, Puḍa, etc. On one occasion, the name of one *parumaka*, Siri, is written as Tiri, and conversely the Dravidian personal name Udiyan is Prakritized as Uttiya and Uti in the Brahmi inscriptions. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit.*, 1985, p. 376.

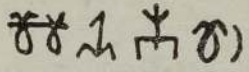
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 404-406.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-251.



Tabara Veḷḷa (No. 319) and *parumaka* Taba Tisa (No. 750), who were associated with mining, working or trading in copper.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the personal name Cuḍa Cuḍi taken up by several *parumaka* chieftains (Nos. 44, 203, 266, 407, 358, 684, 856, 1015, 1042, 1083) may reflect their control over gem-bearing areas or trade associated with mineral stone<sup>42</sup>

In addition to their control over resources, it is fairly clear that the *parumaka* controlled labour in particular areas related to craft and commercial sectors. For instance, *parumaka* Gopala headed the *goṭhi koboja* (No. 990). *Koboja* were a community who had organised themselves into a corporate body i. e. *goṭha*. The *Mahāvamsa* (xxiii. 4-6) records that *senāpati* Mita of Eḷāra (the maternal uncle of *parumaka* Nadimita of the inscriptions), controlled a village of workers i. e. *kammantagāna*. Another *parumaka* is mentioned as the *bojhika* of Bama-nagara (No. 1037) and it clearly establishes control over centres having full-time specialists and exchange points. Therefore it is not surprising that administrative functions such as *nagara-guttika* (burgomaster) and *pura kamata* (officer-in-charge of city affairs) are associated with the *parumaka* (Nos. 230, 1002). In another inscription, a *parumaka* is called a *tota-bojhaka* (No. 860) i. e. ferry-crossing, implying their control over means of conveyance and communication.

The *parumaka* group directly involved themselves in trade and commerce. An inscription from south east Sri Lanka mentions one *parumaka* *Vañijha* Tissa (No. 515). From north west Sri Lanka we come across the powerful *parumaka* clan (who display the symbols ) , where a member of this group, *parumaka* Tisa is called *duta-navika* (envoy-mariner) and *kaniyata* (navigator) (Nos. 1053-55).<sup>43</sup> We may note that in another inscription, *parumaka* Utara, a member of this clan, records the term *kaderi*, which is probably associated with

41. A *parumaka* Taba Tisa is mentioned in an early Brahmi inscription from Mavaragala. Less than five miles from this site, slag remains having traces of copper were found by Coomaraswamy at Koka-gala. *ARMS* 1907, pp. 8-9. It is recorded that a chieftain named Tamba was defeated at the village Tamba by *Duttahagamaṇi* in the course of his campaign. *Mahāvamsa* xxv-14-15.

42. In the Dravidian group of languages, *Cudakam* / *Cuda* means 'bracelet, sacred eleocarpus bead enclosed in gold hung around the neck in a gold band, (DED 2246). *Sud-am* in Sumerian is 'lustrous-gem'. A. Sathasivan, *Sumerian. A Dravidian Language*. California, Berkeley, 1965, p. 56; No. 463. A *parumaka* Narayagutha was the *bojhika* of Piyaka-pas'ana (No. 171). This inscription is associated with a mineral stone yielding reg on adjacent to the burial complex of the middle Yan-oya and Mamaduwa. Piyaka-pas'ana may refer to a variety of mineral stones i.e. *pasana* (*pašana*). Large quantities of carnelian, an imported variety of semi-precious stone from south Deccan that had much prestige value, emerged from the cist burials of Ibbankatuwa during the 1988 excavation. Sudharshan Senaviratne, *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 276-277.

43. Merchants were often employed as envoys. It is recorded Tissa included a *setthi* among the group of envoys he despatched to As'oka. *Mahāvamsa* 11. 26.



maritime activity. This particular region has direct access to the primary chank and pearl yielding areas in the Gulf of Mannar. A second inscription from Maligatenna mentions another navigator (*kaṇiyata, parumaka* Maha Asoka (No. 977a). A later Brahmī inscription speaks of a *parumaka* who undertook journeys to Bhārukachcha (No 1183), which was the primary port town in western India, linked to the long distance trade network.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the growth in the agrarian base in the post 3rd century had a direct bearing upon the expansion of the *parumaka* group. The location of certain *parumaka* in fertile pockets and their ability to control resident communities during the Proto Historic period, gave their successors an additional advantage during the Early Historic period. This is especially true during the post 2nd/1st century B. C. period, when private ownership developed in land and when the primary producer was directly subordinated by the ruling class, who also controlled the surplus.

The following evidence may substantiate the above assumption. While one early Brahmī inscription mentions the place of residence of a *parumaka* as Anurādhagāma (No. 706), another *parumaka* is called the *bujhika* of Maṭukagama (No. 807). It may be assumed that the four *parunaka* brothers who founded the village settlement Mahā Ariṭṭhagāma (No. 269) may have had the right over the produce and labour as well. Their ability to mobilize labour from such resident villages, most obviously gave the *parumaka* the opportunity to build and own reservoirs or tanks (*vāpi > vavi*). An inscription clearly mentions one *parumaka* Tissa as a *vavi-hamika* (*vāpi-swāmika*) i. e. lord or owner of a reservoir (No. 1200). It is evident that with the growth of private property and with the greater elaboration of the principles of inheritance, individual ownership of the *parumaka* over strategic resources consolidated itself to a greater extent. Apparently this situation was developing from the 1st century B. C. as we came across the term *paravari* (*paraveṇi*) i. e. inherited share, in an early *parumaka* inscription (No. 298). It is therefore not surprising that by the beginning of the early Christian era, according to inscriptional evidence, the *parumaka* had become the single largest group privately owning reservoirs (Nos 1051-52, 1200, 1130, 1132, 1198, 1151, 1153, 1200).<sup>45</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that the uneven development in the distribution of resources may have witnessed certain *parumaka* individuals holding more than one reservoir, village or extensive tract of paddy lands. The earlier mentioned *parumaka* *duta-naviku* gifted a reservoir along with a monastery to the clergy (Nos. 1051-52). Another *parumaka* donated a reservoir to the sangha (No. 1225). In a third case, an inscription (dated to c 40 B.C.) mentions that a *parumaka* donated shares in a tank

44. Long distance trade with western India is confirmed by another inscription from north west Sri Lanka, recording the endowment made by a *navika* (mariner) from Bhojakata (No. 105).

45. S. Paranavitana - *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, Vol II (i), 1983, No. 5.



and also shares in a paddy field,<sup>46</sup> while another early *parumaka* inscription records the endowment of a village (No. 251)

The control over water, which was extremely crucial to dry zone paddy cultivation, may have greatly enhanced the control the *parumaka* wielded over the primary producer. It is precisely the capital accumulated from agricultural surplus, revenue from water control over raw material, that gave them an advantageous access to commercial ventures. In this connection *parumaka duta-navika* is a case in point. This surplus in their control gave the *parumaka* the opportunity to indulge in the luxury of conspicuous consumption, expressed mainly through endowments of drip-pledge cave shelters, monasteries and *stūpas*. The same *parumaka* who donated a village, is said to have spent coins numbering ten-thousand (*dasa-sahasa-daraya*) to construct a cave shelter (No. 251). Inscriptions of the 1st century A.D. mention the affluent Vahiṭ lineage who were politically powerful and had much surplus wealth, enabling donations such as revenue from two tanks, interior fields (of one tank), 60 measures (*kārisa*) of land, one reservoir, one *vihāra* and cave shelters to the monks (Nos. 1202, 1205, 1231).<sup>47</sup> Thus, it is not incorrect to term the *parumaka* as the earliest and the primary agrarian elite during the Early Historic period.

The emergence of the *parumaka* as the primary agrarian elite and their extended economic interest in commercial activity leading to greater economic affluence had interesting political implications (Table 3). It is possible to make several observations on the basis of this Table indicating the designation held by the *parumaka*. First, they were the largest single group who held bureaucratic positions at the upper level, though certain non-*parumaka* individuals also held such positions.<sup>48</sup> All offices, with the exception of one *badagarika*, were held by one family in the latter Brahmi inscriptions. In the case of this particular family, each individual often held more than one office. Secondly, there is a large group of *parumaka* in the inscriptions, who are associated with revenue collection (*ayaka*) and storage (*badaga-ika*) of the surplus. One *parumaka* very specifically mentions his father as a *gaṇaka* i.e. accountant (Nos. 212-213). A significant number held high military (*senāpati*) and civil administrative positions. Thirdly, the *parumaka* served both in the independent political units as well as in the main political centres at Anurādhapura and at Mahāgāma. A higher concentration however is with the main political centres. Finally, the administrative structure appears to be less complex, which is apparent from the limited designations associated with the Early Historic period.

46. *Ibid.*

47. S. Paranavitana "Brahmi inscriptions in caves at Kaduruveva". *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. 5 (iii). 1965, pp. 410-418.

48. It is not always easy to make out the *parumaka* and non-*parumaka*. For instance, later Brahmi inscriptions have the following - *Badakarika parumaka Sangha puta parumaka Utiya . . .*" (No. 1109), *. . . badarika Sangha puta Utiya . . .* No. 1110).



TABLE 3

*Civil and Military Administrative Designations held by the Parumaka*


Senapati (Senāpati)	4
Mahamata (Mahāmātya)	1
Maha Amati (Mahā Amātya)+	1*
Amati (Amātya)+	3
Maha-dora-tana (Great Chamberlain)+	1*
Dora Kani (Chamberlain)	1*
Rupa-vapara (Dealer in coined money)+	1*
Kanapedika (Record Keeper)+	1*
Badagarika (Bhāndāgārika)	4 + 1*
Ayaka (Revenue Collector)	4
Duta (navika) (Envoy - Mariner)	1
Nagaraguta (Mayor)	1
Pura Kamata (Officer-in-Charge of City Affairs)	1
Tanaka (Sthānika) (Officer-in-Charge of Ward / City / District)	1
Sivika-adeka (Superintendent of Palanquins)	2
As'a-adeka (Superintendent of Horses)	1
Adakachaka (Adyaksaka?) (Superintendent)	1
Batakaraka (Superintendent of the Kitchen)	1
As'aruya (Horseman)	1

\* From later Brahmī inscriptions.

+ Individuals from the same lineage group.

In view of this, it is possible to suggest that the crystalization of the Early State of Sri Lanka (a process initiated largely from the south east by the Gamani lineage), may have resulted in the quantitative expansion of the *parumaka* group. First, the *parumaka* who were the descendants of the old elite families were absorbed in a subordinate position to the newly evolving state structure, for the convenience of administration and to neutralize political opposition. Secondly, this title was used as a convenient status assigned to elevate and absorb newly emerging elite groups to the state structure. The situation we have therefore is the gradual subordination of the original *parumaka* groups and the introduction of new *parumaka* as the servants of the state.

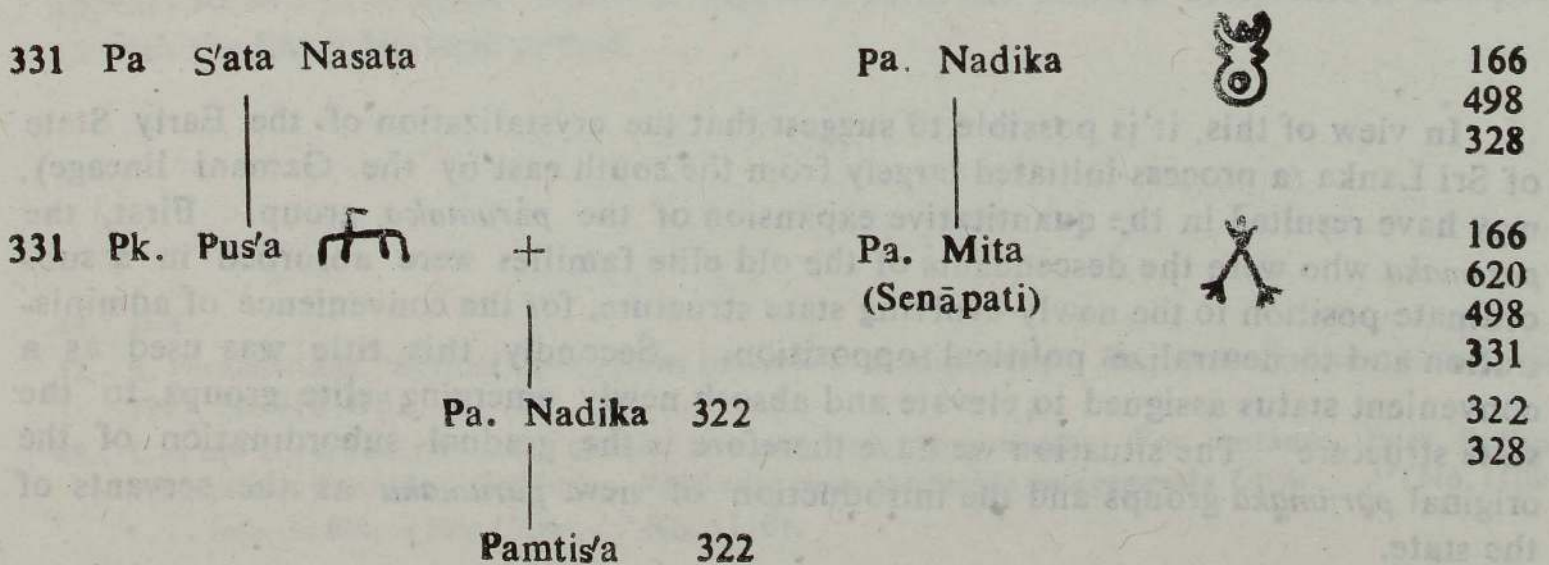


A study of the S'ata Naṣ'ata - Nadika lineage group may confirm the above assumption. In fact *senāpati* Mita may be identified with *senāpati* Nandimitra, a commander of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa* (xxiii. 4-15). The inscriptions indicate that *parumaka* Mita's donative records carrying the symbol  are found in the north (at Nāṭṭukanda) and in the south east (at Situlpavuva) (Nos 166, 620). *Mahāvamsa* records that Mita was born and grew up in a village east of Anurādhapura, called Kammantagāma (lit. 'village of workers') near Chittapabbata (xxiii. 4-15). This may be identified with an area adjacent to Nāṭṭukanda, which is close to Yan-oya Megalithic burial complex. The *Mahāvamsa* (xxiii. 5-6) also records that Mita was named after his maternal uncle, who controlled the above-mentioned *Kammantagāma* and was also a commander in the army of the invader, Eḷāra. All this may indicate that this powerful *parumaka* family controlled the middle Yan-oya around the 2nd century B.C. It is important to note that the route connecting the north central plain with the rich copper-magnetite repository at Seruwila in the east had necessarily to traverse the middle Yan-oya region. Mita's father Nadika has engraved a *nandipada* on his inscription, which may associate him with his craft and commercial groups.

It is evident that the combination of these two families concentrated much wealth in the hands of this group. Their socio-economic and political affluence was further enhanced when Mita contracted a marriage alliance with another ancient *parumaka* family, which lived in the north, associated with the Mamaduwa burial complex. *Parumaka* Puṣ'a, a chieftainness in her own right, and her family probably controlled the vital junction connecting the Jaffna peninsula with the north central region and resources such as mica, mineral stones and gold bearing areas in this region. In their effort to encroach upon the northern nuclear region militarily, the Gamaṇi lineage could not overlook this family and therefore obtained Mita's services in the capacity of a *senāpati*.

The *Mahāvamsa* narration very clearly records that the rulers of Mahāgāma (i. e. Gamaṇi lineage), in their effort to consolidate power in the geo-physical area south of the Mahaweli, depended heavily upon the agrarian elite of south east

Sāta Naṣ'ata - Nadika Lineage





Sri Lanka. The emergence of a developed agrarian economy in the south east coincided to a great extent with the chiefdoms controlled by the Gamaṇi lineage. The *Mahāvamsa* (xxiv. 2-3, 58) mentions that this family personally undertook the task of expanding agriculture.

On the basis of the *Mahāvamsa*, *Sihassavatthippakarāṇa* and *Rasavāhinī*, it is suggested that, while *setthi*, *vessa*, *kuṭumbika* / *gahapati* and *issara* in early Sri Lanka had overlapping and allied meanings, there was a simultaneous emergence of a strong and powerful agrarian elite known as *Mahākula* or *Kulagha*, who are described as 'adlho mahādhano mahābhogo' i. e. holders of great wealth and possessions.<sup>49</sup> Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's father recruited one member from each *Mahākula* family to command the frontier (*Mahāvamsa* xxiii, 16-19). A cursory examination of certain *parumaka* inscriptions (stating titles) in south east Sri Lanka, recording second or third generation members of the lineage, indicate that the earliest or the latest members were associated with the Gamaṇi lineage group as their subordinates in the military and civil administration.

1. Pa. Sumana (*Baḍakarika* of Pita Maharajha)  
    |  
    Pa. Cema (No. 625)
2. Pa. Veḷaśumana  
    |  
    Pa. Veḷa  
    |  
    Pa. Puśadeva (*Ayaka* of Devanapiya rajha Tisa) (Nos. 647, 703)
3. Pa. Puśadeva (*senapati*)  
    |  
    Nagā + Agidata (*senapati* of Tiśa Maharajha) (Nos. 704-725)
4. Pa. Abaya (*senāpati*)  
    |  
    Pa. Puśadeva  
    |  
    Pa. Abaya (Nos. 665, 654)

We may therefore conclude that certain members of the agrarian elite were drawn into service under the Gamaṇi lineage group and assigned the rank of *parumaka*. An inscription from south east Sri Lanka refers to one *parumaka* Deva, the son of *gapati* (*gahapati*) Avirada (No 630), while a second inscription, from Vevala near Sigiriya, also records a *parumaka*, who identifies his father

49. H. Ellawala, *Social History of Early Ceylon*. Colombo, Department of Cultural Affairs, 1969 pp. 48-49, 76-78; Tilak Hettiarachy, *History of Kingship of Ceylon*. Colombo, Lake House, 1972, pp. 77-80.



as a *gahapati*.<sup>50</sup> This clearly points to the socio-economic origins of these two *parumaka*. The literary texts also call Nandimitta a member of *Kulageha* (*Sahassa*, p. 92), while the early inscriptions call him a *parumaka* and a *senapati* of Devanapiya rajha Abaya (No. 620). Veḷusumana, another commander of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, was born in Kuḍumbiyāṅgaṇa in the south east Sri Lanka and his father is called a *kutumbika* in the texts (*Mahāvamsa* xxiii. 68). An inscription (again from south east Sri Lanka) of *parumaka* Pus'adeva the *ayaka* (accountant) of Devanapiya rajha Tisa (identifiable with Mahācūḷi Mahātissa, the grand nephew of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi) records the name of his grandfather as *parumaka* Velas'umana (Nos. 647, 703).<sup>51</sup> The latter may be identified with *senapati* Veḷusumana in the literary texts, who served under both Kāvantissa and Duṭṭhagāmaṇi.<sup>52</sup>

In this manner there was an incorporation of the old elite under the hegemony of the 'first dynasty' and the integration of the new elite into the state structure by designating rank status to them. The crystalization of the Early State did not undermine the relative economic affluence of the *parumaka*, but on the contrary enhanced it. In fact, almost all inscriptions recording the ownership of reservoirs by the *parumaka* are concentrated in the districts of Anuradhapura and Kurunegala, where political authority of the 'first dynasty' was best established. The kings of the 'first dynasty' seem to have supplemented the income of the *parumaka*. The texts record that Duṭṭhagāmaṇi gifted a tract of land in western Sri Lanka as a *bhōgagāma* to *senapati* Nandimitta (*Sahassa*, p. 28). It can be suggested that the foothold the *parumaka* had in units of production (e. g. *Kamnantagāma*, *pugi*, *bhogagāna*, *nagara*) and control over primary resources (e. g. reservoirs, raw material), may have prompted the rulers of the 'first dynasty' reach the primary producer and localized resources via the *parumaka* by obtaining their services in the capacity of *ayaka* (revenue collector), *baḍakarika* (treasurer) and even city and district administrators (Table 3). The continued dependence upon them in these areas may have encouraged the hereditary succession to such offices by the *parumaka*. For instance, an inscription at Mihintale, Anuradhapura reads "Baḍakarika *parumaka* Tisa puṇa baḍakarika *parumaka* Maga..." (No. 22). A later Brahmī inscription from the north, records a series of offices such as *amātia*, held for nearly three generations by the powerful *parumaka* Vahiṭi lineage group (Nos 1202, 1205, 1231). We may assume that the *parumaka* placed themselves as a vital link in the downward penetration of authority and the upward movement of resources and the surplus production.

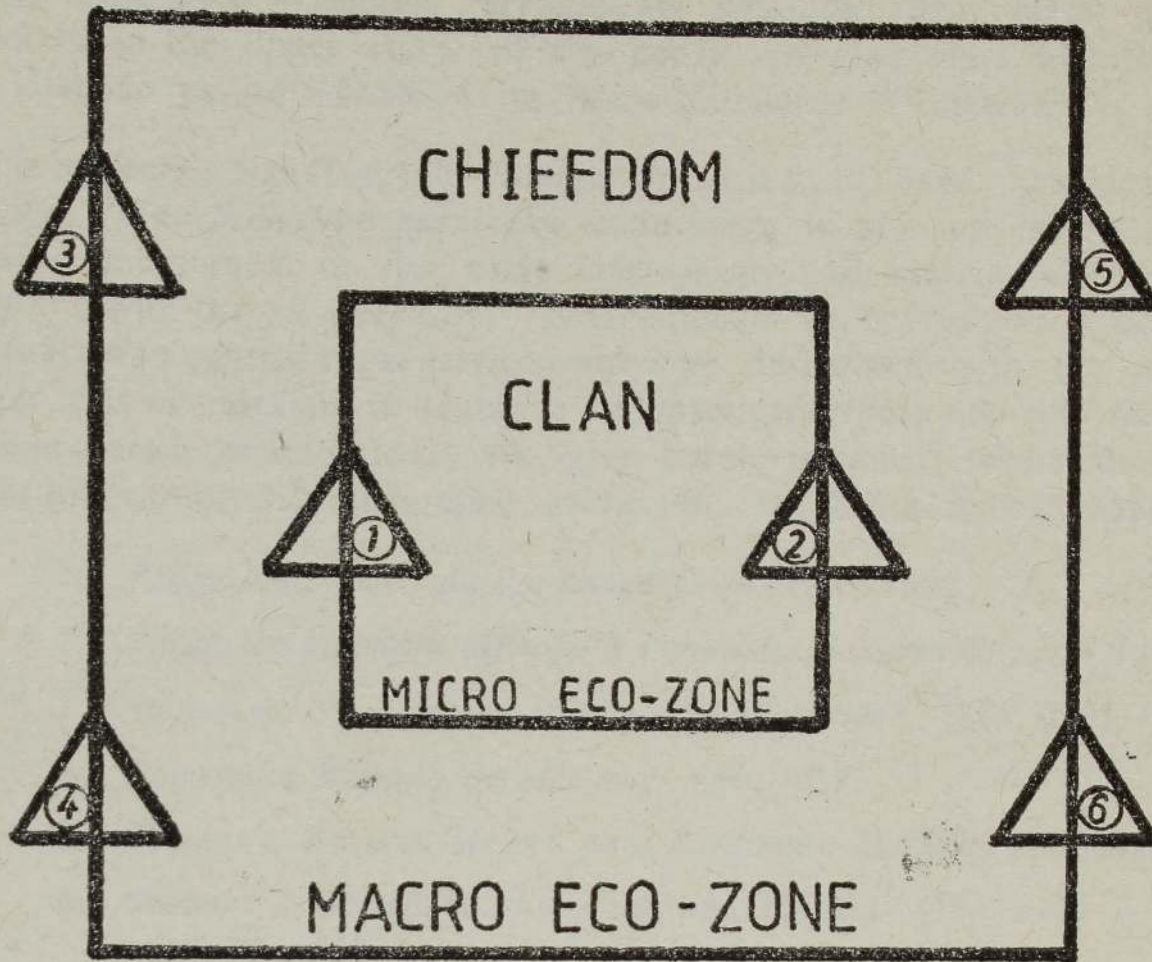
50. S. Ranawella, "Report on Epigraphy", in Senake Bandaranayake ed. *Sigiriya Project: First Archaeological and Research Report* (January-September 1982). Colombo, Central Cultural Fund. 1984, p. 211, No. 29.

51. C. E. Godakumbura, "Akurugoda Slab-inscription of Pussadeva". *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. V (ii), pp. 315-317.

52. An inscription in south east Sri Lanka records genealogy from grandfather to grandson as, *parumaka* Aiyмара > *parumaka* Cuḍi Tissa > *parumaka* Cuḍi Tissa (No. 684). The *Mahāvamsa* (xxiii. 49-54) mentions another *senapati* of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi as Gothaimbara. If *gotṭha* derives from *goṭṭha* i. e. guild, Aiymara may have had origins from a commercial background.



# EARLY STATE

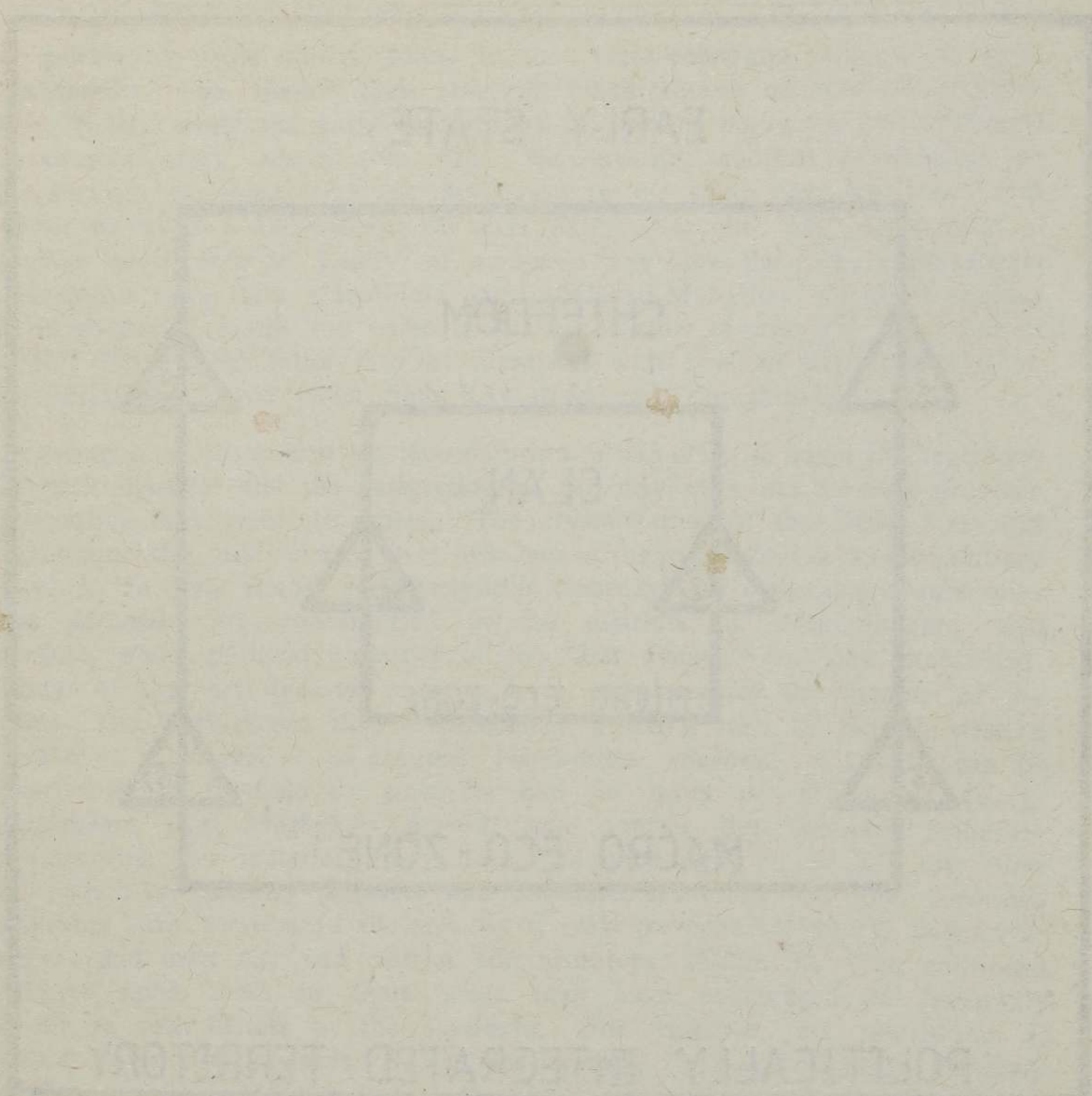


## POLITICALLY INTEGRATED TERRITORY

1. Intrusive Proto Historic Clan Chieftains
2. Acculturated Mesolithic Clan Chieftains
3. Pre State Clan Chieftains
4. Incorporated Mesolithic Clan Chieftains
5. Incorporated Members of Elite Agrarian Families
6. Incorporated Members of Craft & Commercial Families

SUDHARSHAN SENEVIRATNE 1985







The conclusive emergence of a class society in the post 2nd century B. C. further enhanced the strength of the *parumaka*, who secured for themselves a position immediately below royalty. On the one hand this was achieved through lineage, now converted into a class position. The newly recruited *parumaka* probably used their economic strength to stabilize their class position, thus themselves in the upper rungs of the newly emerging class hierarchy during the Early Historic period (Table 4 on Socio-Economic Affiliates).

It is extremely significant that royalty found it fit to have matrimonial ties with *parumaka*. The *Brāhmaṇa-parumaka* connection is also an interesting one. The *Brāhmaṇa* mentioned in the early inscriptions had matrimonial ties only with royalty and with the *parumaka*.<sup>53</sup> There appears to have been certain *Brāhmaṇa* individuals who entered royal services and were designated with the *parumaka* title. However, this assumption is tentative as inscriptions are not too clear about the *Brāhmaṇa-parumaka* affiliation. We give below instances where these two terms occur in association with each other (Nos. 130, 296, 812, 838, 1045, 1136).

1. *Parumaka Bama puta Parumaka Ti'sa...*(No. 130).
2. *Parumaka baḍihara Mita puta Parumaka Bamaṇa Utiya...*(No. 296).<sup>54</sup>
3. *Parumaka S'uri putaha Bamaṇa Datakaha lene...*(No. 812).<sup>55</sup>
4. *Parumaka Bamaṇa Tis'aha lene...*(No. 838)
5. *S'agas'a Bamaṇa Megali puta Parumaka Majhima Dataha...*(No. 1045).
6. *Parumaka Bamaṇaha puta danukaya Gutaha ..*(No. 1136 - Late Brahmi inscription).<sup>56</sup>

In some cases the father is known as a *Brāhmaṇa* and in certain other inscriptions the son is called thus. However, no inscription mentions it as the *jāti* status of both, whereas the title lineage affiliation *parumaka* is indicated in association with father and son. It is tempting to question whether the status of a *Brāhmaṇa* was acquired in certain cases, especially by the *parumaka*, who were attempting to give their class exclusiveness a ritual status as well. This pattern was not unknown in Andhra and Tamilnadu during the Early Historic period. As for the rest, with the exception of the *gamika*, who are again associated with the village level administration (themselves being an exclusive group within the agrarian elite), the others, viz. *gahapati*, *Barata* / *Bata* and *as'a* are also associated with the agrarian and commercial elite, which may account for their connections with the *parumaka* group.<sup>57</sup>

53. According to the Bambaragala inscription. Pocariraja Naga married the daughter of *Brāhmaṇa* Kojhra (No. 814).

54. *Baḍihara* is explained as a variation of *baḍakarika*, i. e. treasurer.

55. According to Paranavitana's translation S'uri and Data are father and son. We prefer to consider them as two separate individuals making a joint donation.

56. *Danukaya* is translated as the maker of bows.

57. Sudharshan Seneviratne, *op. cit* 5891.. . "The Baratas... .."



TABLE 4

*Socio-economic groups affiliated to the Parumaka.*

Kin affiliates	Social affiliates
Maharaja : Father-in-law (994)	1051-52
Aya : Son-in-law (655)	
Abi : Daughter (305, 655)	
Wife (994)	
Brāhmaṇa : Grandfather (1045)	83, 812
Father (130, 1045, 1136)	
Son (296)	
Bata :	121, 126, 190, 321, 531-32, 636, 671 746, 755, 771, 772, 776, 1069, 1097 1180.
Gamika : Father-in-law (578)	153, (3 <i>gamika</i> ). 323, 337.
Wife (853)	952*
Gahapati : Father (630)	
Father (Ranawella <i>op. cit.</i> p. 211, No. 29)	
As'a	529.

\* A newly discovered early Brahmi inscription from Ranagiriya temple at Melsiripura, (Kurunegala District), by my Colleague Piyatissa Senanayake, records a joint donation by one *parumaka* Tis'a and *gamika* Siva (Pers. Com.)



It is not incorrect to assume that the strategic location of the *parumaka* in the political economy of the Early Historic period may have resulted in their gradual but total social exclusiveness by the beginning of the Christian era. The later Brahmi inscriptions do not indicate the *parumaka* in joint donations with other social groups, with the exception of a *Bata* in one instance (No. 1180), and in another fragmentary inscription, the son of the ruling king, the son of a *parumaka*, the son of an *amātya* and the son of a merchant *vanika* who made a joint donation.<sup>58</sup> Precisely during this period, one can also witness the emergence of powerful *parumaka* families such as the *Vasiti* (*Vās'istha*) lineage group, who had a near monopoly of certain vital administrative, political and financial positions for almost three generations. It is suggested that his lineage group was probably responsible for undermining the 'first dynasty' by virtue of their political and economic strength. Paranavitana also suggests that this group may have been *Brāhmins* (Table 5).<sup>59</sup>

Another interesting feature is the relative decrease in the number of *parumaka* individuals mentioned in the later Brahmi inscriptions. It is possible that, as Hettiarachchy suggests, the nobility largely represented by the *parumaka* may have gradually come to be by another name.<sup>60</sup> Most probably, in a new economic context, which began to evolve in the post 1st/2nd century A.D., the term *parumaka* may have lost its significance or meaning. During this period we find the emergence of a new group of rural administrators at the provincial level, known as the *ratiya* (*ratthika*) or the *rachiya* of Pliny,<sup>61</sup> all of the first generation.

58. S. Paranavitana - *op. cit.*, 1983, pp. 6-7, No. 5.

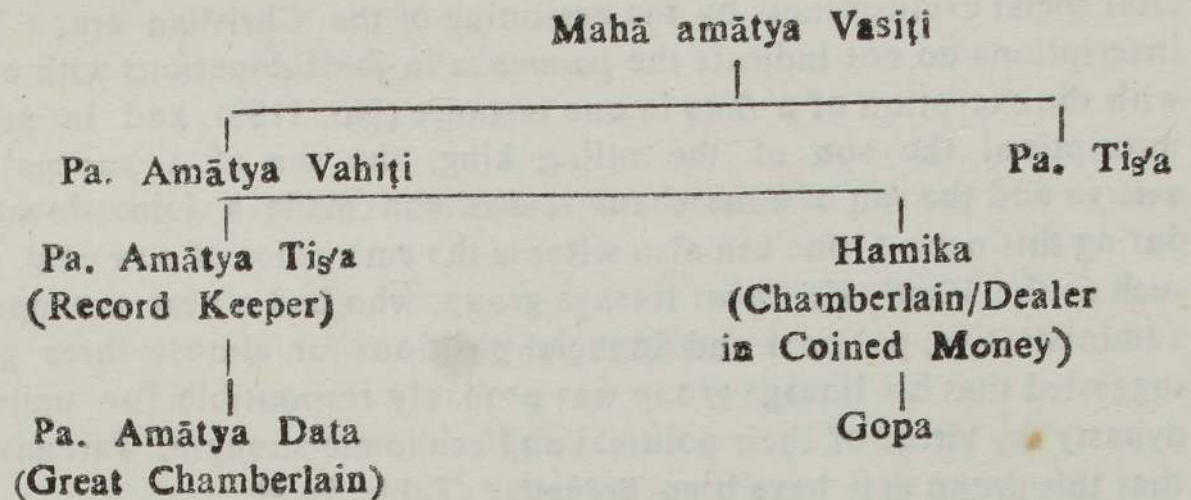
59. Paranavitana - *op. cit.*, 1965, pp. 417-418. Significantly, the office title of *amātya* was always passed on to the eldest son in this lineage group.

60. Tilak Hettiarachchy - *op. cit.* p. 75.

61. J. W. McCrindle - *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, Westminster 1901, p. 104



TABLE 5

*The Vasiti lineage.*<sup>62</sup>Endowments made to the *Sangha*:

1. Two categories of revenue from the tanks of Datavi and Karajavi.
2. Two interior fields of the tank at Kaṭaka nagara.
3. 60 *kārisa* of land.
4. Pebakara *vāpi* (in the District Badagaṇa).
5. One *vihāra*.
6. Three rock-shelters.

Another group, known as the *kulina*, emerged simultaneously and they are equated with the earlier *Mahākula* and *Kulageha*.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that in the post Christian era, sections of the *parumaka* and their descendants may have occupied the positions of the large landowning group, though one is uncertain about their actual strength in the administrative structure during this period. We may assume that the *parumaka* (or their descendants) may have continued to hold bureaucratic positions at the upper level, while the expanding state structure probably recruited a new segment of officers for the lower administrative posts. It is significant that even without the common use of the term *parumaka* denoting the nobility, the ruling kings of this time took up the title *Maparumaka* (*Mahāparumaka*), which may have some bearing on their authority over the nobility.<sup>64</sup>

62. For details see S. Paranavitana, *op. cit.*, 1965, pp. 415-418; 1970, Nos. 1202, 1205, 1231; 1983, pp. 54-56, No. 39.

63. Tilak Hettiarachchy, *op. cit.*, p. 79. It is also pointed out that by A. D. 450 the *kulina* were the nobility who possessed land in lieu of services. See A. P. Buddhadatta, "Some Corrections of Geiger's *Cūlavamsa* Translation". *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. 8 (2) 1950, p. 99. Not only did this group give strong support to the monarchy, Datusena, who captured power in A. D. 460 is referred to as a descendant of a *kutumbika* family. W. Geiger ed. *The Cūlavamsa*, xxxviii. 14.

64. Tilak Hettiarachchy, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-59. It is suggested that the prefix *ma* is Dravidian and it conveys the meaning 'great'. S. K. Sitrapalam, *op. cit.*, 1986-87, p. 17.



## ABBREVIATIONS

- ARMS** - **Administrative Report, Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon,**
- ASAnR** - **Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report.**
- DED** - *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, ed T. Burrow  
et M.B. Emeneau. Oxford, 1961.
- Mv** - *The Mahāvamsa* ed. W. Geiger. London, 1958  
(Pali Text Society edition)
- Sahassa** - *Sahassavathuppakarana*, ed. A. P. Buddhadatta.  
Colombo, Ananda Book Co., Ambalangoda, 1959.







# Internal Trade in Pre-colonial Sri Lanka

W. I. SIRIWEERA

The social and economic history of ancient and medieval Sri Lanka cannot be properly understood without the study of its internal trade, although it may be difficult to quantify this by asking and answering questions such as "how much?" and "of what proportions?" The distribution of luxury commodities among the elite, the collection of articles of trade for export, the distribution of items such as pepper, ginger, arecanut and coconut that did not grow everywhere, the provision of salt brought in from coastal areas and the circulation of handicraft articles, all required a certain amount of organized internal trade.

Merchants, denoted by the term *vanija* or *vanica*, occupied an important position in society from pre-Christian times and figure among the donors in early Brahmi inscriptions found at Kanḍuvil and Bambaragastalāwa in the Ampara District and at Mandāgala in the Hambantota District.<sup>1</sup> Some of the merchants were of the Tamil community, as indicated by the term *dameda vanija* in two inscriptions found at Periyapuliyankulama in the Vavuniya District<sup>2</sup>. There are also early Brahmi inscriptions at Mahakapugollāya and Aliyākaḍa in the Anuradhapura District, Bovattegala 30 miles east of Kataragama, Gōnagala in the Hambantota District, Vālaellugoḍakanda and Maḍugasnulla in the Monaragala District, which mention corporations or guilds of merchants by the use of the term *puga* or *pugiya*<sup>3</sup>. The wide dispersal of these inscriptions indicate that even in the pre-Christian era, trade was not limited to the centres of political authority, which were the prime urban settlements. A later Brahmi inscription from Sigiriya refers to a dealer in tamarind (*abala-vābara*),<sup>4</sup> which indicates that some traders specialized in certain commodities from the early centuries of the Christian era. The *setthi*, frequently referred to in chronicles and literature, seems to have been a person who had acquired wealth and social position by means of trade. By the time of the Polonnaruwa kingdom trade had become so important that the head of the mercantile corporations or chief of the *setthis* was a member of the King's council. In the *Nikāya Sangrahaya* this position is referred to as *situna* and in the Council Chamber inscription of Nissankamalla by the term *kaḍa-gosthiye-āttavun*<sup>5</sup>. The *Kandavuru Sirita* and the *Pūjāvali* refer to two positions, *situ* and

1. S. Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, vol. I, Colombo (1970) p. 37, 40, 44-45.

2. *Ibid.* p. 28.

3. *Ibid.* p. 11, 42, 50, 55, 94

4. *Ibid.* p. 45

5. *Nikāyasangrahaya*, ed. Simon de Silva, Mendis Gunasekara, W. F. Gunawardena, Colombo (1907) p. 18; *CJSG*. II, p. 139; *U.C.H.C.* I. Pt. II, p. 541



*mahavelandanā*.<sup>6</sup> One of the three officers who organized a revolt against Vijayabāhu I was *Setthinātha*,<sup>7</sup> and this too may indicate the importance of mercantile communities during the Polonnaruwa period. The prominence gained by the Alagakkōnāras, hailing from a rich trading family during the reigns of the Gampola kings, shows the upward social mobility at the time and the importance of trade in the economy. *Jōti Sitāna*<sup>8</sup>, who was the chief administrative officer in the Kandy region during the reign of Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte, may have attained his position through wealth accumulated by trade

Undoubtedly the capital cities, because of their concentration of a large population, some of whom were not involved in economically productive work, were focal points of trade. Courtiers, their families and retinue, dignitaries of military establishments, sometimes mercenaries and other categories of foreigners, lived within the city walls or in the immediate periphery of the city, and most of their needs had to be catered to by traders. The capital cities, in addition to being administrative centres, were also centres of ritual and pilgrimage and therefore they frequently attracted outsiders, which in turn enhanced their trade potential. Besides, the needs of the large monastic establishments in the city had to be catered to by their patrons, headed by the king.

The form and functions of the capital city required specific areas to be set apart for trade—stalls and traders. The *Dīpavamsa* refers to an inner market place (*antarāpana*) at Upatissagāma, one of the earliest capitals of the island.<sup>9</sup> The *Mahāvamsa*, in its story of Paṇḍukābhaya, refers to a separate quarter near the Western gate of the city for *Yavanas*, probably traders of Mediterranean or Persian origin.<sup>10</sup> The inscription on the stone canoe within the citadel of Anuradhapura implies that marketing was an all-important function at Anuradhapura.<sup>11</sup> Even land-owning groups in the city of Anuradhapura lent capital to the urban merchants for trading and were sleeping partners in trading ventures.<sup>12</sup> The *Samantapāsādikā* refers to food-centres within the city, where one could purchase meal<sup>3</sup> (*ivkkhāyika-bhattapacanaghara*), including cooked meat (*māmsa*) and sweets (*pūva*).<sup>13</sup> In Polonnaruwa certain streets were set apart for the bazaar, where there were open shops full of commodities.<sup>14</sup> Kurunegala had *velanda viḍi*,<sup>15</sup> or merchant streets,

6. *Sinhala Sāhitya Lipi*, ed. D. B. Jayatillake, Colombo (1956) p. 65, *Pūiāvali*, ed. Bentota Saddatissa, Colombo (1930) p. 113

7. *Cv*, lix, 17

8. *EZ*, III, no. 24

9. *Dv*, ix, 36

10. *Mv*, x, 90

11. *EZ*, III, 9

12. *Manōrathapūranī*, vol. II, ed. Max Walleiser and Herman Kopp, P.T.S., London (1930) p. 188.

13. *Samantapāsādikā*, vol. II, ed. J. Takakasu and M. Nagai, P.T.S., London (1927) p. 380-381

14. *Cv*, lxxiii, 149

15. *Ms. Kusunegala Vistaraya*, British Museum, (OR 5042) fol. 3b



while at Kotte there were many shops on either side of its streets full of various commodities.<sup>16</sup> In considering this spatial lay-out of the capital cities, it can be assumed that the venues of trade in most cases were located on the periphery of the inner city or in the outer city.

While trade was one of the functions of the capital cities, it was the prime function of the port cities. Of these, special reference may be made to Mahātittba, which was perhaps the most important port in the island up to about the thirteenth century, Ūratoṭa or modern Kayts, a place of bustling trade activity, at least in the twelfth century, and to Galle, Dondra and Colombo, which gained prominence after the thirteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Among the other centres of import were Godāpavata on the mouth of the Walawe river, which is mentioned in an inscription of the second century A.D., Weligama, which became increasingly important after the twelfth century, and Beruwela, Bentota, Wattala and Chilaw, which were primarily dominated by Muslims in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> The *Sandesa* literature, which throws light on the conditions which prevailed towards the end of this period, refers to wide streets in port cities, such as Galle, along which there were shops of all kinds full of commodities, including beads, pearls, gems and other precious items.<sup>19</sup>

As centres of import and export the port cities were also collection and distribution centres. Certain export commodities, such as gems, pearls, spices and animals like elephants, had to be extracted from the interior and transported to the port cities. Some of the items of export had to be manufactured in or near the port cities or transported from areas of manufacture in the interior. Current archaeological excavations at Alakolavewa, about five kilometers from Sigiriya, and at Samanala wewa, indicate that large-scale iron-melting of very high quality (which could boast of about 99 per cent purity), had taken place in these areas, and part of the produce was perhaps used for export. Imported luxury commodities, such as ceramic ware, silks, perfumes and wines, had to be channelled to the local market, and all these necessitated an intricate trade organisation.

The evidence available for an understanding of this organizational network is extremely limited. Regarding the manufacture of commodities in port cities, a Chola inscription, datable to the eleventh century, is of some value. This inscription refers to taxes on looms at Māntāi.<sup>20</sup> It is also reasonable to believe that, after about the twelfth century, coir industry flourished in the vicinity of most of the port cities of the Western and Southern coasts, as even ships from Oman and Yemen came to Sri

16. *Hamsa Sandesaya*, v. 24

17. W. I. Siriweera, 'Pre-colonial Sri Lanka's Maritime Commerce, with Special Reference to its Ports, *Sri Lanka and the Silk Road of the Sea*, Colombo (1990) p. 125-134

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Tisara*, vs. 52-55; *Parevi* vs. 84-88; 103; 105; *Girā*, vs 104

20. *S.I.I.* vol. IV, no. 1412; 1414 b



Lanka to obtain rope as well as trunks of coconut trees for masts, and timber for planking, for their shipping industry.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the port cities were perhaps closely guarded by troops and protected by walls and gates. Their population was composite and consisted of diverse elements. In several of these port cities, such as Mahātīttha, Dondra and Weligama, there were also well-known religious establishments. So one may assume that in all these port cities there were permanently settled groups of traders who supplied the necessities of the local residents, people of the satellite settlements around them, the religious establishments, and sometimes the foreign merchants. These traders also provided the requirements of petty traders, who retailed the items they had collected at the port in interior villages.<sup>22</sup> There were mercantile guilds in some port towns; for instance, at Mahātīttha a guild of merchants provided baking facilities and accepted deposits of money. A Tamil inscription found there, datable to the eleventh century, states that money for the purpose of burning a street-lamp outside the Tiruirāmisvaram temple at the port was deposited by a certain Tevan with Cankarapaṭṭyār, Verrilal-Vaniyār and the Valakkai Vaniyār, all of Mātoṭṭam.<sup>23</sup>

Imported luxury commodities were conveyed from port towns to capitals and market towns in ox-wagons or on pack animals, and commodities for export were also transported in the same manner to the port towns. A number of roads connecting the capitals and market towns with port towns facilitated this movement of trade commodities.<sup>24</sup> Periodically designated markets were held in such routes and were known as *tavalama*. One such medieval stop-over or *tavalama* close to Bentota and a caravan leader (*sāttunā*) are referred to in the Galapāta Vihāra inscription of Parākramabāhu II.<sup>25</sup> A Tamil inscription from Padaviya refers to another *tavalama*, from which money was collected as tolls.<sup>26</sup> *Kadigai-tavalam* is a word frequently used in medieval South Indian Tamil inscriptions, which has connections suggestive of either itinerant trading groups or of trading stations.<sup>27</sup>

Besides capitals and port cities, there were market towns in areas of dense population, information on some of which are available in epigraphic records. There were at least two mercantile settlements, Kalahumanaka and Mahatabaka, outside Anuradhapura in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. As at the Mahātīttha port, the

21. R- A. L. H. Gunawardana: "Seaways to Sieldiba" *Kalyani*, vols. V-VI (1986-87) p. 13

22. *Saddharmāṅkārā*, ed. Bentara Sraddhātisya, Panadura (1934) p. 641; *Rasavāhini* ed. Saranātissa, Colombo (B.E. 2434) p. 128

23. *S.I.I.*, vol. IV, no. 1414 B

24. W. I. Siriweera, "Transport and Communications in Pre-colonial Sri Lanka", *S.L.J.H.*, XII (1986) p. 17-38

25. *EZ.* IV, no. 25

26. *C.T.I.*, Pt. I., p. 55, Pt. II, p. 19-20

27. Moera Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India*, Delhi (1988) p. 113



mercantile 'guilds' in these settlements provided banking facilities where customers could deposit money or grain such as paddy, black peas and green gram and obtain annual interest on their deposits.<sup>28</sup> The acceptance of grain deposits by guilds clearly indicates that there was a well organised grain trade, at least in the city and its surrounding areas. It is reasonable to assume that guilds in these localities supplied consumables to the city and its suburbs and that they had facilities for storage of substantial quantities of grain. It may also be reasonably assumed that these guilds had a good tradition of maintaining records and that they did not function in isolation but acted in association with several other mercantile establishments in the area.

If we are to assume of the whole of the island's history through sporadic evidence it would seem that there were many small market towns, denoted by the term *nigama* or *niyangama* all over the place. *Nigama*, like the city, *inter alia* had stalls for the sale of prepared food (*sāpanako*)<sup>29</sup> - which means that they were frequented by people from outside, presumably by villagers from the hinterland, traders and artisans, who congregated in order to exchange commodities.

The emergence of these commercial centres with the expansion of population resulted in a kind of social mobility. One of these centres, namely Hopitigama, referred to in the Badulla Pillar inscription of Udaya IV (946-954)<sup>30</sup>, is typical of a well-regulated market town of medieval Sri Lanka. According to regulations stipulated in the inscription, a trader who kept his shop open on *poya* days was liable to pay a *padda*<sup>31</sup> of oil for the burning of the lamps at the Mahiyangana monastery. If he failed to do so, a fine was to be imposed and used for the same purpose. This would mean that although it was normal to close all shops on *poya* days, there were exceptions made with certain stipulations. Tolls were levied on goods brought in for sale at the Hopitigama market, and shop-owners or buyers there not expected to purchase these goods before they reached the market. The regulation was obviously intended to prevent the loss of revenue to the king. It seems that Hopitigama was located on an important trade route or at a place where several roads converged, as the inscription specifically states that goods, which were merely transported through the market, were not taxable. In the market itself there were authorized places for the sale of commodities liable to tolls, and if these were not shown to the officers but detected subsequently by them, double tolls were to be levied.<sup>32</sup>

Of the many other market towns specific information is available on two, Pada, viya and Wahalkada in the eastern belt of the north-central plain. These had become important centres of trade at least by the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Archaeological remains of Buddhist and Hindu religious establishments spread over a

28. *EZ.* III, no. 17, no. 26

29. *Vimativinodini*, ed. Berantuduwe Dharmadasa Tissa, Colombo (1935) p. 77

30. *EZ.*, V. no. 16

31. *Padda* or *pata* is a measure of capacity. See below.

32. *EZ.* V. no. 16



considerably large area at Padaviya indicate that the town contained a mixed population of Sinhalese and Tamils. The town had as its nucleus a walled enclosure of about eight acres in extent, which, seems to have functioned primarily as a military outpost during the Chola rule.<sup>33</sup> Tamil inscriptions referring to South Indian mercantile communities such as Ceṭṭis, Nānādesis and Ainnuruvār found at Padaviya indicate that these mercantile communities played a prominent role in trade at the town at Padaviya (*nakeram*), which consisted of markets and shops.<sup>34</sup>

Wahalkada, close to Horowpatāna, was a mercantile town of modest proportions, which had grown over a long period. The South Indian mercantile communities had gained prominence in the town in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as Tamil inscriptions found in situ refer to Nānādesi and Valaṅṅiyār mercantile communities. One of the inscriptions refers to a gathering of many component groups of the town, which included "the chief of the guild of the boatmen at Māntai".<sup>35</sup> This implies that the Wahalkaḍa market centre had wide-ranging connections and served as a point of intersection between two different levels of commercial activity, viz. long-distance trade and regional trade. The same inscription refers to "the superintendent of the streets" at Wahalkaḍa, which indicates that the market town had an efficient administrative organization. Pathmanathan infers that the term *akkasālai*, referred to in the same inscription, was a foundry where metal workers were engaged in craft production.<sup>36</sup> If his inference is correct, it is certain that there were artisans involved in craft production at this market town of Wahalkaḍa.

In all the key centres of trade, viz. capital cities, port towns and market towns, tolls were levied either directly by officers appointed by the king, or by mercantile communities themselves who were assigned that task, perhaps in return for lump-sum or regular payment to the king. The nature of these tolls had been determined by custom and usage (*pera sirit*).<sup>37</sup> Dues levied at the Goḍapavata port in the second century A.D. were donated to a nearby monastery by the king,<sup>38</sup> implying that either the monastery itself had to appoint collectors of tolls or that the king's officers collected dues and handed them over to the monastery. At Mahātitha royal officials, titled *mahapuṭuladdan*,<sup>39</sup> were responsible for the collection of tolls in the ninth century, while at Hopiṭigama the responsibility devolved on an officer titled *padi lad dada nāyaka* in the tenth century.<sup>40</sup> The inscription on the stone canoe within the citadel

33. S. Pathmanathan "The Cities of Medieval Sri Lanka; (A.D. 1000-1250) Centres of Dynastic Power, Religious Authority and Commercial Activity," *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences*, Colombo, vol. V. no. 1 (June 1982) p. 11

34. *C.T.I.* Pt. I, p. 46-57; K. Indrapala, *Epigraphia Tamilica*, Jaffna (1971) p. 32-35

35. *C.T.I.* Pt. I, p. 46-57

36. S. Pathmanathan, "The Nagaram of Nānādesis in Sri Lanka, circa A.D. 1000-1300", *S.L.J.H.*, vol. X. (1984) p. 145

37. *E.Z.*, II, no. 4

38. *C.J.S.G.* II, Section G. (1930) p. 197

39. *E.Z.*, III, no. 5

40. *E.Z.*, V, no. 16



of Anuradhapura indicates that tolls were levied on goods brought into the city, e.g. one *pata* of paddy was charged on each sack of paddy brought in.<sup>41</sup> One of the Tamil inscriptions at Wahalkaḍa refers to a chief of the toll gate,<sup>42</sup> who seems to have been a member of one of the mercantile communities. According to the Dondra inscription of Parākramabāhu II, customs duties at the port of Devinuwara were charged by an officer titled *mahapandita*.<sup>43</sup>

This points to the fact that some of the mercantile towns and port cities were reckoned as distinct units for purposes of administration. Pathmanathan, on the basis of Tamil sources, states that Mahātittā, or Mātōṭṭam, constituted a separate administrative unit under the Cholas, while Padaviya and Wahalkaḍa were mainly administered by mercantile communities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>44</sup> However, they could not have been completely autonomous units and were under the king's orders.

As far as villages are concerned, trade was limited, but certainly not negligible, and this raises the important issue of the self-sufficiency of the ancient village. The ideas of some of the early British administrator-scholars on Asia inspired Marx's views on the Asiatic mode of production, characterized by the predominance of a self-sufficient village economy.<sup>45</sup> As Morris and Stein have pointed out, the patriotic or nationalist bias of Asian writers too has resulted in an exaggeration of the self-sufficiency of the Asian village.<sup>46</sup> But it is important to note that some of the essential commodities such as salt, metal and metal implements were not produced in all Asian villages. In Sri Lanka frequently metals and metal products had to be brought into many of the villages from the few producing and manufacturing areas, and salt had to be transported to the interior from the coastal centres. Some of the other needs of the village community too, which could not be procured locally, had to be supplied by outsiders, and this necessitated money exchange or barter. Medieval literature refers to villagers paying currency (*kahavanu*) to purchase ghee, venison and lime.<sup>47</sup> The peddler or hawker too, who constantly moved about between the regions, played an important role in supplying light-weight commodities such as clothes, rings, necklaces and bracelets to the villagers.<sup>48</sup> At least in some villages there were also permanent trading places. For instance, the *Cūlavamsa* refers

41. *E.Z.*, III, no. 9

42. *C.T.I.*, Pt. I, p. 46-57

43. S. Paranavitana *Shrine of Upulwan at Devinuwara*, *AGSM*, VI, Colombo (1953) p. 63-64

44. S. Pathmanathan, *op. cit.*

45. Daniel Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, no. 9, (December 1966) p. 33-66

46. Morris D. Morris and Burton Stein, "The Economic History of India: A Bibliographic Essay", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. XXI (1961)

47. *Saddharmāṭṭakāra*, ed. Kirielle Gñānawimala, Colombo (1954) p. 450, 503 and 675

48. *Cv. LXVI*, 134; *Rasavahini*, *Lankāḍḍipuppattivatthuni*, ed. Saranatisa Thero, Colombo (B.E. 2434) p. 24 and 134; *Pūjāvali* ed. Bentota Saddhatissa, Panadura (1930) p. 517



to "shops here and there on the outskirts of Polonnaruwa".<sup>49</sup> Towards the end of this period *Parevi Sandesa* refers to village market-places. Some of the village products circulated within the village itself in the form of barter or sale. For instance, those who fished in the village reservoirs sold their catch to the people of the area. The *Saddharmaratnākaraya* refers to a fisherman who exchanged two-thirds of his fish daily for rice, ghee, milk and oil.<sup>51</sup> The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* refers to a person who exchanged his fish for metal weights known as *aka*.<sup>52</sup>

It should be emphasized that monetized exchange was only a small part of the ancient Sri Lankan economy.<sup>53</sup> The remuneration for services rendered to the king and to the temples as well as for work related to most of the caste obligations were made in the form of land revenue and not by money exchange.<sup>54</sup> The circulation of goods depended to some extent on the mechanics of taxation, rent and other payments made in kind. The system of barter was an important mode of exchange. Yet, what is important to note is that currency was also widely used, at least in the capital city, port cities and other commercial centres, and to some extent even in the interior villages.

Coins have been found at sites in the city of Anuradhapura in layers datable to a period between 200 B C and the beginning of the Christian era, a factor which points to the early use of currency in the island. Inscriptions and literature attest to the use of currency in a number of different transactions, including the sale and purchase of irrigation works and land. Currency was deposited in guilds in expectation of a return in interest payments, and was also donated to religious institutions.<sup>56</sup> Besides, currency was used in settling judicial fines and certain payments made by peasant cultivators to owners of land and irrigation works. According to the *Mahāvamsa* description of the construction of the Mahāthūpa, Duṭṭhagamani paid for all labour utilized for that task.<sup>57</sup> From the *Samantapāsādikā*, written in the fifth century A.D., it is clear that the use of coins had become common in transactions involving the purchase of items of everyday use, like axes and ceramic alms-bowls used by monks. It refers to visits by customers to workshops of craftsmen to purchase products in exchange for payments in coin. As stated earlier, the text also indicates that currency was used for the purchase of meals in the city of Anuradhapura. It is

49. *Cv* LXXII, 212

50. *Parevi Sandesa* V. 105

51. *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, ed. D. Vimalakitti, Colombo (1955) p. 469

52. *Saddharmaratnāvali* ed. D. B. Jayatillake, Colombo (1930) p. 449

53. R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, "Anuradhapura: Ritual Power and Resistance in a Pre-Colonial South Asian City" in *Domination and Resistance* ed. Daniel Miller, Michael Rowlands, Christopher Tilley, London (1989) p. 168

54. W. I. Siriweera, "Land Tenure and Revenue in Medieval Ceylon" *CJHSS*, vol I, no. 2, N.S. (1972) p. 1-49

55. M. H. Srisoma, "Coins" *Ancient Ceylon*, vol. II (1972) p. 147-150

56. *Mv* XXXV, 118, 21, *Ca*, XXXIX 10-12; *CJSG*, I, p. 120; *EZ*, 1, no. 18, IV, no. 14 and 24; V no. 17

57. *Mv*, XXX, 17, 18



reasonable to assume that most of the customs and tolls levied on merchandise at ports, market towns and capitals were collected in cash. By the twelfth century money circulation was perhaps increased, for the *Cūlavamsa* explicitly states that Parākramabāhu I issued *kahavanu* for purposes of trade in the country.<sup>59</sup> During this period even land tax was paid partly in kind and partly in cash.<sup>60</sup> Money payments were also made as advance payments denoted by various terms such as *attikāram*, *saccakāra*, *at panduru* and *hūtyuru*<sup>61</sup> in several trade transactions. Medieval literature refers to instances of obtaining currency loans on interest (*poli*) by individuals on trust or by mortgage (*ukas*) of movable and immovable property.<sup>62</sup>

As in India, the earliest Sri Lankan coins were punch-marked rectangular pieces of silver, known as the *purānas*, which were presumably issued by guilds with the approval of the rulers. These are the coins referred to as *karsāpana* in Sanskrit, *kahāpana* in Pali, and *kahavanu* in the early Brahmi inscriptions.<sup>63</sup> Some of the later punch-marked coins were circular in shape. The punch-marked coins were succeeded by die-struck coins, and the 'elephant and swastika' and 'Laxmi' coins may be regarded as the earliest die-struck coins of the island. These coins, as well as Roman gold coins, seem to have been accepted as legal tender in trade transactions in the early centuries of the Christian era. In inscriptions up to about the seventh century the *kahāpana* is mentioned, but it is not certain whether *purānas* were in circulation up to that time. A gold coinage, with the *kalanda* as the standard weight, and fractional pieces of one fourth, known as *pala*, and one eighth, called *aka*, were in circulation during the last three centuries of the Anuradhapura period.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps some of these coins were used as both bullion and currency. A later Brahmi inscription from Kaduruvāwa refers to a *rūpa vāpara* – which has been interpreted by Paranavitana as a dealer in coined money.<sup>65</sup> The fifth century commentary, the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhagosa, indicates that there were money changers both in India and Sri Lanka and states that the money changer would know "at what village, town, city, mountain or river bank and by what mint-master a coin was struck."<sup>66</sup>

The first Sinhalese king to issue coins in his name was Vijayabāhu I, and most of the gold and Silver coins bearing the legend 'Sri Vijayabāhu' can be attributed to him.<sup>67</sup> The type is the same as that which prevailed in the late Anuradhapura period.

58. *Samantapāsādikā*, ed. J. Takakasu and M. Nagai, P.T.S. London, vol. II, (1927) p. 380-381; vol. III, (1930) p. 698-699

59. *Cv*, lxxvii, 102

60. W. I. Siriweera, *op. cit.*

61. *Dhampiyā Atuvā Getapadaya*, ed. D. B. Jayatillake, Colombe (1932) p. 62; *Jātaka Atuvā Getapadaya* ed. D. B. Jayatillake, Colombo (1943) p. 57

62. *Saddharmāṅkārāya* ed. Bentara Sraddhatisya, Panadura (1934) *Atadā Sannaya*, ed. Medauyangoda Vimalakitti and Nahinne Samananda, Colombo (1954) p. 237, *Saddharmaratnāvali*, *op. cit.* p. 418

63. *CCC*, p. 16 ff, S. Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, *op. cit.*, p. 60 and 73

64. *UCHC* I, Pt. I, p. 363

65. S. Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, *op. cit.*, p. 97

66. Cited in Michael Mitchiner, *The Origins of Indian Coinage*, London (1973) p. 122

67. *CCC*, p. 53



With the reign of Parākramabāhu I the use of precious metals for coins entirely ceased,<sup>68</sup> but it is important to note that even these coins were known as *kahapana* in the contemporary chronicles and literature. The coins of the Sinhalese rulers of the thirteenth century later came to be known as *Dambadeni kāsī*, a phrase correctly indicating the dynasty by which they were issued.<sup>69</sup> After the middle of the fourteenth century *massa* or *kahāpana* fell into insignificance and coins such as *panam*<sup>70</sup> were more widely used.

Apart from currency, uncoined metal, particularly gold and silver weights, were also used as media of exchange. Literary and epigraphic sources frequently refer to minute weights such as the *viyaṭa* (a weight of paddy seed), *madaṭa*, *kalanda*, *nikkha* or *nika* of gold and silver.<sup>71</sup> On the basis of such sources it can be concluded that 8 *viyaṭas* were equivalent to one *madaṭa*, 2.5 *madaṭas* to one *aka*, 8 *akas* or 20 *madaṭas* to one *kalanda*, and 15 or 25 *kalandas* to one *nikkhā*.<sup>72</sup> The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* indicates that in the thirteenth century one *massa* or *masuran* was equal to the weight of a *kalanda*.<sup>73</sup>

The measures of capacity and length used in trade could also be gauged from literary and epigraphic evidence. The measures of length frequently referred to are *angula*, *viyata* and *riyana*. When employed in trade transactions, these were presumably used for measuring items like cloth.<sup>74</sup> According to the list of measurements of length in Moggallāna's *Abhidhanappadipikā*, as calculated by T. W. Rhys Davids, 12 *angulas* were equal to one *viyata*, and two *viyatas* to one *riyana*.<sup>75</sup> The measures of capacity which were employed in measuring liquids as well as dry commodities, such as oil, ghee, honey and grain, were *pata*, *manāva*, *nāli* and *lahasu*.<sup>76</sup> Two *patas* or *paddas* were equivalent to one *manāva*, and two *manāvas* to one *nāli*, and four *nālis* to one *lahasu* or *lāssa*.<sup>77</sup>

The rulers played a significant rôle in internal trade throughout history. Besides regulating weights and measures and the manner in which trade was conducted, particularly in the capital, port towns and market towns, the king had to have direct

68. UCHC I, Pt. II, p. 551

69. CCC, p. 64

70. EZ, IV, no. 12

71. CJSJG II p. 120; *Jataka Atuvā Gatapadaya* ed. D. B. Jayatillake, Colombo (1943) p. 55; *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, *op. cit.*, p. 445 *Pūṇāvaliya op. cit.*, p. 578; *Visuddhimārga Sannaya* vol. I, ed. M. Dharmaratana, Colombo (1890) p. 132; *Cv lxxxii*, 12-14

72. CCC, p. 11; F. Modder. "Sinhalese Weights and Measures", *JRASCB*, XII, no. 43 (1892) p. 172-183; *Yōgaratnākaraya* ed. Don George Samarasinghe, Colombo (1907) V. 284; *Saddharmaratnavali*, *op. cit.* p. 388, 497, 623 and 821; *Jataka Atuvā Gatapādaya*, *op. cit.*, p. 89, 109 and 263-237; EZ. IV, no. 33

73. *Saddharmaratnavali*, *op. cit.* p. 394 and 860

74. *Saddharmaratnavali*, *op. cit.* p. 276; *Pujavali op. cit.* p. 5

75. T. W. Rhys Davids, 'On the Ancient Coins and Measurements of Ceylon', *Numismata Orientalia*, Pt. VI, London (1877) p. 15

76. EZ I, no. 7; EZ III, no. 14, *Saddharmaratnavaliya*, *op. cit.* p. 282, 755 and 773; *Jataka Atuvā Gatapadaya*, *op. cit.* p. 25

77. T. W. Rhys Davids *op. cit.* p. 18-20; EZ. III, no. 4, p. 94-95; EZ V. no. 16, *Saddharmaratnavaliy op. cit.* p. 773, 747; 960



dealings with foreign merchants. Some of the export commodities, such as gems, pearls and elephants were the kings monopoly, at least from about the tenth century onwards. Parākramabāhu I's establishment of a separate department called *antarangadhura* (office of the interior) to supervise the territories that produced articles in demand in foreign countries, and his Burmese campaign indicate the extent of interest that some of the kings had shown in trade. Bhuvanekabāhu I's (1272-1284) embassy to Egypt<sup>79</sup> and Parākramabāhu VI's expedition to the port of Adrainpet (*Ativīrayāmapattana*) in South India,<sup>80</sup> though directly related to foreign trade, would also point to the fact that the king had a stake in the organization of internal trade, which was necessary for him to meaningfully enhance foreign trade activities.

As to the relationship between the king and the trading guilds or mercantile communities, the evidence available is limited. It can be assumed that the mercantile guilds referred to by the terms *puga* or *pugiya* in some of the early Brahmi inscriptions,<sup>81</sup> were autonomus bodies as the state apparatus was in its formative stages during the pre-Christian era. But the activities of the guilds mentioned in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. which accepted money and grain deposits, as referred to earlier, would have been regulated by the king. By the tenth century the activities of the guilds, such as *vanigrāma* referred to in the Badulla inscription were certainly controlled by the king. The preamble of this inscription states that when the king visited the famous shrine at Mahiyangana, the traders and householders of the Hopitigama market, in a petition to the king, complained that the bailiffs of the market exacted illegal dues, contravening regulations made by an earlier king. The king hereupon ordered that a statute of the council be promulgated for the proper conduct of the market place.<sup>82</sup>

Pathmanathan's exhaustive study of the South Indian mercantile communities, Valañjiyār or Vīravalañjiyar, Nānādesis and their associates - Cettis, Cettiputras, Cankarapaṭṭiyār and the Vāniyar, has shed greater light on the nature of the relations between the king and these communities which operated in various parts of the island, such as Mahātittā, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Padaviya, Wahalkaḍa and Vihārahinna in the period between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries.<sup>83</sup> These communities who managed their own affairs, obtained charters from the reigning monarchs on the condition that a fixed amount in kind from the assessed revenue of the market towns was paid to the state. Some of the market towns, such as Padaviya and Wahalkaḍa, were autonomus units where these corporations maintained armed

78. *Cv*, LXIX, 32-33

79. H. W. Codrington "A Sinhalese Embassy to Egypt," *JRASC*, XXVIII (1919) p. 82-85

80. *Gira Sandesaya V*, 148-149, G. P. V. Somaratne, *Political History of the Kingdom of Kotte*, Colombo (1975) p. 125

81. See above

82. *EZ* V, no. 16

83. For a detailed study of these communities see S. Pathmanathan, *op. cit.*; also K. Indrapala, "South Indian Mercantile Communities in Ceylon circa 950-1250," *CJHSS*, N. S. vol. I, no. 2 (1971) p. 107-108



retainers for purposes of defense and made arrangements for the purpose of public amenities. The role of these communities in the politics and military pursuits of the monarch is far from being clear, but there is considerable evidence of their mutual interaction and collaboration with regard to the establishment and maintenance of religious and cultural institutions.<sup>84</sup> For example, in one instance Queen Lilāvati caused a building, identified by Parānavitana as a 'customs house', to be constructed by Nānādesis at Anuradhapura, the proceeds of which were utilized for the supply of spices and other commodities needed by an alms-house called *Palabalavi Mēdhavi*.<sup>85</sup>

The foregoing study reveals that, along with the well-known developments in irrigation technology, construction activity and art and architecture, there were certain trends in the development of internal trade in ancient and medieval Sri Lanka. The study also refutes the view that the ancient Sri Lankans were averse to trade, postulated by European writers such as Tennent,<sup>86</sup> who set the pattern for the study of Sri Lanka history in the nineteenth century. Taking into consideration both foreign and internal trade, one may conclude that trade and craft production played an important role in the ancient and medieval Sri Lanka economy, though the primary economic activity was agriculture.

84. S. Pathmanathan *op. cit*

85. *EZ* I, p. 179-181, S. Parānavitana, "Lankātilaka Inscriptions" *U.C.R.* XVIII (January 1960) p 12-13

86. James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon: An Account of the Island, Physical, Historical and Topographical*, vol. 1, London, (1859) p. 440



## NĀDA SITTAM

BY W. D. AMARADEVA

Lakehouse Investments Ltd. Colombo, (1989), 95 p.

Amaradeva's *Nāda Sittam* is a collection of eighteen short essays in Sinhala on various aspects of music. According to the author's own introduction, the genesis of the book was a series of articles contributed to a leading Sinhala fortnightly.

True to its title, (which one might translate roughly as "Sound Paintings"), the focus of interest is the pictorial aspect of music. This pictorial aspect, we are told, impressed Amaradeva quite early in life, and there can be no doubt that its impact is felt in much of his vast musical output, even though the composer himself subscribes to the time-honoured distinction between pure and applied music (see chs. 5 and 6). The title also serves to underline the unity and universality of the goal of all arts.

In the actual treatment of the subject, however, one feels the presence of some ambivalence in the author's attitude. In the opening chapter Amaradeva sets out to explain why music is called "the finest of fine arts", supporting his explanation with a large number of quotations from eminent figures of the past, including not only musicians, but poets, philosophers, statesmen and religious leaders as well. He is firmly convinced of the universal appeal of music, which is attributed to its freedom from the limitations of language. Whereas prose, poetry, drama and ballet are restricted to a country, nation or language, music, according to our author, transcends these barriers.

On the one hand, I feel that the so-called universality of the language of music is a gratuitous assumption not justified by the actual experience of mankind. A certain amount of cultural conditioning is necessary before one can appreciate creations of a musical system other than that in which one has been brought up. What the advocates of the "universal language" theory mean in effect is that music which they love and enjoy must be loved and enjoyed by everyone else. It would be more realistic to insist that most human beings with a capacity for hearing (and even some who are deprived of this capacity) are able to respond to some kind of music, and that the ability to appreciate any type of music can be acquired through empirical training.

On the other hand, Amaradeva himself draws our attention to the impact of language on the genesis of music (ch. 3). Language is the origin of literature, which in its turn, says our author, causes the development of music. He substantiates this last point with examples from the sacred music and theory of many eastern and western countries, showing how in each case music developed from the few notes of a chant, gaining in range with time. Should one perhaps detect here a certain uneasiness, if not conflict, within the soul of an artist torn between the desire to realize his



highest aesthetic through the medium of pure sound, and the need to win the patronage of an audience perennially addicted to the light song, and largely untrained to appreciate pure music? It is a well known fact that Amaradeva himself, brilliant violinist and trained classical vocalist that he is, has nevertheless won the hearts of thousands chiefly through his many immortal songs; and in this he shares the common lot of all Sinhala musicians of the present day. Thus, one is not surprised to find that in his book Amaradeva's attention is focused mainly on the song, which he considers to be the most important musical form.

Amaradeva is, however, careful to distinguish the properties of music from those of language (ch. 4). Unlike language, music does not depend on a casual relation for its emotional appeal. Again, repetition, which would be a blemish in literature, is an ornament of music. His own setting of Mahagama Sekara's 'Song of the Weavers' (adopted from Sarcjini Naidu) provides a working example of the difference between the two media. The first two stanzas of lyric are joyful, but in the last the mood changes to grief. However, grief is the overall mood of the poem, and it is this overall mood that the musician must capture. Amaradeva has thus justified his setting of all three verses of this song to the same melody.

Still, one has to admit that the majority of listeners in this country have learned to approach music through literature. Accordingly, Amaradeva quotes and discusses a number of song lyrics, although each time he is careful to emphasize that melody is the soul of the song and therefore the more important element. (see esp. ch. 10).

The author has touched on some of the most significant and controversial aspects of artistic creation; the relationship of music to language (ch. 4), poetry to song (ch. 12), artist to society (ch. 15), musician to tradition (ch. 17), and the nature of artistic creation and appreciation, are just a few of the many issues raised and discussed. The reader is impressed by the clarity and sublimity of Amaradeva's thought as well as by his extraordinary familiarity with the authors of East and West, classical and modern. The conspicuous effect of this thought and reading (backed by the author's unique command of language) is the effectiveness and immediateness of his communication, as, for instance, when the relationship of form to content in music is likened to that of body and mind (ch. 2).

Some of these issues concern more specifically musical life in present-day Sri Lanka (ch. 13), appropriateness of the epithet 'Sinhala' to describe today's music, the role of Indian and other foreign influences, the expectations of the musical public and the adequacy of our technique to fulfil them, the creation of a truly national music with international appeal, and the development of instrumental music; all these are given considerable attention. In particular the author stresses the need for our musicians to free themselves from the grip of Indian music, engage in experimentation, and explore our folksong heritage.

However, in the penultimate chapter (ch. 17), entitled 'Music and Tradition', which might be taken as a summarized statement of Amaradeva's artistic creed, it is maintained that, to the abundantly gifted artist duly acquainted with the essence of Sinhala culture and well versed in the techniques of his art, cultivation of the Indian



tradition is in no way an impediment to the creation of works of Sinhala music of local fragrance. The way to preserve originality, Amaradeva believes, is the creation of independent compositions, freeing the mind of narrow thoughts, and cultivating an open mind, and acquiring a broad view of life.

I welcome *Nāda Sittam* as a work of self-analysis, wherein a great artist of our time has given us an insight into his creative experience. Analysis of his song melodies and film and ballet scores reveals the way in which Amaradeva has striven to translate into sound reflections which are the fruit of profound meditation. I feel that Amaradeva's ventures into applied music, such as his scores for plays, films and ballets reveal, more than anything else, the power of his sensibility and artistic genius. It is to be regretted that these scores are not readily available to the readers of this book for study or enjoyment under the composer's own guidance. Such an experience would have been of immense value to music lovers, who are, nevertheless, deeply indebted to their composer for this revelation of the secrets of his craft. These descriptions help us to realize the existence of a conscious element which plays an important part in artistic creation.

Of particular significance in this connection is the detailed exposition of the artistry behind the incidental music to the film *Rin Silu* in the concluding chapter, where the composer reveals the source-material that influenced him and the principles which guided him in the choice of specific melodic patterns and tone colours. The exposition has the effect of establishing the validity of a thesis which Amaradeva is never tired of defending, namely, that whatever be the source of his influence, the gifted artist is able to stamp his work with the true sign of originality.

Some of his observations give rise to further debate. There are, he says, two ways of creating a song (ch. 13), setting a preconceived lyric to music, and creating a melody to which an appropriate lyric is then written. After admitting the validity of both methods, he goes on to prefer the second method as being more conducive to the production of a perfect musical creation, the artist being unhampered by an extraneous medium.

Amaradeva is no doubt speaking from personal experience here, and the ensuing analysis of a well-known song melody from the ballet *Nala-Dumriyanthi* serves to demonstrate the effectiveness of this method. But does this reflect the universal experience of the great masters of song composition? The immortal songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, Mahler, Duparc, and Faure were, almost without exception, settings of already existing poems; and Amaradeva's own analysis of Sunil Santa's setting of a well-known poem (p. 53-58) as well as some of his compositions proves beyond doubt that both methods could give rise to great works in the hands of a truly gifted artist. However, Amaradeva's observations on this point serve to reinforce the postulate that a good song lyric can be created only by a mature poet with many years of experience.

I would also question the validity of the assumption, implicit throughout the work and expressly stated a couple of times (cf. ch. 6 *sub. fin.*), that only



smooth-sounding "musical" letters and words should be admitted into a lyric, while only concordant sounds should find a place in a musical tone poem. Once again the author has failed to take actual practice into consideration. On the one hand, a lyricist's choice of sounds and words can be governed by the nature of his theme. On the other hand, I feel that musical composition is not simply the imposing of order and definition upon material lacking in such order and definition, but that it also involves the judicious blending of concordant and discordant elements. Only such music can be said to be true to life, while the listener experiences aesthetic satisfaction from the resolution of discordant elements within a musical composition.

Overlapping and repetition are hard to avoid in the re-publication of a series of articles in book-form. Even so, I feel that careful editing could have eliminated some of the shortcomings, such as the virtually verbatim repetition in chapter 12 of a long passage from the previous chapter, and the double list of musical instruments in chapter 8.

While on the subject of musical instruments, I should also express my reservations regarding the visual illustrations. The seating plan of the full orchestra (p. 28) and pictures of percussion (p. 30), woodwind (p. 35) and string (p. 41) instruments could well mislead a potential reader into expecting from *Nada Sittam* a textbook on music appreciation. But it is not a textbook or a tutor for absolute beginners. This book, which crystallizes the author's experience in the field of music of more than six decades, is, (as E. R. Sarathchandra has correctly observed in his foreword), an important document indispensable to those who wish to understand Amaradeva's art and philosophy of music, and not a little of its attraction is due to the element of autobiography.

Of course, I do not wish to deny the educational value of the book. Unfortunately though, there are instances where one cannot help feeling that the "textbook" approach has deprived the reader of valuable material. The discourse on the violin (ch. 9) is a case in point. This is Amaradeva's instrument, and one naturally expects to hear something about his own response to its calling, and perhaps even get a glimpse of his experience as a student of V. G. Jog, the renowned Indian maestro. What we have instead is a carefully written, and no doubt informative, encyclopaedic account of the development and construction of the instrument. The treatment of rhythm (ch. 14) is also somewhat cursory.

Amaradeva's colourful and attractive prose style merits commendation. It is yet another manifestation of his intuitive feeling for the musical properties of language. His comparisons, metaphors, and illustrations are apt and to the point and serve to enlighten and clarify his meaning. Above all, they reveal his keen perception of, and fondness for the marvelous gifts of nature, and this, in no small amount contributes to enliven his treatment of even the most technical aspects of the art of music (ch. 2).



“Just as a flower - garden becomes form to a stretch of flowers blooming with many colours, scents and shapes, even so musical form is the attractive vessel which holds together the scattered multitude of beautiful sounds.”

Scattered throughout the book are memorable word-pictures, whose attraction is often enhanced by autobiographical touches. Unforgettable, for instance, is the sketch of the infant Amaradeva fascinated by the sights and sounds of the seashore at sunset (introduction), or frightened by adults with stories of Mohini (ch. 5).

*Nāda Sittam* is an eminent testimony to Amaradeva's mastery of his subject, language and style, and reveals his gift for winning the hearts of his readers just as much as he has won his audiences with the strains of his melodies. Personally, I have derived much pleasure from reading this little book, which, I am sure, future generations will number among the classics of 20th century Sinhala prose.

D. P. M. WEERAKKODY



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## Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India

BY MEENA ABRAHAM

Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1988

The significance of the role of corporate bodies such as guilds of artisans and traders in ancient and medieval Indian history has long been emphasized by many scholars who wrote on Indian economic history, yet very few detailed studies have appeared in print on this subject; these dealt with only certain aspects of the functions of these organizations. Guilds appear to have existed in India from a fairly early period, but their surge into prominence definitely presupposes a high level of trading and commercial activity, and the Kuṣāṇa, Ś'aka-kṣatrapa-Sātvāhana period, which witnessed a thriving overseas trade, provided the right conditions for it. Ancient India's foreign trade, which witnessed its high water mark in this period, slowed down sometime later, but did not diminish very much until the end of the Gupta period.

Though north India experienced a decline in trading activity in the post-Gupta era, the same cannot be said about most parts of the peninsula. The growing importance of Southeast Asia as a rich source of many commodities and the increasing sea-faring activity and the sea-borne trade with China gave peninsular India a new importance as a region heavily involved in intermediate trade. The emergence of the Persians and then the Arabs as major participants in the Asian trading arena also gave a new impetus to the Indian ocean trade and commerce from about the sixth/seventh centuries A. D onwards, and the western coast of India, particularly the western Deccan, again began to play a prominent role in this trade. And in this background, guilds of merchants too begin to re-emerge in a significant way.

In her monograph entitled *Two Medieval Guilds of South India*, Meena Abraham deals with the history and functions of two such guilds which had their origin in the western Deccan. Of these, the Maṅṅrāmam guild, which was headquartered in Quilon in Kerala had a history going back to at least the ninth century A D, while the other, the Ayyavole guild of traders, originated in Aihole in the Bijapur district. Between the two, the Ayyavole appears to be the more powerful and extensive in its expansion and activities. The Ayyavole also came into existence roughly in the same period as the Maṅṅrāmam and, according to the author, it continued down at least to the sixteenth century A.D., perhaps being the precursor to the organization of Naṭṭukkoṭṭu Chettiars of later times.



In discussing the history of the Maṇigrāmam, the author takes great pains to bring out in detail the close relationship that existed between this guild and the Syrian Christian community living at Quilon. However, information about the Maṇigrāmam is at times much sketchy, as only a few inscriptions pertaining to it are available, and these too, are chronologically far apart. In fact, its history from about the eleventh to the thirteenth century is almost unknown. When its name reappears some time in the thirteenth century, it seems to have functioned as a mere appendage of the more powerful Ayyavole organization. Although the author argues that the Maṇigrāmam of the thirteenth century was the same as its namesake of the early times, her argument is not convincing as there is no other proof except the similarity of the names. Moreover, the Maṇigrāmam of the thirteenth century was head-quartered in the heartland of the Tamil country, while the Maṇigrāmam of the earlier period had long been functioning in the Quilon region.

However, what is significant about this organization was its close association with certain alien trading communities, first the Syrian Christians, then the Jews and Arabs. These groups, from time to time, as the inscriptions reveal, received various favours from the rulers, and they seem too have existed amicably with the main local communities with whom they came into contact. What is also interesting is their social positions in relation to the local groups. The Maṇigrāmam, at least in the ninth to tenth century period, functioned as an elite urban group at Quilon. The service castes in this colony, the washermen and carpenters and even the land-owning vellalars, appear to have been considered lower in social status than the merchant community.

The Ayyavole association, unlike the Maṇigrāmam, was begun by a group of Brāhmaṇa residents of an *agrahāra*, and perhaps initially there were about five hundred members, who are often referred to as "the five hundred lords" in many inscriptions.

The early inscriptions that refer to these traders belong to the period between the ninth and thirteenth centuries and at this stage their area of operation was mainly limited to the western Deccan; however, from about the thirteenth century onwards they appear to have extended their activities into the Kannaḍa and Tamil speaking areas further to the south and also to Sri Lanka. The author shows how the Ayyavole traders closely followed the tracks of the Coja military expeditions in widening their area of operation gradually gaining control of a large portion of the transpeninsular trade. These traders themselves began to hire contingents of troops for their own security, and as a result a relationship was forming up between the traders and the mercenaries. This relationship became a very important phenomenon in medieval south Indian society, and at times, as several scholars have shown, traders' associations and mercenary groups acted hand in hand to achieve their objectives. This important aspect of the activities of the guilds, particularly the Ayyavole, is something worth investigating, but unfortunately the author has not paid much attention to it.

All the inscriptional evidence concerning the Ayyavole association has been taken by the author as referring to one single organization and argues that it was a guild



which had a well-knit net-work of trading units and even controlled the activities of several other minor merchant organizations as well. However, the many inscriptional data available on the activities of the Ayyavole association do not precisely point to the existence of a closely-knit trading organization with a central authority maintaining a strict control over the functions of its membership, whose trading activities had spread over a vast terrain in South India and outside. In this regard, one can question whether that organization had the administrative apparatus and other abilities to function in such a manner at a time communication was not efficient or easy. As such, one cannot help but agree with scholars like K. Indrapala, who argued that the Ayyavole traders were merely a loosely organized body which cannot be considered as a corporation or a trading guild and that they were not unified as a single organization of merchants. If that was the case, then it brings the author's main thesis into serious questioning.

While discussing the motives of the Coḷas in their invasion of Sri Lanka, and the subsequent conquest of its northern area, the author argues that the main aim of the Coḷa campaign was the need to take control of the main trading ports of the island particularly those of the east coast, as a part of a grand plan to control the east-west trade in the Indian ocean region. In putting forward this idea the author also claim that she is the first person to highlight this aspect of the Coḷa invasion. Whether this was the *main aim* of the Coḷa campaign may be a matter of debate, but the fact that it was an important driving factor behind the invasion and the subsequent conquest of the northern parts of the island is something that cannot be ignored. However, the author's claim for originality of this theory is somewhat doubtful, for several scholars, like S. Paranavitana, K. A. N. Sastri, S. Kiribamune and Michael Roberts have emphasized this point before.

On the whole the monograph can be considered a collection of useful data for understanding the patterns of trade and commerce in south India, Sri Lanka and south-east Asia at a time South Indian kingdoms began to play a dominant role in politics, trade and sea-faring. Though the monograph consists of an introduction, five chapters three appendices, a bibliography, an index and some maps, what is conspicuously absent in it is a conclusion. A concluding chapter, or at least a concluding section, would have helped the author place her main findings in a clear perspective and added clarity to many of her arguments and theories that are scattered over several chapters. It would also have served to correlate the chapters, most of which, as they now stand, appear to lack cohesion and continuity.

P. V. B. KARUNATILAKA.



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 the Ayvazian teachers were merely a loosely organized body which cannot be considered  
 as a component of the teaching guild and that they were not united as a single organiza-  
 tion of members. What was the case, then, that brought the author's attention to this  
 various questioning.

While discussing the motives of the Goias in their invasion of Sri Lanka, and the  
 subsequent conquest of its southern part, the author notes that the main aim of the  
 Goias campaign was the need to take control of the three trading ports of the island  
 particularly those of the east coast as a part of a grand plan to control the east-west  
 trade in the Indian Ocean region. In furthering this idea, the author also claims  
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 author's claim for originality of this study is somewhat doubtful. As several scholars  
 like S. Paranavithana, K. A. N. Sankar, S. Kinnaman and Michael Kovalev have  
 emphasized this point before.

The whole of the monograph can be regarded as a collection of useful data for  
 understanding the patterns of trade and commerce in South India, Sri Lanka and south-  
 east Asia at a time when South India kingdoms began to play a dominant role in politics  
 and trade. Though the monograph consists of an introduction, five chapters  
 and an appendix, it is a very good index and source, what is comparatively scarce  
 in a book of this kind. A concluding chapter or appendix containing a summary would  
 have helped the author to bring his main findings in a clear perspective and added  
 clarity to many of his arguments and theories that are scattered over several chapters.  
 It would also have served to reinforce the chapters most of which, as they now stand,  
 appear to lack cohesion and continuity. In fact, the author's argument is not  
 very clear and the data is not well organized. The author's argument is not very  
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Y. B. KARUNATHILAKA

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## **Bitter Berry Bondage: The Nineteenth Century Coffee Workers of Sri Lanka**

BY DONOVAN MOLDRICH

Published by the Co-ordinating Secretariat for Plantation Areas,  
Sri Lanka (1989) pp. xix and 207.

This book by Moldrich deals with the arrival and the subsequent settlement of Indians as plantation workers in Sri Lanka and the various aspects connected with their life, work and, of course, their death in this country.

It is well known that migration from India have a long history. Indian cultural and trade connections with South East Asia and the East coast of Africa are said to date back to pre-Christian era.

However, such developments lost their momentum in due course on account of several changes that took place within India. A new wave of emigration, different in scale and quality was witnessed in the nineteenth century. While the early emigrants were "the ambassadors of a great civilisation and religion or traders in rare commodities, the new immigrants were a group of unlettered labourers who set out to sweat and live in an alien's estate". This emigration of Indians was spread out from Fiji in the East to the West Indies in the West and to Mauritius in the South. Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Fiji, Mauritius, the East African territories, South Africa Guyana and Trinidad are some of the countries to which they emigrated.

On the basis of historical patterns of Indian emigration and settlement in various countries, Jain divided Indian emigration into five categories each category being based on a distinct mode of Indian emigration :

1. Indentured labour emigration - to west Indies, Fiji and Mauritius.
2. Kangany/Maistri System- to Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Burma and Singapore.
3. Free, or Passage Emigration of trading castes, mainly to Africa, south of the Sahara.
4. Voluntary emigration to the metropolitan countries of Europe, North America and Australia.
5. Labour emigration to the West Asian countries.

**These last two are contemporary phenomena.**



Moldrich's study deals with the second category of emigration, and of this the emigration to Sri Lanka. As he rightly points out, "the paucity of historical works on Indian workers overseas stands out in stark contrast to the abundance of books on comparable groups such as Africans transported across the Atlantic to work on plantations in America" (Introduction p. ii)

In case of immigrations to Sri Lanka of Indian workers, although there have been no overall or general studies covering the entire coffee period (ie. 1830's to the 1890's), there have been in-depth studies of particular aspects or particular periods of the coffee industry in Sri Lanka. Most of these were undertaken by researchers who were seeking doctoral degrees from foreign universities on the strength of such researches (e.g. K. M. de Silva, Wesumperuma, Vanden Driesen and Lal Jayawardena),

In such researches even when the researcher feels that what he thinks is right, he may not be in a position to state this in his thesis owing to lack of evidence to support it. In other words, they are objective studies. As Fr. Caspersz says in his foreword, to Moldrich's book, "...professional historians all too often see history as the interpretative chronicle of events and not at all sufficiently as the saga of the masses of the people behind them."

The studies referred to above belong to this category. The major objective in writing these was to secure a degree. (This does not mean that these works are biased or are of a low quality). Here what Jurgen Kuczynski has to say about writers on the working class is relevant. According to him, "there is no work on the rise and condition of the working class which has not suffered intellectual ship-wreck if the author has not been sympathetic towards this class... No one... who did not at least feel sympathetic towards the poor or a deep religious responsibility for their situation has ever been able to present an analysis of the working class or description of their condition of any intellectual merit" (*The Rise of the Working Class*, London, (1967) p. 232. Moldrich's work certainly shows a sympathy for the people about whom he is writing. One sees this in every chapter and every page of this book.

The fourteen chapters in this book have one thing in common, and that is to bring out vividly the hardships, sufferings, the misery, the humiliation and the oppression and exploitation of these workers by all those with whom they came into contact from the time of their recruitment in India. The story that the pages unfold is one that would not leave anyone's heart untouched.

The different chapters of the book seem to follow a chronological rather than a thematic order, in that they deal with the historical order of events, but the different chapters are not confined to the discussion of those events in isolation from the others. Events are discussed in an inter related manner so that the reader is given a total picture rather than a partial one. This shows the thoroughness with which the author deals with each issue.

The first three chapters deal with local events. The rise and fall of the coffee industry, the reluctance of local village labour to work in the coffee plantations and



the resulting shortage of labour which prompted the planters to seek foreign labour, and the abortive attempts to import Chinese labour are discussed in these three chapters in that order. Having failed to attract Chinese labour the British planters turned to India, where there was a large reserve of unemployed men and women. In chapter 4 Moldrich shows the push and pull factors that worked towards inducing Indians to come over to Sri Lanka in large numbers.

The sea voyage from India to Sri Lanka and the disasters that faced them at sea from the subject-matter of chapter 5. He shows how these workers were "dumped together like a tin of worms for bait", and the major disasters that took place in mid-ocean. This is followed by an account, in chapter 6, of the long walk from sea-coast to the estates. The different points of arrival, the different routes they took to the estates, the many hazards they faced on this long journey, and the human casualties due to exhaustion, starvation etc. are described in this chapter, supported by evidence from varied sources. The author describes the extortion perpetrated on the workers from the point of arrival, where toll-keepers, and others pretending to be toll-keepers, demanded various sums of money from the migrants, and attacks, on the workers by criminal elements from the lowlands. He quotes Pippet, the Police historian, who says, that "three to four sturdy Sinhalese would not only dare to attack a gang of 16 to 20 coolies but they could do so with impunity, depriving them of all they possessed, even of the little piece of coarse cloth which covered their nakedness" (p. 32). His description of the deaths that took place along the famous (or infamous, rather) North Road is worth reading.

The remaining chapters are concerned with living and working conditions of these workers on the estates. Chapter 7 is devoted to the discussion of labour legislation of the coffee period. It is generally thought that the first piece of labour legislation - the Service Contract Ordinance No. 5 of 1841 - was enacted to protect the plantation workers. Several other pieces of legislation followed this; but most of these laws, instead of protecting the workers, only helped the employers to penalise workers for various acts. They in fact operated in favour of employers. Employers made use of these to curb desertions from plantations by fixing penalties for breaches of contract. Many were arrested and kept in jails.

The wage structure of the coffee estates is the theme of chapter 9. Wages were generally low, but even then many planters felt that wage rates were higher than they had been led to believe. Delays in the payment of wages were common, especially during the coffee crisis in the mid-forties. The working of the kangany system is well brought out in this chapter. The "Coastal Advances" System and the "Tundu System", which made the workers heavily indebted to the kanganies, have been discussed by many authors. Moldrich describes the high interest rates charged (Rs. 1/- per month for a loan of Rs. 10/-, which worked out to 120% per annum) and shows how on pay-day, as P. D. Millie says, the wage went "from the pay table into the well bulged-out waistcoat of the kangany" (p. 83). Meyer, as quoted by the author (p. 84), puts in a nutshell the condition of the workers. "Having arrived at the plantations in debt, the immigrants died in debt; his universe was one of complete dependence, his social position that of a pure proletarian".



Chapter 9 gives an account of the repression by planters and the resistance by workers on the coffee estates. Flogging to death was common on estates. The planters considered themselves magistrates on their estates, magistrates who had the right to do anything short of killing those men and women who worked under them. Though often punishments resulted in the death of workers, the punishment causing these deaths never went beyond a fine. The author quotes a number of instances to illustrate this.

Jayaraman divides the history of Indian emigration to Sri Lanka into three periods: 1839 to 1900, 1900 to 1930 and 1930 to 1950. The coffee period covers the first of these. During this period emigration was seasonal and emigrants generally returned to India within a year and the male-female ratio among the emigrants was extremely low. Emigration assumed a familial pattern only after 1900. Chapter 10 of the book is concerned with the low male-female ratio and its serious consequences. This disproportion between women and men was higher in the early years of the industry, but at no stage in the history of the industry was the ratio higher than one woman to every four men (p. 93). This naturally had a number of social consequences. Prostitution and the prevalence of venereal disease and infanticide were the chief consequences of the shortage of women (p. 47). Men who brought their women were wary of the large number of bachelors in the "lines", so much so that even when they fell ill they were reluctant to go to hospital, leaving their women behind with the bachelors (p. 97).

Chapter 11 concentrates on social life on plantations. The dietary habits of these workers, their heavy consumption of liquor, housing and educational facilities provided by the estates, and the attitude of missionaries towards these workers are dealt with in this chapter. On page 101 the author says that "those who had their main meal of hot rice in the morning had the left-over food in the evening, while those who cooked the main meal in the evening kept the left-overs to be eaten in the morning". I would like to add here that the situation today is not substantially different from this. The practice of heavy liquor consumption among plantation workers, for instance, continues to be a problem even today.

Heavy mortality among these workers from the time they left the Indian coast is a subject that has been studied by many. Not surprisingly the author of the present book too devotes the last three chapters to discuss this. They deal with mortality among the estate workers at different periods of time, mortality in the growth years of the coffee industry, mortality in the boom years, and mortality in the twilight years of the industry. Mortality rates were very high during the early years of coffee planting. Some estimates, as quoted in the book put the mortality in the first eight years of immigration at 70,000. These rates have continued to be high right through the coffee period; many deaths went unrecorded and unknown, as the author says in his epilogue; "... the precise number-leave alone the names of the coffee workers who had died in Ceylon, will never be known. The approximations in the last three chapters of this book are, at best, informed estimates" (p. 166).

There is no doubt that this book is a valuable contribution to the history of Indian plantation workers in this country. Other than the workers of Hugh Tinker



(which deals with Indian immigration in general) and some Indian authors, there are hardly any books dealing with the history of these workers. As mentioned before there are, of course, a number of scholarly articles on the subject published in some reputed journals. The present book fills out this sporadically researched area. The author also tells us that there will be a sequel to his book, dealing with the tea workers in Sri Lanka. I am sure that all those who have read the present book will eagerly await the publication of this work which, together with the present book, will form a comprehensive work on the history of the Indian plantation workers in Sri Lanka.

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which deals with Indian immigration in general) and some Indian authors, there are hardly any books dealing with the history of these workers. As mentioned above there is of course a number of popular articles on the subject published in some regional journals. The present book fills out the gap especially in the area of the Indian workers in the rubber plantations in the present book. The book will be a valuable addition to the literature on the subject. The publication of this work which, together with the present book, will form a comprehensive work on the history of the Indian plantation workers in Sri Lanka.

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